



Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ALTERITY AND LIFE

**A contrast of perspectives from the proposal of Charles
Taylor**

(ALTERIDAD Y VIDA

Un contraste de perspectivas desde la propuesta de Charles Taylor)

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The question of alterity is as old as humanity itself. It is a relevant theme for every culture and for every generation that faces the mystery of the person and seeks adequate answers to the problem of personal existence. Our study aims at penetrating this very fundamental issue. Alterity philosophically has to do with our concern for the other, whether it is a concern for something or someone who is different from me. We are convinced that for any integral understanding of the human being, alterity and interpersonal dimensions of our existence must be taken into account. We are beings who cannot exist in isolation and as they say, no man is an island, and no one has the monopoly of knowledge.

Thinking about the other, who is different from me and yet both are called to a common existential project, is an all-time theme. It is a subject that is always new because of the nature of human life. At all times, we find ourselves called to be existentially involved in common life. Alterity as we know is a very broad concept and much has been said about it in different systems of thought. To avoid this ambiguity, we had to narrow down the topic further to a particular author who could act as our guide throughout our study. Charles Taylor is the author chosen for his holistic view of the human being where he maintains the tension between the individual and the community as two entities that must coexist.

However, Taylor alone does not exhaust this theme. This made us to devise a method that not only analysed Taylor's ideas, but also took into account other authors who have contributed greatly to the subject matter. Our method has therefore been comparative where Taylor's ideas are contrasted with that of others. It is an enriching method because it challenges, enriches and deepens our understanding the ideas of our author. The reason why we put Taylor to dialogue with other authors is born from the fact that alterity as a theme also implies involving others in the task of thinking.

Keywords: Person, I-Thou, alterity, interpersonal encounter, intersubjectivity, individual, dialogue, plurality, community.

RESUMEN

La cuestión de la alteridad es tan antigua como la humanidad. Es un tema relevante para toda cultura, para toda generación que se enfrente con el misterio de la persona y que busque respuestas adecuadas para el problema de la existencia personal. Nuestra investigación quiere penetrar este tema tan fundamental. La alteridad filosóficamente tiene que ver con nuestra preocupación por el otro, ya sea la preocupación por algo o alguien que es diferente. Estamos convencidos de que para cualquier comprensión integral del ser humano hay que tener en cuenta la alteridad y las dimensiones interpersonales de nuestra existencia. Somos seres que no podemos existir aislados y como dicen, ningún hombre puede vivir como una isla y nadie posee el monopolio del conocimiento.

Pensar en el otro, que es diferente a mí y, sin embargo, ambos llamados a un proyecto existencial común, es un tema de todos los tiempos. Es un tema que siempre es nuevo en el sentido de la vida humana, en todo momento, se encuentra la llamada, involucrada existencialmente, a la vida común desde su propia autonomía. La alteridad tal y como la conocemos es un tema amplio y mucho se ha dicho en los diferentes sistemas de pensamiento. Para evitar esta ambigüedad, tuvimos que reducir el tema aún más a un autor en particular que pudiera actuar como nuestro guía a lo largo de nuestra investigación. Charles Taylor es el autor elegido por su visión holística del ser humano donde mantiene la tensión entre el individuo y la comunidad como dos entidades que deben coexistir.

Sin embargo, Taylor por sí solo no agota este tema. Esto nos hizo idear un método que no solo analizara las ideas de Taylor, sino que también tuviera en cuenta a otros autores que han contribuido enormemente al tema. Nuestro método ha sido, por lo tanto, comparativo donde nuestro autor principal ha sido puesto en diálogo con otros autores. Es un método enriquecedor porque en él se desafían y enriquecen las ideas de nuestro autor. La razón por la que ponemos a Taylor a dialogar con otros autores nace del hecho de que la alteridad como tema implica involucrar también en la tarea del pensar.

Palabras clave: Persona, yo-tú, alteridad, encuentro interpersonal, intersubjetividad, individuo, dialogo, pluralidad, comunidad

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ABBREVIATIONS

This is a summary of the abbreviations used during our research to make the reference easier. However, the full citation will be used when they first appear.

CTPN	Ruth Abbey, <i>Charles Taylor Philosophy Now</i> (Teddington: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2000)
SS	Charles Taylor, <i>Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity</i> (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989)
TRO1	Pedro Laín Entralgo, <i>Teoría y realidad del otro: Tomo I</i> (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983)
MEPR	Charles Taylor, <i>Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)
HAL	Charles Taylor, <i>Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
PA	Charles Taylor, <i>Philosophical Arguments</i> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995)
PHS	Charles Taylor, <i>Philosophy and the Human Science: Philosophical Papers II</i> (Montreal: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
H	Charles Taylor, <i>Hegel</i> , (Montreal: Cambridge University Press, 1975)
SA	Charles Taylor, <i>A Secular Age</i> (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007)
LA	Charles Taylor, <i>The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity</i> (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2016)
TRO2	Pedro Laín Entralgo, <i>Teoría y realidad del otro: Tomo II</i> (Madrid: Editorial Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1968)
PH	Gabriel Amengual Coll, <i>La persona humana: El debate sobre su concepto</i> (Madrid: Editorial síntesis, 2015)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The question of alterity is as old as humanity. It is a relevant theme for every culture and every generation that faces the mystery of the person and seeks adequate answers to the problem of personal existence. This study aims at deepening on this theme of alterity for a comprehensive understanding of its deeper meaning. Alterity philosophically has to do with our concern for the other, whether it is a concern for something or someone who is different. Sometimes the term otherness is used to mean the same thing, but in our study, we shall restrict ourselves to the use of the term alterity. The Collins dictionary defines alterity as «*the quality or condition of being other or different; otherness*»¹. Our sense of alterity through our research is above all the concern for the other human being. We are convinced that for any integral understanding of the human being, alterity and interpersonal dimensions of our existence must be taken into account. We are beings that cannot exist in isolation, that is, no man is an island, and no one has a monopoly on knowledge. To enter deeply into the mystery of the human being we cannot be indifferent to these dimensions because, as it has been said, «*ser con los demás y para los demás pertenece al núcleo de la existencia humana*»².

Thinking about the other, who is different from me and yet both of us are called to a common existential project, is a theme, of all times, but that each historical epoch has to think again carefully to respond to the existential call of common life without abandoning personal autonomy. Man as a philosophical problem remains a paradox and a mystery and continually presents new questions that demand answers. That is why our topic in question remains a perennial problem and always requires a continuous search for truth. All cultures have presented coexistence as a fundamental dimension for human life. The African ethics of Ubuntu echoes the same sentiments by saying that: «*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am*»³. As human beings, we are by nature condemned to coexist. This is a fact that we have to accept and cannot ignore, whether we like it or not.

¹ Collins English Dictionary, s.v. "alterity (n)," accessed April 10, 2022, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/alterity>.

² Gevaert Joseph, *El problema del hombre* (Salamanca: edición sígueme, 2008), 43-44.

³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (New York: Doubleday and company, 1970), 141.

The present theological thought also emphasizes that for possible encounter with God, the encounter with the other or my neighbour is necessary.

El hecho significa que el hombre no puede entrar en contacto con el Misterio, hacerse cargo de su requerimiento, tomar conciencia de su presencia interpelante más que a través de realidades en último término mundanas. Éstas pueden ser objetos externos, palabras, visiones o representaciones. Pero cualquiera que sea la forma concreta que adopten, se tratará siempre de mediaciones tomadas del propio mundo del hombre⁴.

We are social beings who are continually involved in interpersonal relationships; a phenomenon visible from the moment we are born. In this way, our world as we know it cannot be qualified as private because we are continually linked with others within our environment.

However, true interpersonal encounter is not easy. Recognizing that the other is a radical otherness, and an unwavering alterity requires a strong ethical commitment that each generation is called to discover.

Today's world needs to discover the listening space, and the presence of the other to open paths to interpersonal dialogue, a condition that creates a possibility of the embodiment of the good in social structures. Each generation must discover the possibilities that can be offered by an ethical praxis that allows not only to commit to the recognition of the other, but also to promote hospitality for all. This is a journey and a continual task. The world needs the recovery of the listening space and the recognition of the presence of the other so that we can open ourselves to interpersonal dialogue. We must let Martin Luther King's words challenge us today: «*Hemos aprendido a volar como los pájaros y a nadar como los peces, pero no hemos aprendido el sencillo arte de vivir juntos como hermanos*»⁵. Therefore, thinking about the other becomes a theme of our time. It has a philosophical character, and its necessity and urgency are vital. We make our own, then, the task that Javier Ruiz, rethinking alterity, proposes:

(La alteridad) Es una semilla que crece y se hace gigantesca. Pero, sobre todo, es un tema de nuestro tiempo: tiene el carácter de todo auténtico problema filosófico, su necesidad y

⁴ Juan Martín Velasco, *El encuentro con Dios* (Madrid: Caparros Editores, 2007), 82.

⁵ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 166.

urgencia vital. Un saber sobre la alteridad es urgente en toda época, es condición mínima para la civilización y el autoconocimiento⁶.

Although the term «alterity» is very old, and it would be difficult to establish the date of its official use, we assume the strong thesis that Lain maintains: «*Solo con el cristianismo, en efecto, podría existir el problema del otro*»⁷. It is not a question of maintaining that in other traditions the consideration of the other does not exist. What is affirmed is that only in the Judeo-Christian tradition does the consideration of alterity, of the presence of the other, appear as a problem that must be thought of: «*Cientos y cientos de siglos ha vivido el hombre sobre el planeta sin sentir esa inquietante necesidad en su espíritu; la realidad del otro en cuanto tal era para él obvia e incuestionable, no problemática*»⁸.

Alterity as we know it is a broad concept and much has been said about it in different systems of thought. To avoid this ambiguity, we had to narrow down the topic further to a particular author who could act as our guide throughout this study. Charles Taylor is the author who we settled on because of his holistic view of the human being where he maintains the tension between the individual and the community as two entities that must coexist. Taylor's background could possibly explain why he became involved with the question of the other and the concern of how different groups of people should coexist. He is a Canadian-born philosopher who grew up in a bilingual environment where his Protestant father comes from an Anglophone background, while his Catholic mother was of French origin. Born in Quebec (Canada), in the bosom of an ethnic minority community, he lived in an environment where this group continuously fought for its recognition⁹.

Taylor in his ethical and political theory recognizes the important role that an individual plays in promoting the well-being of the community. He values the uniqueness and originality of each individual, without forgetting that this individual is fully realized in society. This is alterity «*per se*», the reason for our choice.

⁶ Javier Ruiz de la Presa, *Alteridad un recorrido filosófico* (México: ITESO, 2007), 11.

⁷ Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Teoría y realidad del otro: Tomo I* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983), 26.

⁸ TRO1, 21-22.

⁹ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 166.

However, Taylor alone does not exhaust this topic. This led us to devise a method that not only analysed Taylor's ideas, but also took into account other authors who have contributed greatly to the subject matter or to the debate. Our method has therefore been comparative where we have tried to contrast Taylor's thought with that of others. It is an enriching method because it challenges, enriches and deepens our knowledge as far as other authors are concerned. The reason why we put Taylor in dialogue with other authors stems from the fact that alterity as a theme implies involving the other. Communication, exchange of views, and language are important aids if the interpersonal relationship is to bear fruit. We are linguistic beings. In fact, Charles Taylor has described man as a «*animal del lenguaje*». In his description of man's linguistic capacity, he conceives language as having a constructive and constitutive function¹⁰.

As human beings, we are «*beings-with*» and this «*being with*» implies the use of language as a means of reaching and understanding the other. Martin Heidegger in his «*mitsein*» also agrees with Taylor that we are not isolated beings. In his description of the «*Dasein*» as a «*being-in-the-world*» holds that we are not the only ones of our species in the world, but rather beings who are essentially «*with others*»¹¹. Our comparative method has allowed us to dialogue with other authors such as Max Scheler, Martin Buber, José Ortega y Gasset, Pedro Laín Entralgo, Emmanuel Levinas and also with the African vision of alterity from the rich and beautiful Ubuntu ethics.

Our work is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, we shall examine the state of the question to introduce our topic. We shall explore the roots of the culture of an individualism that is so common today in our world. We have decided to briefly analyse the famous dictum of Protagoras: «*man is the measure of everything*». It is a saying that has received many interpretations. But whichever the interpretation, what is clear is the consequences of many individualistic ideologies born of such a saying. Most of the ideologies born of its understanding are individualistic in nature that contradict the whole question of alterity. This explains why we have decided to analyse this saying, although Taylor is not participating in this debate.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *The language animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge: The Belknap press of Harvard University press, 2016), 333.

¹¹ Paul Gerner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56.

We shall also discuss how moral ontology has been lost and especially in an attempt to separate the self from moral issues as part of what forms our identity. Here, apart from Taylor's vision and in the spirit of dialogue, we shall investigate in depth this question with the interpretation of Pedro Laín Entralgo who gives us an outline of how alterity has been interpreted historically. His ideas expose this historical vision starting from the Cartesian vision of the self, characterized by his definition of «*cogito ergo sum*».

After the historical exposition of the problems underlying alterity, we shall return to Taylor's position by analysing his vision of the self. Taylor's concept of the self represents a self that is self-interpretive, purposeful, dialogical, historical, narrative and capable of a strong evaluation. It is a self that is committed, against the modern disengaged self, and always seeking its identity with others. Taylor's moral theory also strongly refers to and emphasizes alterity. His moral theory is pluralistic and communal. To explain more about this, he explains what he calls the inescapable moral frameworks that should make up any society. These moral frameworks must be articulated because they have been ignored. Its articulation is for the good of the individual and the community at large.

We shall also investigate Taylor's political theory that basically advocates for a recognition of everyone in society, including the minority. Taylor attacks the atomistic interpretation of society and proposes cohesion and recognition of all. We shall also briefly look at some of the influences Taylor has had from Hegel's philosophy particularly his book on Hegel as pertains to alterity.

Taylor has also given his view on secularization in his attempt to analyse modern culture. This will be seen especially in his book: «*A secular Age*». We'll see how he redefines secularization by differentiating between an earlier enchanted worldview from the modern disenchanting one.

Chapter two pushes the debate about alterity even further by letting Taylor's ideas dialogue with other views. No philosopher is an isolated philosopher. In the spirit of alterity, this chapter is dedicated to some systematic proposals on alterity to dialogue with our main author. These authors have a great affinity with Taylor's ideas and therefore their views are enriching and complementary. Here we shall meet great authors such as Max Scheler, Martin Buber, José Ortega y Gasset, Pedro Laín Entralgo, Emmanuel Levinas and above all the African vision of alterity in its most famous Ubuntu ethics.

The third chapter deals with a very important aspect of the human dimension that promotes alterity. This is the dimension of language in which Taylor has devoted much of his proposal. For Taylor, the human being is an animal of language. Thanks to this aspect, Taylor's moral agent is able to self-express and manifest itself. Here, we will trace the background of the two rival theories on language born of our history, one designative and the other constitutive. Taylor supports the constitutive view of language. He outlines two models: proponents of the HLC model whose ideas about language are designative and those of the HHH model whose ideas are constitutive. Taylor identifies with proponents of the HHH model of language for its holistic interpretation of the human being.

Chapter four illustrates our position when it comes to alterity. Our position is to do with interpersonal as a way of describing human nature and alterity. Interpersonal relationship defines who we are as human beings. It defines human existence because by nature our being is interpersonal; we are always beings in relation. No matter how man tries to escape this reality, he cannot because we are involved with others who are different from us in the space of everyday life. This dimension has been ignored in our day and it is no wonder that coexistence sometimes seems difficult. It is for this reason that our proposal of interpersonal as an essential characteristic of alterity is vital. To help us make an informed illustration about interpersonal, we will trace the concept of the person from its understanding in ancient times. After this, we shall make a synthesis of what the interpersonal encounter should involve helped not only by Taylor's ideas, but also by other points of views that support the interpersonal encounter. Finally, we shall offer a conclusion where the main conclusions of our study will be collected.

CHAPTER I

THE STATUS OF THE QUESTION: IN SEARCH OF THE CONCEPT OF ALTERITY OF THE HUMAN BEING IN THE REFLECTIVE PROPOSAL OF CHARLES TAYLOR

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we shall expose the status of the question by globally addressing the question of alterity and intersubjectivity in our world. We have chosen to dialogue with Charles Taylor among other authors in our context because of his conception of the human person as someone who lives with others and who needs to understand the other for mutual coexistence. He values not only the importance of the individual in society but also the intersubjective dimension, the presence of others, in human life, thus respecting all the dimensions of the human person. Charles Margrave Taylor, commonly known as Charles Taylor is a Canadian philosopher born on November 5, 1931, in Montreal, Quebec. His intersubjective vision of human being could be attributed to the bilingual home in which he grew up. His father was a Protestant of Anglophone origin, and his mother was a Catholic of French origin. In addition, his family belonged to Quebec, a small minority community struggling for recognition of its French culture in a social reality dominated by the Anglo-Saxon tradition¹².

Charles Taylor is famous for his dedication to exploring the modern self. He successfully completed his Bachelor's degree in history at McGill University in 1952, followed by his second degree in politics, philosophy and economics in 1955 at Balliol College, University of Oxford, where also in 1961 he obtained a doctorate in philosophy¹³. Taylor insists on the hermeneutic view of society by arguing that some ontological characteristics that define the human being do not change: «*These include the self's moral orientation, the centrality of self-interpretation, the fact that humans are animals with language, the dialogical nature of selfhood and the significance of embodiment*»¹⁴. However, these mentioned characteristics could change in their form of interpretation depending on different cultures and eras. In this way, Taylor is a strong advocate of diversity and pluralism of different worldviews and goods, while advocating for a reconciliation of them:

His approach to selfhood, for example, attributes immense importance to changing self-interpretations and the way these are influenced by cultures, yet he does not accept that

¹² Manuel Sánchez Matito, "La articulación lingüística de los universos morales en la obra de Charles Taylor" (PhD diss., Universidad de Sevilla 2007), 153. Accessed April 16, 2021.

<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=23465>

¹³ Ruth Abbey, "Charles Taylor," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1 Nov. 2020): Accessed 17 May 2021,

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Taylor>.

¹⁴ Ruth Abbey, *Charles Taylor Philosophy Now* (Teddington: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2000), 2.

selves are interpretation “all the way down”. He insists, rather, that there are enduring and universal features of selfhood, even while acknowledging that these are interpreted differently at different times by different groups and cultures¹⁵.

He has had a great teaching experience especially at McGill University, in addition to being integrated as a political activist in Canada and Quebec. He also served «as vice-president of the federal New Democratic Party (NDP) and president of its Quebec branch. Between 1962 and 1968 he ran four times, all unsuccessfully, for federal parliament as an NDP candidate»¹⁶, etc. Taylor's line of thought shows the influence of many philosophers, but it is worth mentioning in this list: Aristotle, Hegel, Rousseau, Herder, Heidegger and Wittgenstein¹⁷. Taylor has written many books and articles touching on the history of philosophy, philosophy and sociology of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of social sciences, etc. It is worth mentioning here among many other books used in our research: «*Sources of the self: The making of modern identity*» of 1989, «*A secular Age*» of 2007 and «*Hegel*» of 1975.

It is impossible to cover all the questions addressed by Taylor in our research given his wide coverage of ideas. Our concern here is to concentrate on his main ideas that touch on intersubjectivity and alterity which in turn will be compared with other authors who have dealt with the same issues. We shall begin this chapter by critically reflecting on the ideas of Protagoras that will help us to trace the roots of modern individualism. Although Taylor does not mention Protagoras, from our perspective it seems important because many modern individualistic interpretations of the human subject refer to the views of Protagoras.

We shall also enrich our presentation by using the ideas of Pedro Laín Entralgo who gives us a very detailed historical background of how alterity has been interpreted. Laín's ideas are in many cases in line with Taylor's position. After the historical perspective of how alterity has developed, we shall examine Taylor's views and interpretation as pertains to our topic. We shall look at his concept of the modern self by examining the ontological and historical characteristics of the self. His vision of the self is intended to present it as capable of self-interpretation and dialogical. It is a self in search of lost authenticity, caused by the erroneous vision of a disengaged human being. Besides,

¹⁵ CTPN, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

we shall assess Taylor's moral theory to list the intersubjective ideas that accompany our moral life. Here we shall mention his pluralistic moral thought, the self and the strong evaluation, the inescapable frameworks, the narrative vision of life, as well as the relationship between the self and moral goods. We shall also briefly look at his political theory and his critique of atomism and negative freedom. Taylor's concept of the social imaginary is going to be addressed in this chapter because of its relationship to the type of society he defends. We will have a section on how Hegel's ideas have had a great influence on Taylor. Last but not least, the concept of modern secularization will be clarified by showing how it has affected the way we relate with others.

Taylor is also known for his linguistic positivism having defined the human being as a «*language animal*». We will dedicate chapter three of this research on the subject of language.

2. MAN IS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS: THE VISION OF PROTAGORAS

Before delving into and exploring Taylor's vision, as we have said in the introduction, we consider it important to penetrate the anthropological conception of Protagoras, in his famous dictum: «*Of all things the measure is man, of the things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not*» or stated in simple terms, «*man is the measure of all things*». This is a statement that over the centuries has received several interpretations, but, in our case, we feel that it is a statement that goes against the spirit of intersubjectivity and alterity. It is an affirmation that has contributed in one way or another to the modern individualistic view of man. We shall examine the consequences of such a position by comparing it with the Socratic view of the human being.

Protagoras of Abdera was a sophist and a great rhetoric who demonstrated great skepticism in dealing with the knowledge of the gods¹⁸. The period of the Sophists was characterized by a great turn from man's examination of the world to the question of man himself. There was a big change from Greeks' ancient view of the cosmos where everything was interpreted in terms of myths. In the ancient world, supernatural or mythological explanations of existence had dominated everything. The Sophists' movement appeared in Greece in the fifth century¹⁹ composed of itinerant teachers who

¹⁸ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

moved from one city to another teaching not only for knowledge, but above all also for what they gained from their listeners. Moved by their greed, these itinerant masters did not focus so much on the truth but used their rhetoric to convince their audience and thus obtain personal gains.

The dictum, «*Man is the measure of all things*», can be a phrase that «*per sé*» does not refer to a particular context, but as Julian Marias points out referring to Aristotle, it is necessary to know, in order to understand it in its depth, whether Protagoras referred to an opinion or referred to the truth as such:

De esta frase se han dado numerosas interpretaciones, que van desde el relativismo al subjetivismo... Basta con indicar que Aristóteles advierte que habría que saber primero si se refiere al hombre como sujeto de *ciencia* o de *sensación*; es decir, si se refiere al punto de vista de la verdad o simplemente de la *doxa*. Protágoras no habla de *ón*, sino de las cosas en cuanto se oponen al él..., las cosas que se usan, los bienes muebles, y de ahí el sentido del dinero (crematística). Es, pues, el mundo de la *doxa*, y por tanto la frase está comprendida en el ámbito de las ideas de Parménides. La *doxa* es opinión de los mortales, «nombres que los hombres ponen a las cosas, convención»²⁰.

However, regardless of the sense in which Protagoras uses his saying, what is clear is the influence this statement has had throughout the history of philosophy. As indicated, many interpretations ranging from relativism to subjectivism have been derived from this phrase. This saying has been the origin of many moral principles that rise to a universal maxim²¹. With the coming of Socrates who tried to establish the sense of truth in Greek thought, things changed, and the sophistic way of teaching was widely questioned. Socrates is undoubtedly known as one of the greatest thinkers of ancient Greece.

At first Socrates appeared as just another sophist,²² only later did he prove that he was not and thus attracted a large number of followers. His way of seeing things was different from that of his predecessors as can be seen by his famous method «*Socratic method*» or method of «*elenchus*» where he employed the dialectical form of knowledge in the investigation of knowledge. Here he involved different participants in a speech of

²⁰ Ibid., 36.

²¹ Muiyiwa Adeniyi Sholarin et al., "Man is the measure of all things: A critical analysis of the sophist conception of man," *ResearchGate* 5 no. 4 (February 2015): 178-184. Accessed 23 November 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274075860_Man_Is_The_Measure_Of_All_Things_A_Critical_Analysis_Of_The_Sophist_Conception_Of_Man/link/5514f57f0cf2eda0df34c8e8/download

²² Julián Mariás, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 37.

questions in order to eventually establish the truth. It was claimed that he received prohibitive messages or warnings²³ of a «voice», «*daimon*» or «*sign*», possibly a divine voice that inspired him in his treatises. There was also the saying that the oracle of Delphos had confirmed him as the wisest of all men:

The Delphi Oracle is said to have confirmed «*pronounced*» Socrates as the wisest man on earth. The proclamation of the oracle at Delphi, studies reveal, had immeasurable influence on the life of Socrates. Confirmed to be the wisest man that was living on the face of the earth, Socrates spent the rest of his life with one mission in focus; which was to confirm or refute the proclamation by the gods. Consequently, Socrates went out, armed with the dialectic method as one of the major tools for achieving his assignment. Socrates did not merely engage in sophistry, he was not interested in arguing for the sake of arguing; rather he was poised to discover the essential nature of Knowledge, Justice, Beauty, Goodness, and especially, the traits of a good character such as Courage²⁴.

The precept of Protagoras, «*Man is the measure of all things*», seems too generalized whatever context is taken. It is a statement that has been accused of committing the fallacy of «*argumentum ad hominem*»²⁵ because it implies that all men, wise or foolish, are reduced to the same level and that all their opinions are correct. In the same way, it would be nonsense to refute anyone's opinion as in the Socratic dialectical method if every man's opinion were correct. And again, if this saying is true then there would be no need for him to teach his disciples since they themselves were also the measure of everything:

A critical look at the maxim reveals that the life of Protagoras has to a large extent, systematically violated his own very creed. If what he preached was “true”, then he had no right to preach, since his doctrines showed that his disciples, without any instruction from him, were as wise as himself. He had fooled them into believing that he could make them wiser than they were, and therefore had taken their fees under false pretences. It looks, indeed, as if he had been talking with his tongue in his cheek, and while flattering people that they were equal to the gods, to whom the maxim applies no less than to men²⁶.

²³ Frederick Copleston, *Una historia de la filosofía, Grecia y Roma: De los presocráticos a Plotinus*, (Nueva York: Image Books Doubleday, Vol. 1, 1993) ,97.

²⁴ Muiyiwa Adeniyi Sholarin et al., "Man is the measure of all things: A critical analysis of the sophist conception of man," *ResearchGate* 5 no. 4 (February 2015): 178-184. Accessed 23 November 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274075860_Man_Is_The_Measure_Of_All_Things_A_Critical_Analysis_Of_The_Sophist_Conception_Of_Man/link/5514f57f0cf2eda0df34c8e8/download

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Therefore, this saying, in our opinion and as far as the spirit of alterity is concerned, seems to reduce man to an individualistic view of his being where every human being feels satisfied with what he knows since it remains his own measure. Alterity requires opening oneself to other points of views, listening and understanding and thus enriching oneself with what other human beings think. Knowledge is not one man's business; it calls for dialogue with the vision of the reality of others.

3. HISTORICAL SCHEME OF THE LOSS OF MORAL ONTOLOGY

We have previously stated that moral ontology is at the center of Taylor's conception of the human subject. However, this vision has been diluted in modern thought with the risk that the human being may forget his moral dimension. The author describes this fact by giving the moral topography on how this change has been evidenced: «*What we are constantly losing from sight here is that being a self is inseparable from existing in a space of moral issues, to do with identity and how one ought to be*»²⁷. At this juncture, it is necessary to be aware of the path that has been followed leading to an individualistic conception of the self, where both intersubjectivity and moral value are diluted.

Charles Taylor's moral topography begins by examining Plato's moral doctrine. A good man for Plato is one who is not dominated by the desires that have their origin in the lower dimensions of the soul (also knowledge is a desire, but of the upper dimension). Reason is the instrument that gives us self-control: «*What we gain through thought or reason is self-mastery. The good man is 'master of himself'*»²⁸. To achieve self-unity, reason must rule over its desires otherwise it would produce a chaotic and dispersed situation of the person. Rationality in this case is closely related to self-mastery. The notion of the good is consequently linked to his conception of order and unity that results from the rational domain: for one to live a good life, reason has to dominate desires. This is a dichotomy that implies that the lower part of the soul must be under the upper one. It is important to echo Taylor's exposition on this point:

The vision of the good is at the very centre of Plato's doctrine of moral resources. The good of the whole, whose order manifests the Idea of the Good, is the final good, the one

²⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989), 112.

²⁸ SS., 115.

which englobes all partial goods. It not only includes them but confers a higher dignity on them; since the Good is what commands our categorical love and allegiance... Thus the good life for us is to be ruled by reason not just as the vision of correct order in our souls but also and more fundamentally as the vision of the good order of the whole²⁹.

Consequently, in order to achieve dominion according to Plato, one must strive for eternal truths and not remain in the realm that the lower dimensions of the soul present. This could be well understood in his famous search for truth in the allegory of the cave. Plato's conception of order and unity through self-control was questioned by Aristotle and others, but the important thing is that Plato put the value of good at the center of his moral doctrine. In other words, the question of alterity and intersubjectivity was almost obvious and did not face a great challenge as in our times. Pedro Laín Entralgo follows the same line in his perspective:

El mundo griego, según Laín, no conoció la alteridad como problema. Platón, con su concepción del hombre como *zoon teleon*, un animal perfecto, consideraría que lo problemático del cosmos no sería 'el otro', sino 'lo otro', *to heteron*, por oposición a 'lo mismo', *to tauton*. La existencia sería un cuerpo material gobernado por el alma del mundo... El universo platónico viene a ser, en suma, una '*bestia bienaventurada*', *makárimon thereon*; la radical, unitaria y permanente unidad de su vida le daría esa natural y cósmica bienaventuranza³⁰.

In the same line, Aristotle conceived the human being as a «*zoon politikón*» that according to Hannah Arendt³¹ can be translated as «*animal socialis*» which in the Thomistic conception emphasizes: «*homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis*».

Taylor proposes, after examining the ancient proposal, Augustine as the intermediate figure between Plato and Descartes. Augustine «*fue el gran sintetizador desde el cristianismo de las importantes teorías de la alteridad en el mundo antiguo*»³². Augustine looks at the problem of alterity from the point of view of love and charity at the core of his reflective proposal. Knowledge is impossible without love and penetration of truth is only possible by the way of charity. God is the fullness of this love. From His love He orders the world so that everything created may participate in Him.³³ Love is the

²⁹ Ibid., 122.

³⁰ Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Teoría y realidad del otro: Tomo I* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983), 22.

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *La condición humana* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1974), 41.

³² Martín Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento de Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 60.

³³ SS, 127.

inner potency that makes it easier for the human person to embody the image of God. God is the integrity of all the love that the human heart desires:

Por eso, estrictamente hablando, el objeto del 'frui' es Dios, como plenitud de todo lo deseable; «fons nostrae beatitudinis», diría San Agustín. Todos los demás bienes son incapaces de dar descanso definitivo. Porque nos ha creado el Señor para sí y nuestro corazón no descansa hasta reposar en Dios. El amor, pues, de todos los bienes creados exige una referencia a Dios como condición del buen uso de ellos, de los que puede gozarse o usar con deleite, mas sin poner en ellos último fin. Si en el uso de los bienes creados falta la relación al Creador, que es su fuente y su último fin, ellos se convierten en bienes absolutos, es decir, en ídolos que ocupan el lugar de Dios, y así su disfrute consiste en una forma de idolatría de la criatura³⁴.

Although greatly influenced by Plato's duality, Augustine's starting point is the «*interiorem hominem*» thus differentiating between the inner and outer man. He invites us to go inward because there is the truth: «*Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas... Augustine is always calling us within. What we need lies 'intus', he tells us again and again*»³⁵. His language is that of interiority as a condition of possibility of moral life because only in interiority can the experience of encounter with God take place. All human beings are capable of doing good because God's love motivates us toward that path. God becomes the starting point and the point of arrival for the human soul, but the path between the two points is the way of love practically expressed by a way of loving ourselves, love for things, and love for our fellowmen: «*Dos son los preceptos y una es la caridad: Amarás al Señor, tu Dios, con todo tu corazón y toda tu alma; y amarás al prójimo como a ti mismo. En estos dos mandamientos se encierran la ley y los profetas*».³⁶

With the nominalist proposal of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the problem of alterity intensified. Its position on universals as «*flatus vocis*» required attention to what is singular and concrete.

(El nominalismo) consistió en afirmar que un universal – como una especie o un género no es ninguna entidad real ni está tampoco en las entidades reales: es un sonido de la voz,

³⁴ Victorino Capanaga, *Agustín de Hipona* (Madrid: La editorial católica, Biblioteca de autores cristianos, serie maior, 1974), 288.

³⁵ SS, 129.

³⁶ Victorino Capanaga, *Agustín de Hipona* (Madrid: La editorial católica, Biblioteca de autores cristianos, serie maior, 1974), 20.

'*flatus vocis*'...los universales son simplemente 'nomina', nombres, voces, vocablos, o '*termini*' términos. El nominalismo mantiene que solo tienen existencia real los individuos o las entidades particulares³⁷.

Until that moment, alterity was expressed through its four dimensions: love of God; love for ourselves, love for our neighbor, and love for things. St. Thomas will have the same vision as St. Augustine: «*Dios es la razón del amar al prójimo (ratio diligendi proximum), pues no a otra cosa sino a Dios amamos por caridad en el prójimo*»³⁸.

Nominalism, however, forces man to question the relationship between the real and the concept he expresses in words. The growing importance of the principle of individuation led to the discovery of man's solitude in the world and with the advent of the modern era the understanding of a society as a community was surpassed by a solipsistic conception of human life. We will immediately show how the problem of the other is experienced in the modern era that starts from the Cartesian roots of solitude.

3.1. Descartes' Lonely Self

Descartes opens us to the modern world. He is the founder of modern philosophy. He was called by Ortega as the first modern man. He is deeply Augustinian in his reflective starting point, Taylor says, because of his radical reflexivity that emphasizes the importance of the cogito. Descartes' world must be understood mechanically, and this requires a method that gives us certainty and evidence of what exists. Unlike Plato who insisted on the world of ideas, Descartes insists on knowing reality starting from the interiority of the subject, which is «*res cogitans*»³⁹: «*The order of representations must thus meet standards which derive from the thinking activity of the knower. It is an order collected ... to meet, inter alia, certain subjective demands*»⁴⁰. He embarks on the search for evidence guided by his methodic doubt and although he does not doubt the existence of the self, nevertheless, he leads us to an impossible metaphysics. As Pedro Laín Entralgo comments, a self-metaphysics is impossible because we think and exist with others. Descartes with his search for certainty from methodic doubt, proposes that everything is doubtful except the existence of the thinking self; that is, «*I think*» and because I doubt

³⁷ José Ferrater Mora, *Diccionario de Filosofía 3* (Madrid: Alianza editorial, 1981).

³⁸ TRO1, 30.

³⁹ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 204.

⁴⁰ SS, 145.

thinking I cannot doubt my thinking existence. But as Lain says, thinking is always «*thinking of*», and also, to exist is to «*exist with*», and this makes impossible the assumption of a metaphysical thought with oneself. That is, for Descartes the first indubitable truth is the «*cogito ergo sum*»: I am a thing that thinks, the only thing left for me undeniable⁴¹.

The Methodic doubt requires that we take a disengaged perspective to understand the world. Taylor uses the term «*disenchanted*»⁴² which involves objectifying matter and seeing it as devoid of any spiritual essence. By adopting a solitary stance to understand matter, Descartes departs from the traditional ontology that considered nature as embodied, proposing the separation of the world and the body from the thinking reality (substance). The tendency to objectify the material world, including the human body, describes its anthropological conception. The body is purely a geometric extension of the self that must also be subjected to methodical doubt: «*Yo me consideraba en primer término...como poseedor de un rostro, de unas manos, de unos brazos, y de toda esta máquina compuesta de hueso y carne, tal como aparece en el cadáver, a la cual designaba con el nombre de cuerpo*».⁴³ Following the analogy, the other for Descartes is conceived as «*alter ego*» or another thinking self, outside of me, possessor of the universal instrument of reason. This means that I put myself in the place of the other and begin to imagine it. In other words, Descartes has to be forced to believe that the other exists. It is for this reason that Zubiri calls it «*creencialismo*»:

Que yo existo, lo sé sin ningún género de duda; que el otro es hombre y otro yo - piensa Descartes-, no puedo pasar de creerlo...por tanto, salvo en el caso de la certeza inherente al cogito ergo sum, un verdadero «*creencialismo*». Dios, que no es engañador, me ha dado una gran inclinación a creer que mis ideas acerca del mundo exterior proceden de cosas corporales realmente existentes⁴⁴.

Descartes tries to escape the solitude of the thinking self for a good and truthful God who makes it possible to believe in the existence of things, an explanation that is not enough for Lain. However, there are thinkers who doubt whether any philosopher can

⁴¹ TRO1, 41.

⁴² Ibid.,146.

⁴³ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 51-52.

defend a total solipsism and, therefore, defend that Descartes did not fall into radical solitude:

Ningún filósofo se atrevió a defender este punto de vista tan radical, ni, por supuesto, Descartes. Hay que tener cuidado con esta cuestión ya que en el ejercicio de la duda metódica hay un momento en el que Descartes parece abrazar este punto de vista: tras dudar de la existencia de los cuerpos y de las mentes Descartes descubre que existe él mismo como ser pensante, pero no sabe aún si existe alguien más –cae por lo tanto en el solipsismo–, pero inmediatamente intenta mostrarse a sí mismo que no está solo, y lo hace precisamente demostrando que, además, existe Dios. Finalmente cree estar convencido también de que la bondad de Dios garantiza la creencia en la existencia de las cosas físicas y de las otras mentes, superando de este modo la duda metódica y eliminando definitivamente la “soledad radical” a la que le había conducido dicha duda⁴⁵.

In short, Descartes' way of thinking does not allow for the real recognition of the other self. The other will only be seen as an object outside the thinking self and, therefore, the flight from the Cartesian solipsism of the self becomes a difficult task. Lain also criticizes the use of analogy as a sufficient way to explain the existence of the other self because the other would be reduced to a projection of myself that does not guarantee the exit from the solitude of the self. It would be a consideration of the other me from my self. The Cartesian perspective of the disengaged self has had a great influence throughout modern times and beyond, Taylor asserts. Rational control and a sense of interior became inescapable when talking about the human subject. Even the rise of mechanistic understanding of the world had been influenced by Cartesian understanding without forgetting the instrumental control of the world by science that can be seen most clearly in Francis Bacon and others.

3.2. The English Empirical Conception of the Self

Descartes' view that man is a self whose main activity is to think is challenged by the empiricist proposal. Although Taylor begins his exhibition with John Locke, we would like to start with the anthropological proposal of Thomas Hobbes. Thomas Hobbes

⁴⁵ “Torre de Babel Ediciones,” accessed November 25, 2021, <http://www.e-torredebabel.com/Historia-de-lafilosofia/Filosofiamedievalymoderna/Descartes/Descartes-Solipsismo.htm>.

(1588-1679) maintains a pessimistic description of man in the state of nature: «*homo hominis lupus*». In this way what characterizes the human being is not the Cartesian «*res cogitans*», but an egoistic nature that is the origin of a struggle of all against all: «*bellum omnium contra omnes*». For the human being to overcome this state of war against all, a social contract is crucial in Hobbesian thought.

By commenting on his proposal, Pedro Laín Entralgo underlines the requirement of sympathy to achieve the social harmony sought by the contract. In other words, the sociology of egoism would lead to a sociology of sympathy that is capable of creating the necessary social harmony. Therefore, selfishness and sympathy would be the two radical determinations of the self, instinctive and sentimental respectively. This kind of thinking will determine the anthropological conception of many English thinkers.

However, the conception of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) goes against the Hobbesian proposal. For him, the human being has by nature a natural moral sense:

Todo en el universo es orden y armonía; el universo es un inmenso organismo regido y ordenado por un alma del mundo...el hombre realiza y manifiesta la preeminencia de su condición a través de dos actividades principales: siente en su alma la belleza de esa armonía del mundo y, movido por un íntimo e innato «*moral sense*», se relaciona mutuamente y socialmente con los demás hombres mediante los lazos de la simpatía y la amistad⁴⁶.

The other, if we follow Shaftesbury, would be an external reality that stimulates the sympathetic instinct of oneself in search of satisfaction, which can only be fulfilled in social life, a condition of what he calls «*self-enjoyment*».

John Locke (1632-1704) with a great influence of Cartesian methodological doubt chose to suspend all judgment on traditional ideas and put them into examination before their acceptance. As Taylor says: «*Locke proposes to demolish and rebuild. This in itself is not new; it is just what Descartes propounded*»⁴⁷. Locke, however, unlike Descartes rejected the doctrine of innate ideas by approaching the conceptions of Bacon or even that of Gassend. He advocated an atomistic understanding of reality. Locke's invitation is to adopt a position of radical disengagement that Taylor calls «*punctual self*»:

⁴⁶ TRO1, 66.

⁴⁷ SS, 166.

Radical disengagement opens the prospect of self-remaking... The subject who can take this kind of radical stance of disengagement to himself or herself with a view to remaking, is what I want to call the *punctual self*. To take this stance is to identify oneself with the power to objectify and remake, and by this act to distance oneself from all the particular features which are objects of potential change. What we are essentially is none of the latter, but what finds itself capable of fixing them and working on them⁴⁸.

Locke is telling us that the self is capable of redoing things and for him this ability to rebuild resides in consciousness. Therefore, in this line of thought the conception of a person is one who is able to assume responsibility for his actions. His proposal of the person is radically subjectivist: «*Locke's theory generates and also reflects an ideal of independence and self-responsibility, a notion of reason as free from established custom and locally dominant authority*»⁴⁹. The term «*self-responsibility*» come from Husserl, but Taylor uses it here to show this similarity between Descartes and Husserl of presenting disengaged modern reason as being opposed to any kind of control by authority.

David Hume (1711-1776) follows in Shaftesbury's footsteps by proposing the existence of the natural feeling of sympathy among human beings. By sympathy, the human being can distinguish socially useful and advantageous actions. The organization of society comes from this sympathy that opens human life to the awareness of the common good.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), founder of pragmatism, explains human nature from the point of view of the principle of maximization:

Para que el «principio de la maximación» — así llamó él ... pueda ser satisfactoriamente realizado, ¿cómo tiene que estar constituida la naturaleza del hombre? La naturaleza — responde explícitamente Bentham— ha colocado al género humano bajo el imperio de dos soberanos, el dolor y el placer. A ellos debemos todas nuestras ideas, con ellos relacionamos todas las determinaciones de nuestra vida⁵⁰.

Therefore, according to this utilitarian doctrine, an action will be useful if it is beneficial to my happiness. As Laín says, sympathy for others belongs to selfish reason

⁴⁸ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁵⁰ TRO1, 72.

and reasonable pleasure reason. And, moreover, in order to obtain benevolence and sympathy from others we are forced to be benevolent and understanding; in this way, sympathy will extend to the whole nation, to all of humanity, and even to all who possess sensitivity (the whole sensitive creation).

In short, and in the interpretation of Lain, a position that will be maintained by Adam Smith (1723-1790); it is the «*alter ego*» that allows me to be truly and truly a moral and social entity; and this thinking continues even up to Bentham. It is the external object—«*alter ego*» too, that offers the possibility of a pleasurable and orderly expansion of the innate egoism that defines the human being.

A disciple and follower of Bentham's ideas, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) thinks that society and sociability belong to the nature of the human being. In this sense, man does not consider himself alone but a member of a social entity.

De lo cual va a resultar en nosotros una doble imposibilidad: por una parte, es moralmente imposible que nuestros sentimientos se hallen desligados del amor de sí (Self-love), puesto que no podemos desear más que lo que nos es agradable; por otro lado, es intelectualmente imposible el amor a un sí-mismo (Self) separado y solitario, porque no podemos considerarnos a nosotros mismos sino como entes sociales⁵¹.

Therefore, sociability can be understood as the possibility for human beings to become aware of themselves through the association of ideas with others. Sociability is natural, but it is not innate or connatural, so it is necessary to create social habits through which man moves away from egoism thus opening paths for altruism. For Stuart Mill, society can only exist if there is equality and mutual respect.

That said, how would Stuart Mill define the other? According to Lain's interpretation, it is a «*alter ego*» that through the association of ideas helps me to build my own nature, making it possible for this common work for humanity to be happy. In short, Stuart Mill does not know the reality of the other from the moral point of view, but by analogy of sociability; concluding that the other has a body and feelings like mine, and therefore is a living being capable of associating, of social life. For Stuart Mill, through a discursive analogical process, we induce what others think and feel. In other words, we know the existence of the other by generalizing our own being. The analogical reasoning previously criticized reappears. We have returned to the analogical reasoning used by

⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

Descartes to reach the other: «*Moverse humanamente entre hombres sería ir construyendo sin cesar inferencias por analogía; dicho de un modo menos técnico, ir poniéndose con la mente en la piel del otro*»⁵².

But it is clear, as Lain points out, that the experience of myself is immeasurable with the experience of the other and with the experience that the other has of himself. They are qualitatively different experiences. Therefore, the human relationship cannot be based solely on analogical reasoning. Our starting point cannot be the self in the support of an intersubjective relationship: it would be like defining the relationship from the solipsistic point, from the solitude of the self. On the other hand, it is insufficient to base the interpersonal relationship on the doctrine of sympathy. It is a serious confusion to use the terms «*love*» and «*sympathy*» without distinction, because while love is aware of values, sympathy is blind to them, and therefore their possible fall into errors of selfishness and utilitarianism.

3.3. The Idealistic Conception of the Self: The Other Expressed as the Moral Activity of the Self

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) begins by challenging Descartes' conception: «*je ne suis qu'une chose qui pensé*», because he is convinced that, just thinking, «*res cogitans*», does not build man's most radical and decisive operation. Kant shows us the reality of man as «*homo phaenomenon* and as «*homo noumenon*»:

En su *Metafísica de las costumbres* (1797) Kant aplica expresamente a la realidad humana su metódica distinción entre fenómeno y noumenon. También en el hombre —y más claramente en él que en cualquier otro ente sensible— hay una realidad aparential o fenoménica y otra esencial, fundamental o nouménica.⁵³

As a phenomenon, man can be studied from sensitive perception and speculative reason. But as a noumenon, because he is not subject to physical laws, only practical reason can access his intimate being, his radically free being. So, what is man to Kant? According to Lain, in the phenomenal dimension of his being, man is a subject; but in the noumenon dimension, he is a person: «*Esto es en mí lo verdaderamente radical*.

⁵² Ibid., 54.

⁵³ Ibid., 98.

*Inaccesible a mi propio conocimiento especulativo, mi yo moral, el yo de mi «deber ser»*⁵⁴.

To regard the person as someone who has the obligation, which he must do, elevates him to the dignity of a free entity and a responsible individual and, therefore, no human being can be treated as a means, always has to be considered as an end in himself.

Now, in Kant, and following Laín's interpretation, there is no explicit focus on how I can know the reality of the other. That is, the question of how the other will become true to me «*homo noumenon*», remains an unresolved problem.

The philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) following Kant can be presented, according to Laín, as his opposite proposal. In Fichte's philosophy, the self plays a central role: «*En su fundamento mismo, el yo sería pura actividad, esencial hazaña (Tathandlung)*»⁵⁵.

Therefore, the self, seen as the original activity, is not infinite. In its activity its limit is manifested: it is the presence of non-self in its ideal activity.

Lo que hace el no-yo es limitar al yo y, al limitarlo, darle su verdadera realidad. Un yo puro, sin más, solo, sería indeterminado e irreal. El yo se afirma como tal frente al no-yo, en una posición que es pura actividad, que consiste en estarse haciendo⁵⁶.

In this activity, which Laín calls the projection of the self, which is neither understanding nor sensitivity, but above all creative imagination, the human being discovers the external reality as complex, since there is an objective reality and a reality that is not other than someone. Thus, Fichte within the outer reality discovers the reality of another self, or other selves. And these other selves are necessary for my being as a human being:

El hombre...solo entre hombres llega a ser hombre; y puesto que no puede ser sino hombre, y no sería en absoluto si no lo fuese, debe haber hombres y estos tienen que ser varios. El concepto de hombre —la hombridad— no podría ser pensado si solo existiese un individuo humano. Un individuo racional y corpóreo absolutamente solitario⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 99.

⁵⁵ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 294.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 301.

⁵⁷ TRO1, 109.

The self would be constituted and matured from the requirements, determinations, of the non-self, where the others are too. This is how he builds his own freedom, putting his own being. My knowledge of the other is not only a cognitive operation, but also and above all a recognition where one braids one's own freedom and that of others; It seems to me that he demands respect, friendly dedication and sacrifice, discovery of my freedom and the freedom of the other. We can say that the moral imperative for Fichte is to become who I am, that is, putting myself and developing my freedom fulfilling my personal destiny to be free according to reason, this is a moral commitment that is not possible without others.

But it will be Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)⁵⁸, who culminates his idealistic proposal. His starting point is freedom, a fundamental determination of the human being that explains the birth of self-awareness. In it the human being is able to know not only the external reality but himself: «*Yo me sé a mí mismo*» es para Hegel una aserción del todo equiparable al juicio ontológico «*Yo soy yo*», y tal habría sido la más honda intuición de Parménides cuando identificó el pensamiento y el ser⁵⁹.

However, self-awareness is progressively formed in relation to its exterior in three stages: 1). It is directed to external things; this is «*the appetite*»; 2). It is directed towards a different consciousness; This is «*the awareness of oneself recognized*»; 3). And finally, it is recognized in reality between and with other consciousnesses equal to its own, this is «*general self-conscience*».

With this proposal by Hegel, the problem of alterity arises. The process of recognition is presented as a struggle, because each of the consciousnesses is a natural, corporeal, living subject with a particular existence, it is not a mere being there, but in particular. Resolving this opposition requires that the two consciousnesses be recognized as free beings:

¿Cómo podrá resolverse tal contradicción? Para ello será necesario que las dos conciencias así contrapuestas se realicen y se reconozcan en su existencia corpórea e inmediata —en su ser-para-otro— como lo que en sí mismas son, es decir, como seres libres⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 308.

⁵⁹ TRO1, 123.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 125.

Only in this recognition of «*being for the other*» (*ser-para-otro*) the human being can achieve his freedom, a condition of possibility of self-encounter. Now, this process of recognition, according to Lain, does not happen without struggle, that is, the one who puts himself and exists puts the other in danger of death, making his freedom possible. The struggle for recognition thus opens the way for life and death, thus demanding their determination so that life overcomes death. One way to resolve the opposition would be the renunciation of conscience to his freedom by submission, to the other, thus becoming a thing or a mere being for the other. Eventually, the lord-servant relationship is established, and the only way to resolve this struggle would be with a relationship of lordship and servitude.

Para Descartes, un semoviente dotado de figura humana, pero desprovisto de pensamiento, no sería un hombre, sería un autómeta. Para Kant, un ser viviente y pensante de apariencia humana, pero incapaz de acciones morales, no sería hombre, sino marioneta. Para Hegel, un sujeto consciente que prefiera su vida a su libertad no es plenamente un hombre, es solo un siervo⁶¹.

However, the relationship between the lord and the servant would be characterized by a bond of cooperation in care and work. The Lord assumes and cares for the free will of the servant, while the servant corresponds with his work to satisfy the appetite of his master. That is, as Lain affirms, the lord is the essence of the servant; and the servant is the truth of the lord. However, from the point of view of freedom, this relationship cannot be satisfactory or essential because the conscience of the servant ceases to be free. Recognition is one-sided: only the servant recognizes the freedom of his master. So far, neither the servant nor the lord is free, because the relationship is not bilateral, because one cannot contemplate in the other. The servant's deliverance is a «*conditio sine qua non*» for the «*Lord*» to achieve his full freedom:

Mientras dura la relación de señorío y servidumbre, cada uno de los dos sujetos autoconscientes se contempla en otro que no es libre, porque ni siquiera el señor logra serlo con plena verdad; instaurada la conciencia de sí general, el reconocimiento es bilateral, la libertad llega a ser objetiva y efectivamente convivida, y los dos sujetos autoconscientes pueden contemplarse a sí mismos uno en el otro⁶².

⁶¹ Ibid., 128.

⁶² Ibid., 133.

However, this situation of lack of recognition, according to Hegel, is not permanent. It describes only and exclusively the natural state of man before building civil society. The construction of civil society that demands the order/power of the State will guarantee mutual recognition because obedience to the law, mandatory for all, recognizes equality as a space where every human being will be treated as a person. In this sense, the State is seen as an instrument that works for reasons to govern, that is, to achieve general self-awareness.

3.4. The Other Understood as an Invention of the Self.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) understands the structure of human life as a unitary whole determined by the self-esteem of the person. Man, Laín adds, would be, according to the Dilthenian proposal, a system of impetus that when it acts clashes with the resistance of the outside world, distinguishing itself from the other. Therefore, the outer movement shows the presence of this vital impulse that describes the interiority. People, compared to external things, would be more real in the sense that they are volitional, active, conscientious units. Therefore, for Dilthey the person is a corporeal, volitional and resilient reality.

However, life for Dilthey is a reality that is earlier, primary to consciousness and becomes understandable as it is meaningful. This understanding is possible in the same impetus or strength of my self-esteem as I face the outside world, a confrontation that allows for self-awareness and openness to the future:

Si la significación hace a la vida comprensible, la fuerza la muestra operante y real. No olvidemos que la realidad del mundo exterior y de la propia mismidad se nos hacen conscientes en el choque de la fuerza que originariamente somos —nuestro impulso— contra la resistencia opuesta por el mundo a este ímpetu realizador y futurista de nuestra vida⁶³.

Each person takes possession and knowledge of his life by experiencing it, that is, by living transitively. As understanding implies experience, then we understand ourselves and others through experience. Alterity for Dilthey, according to Laín, is glimpsed when my individuality realizes itself colliding vitally with the outside world and is made by the

⁶³ Ibid., 156.

self in front of the world, that is, resisting what resists for me. In this outer world there are living and volitional bodies also resistant, that is, external beings in which I see the correlatives of myself:

La mera resistencia de su cuerpo me hace saber que una persona exterior es real; la condición volitiva de esa resistencia suya me convence de que tal realidad es persona; la comprensión elemental me descubre y confirma más o menos inconscientemente que ella y yo convivimos perteneciendo al mismo mundo objetivo; la comprensión superior, en fin, me permite adivinar lo que en su personal e intransferible mundo interior acontece⁶⁴.

The analogical argument mentioned above appears here again: the knowledge of the other remains another «*my self*»; the «*I*» I simply invent «*you I*» and therefore fails to escape its solitude. Simply put: the other is not really a «*you*», but a different one projected by each one. There is no proper way out of what is different for each of them.

A similar proposal can be found in the proposal of Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936). His anthropology wants to abandon the abstractions of modern philosophy and therefore describes the human being as: «*El hombre de carne y hueso, el que nace, sufre y muere- sobre todo muere-, el que come y bebe y juega y duerme y piensa y quiere; el hombre que se ve y a quien se oye, el hermano, el verdadero hermano*»⁶⁵. The human being is a singularized individuality, who not only reasons, but feels, desires, suffers and, above all, feels the flesh of his reality, which is to feel beyond materiality, is to feel spiritual⁶⁶. Because through the pain that this suffering produces, the human being discovers his bodily finitude and, in it, the longing for immortality opens, the longing for God: the pain of wanting to live forever.

The human being has to learn to love himself as he is: in his own finitude, in his own smallness, in his knowledge, therefore, of his consciousness of death, but discovering his radical longing for survival and immortality. The tension between the awareness of finitude and the longing for immortality engenders the tragic feeling of life. It is a feeling that projects the need for the other and compassion for the other, causing an unbreakable union:

Al oírle un grito de dolor a mi hermano, mi propio dolor se despierta y grita en el fondo de mi conciencia. La percepción del otro como tal otro —es decir, como persona— sería

⁶⁴ Ibid., 164-165.

⁶⁵ Pedro Ribas, *Para leer a Unamuno* (Madrid: Alianza, 2002), 113.

⁶⁶ Miguel de Unamuno, *San Manuel Bueno: mártir* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1987), 71.

según esto fraterno intercambio de compasiones, mutuo, metafísico ...Una persona aislada —clama Unamuno...deja de serlo⁶⁷.

Therefore, from one's own metaphysical reality, each of them imagines the other as a similar and therefore in need of my compassion. But Laín asks: does this answer satisfy the question for the other, for the person of the other, as the other? Perhaps in this sense the other would be in other words my own invention.

3. 5. The Other Phenomenologically Reflected: Husserl's Proposal.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), in facing positivism, historicism, and the psychologism of his time, offers, following his teacher Brentano, a philosophy of essences. But:

Esencia no es para Husserl un concepto universal deducido de intuiciones sensibles, sino una unidad ideal de sentido. Por ello necesita, para su aprehensión de un peculiar acto de conocer, la llamada, 'intuición de esencia' (...) ponemos entre paréntesis lo circunstancial en nuestros contenidos de conciencia quedándonos solo con lo esencial⁶⁸.

This process demands as a condition of possibility a transcendental philosophy, the existence of a pure self, distinct from reality and not identifiable with its psychological contents; a self, therefore, not subdued and still able to subdue mutability and contingency. In this way we return to the idea of Descartes. Therefore, the problem of alterity arises with absolute radicality. How can we explain, if it can be explained, the reality of alterity in Husserl?

A self that *abstracts (epojé)* everything that is not in itself, a pure self, how can it recover the exterior of itself? For the objective world to be real for me, it may be:

...necesario que en mi propio yo, junto a las experiencias de mí mismo y de lo que me es propio, haya otras experiencias del mundo que formen con la mía sistemas concordantes. Pero este es el problema: ¿cómo el ego puede tener en sí mismo este nuevo género de intencionalidades?⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ TRO1, 181.

⁶⁸ Johannes Hirschberger, *Historia de la filosofía II* (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1967), 397-398.

⁶⁹ TRO1, 194.

Husserl proposes a new form of analogy. He suggests two terms for developing his theory of the other: «*la presentación*», that is, perception by analogy and «*apareamiento*». The first term in husserlian language means «*el acto psíquico que me hace compresente, la parte de un objeto no inmediatamente percibida por mí*»⁷⁰. Two transcendental phenomena make up my experience of the world: «*presentación*» and «*apresentacion*», and this gives reason to propose that when the self meets others it discovers that they are not the same, it is alterity. But the self will never be able to conceive the other self in direct perception. Therefore, the only solution is to assume the similarity between my body and that of the «*alter ego*»: this is an analogical conception; and so, the other will be seen as someone other than me in my self. In short, analogical perception is characterized by two moments: first, there is my body, alive and present; and secondly there is the object represented, which can never really be given to me as a true perception. However, the need arises to use the second term of Husserl: «*apareamiento*», to explain how the aperceptive association of ego and «*alter ego*» is possible. We use Laín 's words to clarify the term «*apareamiento*»:

Cada vez que para mí hay una semejanza de forma o de sentido entre dos objetos surge en mi conciencia una asociación aparente entre ellos, y ambos quedan constituidos en «pareja». Los objetos que se aparean están dados a la conciencia de un modo a la vez conjunto y distinto; con más precisión, se reclaman mutuamente y, por lo que atañe a su sentido objetivo, se recubren canjeando mutuamente sus elementos⁷¹.

Therefore «*apareamiento*» is the paired configuration (*paarung*) used by Husserl to explain the universal phenomenon of transcendental experience of the world. It is a term that explains what happens when a body similar to mine penetrates my perceptual field, so this body similar to mine is present to me as an ego: «*alter ego*». Therefore, the other will always be regarded as something analogous to what is given to me. The reality of the other is discovered, therefore, by my «*monadic ego*», that builds a «*alter ego*» not like me, but as a reflection of my own self. Ortega will say: «*El error garrafal consiste en suponer que la diferencia entre mi cuerpo y el del otro es solo una diferencia de perspectiva, la*

⁷⁰ Ibid., 195.

⁷¹ Ibid., 197.

diferencia entre lo visto aquí y lo visto desde aquí (hinc) y allí (illic). Lo que yo llamo mi cuerpo se parece poquísimo al cuerpo del otro»⁷².

Ortega is trying to prove that my body is not only mine simply because I am in it, but that it is mine because I am my body and without it, I could not live as an indispensable being in the world. Certainly, for Husserl each ego forms a community with other similar egos. But reducing human beings to a pure consciousness and as the only substantive reality loses its reality in all reality and therefore unable to escape this idealism.

4. BALANCE

We have briefly gone through the main milestones in the history of philosophy with the intention of bringing to light the different ways of explaining how the «*self*» can relate to external reality or to alterity. We have discovered the problematic situation of describing what would be a genuine relationship of the self with the other self. It is clear that human beings are by nature social, they exist with others, an undeniable fact. So far, any description that does not take into account this fact, cannot be enough to describe the human being.

Analogical reasoning, so characteristic of modern thought and culminating in the vision of the other as «*alter ego*», carries with it the danger of interpreting the other from the self, without hosting and welcoming the other as radically different. A new approach is needed to help humanity come out of this crisis of solitude. Mere sympathy as a tendency to relate with the other would also not be enough to express who the other really is. It is about opening a real space for the other in such a way that the self learns and frees itself from its solitude. Moreover, where there is a self there is a «*you*» and this constitutes the «*us*»; you can't think of an individual without thinking about the individuals around them. Says Laín:

No hay yo sin algo que no sea yo, ni hay conciencia que no sea «conciencia de»; lo «otro que yo» —el no-yo— no es un hecho fundado en una primaria «posición del yo», como pensaba Fichte... Mi yo no agota mi propia realidad. En mí, en lo más hondo de mí, hay algo a lo cual no puedo ni debo llamar «yo»: psicológicamente, lo que por modo inconsciente me constituye; ontológicamente, mi «existencia», mi «vida» o mi

⁷² Ibid., 202.

«personidad». Con lo cual queda deshecho in radice el yoísmo de los siglos comprendidos entre Descartes y Husserl⁷³.

5. TAYLOR'S PROPOSAL

Having looked at the historical topography of how moral ontology has been lost and how alterity interpreted over the centuries, we now outline Charles Taylor's answer. His proposal puts the human agent at the center of research by capturing the intersubjective dimension. Intersubjectivity understood as interpersonal exchange between subjects focuses on the human agent. Many philosophers have seen the importance of this aspect since one cannot speak of the subject ignoring everything that surrounds him. In enunciating the basis of the anthropological question, Joseph Gevaert mentions coexistence and living with others as a deeply rooted aspect. Anthropological problems have a communal and social factor because they arise from what unites the subjects. In addition, the meaning of our existence and the possibility of achieving authentic freedom depends to a large extent on others:

Los problemas antropológicos tienen un factor comunitario y social. Surgen específicamente de los vínculos que nos unen con los demás en el mundo, es decir, en el trabajo, en el dolor, en el gozo de amor y de la amistad, en la muerte de un ser querido, en los conflictos que dividen a los hombres y en la esperanza que los une. El propio sentido de la existencia y la posibilidad de lograr una auténtica libertad parecen depender en gran medida de los demás⁷⁴.

Anyone who reads Charles Taylor's work will realize that the human agent is characterized by a major occupation: his own self. His method is anthropological and aims to understand the human agent as he vividly points out in one of his writings.⁷⁵ The urgency of the anthropological question of «*who is man*» and the meaning of human existence remains relevant to all generations and our thinker wants to keep the question open. He questions himself about what it is to be a human agent, a person or oneself while exploring modern culture. Focusing on moral ontology, our author continues to demonstrate that there is an inseparable link between the self and the good as a condition of possibility of human identity. The meaning of life depends on how each one stands in

⁷³ TRO1, 217.

⁷⁴ Joseph Gevaert, *El problema del hombre* (Salamanca: edición sígueme, 2008) 18-19.

⁷⁵ SS, preface.

relation to the good. Taylor feels that among the contemporaries there has been a suppression of the moral ontology that entails and implies a contradiction since human life must be respected and seen as something that cannot be without moral response. This has occurred as a result of the «*loss of horizon*» and «*meaning*». Moreover, the human agent is not an abstract being, but a linguistic being capable of self-interpretation and intersubjectivity:

To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question, one to which there couldn't in principle be an answer...To study persons is to study beings who only exist in, or are partly constituted by, a certain language...A language only exists and is maintained within a language community. And this indicates another crucial feature of a self. One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it⁷⁶.

5. 1. The Concept of the Self

Taylor has a general feeling that the self as a concept has not been fully understood by many and therefore there is a great need to examine this aspect. As Ruth Abbey points out: «*In Sources of the Self, Taylor contends that while people have always had some perception of themselves as individuated beings, their self-understandings have not always revolved around the concept of the self*»⁷⁷. There have been different interpretations and understandings of individuality in Western modernity, but one thing Taylor points out is that there are «*some perennial features of the self, irrespective of changes in the ways in which these are expressed or understood*»⁷⁸. The perennial characteristics fall under the ontological dimensions of the self, while the changing ones under the historicist dimension following the line of interpretation of Ruth Abbey. As will be observed throughout our examination of individuality, the terms «*I*», «*person*», and «*subject*», as well as «*individuality*», «*personality*», and «*identity*», will be used interchangeably by the fact that they revolve around the larger question of being human:

Taylor does not share some philosophers' interest in differentiating these terms from one another, and according them precise meanings. For him, all these terms relate to the wider question of what it is to be human. As such, they touch on some of the same issues that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 34-35.

⁷⁷ CTPN, 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 56.

used to be raised under the rubric of human nature or that now fall under investigations of philosophical anthropology⁷⁹.

5.1.1. The Ontological Dimensions of the Self

This section will aim at analyzing three of these dimensions that in our line of thought are closely related to intersubjectivity.

5.1.1.1. Self-Interpreting Person

The first obvious ontological feature of the self in Taylor's view is the centrality of self-interpretation. This is a universal characteristic that identifies us all, a characteristic without which self-understanding and understanding of others would be useless. It is a unique feature of the human species and a distinction from man and other animals. However, self-understanding as well as the interpretation of others is not devoid of errors. Sometimes we can be very wrong in our interpretations, but this does not eliminate the importance of this characteristic as far as human existence is concerned. The form of self-interpretation again is subject to change. Today I may have a different interpretation than I will have tomorrow. It's something that can change over time depending on the circumstances and that form of momentary perception. This change of self-interpretation over time must be taken positively because when it happens it also means that something has changed in our own being as beings that interpret. In addition, different people have different forms of self-understanding:

Firstly, my self-understanding is not something I forge all by myself: how I see myself is shaped by how I am seen by and relate to others...., Secondly, just thinking about myself in a particular way does not necessarily or automatically make me that: I can have a deluded or exaggerated interpretation of my sporting prowess or of my intellectual acumen, for example. However, even when someone's self-interpretation is erroneous, the way in which that person understands himself is still a crucial feature of his identity. The self-understanding does not have to be valid in order to be significant. Nor is there any sense in which Taylor takes a person's self-understanding to be unitary. A person can have multiple and even conflicting ways of understanding herself...., For a variety of

⁷⁹ Ibid., 57.

reasons and in a variety of ways, new understandings of the self can be acquired and old ones shed or marginalized⁸⁰.

Another peculiar fact with this feature is that of self-definition. We are talking about a being that when interpreted defines its reality. If we follow the same argument of change brought by self-interpretation, then when self-understanding changes, it means that the definition has also changed. The self is not like a book that remains unchanged even when the meaning of the text has changed: «*A self resembles a text in that there is a meaning to be understood and in the way that new interpretations can supersede earlier ones. But when it comes to selfhood, the self is not just the text to be interpreted but also the interpreter of that text*»⁸¹.

A change in self-interpretation in Taylor's perspective is a mark of progress in the individual. The new interpretation comes with a better and even more true explanation of us and means that this process of self-knowledge is gaining progress. This view is associated with the author's belief that human life is narrative in nature and continues to progress for the better⁸².

As we said, human beings are self-interpreting animals; an aspect with which many contemporary philosophers agree. Self-interpretation according to Taylor is constitutive of who we are and not a simple vision of our reality. As rational animals we are reflective beings always involved in the interpretation of our feelings and experiences. Our feelings are open to a mastery of imports that must be interpreted and articulated. The process of articulation and interpretation is perpetual since each interpretation opens up to others:

But then we must speak of man as a self-interpreting being, because this kind of interpretation is not an optional extra, but is an essential part of our existence. For our feelings always incorporate certain articulations; while just because they do so they open us on to a domain of imports which call for further articulation. The attempt to articulate further is potentially a life-time process. At each stage, what we feel is a function of what we have already articulated and evokes the puzzlement and perplexities which further understanding may unravel. But whether we want to take the challenge or not, whether

⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁸¹ Ibid., 60.

⁸² Ibid., 61.

we seek the truth or take refuge in illusion, our self-(mis)understandings shape what we feel. This is the sense in which man is a self-interpreting animal⁸³.

Self-interpretation implies a qualitative discrimination of our goals and desires that qualify them as lower, superior, good or bad for us, etc. It is a judgment and classification of the goods and motivations from which the human subject cannot escape. Therefore, self-interpretation is closely related to the sound assessment cited. It's like putting our motivations together and drawing a moral map to see which one is worth choosing. It's like discerning such motivations and choosing what's most important for us:

Implicit in this strong evaluation is thus a placing of our different motivations relative to each other, the drawing, as it were, of a moral map of ourselves; we contrast a higher, more clairvoyant, more serene motivation, with a baser, more self-enclosed and troubled one, which we can see ourselves as potentially growing beyond, if and when we can come to experience things from the higher standpoint. The drawing of a moral map puts us squarely in the domain of the subject-referring, since this touches quintessentially on the life of the subject qua subject. It is in fact an attempt to give shape to our experience. This drawing a moral map of the subject is an intrinsic part of what I referred to earlier as discerning the good or higher life, or the shape of our aspirations, or the shape of our life as subject. It involves defining what it is we really are about, what is really important to us; it involves entering the problematic area of our self-understanding and self-interpretation⁸⁴.

The whole process of self-interpretation and articulation of our feeling and emotions requires language. It is language that participates in the clarity of our feelings and therefore transforms the type of data we receive. Language helps us in the conception of our imports and thus we continue to constitute our experience. Language is what helps us distinguish what is most important or least important to us; what is really worth or good for us. Taylor summarizes the human being in a being of language and this:

...means that he cannot be understood simply as an object among objects, for his life incorporates an interpretation, an expression of what cannot exist unexpressed, because the self that is to be interpreted is essentially that of a being who self-interprets⁸⁵.

⁸³ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 65.

⁸⁴ MEPR, 67-68.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

Now we look briefly at the Taylorian concept of the person and how he defines it. While Boethius' famous classical definition of person: «*an individual substance of rational nature*» (*rationalis naturae individua substantia*) focused more on the rational aspect of the human being, Taylor's puts more aspects into consideration. In its definition it incorporates the moral aspect, the awareness of the self, as well as its ability to plan and even respond to situations. Taylor puts it this way:

Where it is more than simply a synonym for 'human being', 'person' figures primarily in moral and legal discourse. A person is a being with a certain moral status, or a bearer of rights. But underlying the moral status, as its condition, are certain capacities. A person is a being who has a sense of self, has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, make choices; in short, can adopt life-plans. At least, a person must be the kind of being who is in principle capable of all this, however damaged these capacities may be in practice⁸⁶.

From this definition we can derive clear notes that help us understand the concept of person that Taylor proposes. A person is capable of plans and can make decisions. These choices involve responses to life situations. Therefore, Taylor's person becomes a «*respondent*» because he can be questioned and, in turn, can respond to such questions. By responding to situations, a person gives his own view of things. In addition, a person is possessed of consciousness to a greater degree than the rest of the animals. Animals may have consciousness, but they lack the ability to make representations and plans, an aspect of man. Human beings will respond when they are questioned by peers in a different way than animals and they do this by interpreting their situation and their world. Persons cannot be interpreted as complex machines. Persons are purposeful beings in a stronger way unlike machines that receive their originality from other places and need someone to operate them. Persons are moral agents also because they are able to recognize some demands and norms and not only by following such norms, but they can respond to them reflectively. Another characteristic derived from this definition of person is the ability to make plans, goals and choose ways to fulfill or not fulfill such plans. A person has what Taylor calls «*strategic power*» that helps in planning among many possibilities it has. He has the ability to evaluate, clarify and choose between these possibilities. Above the strategic plan, noticeable in the human being, there is also the fact that things matter

⁸⁶ Ibid., 97.

to him, and he can recognize some goals unlike other animals. In short, persons live an intentional life.

What is striking about persons, therefore, is their ability to conceive different possibilities, to calculate how to get them, to choose between them, and thus to plan their lives. The striking superiority of man is in strategic power. The various capacities definitive of a person are understood in terms of this power to plan. Central to this is the power to represent things clearly. We can plan well when we can lay out the possibilities clearly, when we can calculate their value to us in terms of our goals, as well as the probabilities and cost of their attainment. Our choices can then be clear and conscious. On this view, what is essential to the peculiarly human powers of evaluating and choosing is the clarity and complexity of the computation⁸⁷.

5.1.1.2. Persons as Purposeful Beings

A self-interpreted being is also a self with a purpose. We strive to understand ourselves not for any arbitrary reason, but because there is something we aim for. This is our purpose in that process, and it makes us yearn for better understanding and progress. Persons are beings governed by purposes; this eliminates any point of view that associate human existence with mere chance. As Ruth Abbey, Taylor states:

...goes beyond the traditional association of personhood with self-consciousness and even with agency to claim that selves are beings with original or intrinsic purposes. This is another factor that he takes to be constitutive of selfhood: persons are beings with purposes that have special significance for them, playing an important part in their sense of who they are. Purposes are, of course, closely related to goals: to have a purpose means that one desires a particular outcome and strives or acts to achieve it⁸⁸.

The question of having a purpose in all human beings differentiates us once again from animals and also from artificial machines. In the case of man, its purpose is intrinsically original while that of the machine comes from the designer of that machine; its purpose can only be attributed to man. Today there is a great attribution of intelligence to machines, but the fact is that their purposes are of the man who is their only inventor.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁸ CTPN, 62.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 62.

5.1.1.3. The Dialogical Self of the Person

The last ontological characteristic of the self that is directly associated with our theme of alterity and intersubjectivity is the dialogical aspect of the human being. Human beings are dialogical in nature, and this is an aspect intrinsically related to their identity; in fact, the relationship with others is vital to the discovery of one's identity. Our identity depends on the dialogical relationships we have with our fellow human beings⁹⁰. Taylor's dialogical idea of the human being is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist⁹¹. As dialogic beings we are always conversing with other beings, but not only with those who are close to us. We even talk to those from different cultures and opinions. To make the conversation between cultures a reality, Taylor presents what he calls «*fusion of horizons*», a term aimed at bringing unity and understanding between different cultures. This is possible because, although we may be physically distanced and different, in the central being of our nature we have much in common. Therefore, there is the possibility of «*blurring these boundaries*» like we can observe:

...it does not mean that one's interlocutors must be members of the same culture. It is possible to conduct these formative conversations with people from other cultures, but in order for the conversation to take place, there must have been some "fusion of horizons", some point of contact uniting people from different cultures so that they can go on to understand one another and even to recognize the differences between them...What the idea of the dialogical self, points to in general is a psychological blurring of boundaries between self and other. While humans might be physically individuated, as per the vignette that opens this chapter, Taylor contends that psychologically we are not. Our inner life is a series or polyphony (or cacophony) of conversations with other people or beings, so that who I am always points beyond me as an individual to my relationships with significant others, to my partners in the dialogues who help to constitute my identity⁹².

Taylor feels that the dialogical aspect of what human beings are has eroded in modern culture and often with the excuse of «*individual freedom, autonomy and independence*»⁹³, that is, in the name of overcoming dependence on others and promoting self-responsibility. This is a wrong way of thinking about being independent because by

⁹⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁹¹ Ibid. 67.

⁹² Ibid., 68.

⁹³ Ibid., 68-69.

nature we are interconnected with the other we converse with and depend on. As we have observed, the human being is dialogical because he is involved in conversation with others. This requires language; and as we had noticed the human person is an animal of language that helps him in self-interpretation in whose bosom, he understands himself and is understood by others. Therefore, language becomes a powerful instrument in the dialogical aspect of the human person. It is an instrument that makes it possible to understand: *«because humans are beings with language, we must be understood dialogically. Language is never a private matter; it always reaches beyond the self to posit another in conversation»*⁹⁴. As noted in the introduction, we will devote chapter three to the question of language.

For Taylor then the self is intersubjective and dialogical. To understand it as isolated self is an abstraction. Intersubjectivity belongs to human identity. All self is a linguistic identity and, therefore, capable of interpretation and intersubjectivity. The selves are also beings oriented towards the good that articulates with their language. Also, selves, are selves among other selves putting the issue of community at the center. The selves are induced into language by other selves and, of course, this takes place in the community; for one to converse needs others. The human being can only be understood in relation to other human beings. Simply put, it is clear that there is no room for an isolated or abstract sense of self in Taylor's perspective:

My self-definition is understood as an answer to the question Who I am. And this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. This obviously cannot be just a contingent matter. There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language. We first learn our languages of moral and spiritual discernment by being brought into an ongoing conversation by those who bring us up. The meanings that the key words first had for me are the meanings they have for us, that is, for me and my conversation partners together⁹⁵.

It is impossible from our perspective that one is oneself on one's own, since one is an interlocutor among other interlocutors. This aspect has been ignored by modern

⁹⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁵ SS, 35.

culture, where individualism is widespread. One has to grow in conversation with others and accept confrontation with others by exchanging one's thought within a social framework. One has to face the challenge of questions such as: «*Do I know what I'm saying? Do I really grasp what I'm talking about? And this challenge I can only meet by confronting my thought and language with the thought and reactions of others*»⁹⁶. We have to fulfill Taylor's transcendental condition, where we converse not only with like-minded individuals in our environment, but in all areas where our dialogue, also with the past generation, is of vital importance. We must converse with the ancients because they are heroes and teachers for our present and future generations.

5.1.2. The Historicist Account of the Self

Finally, on the concept of the self, we shall look at Taylor's historical presentation of the modern self. There are traits subject to change along the path of history as opposed to ontological dimensions that are perennial. We continue to use Ruth Abbey's analysis of Taylor's vision of the historicist development of the self which is basically based on Taylor's text: «*Sources of the Self*». This book as you can see has a genealogical purpose of bringing to our knowledge of how modern identity has developed throughout history⁹⁷. However, Taylor's historical analyses of the self are not for mere doing, but to make known what has happened and thus help modern man to better understand himself and his culture, seeing the demerits of these changes, as well as appreciating the merits. Only after understanding one's own culture can one understand the culture of others. Again, here we see Taylor's emphasis on cross-cultural understanding:

When westerners can better understand their own culture, they will, Taylor hopes, be better placed to understand other cultures...In connection with this, he suggests that by better understanding the history and specificity of their culture, westerners can come to identify the spiritual and moral dimensions woven into their own cultural beliefs. This will, he hopes, make them more open to the value of other cultures, and more receptive to the fact that the moral and spiritual values woven into them, although differing from the western ones, are not some strange aberration but an inherent aspect of human culture⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 73.

5.1.2.1. A Disengaged Self

We want to discuss the first characteristic that describes the modern self under this classification. We call it «*disengaged self*» that characterizes a human being who aspires to a kind of freedom that is radically disconnected⁹⁹. It is the era of a disenchanted order where man breaks with the old control by the cosmic order and its rules. Man wants to be free to define himself and no longer believes in a meaningful order defined by the world above. Man wants to understand his world more and make sense of it, even to the point of controlling and dominating everything around him. This kind of change as Taylor claims has been influenced by both the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and its corresponding philosophical interpretation of events:

One of the distinctive features of the modern western outlook is that humans no longer see ourselves as ensconced in, and in important ways defined by, some larger cosmic order. People no longer see ourselves as being part of a world of forms, nor situated in the hierarchy of God's creation above the animals but just below the angels, nor as belonging to a great chain of being. Because the modern world is considered a disenchanted one, without any intrinsic moral meaning, the modern self is freed of the need to find preordained meaning or order in the world...This erosion of belief in an inherently meaningful cosmos, one which contained prescriptions for human life, makes possible the meaninglessness, loss of horizons and nihilism that Nietzsche expressed so vividly...This view of the self clearly influenced and was influenced by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and Taylor identifies René Descartes, Francis Bacon and John Locke as being among its major exponents¹⁰⁰.

5.1.2.2. Modern Self and Interiority

This kind of tendency for the self to want to delve into itself is a characteristic that Taylor finds its origin in Augustine, although it also differs in some respects. While Augustine's sense of turning inward is seen as the path to God that resides in the depth of each of us, the modern aspect of turning inward associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau is the path to listening to oneself as opposed to listening to the outward opinion of

⁹⁹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 81.

others¹⁰¹. The modern form of interiority wants to explore the inner depth of the self that is worthy of self-exploration; is a post-Augustinian perspective:

In the modern, post-Augustinian outlook however, the individual turning inward finds himself as a being whose richness and complexity call for self-exploration. This approach to the self can be characterized as post-Augustinian because it draws on but goes beyond the inward turn pioneered by St Augustine¹⁰².

5.1.2.3. The Self in Search of Authenticity

The need for the modern self to seek self-exploration inwardly is closely related to its search for authenticity. This term implies that the individual seeks his own way of being, true to himself without having to imitate any other source. An authentic self is one that is able to undertake its own individual life project and advance in self-discovery without outside influences towards its realization. It is an individual project where: *«Each person is seen as having his or her own mode of being human and is encouraged to realize this rather than conform to a pre-existing model or a pattern imposed from outside. Each has to discover an original way of being...»*¹⁰³. This great turning point of the self to itself according to Taylor dates back to Michel de Montaigne just in the seventeenth century, although its fruitification is seen in the eighteenth century. As he says, it is this French philosopher who correctly *«inaugurates a new kind of reflection which is intensely individual»* and *«entirely a first-person study»*¹⁰⁴.

We have seen before how Descartes and his followers, the empiricists led us to a modern man who is a punctual subject disconnected and exercising instrumental control of reason. Taylor describes the modern ideal of disengagement from the reflective position. This means turning inward and becoming aware of your own activity and the process that shapes us. There is a big difference between modern man and classical moralists in terms of how they embarked on the journey of knowing themselves. The punctually detached modern man can be explained in the perspective of the first person with the terms of the *«self»*, the *«I»* and the dominant *«ego»*:

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰² Ibid., 85.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 86-87.

Of course, the great classical moralists also call on us to stop living in unreflecting habit and usage. But their reflection turns us towards an objective order. Modern disengagement by contrast calls us to a separation from ourselves through self-objectification. This is an operation which can only be carried out in the first-person perspective... This vision is the child of a peculiar reflexive stance, and that is why we who have been formed to understand and judge ourselves in its terms naturally describe ourselves with the reflexive expressions which belong to this stance: the 'self', the 'I', the 'ego'... The punctual agent seems to be nothing else but a 'self', an 'I'¹⁰⁵.

Having mentioned the great gap noted between the ancients and the moderns in terms of how Taylor imagined the human being, however, he points to a great turning point introduced by Montaigne's philosophy. Montaigne agreed that it was necessary to recover the immutable, permanent, stable core of being in each of us, but he also recognized the fact that there was terrifying internal instability. He noticed a great instability of all things and, above all, in human life:

There is no constant existence, neither of our being, nor of the objects. And we, and our judgement, and all mortal things else do incessantly flow, turn, and pass away ... We have no communication with being; for every human nature is ever in the middle between being borne and dying; giving nothing of itself but an obscure appearance and shadow, and an uncertain and weak opinion. And if perhaps you fix your thought to take its being; it would be even, as if one should go about to grasp the water¹⁰⁶.

Under this fact of a constant flow not only in human beings, but everywhere, Montaigne tries to come to balance with this undeniable reality of change. He sees self-knowledge and self-acceptance as the indispensable keys to being calm within these limits. In this way he invites us to distance ourselves from the excesses of moral rigor and all the excesses of tyrannical demands because he was convinced that living well implies living within limits. His ideas inaugurate a new type of self-explanation characterized by accepting who we are and from self-knowledge. However, there is a big difference between what he proposes and the Cartesian understanding. Montaigne advocates the discovery of the particularity and originality of each individual as an unrepeatable reality. Where Descartes called for radical separation from ordinary experience, Montaigne advocated a deeper commitment to our particularity:

¹⁰⁵SS, 175.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 179.

The contrast with Descartes is striking, just because Montaigne is at the point of origin of another kind of modern individualism, that of self-discovery, which differs from the Cartesian both in aim and method. Its aim is to identify the individual in his or her unrepeatable difference, where Cartesianism gives us a science of the subject in its general essence; and it proceeds by a critique of first-person self-interpretations, rather than by the proofs of impersonal reasoning¹⁰⁷.

However, regardless of the differences between Descartes and Montaigne, both invite us to turn inward in a radically reflective way for auto complacency. The Montaigne idea is an attempt to show how Augustinian interiority has influenced the modern world. It is the search for identity in who one is essentially, without falling into the trap of a universal description of the human agent. This interiority involves self-examination and penetration to understand what is particular to each of us.

5.2. Taylor's Moral Theory

We've been talking about the concept of the self in Taylor's perspective. It is a self that cannot be treated in isolation with other beings, and this brings up the question of morality. In this section, therefore, we will focus on the characteristics of the moral life that touch the relationships of the individual with others, what it means to be good, the question of respect and dignity; criticizing and bringing out the limitations of modern moral proposals that seem to circumvent the intersubjective dimension of the human being, etc. We will return to follow Ruth Abbey's outline of these characteristics in her attempt to analyze Taylor's moral theory¹⁰⁸.

5.2.1. Pluralistic Moral Thought

Pluralism as a characteristic of Taylor's moral thinking means the presence of multiplicity of goods in our lives. This conception of the variety of goods however differs from that of Aristotle who admits «*no necessary conflict among them*»¹⁰⁹. Taylor's sense of pluralism admits of a kind of different qualitative goods, and this makes any harmonious combination impossible. Faced with such a range of goods one has to choose

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 181-182.

¹⁰⁸ CTPN, 9-53.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 12.

what is worthy of having and even sacrifice others; in such a pluralistic reality «*moral choices are hard and necessarily entail sacrifice and loss*»¹¹⁰. Taylor believes that:

...in any person's life there is always a multiplicity of goods to be recognized, acted upon and pursued. These goods are not only plural in the numerical sense but they are plural in an ontological sense; they are of qualitatively different types from one another and, because of this, cannot always be harmoniously combined, rank-ordered or reduced to some more ultimate or foundational good¹¹¹.

Taylor deviates from those who wish to associate his form of pluralism with secularism. In fact, to defend himself he cites the presence of the monotheistic moral pluralism of Christianity, Judaism and Islam as a good example in the field of religion¹¹². As we have said one has to decide and choose some goods and possibly leave others. This means that all goods cannot have the same value. In this case Taylor again distances himself from modern relativism that can advocate the equality of all goods:

However, in Taylor's thought this pluralism does not have the consequences it often does in other schools of thought. He does not, for example, advocate relativism, the belief that all goods are theoretically of equal value and that it is impossible to argue rationally for the superiority of some to others. He finds the relativist idea that what the individual faces in the moral world is a dazzling array of equally appealing and equally arbitrary goods to be an utterly implausible account of moral life¹¹³.

As we had indicated, our author values and puts the human subject at the center, but nevertheless does not admit any form of subjectivism. Subjectivism in our case implies the idea that the «*choice among goods can only be justified according to individual preferences or inclinations*»¹¹⁴. Instead of promoting only certain types of goods, Taylor advocates that we respect the qualitative differences between these goods. Man, who is capable of a strong evaluation, will be able to make the best decision when presented with a multiplicity of goods.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹¹² Ibid., 13.

¹¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

5.2.2. The Self and the Strong Evaluation

In its text «*Human agency and language*»¹¹⁵, classifying it under philosophical anthropology, Taylor criticizes the reductive tendency of the natural sciences in the definition of human agency. In this text, therefore, he places man as his main concern as we had pointed out earlier. He casts the blame on the great cosmological change of the seventeenth century that saw man mechanistically leading to the separation and objectification of man in modern times. He reiterates that our person cannot be treated only scientifically in the same way that organic substances are treated.

In his definition of human agency Taylor focuses on the characteristics that delineate man as a responsible human agent and a self-interpreting animal that differentiates him from the rest of the animals:

To be an agent means to be one who affirms purposes and goals, goes after them and attains them. In distinction to the inanimate agent, the animate agent has consciousness, i.e., he is aware of himself. As a conscious being, the human agent is not only aware of his purposes and goals, but of his desires, aspirations, feelings, aversions, and emotions as well¹¹⁶.

In addition, he distinguishes between the desires of the first and second order influenced by the idea of Harry Frankfurt in his work.: «*Freedom of the will and the concept of a person*»¹¹⁷. It is true that human beings are not the only ones who have desires and motives; in other animals they also occur; but only the human being is capable of second-order desires. This is what is peculiar in human beings, since they have the ability to evaluate desires. They are capable of reflex evaluation or self-evaluation of desires, with respect to some as desirable and vice versa. For the purpose of our distinction here, we can say:

The first-order desires are the ones with which we continuously deal in our daily life (to eat now or later, to take beef or pork, to vacations in the north or south, and so on). Basically, in every moment of our life, we have to make choices between different first-

¹¹⁵ Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-5.

¹¹⁶ Tone Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity: Charles Taylor on its Genesis and Prospects," (PhD diss., Boston College University Libraries, 2012), 150. Accessed November 26, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/69167711/Rereading_Modernity_Charles_Taylor_on_its_Genesis_and_Prospects.

¹¹⁷ HAL, 15.

order desires. Why we chose a certain thing and not something else (why now and not later, why beef and not pork, why the north and not the south), depends on the second-order desires or motivations, which are beyond our immediate desires¹¹⁸.

Similarly, Taylor also distinguishes between a strong and weak evaluation. In the weak evaluation our concern refers to the outcome, while in a strong evaluation it is the qualitative value of different desires. While in the weak evaluation, «*for something to be judged good it is sufficient that it be desired...in strong evaluation there is also a use of 'good' or some other evaluative term for which being desired is not sufficient*»¹¹⁹. In other words, a weak evaluator (*a simple weigher*) does what Taylor calls minimal reflection while a strong evaluator goes much deeper and characterizes his motivation deeply as more noble, more liable, more integrated, etc. A strong evaluator has a strong articulation and depth in their evaluation that lacks a «*simple weigher*».

Another aspect that differentiates people and animals is that of responsibility. People are responsible for their own actions in a way that animals are not, and this is due to their capacity for second-order desire and strong evaluations. The whole question of evaluation is intrinsically related to our identity which is defined by the evaluations we do on a daily basis. A person in his full sense is an evaluation person. This is a fact that characterizes who we are as such. Without evaluations as Taylor claims, we would cease to be; in fact, we would enter into an identity crisis:

Our identity is therefore defined by certain evaluations which are inseparable from ourselves as agents. Shorn of these we would cease to be ourselves...but that shorn of these we would lose the very possibility of being an agent who evaluates; that our existence as persons, and hence our ability to adhere as persons to certain evaluations, would be impossible outside the horizon of these essential evaluations, that we would break down as persons, be incapable of being persons in the full sense...The notion of identity refers us to certain evaluations which are essential because they are the indispensable horizon or foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate as persons. To lose this horizon, or not to have found it, is indeed a terrifying experience of disaggregation and loss. This is why we can speak of an '*identity-crisis*' when we have

¹¹⁸ Tone Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity: Charles Taylor on its Genesis and Prospects," (PhD diss., Boston College University Libraries, 2012), 151. Accessed November 26, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/69167711/Rereading_Modernity_Charles_Taylor_on_its_Genesis_and_Prospects.

¹¹⁹ HAL, 18.

lost our grip on who we are. A self decides and acts out of certain fundamental evaluations¹²⁰.

In other words, human beings have always been involved in a life of constant and endless evaluation and re-evaluation. One evaluation opens the door to another evaluation and the process is endless. This is in line with what philosophy does in its research form. Philosophy begins with questions that are not clear at first. These questions receive answers, but these answers eventually become other questions that require more answers, and the process continues in search of clear questions and answers. Taylor will write:

In philosophy typically we start off with a question, which we know to be badly formed at the outset. We hope that in struggling with it, we shall find that its terms are transformed, so that in the end we will answer a question which we could not properly conceive at the beginning¹²¹.

In short, Taylor's idea of strong evaluation, which as we have said comes from Harry Frankfurt, may be the answer to the moral pluralism brought by the multiplicity of goods to human life. This is true because as Ruth Abbey comments: «...*we experience a range of desires; we do not view them all equally; some are seen as higher or more admirable than others*»¹²². In this case, human beings, as noted above, are able to make this distinction and choose what is worthy and valuable to them in a variety of many goods. This is what it means to have strong assessment for humans:

The term “strong evaluation” captures Taylor’s belief that individuals rank some of their desires, or the goods that they desire, as qualitatively higher or more worthy than others. The term refers, therefore, to distinctions of worth that individuals make regarding their desires or the objects of their desires. One of the entailments of strong evaluation is that although there are always multiple goods clamouring for attention in a person’s life, they do not all appear in the same light. Some are recognized as being inherently more worthy, more valuable, more meaningful or more importuning than others¹²³.

It's important to note that the evaluation for Taylor is a kind of «*an intuitive judgement or response than to the outcome of a reasoned, reflective process*»¹²⁴, this means that the individual does not need to always be fully aware that he is doing it, but

¹²⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹²¹ Ibid., 41.

¹²² CTPN, 17.

¹²³ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 18.

that it happens connaturally. Also, not all options «*imply or invoke any sense of higher or lower value. Decisions employing strong evaluation are qualitative and can be contrasted with non-qualitative choices*»¹²⁵. Another clarification is in his use of the term «*strong*», as a way to describe the evaluation activity. This term indicates any strength or power, does not imply the quality of these evaluations¹²⁶.

As argued earlier in Taylor's mode of pluralism, there is a strong indication of variety of cultures that may actually differ across different areas and people. It recognizes different moral values that must be respected. This is also an echo for qualitative distinctions in moral values. However, it also indicates that there are moral values that are universally accepted for example in the general agreement for respect for human life. Taylor's forms of interpretation in all respects are entirely intersubjective and try as far as possible to accommodate diversity:

...although Taylor believes that all individuals are strong evaluators, he does not believe that we all value the same things strongly. The fact of strong evaluation might be a human universal, but the goods thus valued vary across cultures and among individuals...Yet notwithstanding this sensitivity to the diversity of moral values among individuals and across cultures, Taylor believes that some goods do feature in all moral codes and are strongly valued by all cultures. These revolve around the idea of the value of human life and the dignity of the person. They carry injunctions against killing or maiming people, treating them cruelly and even failing to assist them in need¹²⁷.

5.2.3. Taylor's Inescapable Structures

To understand more about intersubjectivity in Charles Taylor we must touch on what he calls the «*inescapable frameworks*». They are inescapable because they touch our responsibilities to others, the meaning and sense of life and dignity of the person and thus provide a solid background for our moral life:

The first way is the one that I have already discussed. Frameworks provide the background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgements, intuitions, or reactions in any of the three dimensions. To articulate a framework is to explicate what makes sense of our moral responses. That is, when we try to spell out what it is that we presuppose when

¹²⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 22.

we judge that a certain form of life is truly worthwhile, or place our dignity in a certain achievement or status, or define our moral obligations in a certain manner, we find ourselves articulating inter alia what I have been calling here 'frameworks'¹²⁸.

It is totally impossible to live without the articulation of these frameworks or horizons as Taylor firmly confesses¹²⁹. «Framework», could be understood literally as a skeleton of a ship, but specifically in our case here, this structure refers to an exterior reality which the human being configures and shapes his interior. Once configured it is interior. The structure or framework has an ontological value if it constitutes the members of a community, it cannot be interior to a being. The configurative appropriation of the framework is, precisely, its internalization as Manuel Sánchez Matito explains with the following words:

El vocablo “framework” significa literalmente esqueleto o armazón de un barco. Se trata, por tanto, de la estructura interior de un ser o, de un modo más particular, de un barco. El termino se refiere, por tanto, a una estructura que habitualmente no es visible, ni se toma en consideración, pero sin la cual resulta imposible el movimiento, la de un determinado ser...El “framework” representa algo físicamente estructural, algo que está ahí, que tiene un valor ontológico, que constituye a la comunidad y al individuo en tanto que miembro de la misma¹³⁰.

In other words, Taylor's frameworks form the basis of the main horizons or axes needed in any society: our moral responses to others, the question of the meaning of life and human dignity. He feels and affirms that there has been a great suppression of moral ontology in our contemporary world pointing out a great difference with respect to previous civilizations: «...*there is a great deal of motivated suppression of moral ontology among our contemporaries...The moral world of moderns is significantly different from that of previous civilizations*»¹³¹. For example, the question of respect has a different notion in the modern West. It is understood in terms of «*right*»; what Taylor expresses as «*subjective right*» because it puts the autonomy of the subject at the center ignoring the intersubjective contribution. There is also the illusory notion of conceiving the human being as a disengaged subject. Taylor uses the term «*disenchantment*» by Max

¹²⁸ SS, 26.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁰ Manuel Sánchez Matito, “La articulación lingüística de los universos morales en la obra de Charles Taylor” (PhD diss., Universidad de Sevilla 2007), 44-45. Accessed April 16, 2021.

<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=23465>

¹³¹ SS, 10-11.

Weber to explain this change of notion in our moral ontology and the destruction of these horizons necessary in our contemporary world:

What Weber called 'disenchantment', the dissipation of our sense of the cosmos as a meaningful order, has allegedly destroyed the horizons in which people previously lived their spiritual lives. Nietzsche used the term in his celebrated "God is dead" passage: "How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon?" Perhaps this way of putting it appeals above all to the intellectuals, who put a lot of stock in the explicit doctrines that people subscribe to, and anyway tend to be unbelievers. But the loss of horizon described by Nietzsche's fool undoubtedly corresponds to something very widely felt in our culture¹³².

This problematic situation of the frames has led to the loss of the spiritual meaning of life and the loss of the spiritual contour, representing a great danger to the world, since the question of the sense of life that was previously unquestionable is broken until it disappears. For Taylor these moral horizons are the key basis for our moral responsibilities, something that, if lost, causes the loss of meaning and sense of life.

Therefore, in Taylor's perspective «*moral frameworks*» or «*horizons*» (Here we note that the two terms are interchangeable in Taylor's use of them¹³³) are a real presence in each human being and provides us with answers touching on our moral life. Without them the evaluation we have talked about before is impossible. They are our guides when it comes to our choices about what is good and worthy for us:

The idea of a moral framework refers to a series of beliefs that gives overall shape and direction to a person's values and moral outlooks... These frameworks give shape and meaning to individuals' lives and provide answers, no matter how tacitly, to the existential questions that he believes face all individuals about the purpose, conduct and direction of their lives. One's framework provides guidance about moral questions in the broad sense; that is, about what it is right to do vis-à-vis others and about what it is good to be; about what is meaningful and rewarding for an individual... Taylor's point is that moral frameworks are indispensable, because they orient people in moral space. He sees this as another necessary feature of moral life; individuals feel themselves to exist within a space of moral questions about what is the right thing to do, what goods should be pursued and

¹³² Ibid.,17.

¹³³ CTPN, 33.

what is the right direction for their lives to take. Moral frameworks help them to answer these questions¹³⁴.

5.2.4. The self in relation to the good

Another aspect that goes hand in hand with our identity is to understand where we are and how we are situated with respect to the good. Our relationship to the good shows how meaningful and valuable our life is. Taylor highlights a very interconnected relationship between our identity and the good. Our lives are substantial, meaningful and valuable in relation to how we face the problem of good in order to stand before it. You have to ask yourself if the life you live is worth it or is empty and that depends on whether it is oriented to the good. This requires examination of the goods that define our spiritual orientation, as reflected in the following:

My point is that the goods which define our spiritual orientation are the ones by which we will measure the worth of our lives; the two issues are indissolubly linked because they relate to the same core, and that is why I want to speak of the second issue, about the worth, or weight, or substance of my life, as a question of how I am 'placed' or 'situated' in relation to the good, or whether I am in 'contact' with it. Typically, for contemporaries, the question can arise of the 'worthwhile-ness' or 'meaningfulness' of one's life, of whether it is (or has been) rich and substantial, or empty and trivial. These are expressions commonly used, images frequently evoked. Or: Is my life amounting to something? Does it have weight and substance, or is it just running away into nothing, into something insubstantial?¹³⁵.

The articulation of good in our perspective, following Tylor, is a «*conditio sine qua non*» because it presents the good to us as a moral source, source of meaning and meaning for human life. This was a fact that the ancients noticed and respected. Articulating the good gives power to man which in turn moves him towards a good deed. Taylor insists that we cannot remain silent in this articulation because it contradicts our identity: «*There are good reasons to keep silent. But they cannot be valid across the board. Without any articulation at all, we would lose all contact with the good, however conceived. We would cease to be human*»¹³⁶. As argued above when we are talking about

¹³⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

¹³⁵ SS, 42-43.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 97.

the self, we are talking about a moral being oriented towards the good as a fundamental constitutive of identity.

We mention briefly what Taylor calls constitutive goods and hypergoods which form a structural part of moral life. Constitutive goods have to do with what people «*deem to make life worth living or the virtues they advocate*», these are life goods with examples such as: freedom, reason, piety, authenticity, courage and benevolence¹³⁷. On the other hand, hypergoods are more supreme than other goods. As Ruth Abbey indicates, hypergoods: «*command even more respect and admiration than strongly valued goods and because of this become hegemonic in a person's life*». Here she gives an example of a human right campaigner who accepts jail sentence for the fight of freedom for the others¹³⁸.

5.2.5. Interpretation of Life as Narrative

The question of identity and change are characteristic also in Taylor's intersubjective description of the human person related to the moral life. Uses the term «*narrative*» to describe this reality. Change and becoming characterize human reality. The search for where we are going must be continuous. The narrative nature of the human being makes life a project and a process and this requires acceptance of the temporal nature of human life. In Taylor's words:

The issue of our condition can never be exhausted for us by what we are, because we are always also changing and becoming. It is only slowly that we grow through infancy and childhood to be autonomous agents who have something like our own place relative to the good at all. And even then, that place is constantly challenged by the new events of our lives, as well as constantly under potential revision, as we experience more and mature. So, the issue for us has to be not only where we are, but where we're going... Now we see that this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. But this is to state another basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a narrative¹³⁹.

¹³⁷ CTPN, 47.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 35-36.

¹³⁹ SS, 46-47.

It's impossible to know everything instantly; a process and projection of the future towards full realization is needed. The question of the self in a puntual or neutral way again makes no sense because the selves exist in a space of questions and concerns that requires continuous self-interpretation. We are always moving towards what we are not yet. As Alasdair MacIntyre would say: «*This sense of my life as having a direction towards what I am not yet is what Alasdair Macintyre captures in his notion ...that life is seen as a 'quest'*»¹⁴⁰. The quote from Alasdair MacIntyre's text clearly shows that the idea of interpreting human life as a narrative was borrowed from him. There is the influence of other authors such as Paul Ricoeur, Jerome Bruner and Heidegger:

According to Taylor, the way we make sense of any particular moment or experience is by situating it in the longer context of our lives. It is impossible to give meaning to something without locating it in relation to past events or future hopes or fears. Underpinning this argument seems to be Taylor's adherence to the Heideggerian notion of humans as being in-time¹⁴¹.

Taylor feels that there has been a great silence in the recognition of the moral values and frameworks involved in the moral life. That is why his goal of delineating these characteristics was to articulate strongly about their importance:

Because of this silence about the underlying sources of moral values, practices and attitudes, one of the important roles Taylor accords to moral theory is articulation, bringing into the light of awareness that which is unspoken but presupposed. Indeed, one of the things he sees his own work as doing is articulating both the most important goods by which modern individuals live and the various sources of these good¹⁴².

We conclude by outlining the main reasons why Taylor places great importance on the articulation of moral theory, as can also be seen in Ruth Abbey's interpretation¹⁴³. One of the functions of this articulation is for the reasons of leading to the understanding of these moral values. Another function has to do with showing these goods, outlining their plurality and their different sources and, therefore, articulating their harmonization respecting their qualitative distinctions. It is a function that is purely intersubjective. Thus, the objective of this plural articulation: «*will be to reduce the appeal of simplistic and reductionist normative theories that try to artificially harmonize different goods or*

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁴¹ CTPN, 38.

¹⁴² Ibid., 41.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41-47.

*that deny the reality of conflicting goods»*¹⁴⁴. This is a goal that echoes what Taylor has always advocated: that is, to respect qualitative distinctions. Another vital function is to provide space for rational debate and thus promote a deeper understanding of those values. This understanding, in turn, will improve the informed assessment that will lead to an informed choice of such assets:

...it increases the chances of rational debate about values. Understanding the underpinnings of moral responses in a fuller and clearer way makes it easier to debate their merits..., to foster rational evaluation of goods – provides Taylor with further ammunition against the relativist idea that individuals just choose goods on the basis of preferences, desires or interests and that these choices cannot be rationally defended or criticized¹⁴⁵.

Due to the understanding mentioned above, another function is born; to correct the *«rival approaches to morality»*. Taylor believes that some modern theories have not allowed qualitative discrimination which is very important when it comes to questions of the moral life¹⁴⁶. Thus, the articulation of these moral values acts as a critique of such rivalry in theories and thus allows room for the harmonious accommodation of all points of view. Another role of articulating moral frameworks is to promote a deep commitment to these goods after realizing how valuable they are in our lives. As he says this empowers us and makes us love them more because what is good emerges clearly. The lack of articulation would lead to losing contact with the good; in reality, as said before, it prevents us from being truly human:

Taylor proposes that because the articulation of a moral framework or source identifies what is moving about it, this can strengthen commitment to it. This is what he means when he says that articulation empowers: bringing a good to light, raising awareness of what usually remains tacit, brings its adherents into closer contact with this good and its ideals, which can invigorate their allegiance to it¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 44.

5.3. Taylor's Political Theory of Recognition of the Other

Taylor's contributions to the political theory is essentially intersubjective and communal. These contributions contain what we can call the recognition of the human subject as a reality among other subjects of the same community. The true freedom and growth of an individual does not consist in ignoring the presence of the other, but rather in trying to harmonize these two realities. On the one hand, individual reality and particularity should not be undermined by the presence of others, but, on the other, each individual should create space for others in the same community. In short, we are trying to reconcile these two facts by creating a dialogical understanding between them. This is the direction of our argument which is in Taylor's idea. The identity of the individual is well understood when there is a space for dialogue with the other identities of the community:

Thus, my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others¹⁴⁸.

Taylor in his text «*Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*», speaks of the need to recognize the freedom and identity of the individual among the other individuals in the community. For the growth of authentic freedom in the community, there must be a recognition of the other subject not only as a limitation to my freedom, but as the condition of possibility of true freedom and personal identity. Taylor laments the differences created by false political theories that ignore those aspects of our identities that we share and that should actually unite us. For him our identities are created dialogically, and this is what our social political theories should emphasize on:

Human identity is created, as Taylor puts it, dialogically, in response to our relations, including our actual dialogues, with others. The dichotomy posed by some political theorists between atomistic and socially constructed individuals is therefore a false one. If human identity is dialogically created and constituted, then public recognition of our identity requires a politics that leaves room for us to deliberate publicly about those aspects of our identities that we share, or potentially share, with other citizens. A society

¹⁴⁸ Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 231.

that recognizes individual identity will be a deliberative, democratic society because individual identity is partly constituted by collective dialogues¹⁴⁹.

Human beings are beings of language who are able to understand themselves and others. By learning language, one is able to express oneself through a dialogical exchange with others. In this case, the human dimension is always dialogical and not monological. Through the dialogical aspect it can be shared with others who in turn benefit from this event:

This crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression. For my purposes here, I want to take language in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the “languages” of art, of gesture, of love, and he like. But we learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others. People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us— what George Herbert Mead called “significant others.” The genesis of the human mind is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical¹⁵⁰.

In keeping with this is the idea of human dignity where every human being must be respected as such as a rational agent. This respect must be accorded to everyone, including those who have lost their potential, for example, those who suffer from a type of disability. This is in line with the principle of universal equality which does not accept any kind of discrimination:

The politics of equal dignity is based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect. It is underpinned by a notion of what in human being commands respect, however we may try to shy away from this “metaphysical” background. For Kant, whose use of the term dignity was one of the earliest influential evocations of this idea, what commanded respect in us was our status as rational agents, capable of directing our lives through principles. Something like this has been the basis for our intuitions of equal dignity ever since, though the detailed definition of it may have changed. Thus, what is picked out as of worth here is a universal human potential, a capacity that all humans share. This potential, rather than anything a person may have made of it, is what ensures

¹⁴⁹MEPR, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 32.

that each person deserves respect. Indeed, our sense of the importance of potentiality reaches so far that we extend this protection even to people who through some circumstance that has befallen them are incapable of realizing their potential in the normal way—handicapped people, or those in a coma, for instance¹⁵¹.

As we've mentioned before, Taylor could be unequivocally referred to as communal when it comes to his political theory. His points on community theory could be classified into two: «*ontological and advocacy*»¹⁵². The ontological aspects of communitarianism insist on the importance and participation of the whole community to contribute to the identity and growth of the individual. The aspect of seeing individuals as only competing elements in the community is not emphasized here. Of importance here are «*the shared elements that make social life possible, that cannot be reduced to individual choices, desires, intentions or possessions*»¹⁵³. On the other hand, «*advocacy aspects*» have to do with the defense and promotion of shared goods that the community considers of value; the promotion has to do with the «*things that cannot be enjoyed by individuals alone or that call for collective action*»¹⁵⁴. We will briefly mention the two outstanding aspects about the ontological elements of communitarianism that will be discussed again when Hegel's influence on Taylor is examined. The two basically revolve around his critique of atomism and negative freedom.

5.3.1. Attack on Atomism

One of the contributions to the modern individualistic understanding of man is the atomistic view of reality born with the advent of social contract theories in the seventeenth century. These were doctrines that above all tried to defend the rights of people over society:

The term 'atomism' is used loosely to characterize the doctrines of social contract theory which arose in the seventeenth century and also successor doctrines which may not have made use of the notion of social contract but which inherited a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfilment of ends which were primarily individual. Certain forms of utilitarianism are successor doctrines in this sense. The term

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 41-42.

¹⁵² CTPN, 101.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 102.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 103.

is also applied to contemporary doctrines which hark back to social contract theory, or which try to defend in some sense the priority of the individual and his rights over society, or which present a purely instrumental view of society¹⁵⁵.

Taylor is using the political atomism associated with the Locke and Hobbes' doctrines. These writers had introduced their notions from the conviction of the primacy of the rights of the individual over the political structure Taylor feels that it is not correct to initiate a political theory underlining the prevalence of the rights of the person. He feels that this is a movement associated with atomism. He proposes a different vision where man should always be seen as a social and political animal as Aristotle taught. Man cannot be self-sufficient without «*polis*». The atomist proposal is radically questionable.

Perhaps the best way is to borrow the terms of the opposed thesis- the view that man is a social animal. One of the most influential formulations of this view is Aristotle's. He puts the point in terms of the notion of self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*). Man is a social animal, indeed a political animal, because he is not self-sufficient alone, and in an important sense is not self-sufficient outside a polis. Borrowing this term then we could say that atomism affirms the self-sufficiency of man alone or, if you prefer, of the individual...For if atomism means that man is self-sufficient alone, then surely it is a very questionable thesis. What then does it mean to say that men are self-sufficient alone? That they would survive outside of society? Clearly, lots of men would not. And the best and luckiest would survive only in the most austere sense that they would not succumb. It would not be living as we know it. Surely proponents of the primacy of rights do not have to deny these brute facts¹⁵⁶.

Taylor uses Weber's term, «*Disenchanted*» as mentioned above to better explain the nature of the subject disconnected from modern times. It is a term that explains the nature of an isolated human subject with its social, material and bodily environment. Taylor advocates rather for a committed human subject who does not distance himself from his social and community context. Another term that goes with this is «*Desacralized*» which indicates religious development and change in it. Taylor also uses the term «*Objectified*» to explain the new subjectivity where the embodied meaning is denied. The term advocates a mechanistic view of the world by refuting the final causes and relying solely on efficient causes:

¹⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Science: Philosophical Papers II* (Montreal: Cambridge University Press, 1985),187.

¹⁵⁶ PHS, 189-190.

I have spoken above of this vision of the world as 'disenchanted' using Weber's term, or as 'desacralized' in speaking of the religious development. Perhaps I can introduce the term of art 'objectified' here to cover this denial to the world of inherent meaning, that is, the denial that it is to be seen as embodied meaning. The point of using this term is to mark the fact that for the modern view categories of meaning and purpose apply exclusively to the thought and actions of subjects and cannot find a purchase in the world they think about and act on¹⁵⁷.

Taylor therefore in opposition to these atomistic tendencies «*replaces the primacy of the individual with the primacy of community*»¹⁵⁸. No in no way undermines the importance of the individual in the community at large but emphasizes the point that the individual's values are more promoted and enhanced in a community perspective. For example, speaking of freedom as a value, it is obvious that when one recognizes freedom for one individual in society, one is also affirming freedom for other individuals in the same community. Therefore, the individual and the whole community are important if such freedom as a value is to be realized:

Community membership is important in a couple of ways. Firstly, because certain goods and even conceptions of the self are only available to individuals by virtue of the culture to which they belong, the fact of belonging to a community or society takes pride of place in explaining political norms, values and practices. By Taylor's analysis, any affirmation of individual freedom or rights effectively points beyond itself to affirm the conditions of possibility of this good; that is, the wider community and culture...., From the fact that certain goods are only available by virtue of the community to which one belongs, Taylor infers an obligation to the community. The logic of his claim is that: if I affirm A (individual freedom) and if B (my membership in the community) is a necessary condition of A therefore, in affirming A I should affirm B¹⁵⁹.

Taylor's argument of recognizing both the values and goods of the individual and the large community where they are offered, is in line with «*Hegelian notion of Sittlichkeit*»¹⁶⁰, which will be mentioned when showing Hegel's influences on Taylor. Now let's go ahead and show how Taylor criticizes negative freedom, which promotes

¹⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, (Montreal: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 9.

¹⁵⁸ CTPN, 105.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

positive freedom because he is convinced that the latter leads to the community vision of society.

5.3.2. Criticism on Negative Freedom

We begin this section by differentiating between the two types of freedom: negative and positive. To help us in this distinction is Isaiah Berlin's twentieth-century formulation, which could also be reflected in: «*Chapter 1 of John Stuart Mill's essay On Liberty*»¹⁶¹. We can say that negative freedom «*applies to approaches that focus on the individual and associate freedom with the absence of interference from outside sources, whether this external force is the state or society in general*»¹⁶². According to these quotes, negative freedom, therefore, when one's activity is not representing any harm to the rest, that individual should not be interfered with or coerced by others. He should be free to act, as his action poses no danger to anyone. The terms negative and positive must be well understood in our context so that one does not misinterpret what the two types of freedom imply. In fact, the term negative does not in any way imply a criticism of this type of freedom but applies to the fact that nothing is done against the will of the one who is acting. On the other hand, the term positive is used when the individual is not allowed to be free to do what he deems worthy:

So rather than understanding these labels in the usual colloquial way, it is important to appreciate they that are being used here in a technical sense. Negative freedom exists when things are not done to the individual against his or her will. The positive approach to freedom focuses not on leaving individuals a sphere of free space in which they can do as they please without interference from others but on enabling or empowering them to do certain things, to achieve outcomes or to realize particular purposes. The accent here is on the individual achieving some control over his or her own life, some measure of self-mastery or self-direction. In some areas, the self-mastery promoted by positive freedom might not be attainable by acting, or being left, alone¹⁶³.

The main purpose of Taylor's critiques of negative freedom is to show that there is a great relationship between it and positive freedom. For this reason, he starts by questioning the «*putative opposition between positive and negative freedom by showing*

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 107.

¹⁶² Ibid., 107.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 108.

*that there is a salient characteristic that is shared by all notions of positive freedom and some notions of negative freedom»*¹⁶⁴. What unites the two notions of freedom are the characteristics of what freedom in general stands for, namely: «*self-rule, self-mastery or self-direction*»¹⁶⁵ what Taylor questions is whether the presupposition «*absence of interference*», what defends negative freedom is sufficient to allow the true exercise of freedom. Here Taylor is again trying to show what is missing from the negative proposals for freedom; there is no room to allow what we called before qualitative discrimination. Therefore, the emphasis remains solely on quantitative criteria that do not actually respect individual particular choices. The individual must be allowed to choose what is most dignified, desirable, and most purposeful to him. On this point we observe that:

Strict versions of negative freedom fail or refuse to make these sorts of qualitative judgements, and therein lies their appeal to many people. Instead, they tend to depict freedom in quantitative terms. By refusing to uphold some forms of action, some human capacities or some individual choices as superior to others, they adopt a non-judgemental stance that derives from a respect for human equality and individual freedom. But Taylor insists that this undifferentiated approach to freedom is implausible: understanding freedom demands that qualitative discriminations be drawn among an individual's motivations, desires and capacities. If the idea of freedom is to be compelling, it must be recognized that some choices, interests, motivations and purposes are higher, more important, worthier or more deserving of respect than others¹⁶⁶.

Taylor's insistence that freedom takes into account the qualitative discrimination of individual desires reminds us of our earlier point about «*strong evaluation*»¹⁶⁷. One should be free to evaluate moral goods and choose what is most valuable and useful in life. In this case, therefore, «*Being free in a meaningful sense requires more than just being able to do what one wants*»¹⁶⁸ ; there must be what we have called before: the «*rank-ordering*» of these goods to give what is really important in one's moral life. To summarize this point without going much into Taylor's political theory what is clear is that his emphasis on the importance of reconciling the freedom of the individual, rights,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 109.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 111.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 111.

etc. with those of the community. Any model that exhorts one over the other is insufficient.

Closely related to the issue of freedom is Taylor's politics of recognition, which is similarly referred to as the egalitarian recognition politics. Again, the need for recognition of everyone in society is explained by Taylor in an intersubjective perspective. The recognition of individuals is interwoven with the identity of the self. As we had pointed out, the identity of the self requires the contribution of others in society. No individual is an island. Our growth as individuals depends in part on others around us: «*Who I am, and who I see myself as being, are closely connected with how I am perceived by those around me*»¹⁶⁹. Every individual requires that their autonomy be recognized and appreciated. One needs to feel that those with whom he lives are trying to understand him and take care of his presence. Not respecting the other's being is tantamount to disrespecting and harming this person. When the individual feels recognized, this in turn promotes a positive outlook on himself and thus eliminates any possibility of any inferiority complex. This gives room for positive growth. The main recognition policy is to consider the difference between the individual and the other; this has to do with respect for what is particular in each individual without putting all people in a common basket. It is about respecting the uniqueness of the identity of each individual or even a group. Using the same author's analysis:

So, the point Taylor is trying to make is that individuals can suffer real harm if who they are is not acknowledged in a positive way by others, be this in the personal, social or public arena. A person's sense of self is not independent of how others see him or her. In fact, if an individual or group is seen by others as in some way inferior, this feeling of inferiority can become internalized, shaping the person or group's self-perception... He is also echoing Berlin's claim that when an individual is not recognized as an autonomous being by others, this can damage his or her sense of self: "if I am not so recognised, then I may fail to recognise, I may doubt, my own claim to be a fully independent human being... It is clear that for Taylor, as for Berlin, the sense of identity is not something that the individual can achieve alone: it is an intersubjective phenomenon, and because it depends on the participation of others for its realization, it can go wrong"¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 136.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 138.

In conclusion, Taylor's theory of egalitarian recognition aims at recognizing individual/group uniqueness and distinction. It is a theory of «*politics of difference*»¹⁷¹ because it respects particular differences of goods and individuals within the larger community. Consequently, Taylor is against the traditional conception of state neutrality, in which all individuals and groups should be treated equally and indifferently; this leads to a general generalization that does not give rise to qualitative discrimination. State neutrality only promotes the status quo. But to reinforce the status quo in cases where groups are unequal is to fail to act impartially¹⁷². Finally, Taylor agrees on non-favoritism on the part of the state for any religion or way of life on the part of a certain group. He supports secular state ideas where diversity of religious views is given space:

Taylor supports the liberal idea of a secular state because it is associated with the tolerance of diversity in religion and other ways of life... It is especially valuable in multicultural democracies, for it means that, in principle at least, the public culture of that society will not privilege any religion over another. This should make it easier for people from different religious backgrounds to identify with the state... So Taylor welcomes a certain version of the secular state, one which is maximally hospitable to diversity and which promotes an overlapping consensus among its members, allowing them to agree on certain values or outcomes on the basis of quite different starting points¹⁷³.

We just mentioned the idea of «*overlapping consensus*» in Taylor's perspective. The concept is associated with what he calls: «*social imaginary*», that we need to elaborate a little because of its relationship with the call to intersubjectivity.

5.4. The Concept of Social Imaginary

The concept of secularism is here related to that of Taylor's vision of the social imaginary in a disengaged society. He conceives social imaginary as a way in which people «*imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations*»¹⁷⁴. The social imaginary in our case should not be confused with a social theory for several reasons. A

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 141.

¹⁷² Ibid., 142-144.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁷⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 171.

social imaginary unlike social theory is shared by the whole society, not just by a few or a possible majority. People united by the social imaginary have a common understanding for many practices that they share widely. This makes it even more complex, as the people who share them must understand each other by integrating with each other. The social imaginary thus demands a deep intersubjectivity when one or a group is not limited within a closed limit of understanding, but opens itself to the opinion of the other in order to understand their points of view and accommodate them:

What I'm calling the social imaginary extends beyond the immediate background understanding which makes sense of our particular practices. This is not an arbitrary extension of the concept, because just as the practice without the understanding wouldn't make sense for us, and thus wouldn't be possible, so this understanding supposes, if it is to make sense, a wider grasp of our whole predicament, how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, how we relate to other groups, etc¹⁷⁵.

Therefore, when talking about the social imaginary, we go beyond a mere theoretical discourse. It is rather a call to interact with different types of people, understand their norms and culture in order to relate to them in a better way. This is possible because we imagine ourselves as a human race capable of conversing with each other and sharing some basic things that unite us. As Taylor says: «*There is a speech act here, addresser and addressees, and some understanding of how they can stand in this relation to each other*»¹⁷⁶. The common understanding in this case is still very important because in a pluralistic reality and in a world characterized by what John Rawls called «*overlapping consensus*»¹⁷⁷ it requires that each group be involved and well understood so that the social imaginary is realized.

Before we look at the question of alterity and secularization in the modern world, we would like to briefly mention some of the influences of Hegel's thought on Taylor's proposal. As noted, some concepts mentioned above will reappear.

¹⁷⁵ SA, 172-173.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 174.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 532.

6. The Hegelian Influences

In order to fully understand Taylor's conception of the human being, it is useful to examine his book entitled «*Hegel*» of 1975, one of his main works. Taylor aims at exposing Hegel's ideas about human subjectivity and its relationship with the world. He tries to unite two different visions of man where one defines the human subject in relation to the cosmic order and the other advocates radical freedom seeing man as self-defined.¹⁷⁸ Taylor presents Hegel's vision of man as intersubjective and integral where unity in society and the expressive current of his time were some of his motivations in his writing:

«Hegel as a young man in the 1780s, first at the Stuttgart Gymnasium then at the *Tübinger Stift*, was deeply moved by the expressivist current of his time. The image of a whole, integrated life in which man was at one with himself, and men were at one with each other in society, also assumed its paradigmatic form for him in the classical past of Greece»¹⁷⁹.

We cannot deny that Taylor was greatly influenced by Hegel's philosophical ideas about human subjectivity that led to the mature conception of his final notion of it. Manuel Sánchez Matito in his doctoral thesis, «*La articulación lingüística de los universos morales. La obra de Charles Taylor*», describes five areas of Hegel's influence on Taylor:

Podemos resumir esta influencia en los cinco puntos siguientes: la defensa de una concepción holista frente a una concepción atomista o desvinculada del sujeto; la necesaria convivencia entre las tradiciones racionalista y expresivista; la vinculación esencial entre filosofía e historia; la necesidad del reconocimiento para el desarrollo de la identidad de los individuos y las comunidades; y la gran importancia concedida al papel del conflicto¹⁸⁰.

We have previously mentioned the role that the community plays in the development of the identity of individuals. This is true because some goods are available to the individual through the community to which he belongs. As we said, affirming the individual requires that one also affirms the community. Taylor's concept of affirming the

¹⁷⁸ H, 3-6.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸⁰ Manuel Sánchez Matito, «La articulación lingüística de los universos morales en la obra de Charles Taylor» (PhD diss., Universidad de Sevilla 2007), 15-16. Accessed April 16, 2021. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=23465>

goods of individuals and the society where he lives again finds roots in Hegel's vision of «*Sittlichkeit*» as we shall see. It's a theme that goes along with his critique of atomism:

The powerful impact of Hegel on Taylor's thought is discernible here, for this argument that affirming goods entails the affirmation of the conditions of their possibility is very close to the Hegelian notion of *Sittlichkeit*. As Taylor explains it, this notion refers to the obligations which members of a society have to sustain and develop it: "what Hegel calls *Sittlichkeit* . . . refers to the moral obligations I have to an ongoing community of which I am part" . . . , Hegel is, in fact, an important influence on Taylor's rejection of atomism in general because of the importance he imputes to locating the individual within his or her wider community. . . . Taylor's immersion in Hegel's thought helped him to identify the ubiquity of atomist assumptions in western culture generally and within the social sciences more particularly¹⁸¹.

In this section we examine the influence of Hegel and how through it, Taylor has been able to present a mature conception of the human subject reconciling the search for the interiority origin of radical human freedom and the presence of alterity as its condition of possibility. In this way we will show that Taylor tries to unite the subject with other subjects but respecting what is particular in each individual subject. Taylor will be presented as well as a great advocate of otherness and intersubjectivity, as well as freedom of expression and growth of the individual.

6.1. Holistic Conception of a Human Being against a Disengaged Subject

Taylor through Hegel presents a holistic understanding of the human subject as opposed to the disengaged understanding of the self, proposed by Descartes, John Locke and their followers. Descartes as we saw specialized more in his «*cogito*» by demonstrating the existence of the self and thus putting everything else in doubt, including the existence of God. This was a change that occurred in the seventeenth century, but before that the ancient world defined man with reference to what surrounded him. This modern change had its own precedents, especially from the Epicureans and skeptics whose definition of the self was made in abstraction from any other order. They opted for self-determination by withdrawing from the world. Ancient skeptics denied the human ability to know the nature of things:

¹⁸¹ Ruth Abbey, *Charles Taylor Philosophy Now* (Teddington: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2000), 106.

...this modern notion of the self was not without precedents. The Epicureans and Sceptics among the ancients presented a view of the self which was defined in abstraction from any order; and it is not surprising that this minority tradition among the ancients provided some of the fuel for the modern revolution, or that many figures of the Enlightenment felt great affinity for Epicurus and Lucretius¹⁸².

The moderns broke with the past creating a difference with the ancient heritage of Plato, Aristotle, Neo-Platonists and even with the ideas of Augustine where the contemplation of the natural order was vital to the definition of man:

The essential difference can perhaps be put in this way: the modern subject is self-defining, where on previous views the subject is defined in relation to a cosmic order... This is plainly the heritage of Plato; order in the human soul is inseparable from rational vision of the order of being. For Aristotle contemplation of this order is the highest activity of man. The same basic notion is present in the neo-Platonist vision which through Augustine becomes foundational for much medieval thought¹⁸³.

6.2. Historical Realization of the Lost Unity

Against the disenchanted model is the perspective of the Hegelian whole that aspires to a reconciliation that overcomes all forms of division. To achieve this wholeness, the human spirit requires a path of healing accompanied by the development of reason in society. The healing of the divisions that invite us to consider exclusively the identity and particularity of the individual is considered by Hegel the formal task of philosophy:

In Hegel's first published work in his new career as a university teacher of philosophy, the *Differenz* of 1801, we see the transformed perspective. Hegel posits that the formal task of philosophy is 'the cancellation of division' (*die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*). But he makes clear that the way to solve the problem is not to 'abolish one of the opposites and raise the other to infinity'. Both separation and identity (*Trennung and Identitat*) must be given their rights¹⁸⁴.

Hegel, like Taylor, seeks to unite two apparently opposing positions: the reconciliation of the human being with nature, with himself and with others without losing radical moral autonomy. Therefore, the purpose of Philosophy is to overcome this

¹⁸² H, 7.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

opposition that leads to a novel human identity. Even when we talk about freedom and self-knowledge, we realize that integral freedom is only achievable with a community perspective. The individual, however, needs his own freedom, he realizes that he lives in a social context where there are others who still advocate for their freedom. In this case, the freedom of the individual can only be nurtured in a community context:

Man, to be free must be his own master, and hence not subordinate to any others. But at the same time man on his own is weak and necessarily dependent on outside help. The freedom of the bare individual is thus a very circumscribed and shadowy thing. But what is more, man as a cultural being only develops a mind and purposes of his own out of interchange with others; the very aspiration to individual freedom is nurtured on this interchange and can be dulled and perverted by it. So that integral freedom cannot be attained by an individual alone. It must be shared in a society which sustains a culture that nurtures it and institutions which give effect to it. Freedom seems to require both individual independence and integration into a larger life. The individual man is part not just of a larger social whole, he and his society are in turn set in a wider frame, mankind, and the whole of nature, with which they are in interchange and on which they depend¹⁸⁵.

Therefore, this position presents us with an undeniable fact that by itself creates an opposition because the freedom of the individual will always depend on the great framework of the environment. In summary, there are several oppositions that Philosophy must overcome: «*between the knowing subject and his world, between nature and freedom, between individual and society, between finite and infinite spirit, or between free man and his fate*»¹⁸⁶. This overcoming should not mean separation, but reconciliation that overcoming them, however, maintains the difference. Taylor argues that if we critically examine these dichotomies they should not be interpreted in terms of opposition, but as linked and inseparable where none can exist alone. Underneath this opposition is a hidden unity that can help us regain the whole.

The growth of the community is necessary for the realization of the spirit, since it is the community that will fully express and embody the spirit. This is the goal for history because it is through history that full reason is attained. In this case, history must be understood teleologically for the realization of the cosmic spirit. Everything that happens

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 78.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 79.

in history has justification and this is in the order of God's plan and providence for men to attain full freedom that is only achievable within the community:

History thus reaches its culmination in a community which is in conformity with reason; or we could also say, one which embodies freedom, for 'the final purpose of the world is Spirit's consciousness of his freedom and hence the first full realization of this freedom...This freedom is not, of course, individual, negative freedom, the freedom to do what I like. It is the freedom that man has in following his own essence, reason...But to follow reason is to participate in the larger life of the state, for 'In the state alone has man rational existence'¹⁸⁷.

The realization of this divine providence that is fulfilled in history is carried out in stages that follow each other according to necessity. This explains Hegel's necessary dialectical plan where there is the arrival and dissolution of things to make way for new ones. Through this necessary contradiction old civilizations fall and die yielding to better ones. At the center of all this process and growth is the realization of reason that is possible through human action. Therefore, reason is working on the story so that everything merges into it. The task of philosophy is to discover universal rationality not as something planned by man, but by Reason:

In short what is at work in history is reason. And therefore, the real (*wirklich*) understood on the deepest level where we see the forces which bring it into being and shape it, this real is rational...The «*wirklich*» is reality understood in relation to its underlying necessity. This is rational, because rationality is what posits the real. Hence those who see the world as God-forsaken are blind. The job of philosophy is to uncover this rationality¹⁸⁸.

Hegel emphasizes very much the importance of the state and the coexistence of the subjects, although we already know that the State cannot provide the final stage of the self-realization of the individual. This final stage is provided by the Absolute as the very basis of things. Our emphasis is on affirming that the State as the ultimate realization of the human community on earth is in a sense an expression of the Idea; it is the highest incarnation of «*Sittlichkeit*», where man operates as the vehicle of the rational will.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 390.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 422.

6.3. Man as the vehicle of the Geist: The unity of the Geist

The greatest understanding of the spirit as we have mentioned is what Hegel calls the Absolute which takes three forms in its ascending order: art, religion, and philosophy. Our concern here is not to examine each of these forms, but to show that man as a finite spirit relates intersubjectively to everything that exists, including the Absolute.

Therefore, to better understand how the subject overcomes his opposition to nature, society, and God we have to examine Hegelian notion of Geist or cosmic spirit according to Taylor. He constructs his conception by uniting two ideas to overcome Cartesian dualism. It unites the Aristotelian theory ofhylomorphism and Herder's expressive theory. Cartesian dualism as we saw perceived the subject as the center of consciousness and, as a consequence, the external world and in it the human body is pure extension, pure exteriority for thought. Expressivist theory attempts to overcome this dualism by showing a different picture. Consciousness according to Herder's theory is embodied and there is no separation between thoughts and the body. There is also the fact of language that in this perspective should not be seen as mere signs, but as a means of expression of the subject's consciousness. Here we echo the words of Taylor's explanation of the express theory:

On this theory words have meaning not simply because they come to be used to point or refer to certain things in the world or in the mind, but more fundamentally, because they express or embody a certain kind of consciousness of ourselves and things, peculiar to man as a language-user, for which Herder used the word '*Besonnenheit*'. Language is seen not just as a set of signs, but as the medium of expression of a certain way of seeing and experiencing; as such it is continuous with art. Hence there can be no thought without language; and indeed, the languages of different peoples reflect their different visions of things. Hence this theory of expression is also anti-dualist. There is no thought without language, art, gesture, or some externa! medium. And thought is inseparable from its medium...¹⁸⁹.

In short, just as Aristotle used hylomorphism to show the unity of soul and body in living beings, the expressivist theory considers the human being not only as a rational being, but with the capacity for expression. Therefore, we are talking about the principle of necessary incarnation where there is this inseparable unity between a human being who

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 82.

thinks, but also uses his means of incarnation which is the body. Let's use the same logic to understand Hegel's conception of the cosmic or Geist spirit. Following the principle of the necessary incarnation, we come to the conclusion that Geist is also incarnate and this is possible through finite spirits. Finite spirits become Geist's vehicles of consciousness so that he can express himself externally. The finite beings in our case are human beings, but as we have seen they are endowed with the capacity for expression. Therefore, Geist expresses himself in these finite beings:

Geist must thus embody itself in finite beings, in certain parcels of the universe. And these must be such that they can embody spirit. They must be living beings, for only living beings are capable of expressive activity, of deploying an external medium, of sound, gesture, marks, or whatever, in which meaning can be expressed; and only beings capable of expressive activity can embody spirit. Hence, we can see that if Geist is to be, the universe must contain rational animals, ourselves. There are finite spirits, who must be living beings, hence finite living beings. Finite living beings are in interchange with a world outside them. Thus, the universe must also contain a plurality of kinds of living things, as well as inanimate nature. Other species and inanimate nature are necessary as the background and foundation on which finite life can exist¹⁹⁰.

Hegel's idea is to try to reconcile the infinity and the finite. The two should not be seen in opposition, but as different in mutual relationship. A true infinity includes the finite. However, we must avoid perceiving the infinity as unlimited; this would lead to what he calls «*bad infinity*». Infinity is not limited by anything exterior; it is the finite that has a limit: a structure defined in a given space. Each finite, although part of the whole, is limited to each other and therefore also has limits. In this way the finite as a whole finds its unity in infinity and infinity is expressed in the ordered whole of finitude. Infinity is not limited by anything exterior, being the finite what has limit: a structure defined in a given space. Each finite, although part of the whole, is limited to each other and therefore also has limits. In this way the finite as a whole finds its unity in infinity and infinity is expressed in the ordered whole of finitude¹⁹¹. Hegel's attempt is to defend this unity, but maintaining the difference and particularity of each one:

Two related essential features of the Hegelian solution follow from this. The first is that the unity of man and world, of finite and infinite subject, does not abolish the difference.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 90.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 115.

Not only is the unity hard-won out of difference, as man struggles to rise to the level where the unity can be grasped; but the ultimate unity retains the difference within it. We remain finite subjects over against the world and God, men with all the particularities of our time, place and circumstances, even as we come to see this particular existence as part of a larger plan, as we come to be vehicles of a larger self-consciousness, that of Geist¹⁹².

Another distinction and difference to make is the fact that Geist, although expressed in the human being, is not reduced to him. Men only become indispensable vehicles of his existence, though not equal to him. Geist is never identical to the human spirit. At the same time, man, though the vehicle of infinite, nevertheless maintains his autonomy. This difference must always be maintained:

On the contrary, he is a spirit who lives as spirit only through men. They are the vehicles, and the indispensable vehicles, of his spiritual existence, as consciousness, rationality, will. But at the same time Geist is not reducible to man, he is not identical with the human spirit, since he is also the spiritual reality underlying the universe as a whole, and as a spiritual being, he has purposes and he realizes ends which cannot be attributed to finite spirits qua finite, but on the contrary which finite spirits serve. For the mature Hegel, man comes to himself in the end when he sees himself as the vehicle of a larger spirit¹⁹³.

The same logic follows the abolition of the opposition between the state and individuals. The state as a realization plays a vital role in the formation of the individual. When the state enters into full development, then this opposition is overcome. An individual will only realize his freedom when he lives in a collective life and this by itself requires a state:

Freedom is only real (wirklich) when expressed in a form of life; and since man cannot live on his own, this must be a collective form of life; but the state is the collective mode of life which is backed by the full power of the community; and thus, freedom must be embodied in the state¹⁹⁴.

The state, therefore, as a whole, needs its parts which are its individuals. In Hegel's dialectic each requires the other. The whole is only integer if in relation to its parts, and the pieces are only parts in relation to the whole. We cannot contemplate the parts on their

¹⁹² Ibid., 118.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 120.

own because they will no longer be conceived as parts; they will become wholes. Hegel uses the concept of «*Sittlichkeit*» to indicate that kind of morality that keeps the members of a community who owe it loyalty as its embodiment. This term further shows that substantial freedom as the realized good in which each member identifies with it. It has to do with the good, but it is done in a common space.

Hegel's view of religion is influenced by Kantian proposition. Its aim is to restore the autonomy of men against any external authority. Their religion is not based on traditional piety, but, in Kant's terms, is a «*religion of Aufklärer*»¹⁹⁵ where man draws near to God when he acts as the subject of a pure moral will. He was against a mere nominal belief based on external practices and opted for a belief of living piety capable of motivating the good of all man:

What I ought to do I determine not by my religious faith or the commands of God but by the commands I give myself as a rational being. Indeed, the rational core of religion, the belief in God and immortality, is founded on the requirements of morality, as necessary postulates if the highest good is to be realized¹⁹⁶.

Hegel thus advocates a religion that allows men to achieve moral self-determination, but that helps them regain totality. In this case, religion must be subjective, which means that it must overcome the tendency of mere external loyalty to certain practices and doctrines. Rather it should become a true living piety, and this will regain the integrity of man. By restoring man's integrity within himself he heals the divisions in society that restore the Greek view of society where men were free and undivided:

And this wholeness would not only heal the divisions within men but between them as well. The regeneration Hegel seeks is thus also and necessarily a political one: the recovery of a society in which men are free and undivided, as the Greeks were, in which the public life is an expression, and a common expression, of the citizens, rather than being imposed by unchallengeable authority on subjects¹⁹⁷.

Therefore, religion must unite people and should not be based on superstition; their doctrines must be based on universal reason. Commenting particularly on Christianity, he says that Jesus' mission was meant to restore man's unity with nature and

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 53

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

in this case, Jesus was « *a Kantian avant la lettre* »¹⁹⁸; his teaching aimed to reach the totality of the moral response where there is unity of reason and sensitivity. Jesus' preaching was meant to abolish the « *unhappy consciousness* »¹⁹⁹ which is a consciousness in which the place of unity and mutuality is overcome by domination and servitude between man and nature, nature and spirit, and ultimately also as a consequence between man and man. The Christian agape lived in its entirety brings full reconciliation:

The message of Jesus was a call to man to restore the lost unity, to replace the law which commands from outside and divides men from nature and each other with the voice of the heart, that affinity of spirit with nature which comes forward in love²⁰⁰.

7. Alterity in the Redefinition of Modern Secularization

In order to go further and investigate our topic of the otherness and intersubjectivity, it is worth looking at what Taylor means when he points out that we live in a secular era. It is necessary to clarify what secularism consists of in Taylorian terms to avoid any ambiguity in the use of the term. Modern man's view of religion is very different from the archaic era where religion was « *interwoven* » in all the activities of society and having « *no separate sphere* » on its own²⁰¹. Given this obvious change there are three ways to look at secularism. In the first case, secularism could be understood in the sense of public spaces where today they seem « *emptied of God* »²⁰² a difference from the old days in the experience of religion was felt everywhere. In the second perspective, secularism could be seen as the fall of these beliefs caused by the disbelief of the people and thus turning away from such practices. But the third sense, which is Taylor's understanding of secularism, religious belief is seen as one of the options among many other possibilities. In this case, faith becomes one of the alternatives for human freedom:

The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 59.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 59.

²⁰¹ SA, 2.

²⁰² Ibid., 2.

understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace...Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives²⁰³.

We are moving from a situation in which the belief that had previously remained an indisputable position receives criticism and is challenged, paving the way for other ways in which man can satiate the same pursuit. To understand Taylor's opinion, one must avoid looking at belief and disbelief as «*rival theories*» but rather as alternatives where an individual can choose to live life; today's spiritual life, therefore, can be lived differently. Taylor is trying to reconcile the different views of understanding religion today. He tries to reconcile two points of view that we had seen before: that of living as the engaged self and that of the disengaged self. From the perspective of the engaged self, the human subject tries to open up to other possibilities around him and live with each other. In the disengaged self the human subject sees himself occupying a possibility, but among many possibilities around him:

We all learn to navigate between two standpoints: an “engaged” one in which we live as best we can the reality our standpoint opens us to; and a “disengaged” one in which we are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist²⁰⁴.

The challenge posed on religion has opened the door to exclusive humanism, where there are different options that have put an end to the naïve religious faith. To use Max Weber's term: we have gone from a «*enchanted*» world where the presence of God seemed undeniable and involved in every explanation to a «*disenchanted*» world. It is no longer a world where God was seen as obvious and acting in the cosmos, but as a new world of science where exclusive humanism seems to be taking over. In the disenchanted world everything has been called into question, using the language of Descartes, giving space to the human mind to reflect, ask questions and interpret all situations. In the enchanted world, the meaning of everything seemed to be imposed on the human agent and was taken as it is; it was imposed from the outside on the human agent. This meaning also had its power that affected the daily procedures of the human being:

By contrast, in the enchanted world, the meaning is already there in the object/ agent, it is there quite independently of us; it would be there even if we didn't exist. And this means that the object/agent can communicate this meaning to us, impose it on us, in a

²⁰³ Ibid., 3.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 12.

third way, by bringing us as it were into its field of force. It can in this way even impose quite alien meanings on us, ones that we would not normally have, given our nature; as well as, in positive cases, strengthening our endogenous good responses...But in the enchanted world, the meaning in things also includes another power²⁰⁵.

This explanation demonstrates why disbelief in the enchanted world remained a rare phenomenon in contrast to the modern world where questioning our beliefs seems like a normal occurrence. The disenchanted modern self or what Taylor defines as the «*buffered self*» is a self that is aware of the possibilities of disengagement unlike the «*porous self*» of the enchanted spiritual world. However, all this has to be understood in a historical sense by calling into question the context of what led to such a change.

In 2009 the «*Institute for Public Knowledge*» at New York University, the «*Social Science Research Council*» and the «*Stony Brook University*» organized a colloquium entitled, «*The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*». Four experts in contemporary political and social philosophy participated: Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler y Cornel West²⁰⁶. Now, we want to analyze the ideas of Charles Taylor in dialogue with these others, especially about the importance of redefining the term secularism; it is an attempt to clarify the term secularism within a secular regime.

Charles Taylor draws attention to a problem with the use of the term «*secular*» as a characteristic of modern democracies. From the beginning he strives to clarify this term to avoid any ambiguity. There are two erroneous ways in which the term has been interpreted that indicate a dissociation between Church and State. On the one hand, there has been an emphasis on the non-correlation of the state with any religious confession and on the other, the call to neutrality, or what he calls «*principled distance*»²⁰⁷ in a pluralistic reality. But according to him, we must go beyond this limitation by examining the term more closely:

If we try to examine it further secularism involves in fact a complex requirement. There is more than one good sought here. We can single out three, which we can class in the three categories of the French Revolutionary trinity: liberty, equality, fraternity.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 33-34.

²⁰⁶ Judith Butler, et al., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011),vii.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 34

Taylor's central point is not only to avoid the reduction of secularism to the relationship between state and religion, but to ask ourselves what a secular state can offer in a pluralistic society. It is important that the identity of each one is protected, that there is equality for each one and also the possibility of listening to everyone in such a pluralistic situation.

There are two historical contexts that show how the secular regime emerged and that explain in some way the incomprehension of secularism. In the United States in 1870, it began as a controversial term in its context for the struggle for acceptance of all groups, whether religious or non-religious. In France, the term, «*laïcité came about in a struggle against a powerful church. The strong temptation was for the state itself to stand on a moral basis independent from religion*»²⁰⁹. For Taylor, the state should treat all religions equally based on freedom. The basis of everything must be state neutrality that avoids favoring any side, whether religious or not. At this point Taylor warns us against the tendency to see secularism or «*laïcité*» as a separation between state and church or as an attempt to isolate religion from public space. In a democratic state, it is a «*conditio sine qua non*» create a collective agent where the nation or the people can operate in unity and above all keep in mind that establishing a collective identity is a perpetual task that needs the effort of each day. Here we use the author's words:

But for people to act together, in other words, to deliberate in order to form a common will on which they will act, requires a high degree of common commitment, a sense of common identification. A society of this kind presupposes trust, the basic trust that members and constituent groups have to have, the confidence that they are really part of the process, that they will be listened to and their views taken account of by the others. Without this mutual commitment, this trust will be fatally eroded...This means that the modern democratic state has generally accepted common purposes, or reference points, the features whereby it can lay claim to being the bulwark of freedom and locus of expression of its citizens²¹⁰.

Taylor does not deny the possibility of a civil religion. He actually mentions the young American republic, which was clearly defined as part of God's providential plan for humanity²¹¹, but he disagrees with Rousseau's idea that having a religion is an organizational criterion in democratic societies. For him, it is important to respect human

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 39.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 43.

²¹¹ Ibid., 47.

rights, avoid any discrimination and observe democracy in contemporary societies. For him too, John Rawls' idea of «*overlapping consensus*» as a response to the plurality of doctrines does not seem appropriate. More than a solution it is something completely new and can be the beginning of suspicion among several groups:

For, indeed, the overlapping consensus between different founding views on a common philosophy of civility is something quite new in history and relatively untried. It is consequently hazardous. And, besides, we often suspect that those with different basic views can't really subscribe to these principles, not the way we do!²¹².

So, what is the solution according to Taylor? He says that instead of returning to the distinction between religion and anti-religion, it is pertinent to have an epistemic distinction or a secular reason as a means of drawing conclusions where everyone feels heard. Habermas speaking on the same point echoes the same opinion; says it's important in cases where an idea seems incompatible to avoid it. A good example is where the Bible is evoked as an authority in a preamble of the law. At this point, the application of secular reason will take precedence not because these references are religious, but because they are not shared between groups.

In the dialogue between Habermas and Taylor they differ in regard to the existence of differences between ethics and religion; Habermas is of the opinion that secular reasons have a philosophical orientation and therefore have nothing to do with religion in its concern for the salvation of man. He completely refutes the irrational provenance of religious reasons:

As to the motivation, I would immediately agree that it makes no sense to oppose one sort of reason, secular, against religious reasons on the assumption that religious reasons are coming out of a worldview which is inherently irrational. Reason is working in religious traditions, as well as in any other cultural enterprise, including science. So, there is no difference on that broad cultural level of reasoning. At a general cognitive level, there is only one and the same human reason..., Anyhow, secular reasons in this sense belong to a context of assumptions—in this case to a philosophical approach..., Philosophical doctrines are not internally connected with a specific path to salvation²¹³.

Taylor defending his proposal of no difference between ethics and religion presents us with the example of the famous Martin Luther King who used a Christian

²¹² Ibid., 48.

²¹³ Ibid., 61-62.

speech to defend the Constitution of the United States without having problems with anyone. The three authors, Habermas, Taylor and Rawls agree on the application of neutrality in the drafting of laws. It must also be applied not only in administrative decrees, but also in the issuance of judgments. The application of neutrality in the state does not mean that religious thought is less rational, but the central point is to prevent any religion from dominating the way the society is governed, since there are many currents that are religious and non-religious:

The state can be neither Christian nor Muslim nor Jewish, but, by the same token, it should also be neither Marxist, nor Kantian, nor utilitarian. Of course, the democratic state will end up voting laws that (in the best case) reflect the actual convictions of its citizens, which will be either Christian or Muslim, etc²¹⁴.

Taylor believes that distrust between state and religion in democratic regimes has its history. Its origin comes from the double basis in the myth of the enlightenment. The illustration has been understood, on the one hand, «*as a passage from darkness to light, that is, as an absolute, unmitigated move from a realm of thought full of error and illusion to one where the truth is at last available*»²¹⁵. This understanding is wrong because it forgets that getting to the truth is always an infinite task that requires a lot of patience. In addition to this, human affairs have been interpreted as worldly and therefore accepting revelation or religion as a source of absolute wisdom. Finally, concluding, how secular regimes should relate to religion, our author says that democracy should not be seen as a defense of religion, but as an honest attempt to enthrone values such as liberty, equality and fraternity that are fruits of the French revolution.

I think it is appropriate to use the opinion of Judith Butler as one of the thinkers of this colloquium which, in my opinion, offers us a very neutral proposal and enriches what Taylor has proposed. She presents herself as not an expert in either the field of religion or the field of public life, but as a person who has an interest in patiently seeking a solution. She opens her speech this way:

I am neither a scholar of religion nor really of public life, but my thinking does intersect with the problem posed here today to the extent that I have been trying in the last years to consider the complex relationship between Judaism, Jewishness, and Zionism, as I know so many other people have as well. My own concern has been to find and foster the

²¹⁴ Ibid., 50-51.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 52.

patience and perspicacity to think through some issues that seem to be confounded within public discourse²¹⁶.

Butler's great novelty is his model of language and questioning. It is a reminder that we are beings of language and cannot live without it. In any existence it is impossible for one to escape being questioned, either in an offensive way or annoying to others. Faced with this reality, it is necessary that one be able to open oneself to such unforeseen questions. In the public sphere and especially in the face of a pluralistic reality it is impossible to avoid this vulnerability of being questioned or contradicted, but this is not the end of everything. This should be the origin of an opportune moment of interrogation with the opinions of the other who opposes his idea:

Butler's contribution to the present volume once again takes up the question of politics, public speech, and vulnerability. It can be read, in a sense, as making good on a promissory note in an argument she made in an essay that first appeared in the *London Review of Books* under the title «No, It's Not Anti-Semitic. » In this powerful text, Butler confronted a public strategy that seeks to control a particular kind of speech that circulates in the public sphere—to terrorize with the charge of anti-Semitism, and to produce a climate of fear...²¹⁷.

Butler's model opens a new chapter where each person or group can open up to the other. The use of the language instrument should help to avoid any idea or action that may cease to be a radical autonomy. She adds that living also means living together and the two are inseparable. In the same argument, living with someone is not an easy matter; living together is still fragile. She insists that coexistence predates any community formation and, therefore, coexistence requires a mutual understanding of others:

To co-habit is prior to any possible community or nation or neighbourhood.... We might choose where to live, and who to live by, but we cannot choose with whom to co-habit the earth²¹⁸.

To understand the vision of secularism from our perspective, we must avoid seeing it as the source of conflicts and distance between different beliefs or unbelief, but rather as a way where the freedom of the individual is expanded. Here the human subject

²¹⁶ Ibid., 70.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 9.

has a possibility to question what he believes. It is a way where belief and unbelief must coexist and enrich each other. This is the true spirit of alterity and intersubjectivity.

8. CONCLUSION

We have tried to show how the formation of the modern self has developed and the changes that have occurred from antiquity to the modern isolated self. We have seen how the Taylorian model favors a better interrelationship between different individuals in society. More than ever today in a world dominated by individualistic and utilitarian tendencies, a stronger ethics capable of cultivating solidarity, mutual understanding and benevolence between individuals and groups is needed in our societies where everyone feels involved and identified. In this, individual value and dignity must be valued, as well as those of other people. The place of the common good in modern society must be defended and seen as part of the anthropomorphic aspect of the human being:

It seems we need a stronger ethic, a firmer identification with the common good, more solidarity, if we are really to enter the promised land of a self-sustaining ethical code, or even meet the basic condition of the modern moral order, that our interaction really be of mutual benefit...The solidarity can't be just managed from on high but must be something people really identify with²¹⁹.

Taylor has presented us with a truly intersubjective view of the human person emphasizing crucial characteristics such as the capacity for self-interpretation and strong evaluation, the dialogical aspect of the person, and a vision of a being that has a purpose, etc. He has condemned the individualistic tendencies that rise in our modern world. His vision of society is all inclusive where the individual as a person feels appreciated in his particularity, but also respecting the fact that society is very important for his growth. Therefore, he does not undermine the importance of the individual or the importance of the community as a whole. This explains why he has insisted on qualitative discrimination of goods within society. His moral theory is therefore inclusive and communal where recognition of all individuals and groups is necessary. He advocates for different worldviews, pluralism and diversity, while strongly advocating for reconciliation

²¹⁹ SS, 692.

between them. We will enrich Taylor's proposals by presenting other visions of alterity in the next chapter.

There have been different philosophical proposals of intersubjectivity and alterity in history that have tried to move the human agent away from the slavery of individualism. Therefore, the task of the next chapter will try to present some systematic attempts that try to overcome such a crisis by opening the way for a better construction of the human community.

CHAPTER II

SYSTEMATIC PROPOSALS OF OTHER AUTHORS ON ALTERITY

1. INTRODUCTION

This second chapter will critically analyse the proposals of other thinkers who have addressed the problem of alterity and intersubjectivity by taking into account the critical contributions made in the previous chapter. As can be seen in our comparative methodology, we shall employ other authors who have touched on our topic in order to dialogue with Charles Taylor's ideas on alterity and intersubjectivity with a view to completing and enriching his contributions.

In the first instance, we shall analyse the ideas of Scheler, a prominent German philosopher who, like Taylor, is very interested in the anthropological question, where he examines especially the emotional and affective dimensions of the human being as a means of interaction and openness to the other. Love in the human being becomes a tool for the human being to open up to the other who is different for Scheler. We will examine especially the aspects of sympathy and love expressed by Scheler to show how he brings out the idea of alterity in his phenomenology of being. Scheler like Taylor presents us with a being capable of transcendence, a being that is capable of transcending the self to reach the other. Both thinkers go against the Cartesian view of the human being living in isolation.

Besides, we shall examine how Martin Buber presents his vision of alterity. In answering the anthropological question, Buber presents us with the dialogical aspect of the human being and especially in his work, *«I and Thou»*. In this philosophy of dialogue, Buber analyses what he calls the double expression of reality seen in the terms I and Thou. By examining the metaphysical structure of such terms, he shows that the human being is capable of dialogue not only with his neighbour but also with the rest of creation. Life in this context becomes an encounter with the other because the human being is able to communicate with the other. Taylor, as we saw, also presents a self that is dialogical by nature. Dialogue is one of the ontological aspects of the human being according to Taylor. This aspect describes human identity. In this case our identities have to do with the relationship we have with the other who is different from me according to Taylor. Therefore, the two authors will agree on the fact that the dialogical aspect of the human person is one of the inevitable ontological aspects with regard to the encounter with the other.

José Ortega y Gasset is another author whose contribution to the understanding of alterity is of immense importance to our generation. Concerned with the study of man, like Taylor, states that the main problem of life is man himself. In other words, man becomes the question to be answered if one wants to reach the solution of life. The human being for Ortega is a being of action; executes. His vision of alterity is very intersubjective because for him existence is mainly coexistence with other beings and things in the environment. It will thus be discovered when we examine the meaning of his famous dictum: «*I am I and my circumstance*». Although Ortega insists on the radical reality of the person's life, however, its meaning for this is far from being associated with the Cartesian solipsist vision of the human being. His presentation of the human being as an executor of action is somehow related to Taylor's vision of the human being as someone capable of self-interpretation and self-evaluation.

The three authors: Scheler, Buber and Ortega will be examined, to some extent, in light of the interpretation of Laín Entralgo, who has also delved into how they have expressed their ideas of alterity.

Immanuel Levinas is another author whose systematic analysis of alterity cannot be ignored and therefore we believe we should include him in this chapter. Levinas' view of alterity looks good in his reinterpretation of transcendence based more on the relationship we have with our fellow human beings. The ethics of Levinas becomes the first philosophy where he insists on the ethical responsibility, we have towards the other who is different from us. In the presence of the other we cannot afford to be indifferent. The other is that voice of infinity that calls us to respond ethically without delay. This will be seen as we analyse what he calls nostalgia and metaphysical desire for the other to bring out your idea of alterity. To delve much deeper into this, we will also examine his view of death, where he strongly points out that the death of my neighbour, the death of the other, is in a way my own death.

Eventually, we shall examine the ethics of Ubuntu in order to highlight the idea of alterity from the African perspective. African culture has significantly contributed to the understanding of the human person and, above all, how a human being should relate to and interact with the rest of creation. Intersubjectivity, inclusivity and the importance of community are characteristic features of Ubuntu's ethics. In this work we have felt the need to compare this notion of alterity with the one outlined by Taylor. Our choice of Ubuntu ethics is intentional because most African traditions practice and follow this

ethics in one way or another. Surely, the African continent is big, and cultures differ in one way or another, but you will notice that most of these cultures in many ways have something in common. Ubuntu's insistence on the «*humanity*» it is what in particular answers the anthropological question of who the human being is. The human being in our context is always «*a being-with*». To bring up the idea of alterity in Ubuntu's philosophy, we will examine its main principles of ethics. As in Taylor, this ethics are holistic, covering all aspects of human existence. We will see its form of communitarianism compared to Taylor's, where such aspects of diversity, pluralism and autonomy are again put into question. The dialogical aspect of the human being so emphasized in Taylor and other authors will also surface again in Ubuntu ethics. Taylor in his theory of ethics has analysed the question of the common good that will also be seen in the African perspective.

2. MAX SCHELER

Max Scheler (1874-1928), like Charles Taylor and most philosophers, gives great importance and priority to the question of the human person. This could be noticed in his confession before death, where the question: «*What is man and his place in being?* » was of great interest. This question awakened his philosophical consciousness in the understanding of the human person, that is, his place, his essence and his end²²⁰. Scheler with the use of the intuitive and descriptive method in ethics became the founder of the material ethics of value as opposed to Kant's formal ethics²²¹. His position is that the human being has the capacity and feeling of what is valuable and therefore does not need the categorical imperative as expressed by Kant. Values actually attract man by themselves because he is not so bad. Scheler's kind of ethics is not intellectual like Kant's; rather his, is presented in an emotional point of view:

Scheler objeta a Kant que con su formalismo ha pasado por alto precisamente el contenido de valor de lo moralmente bueno; no es una acción moralmente valiosa poder convertirse en ley universal, sino al revés, por ser valiosa puede convertirse en una ley general. También ha ignorado Kant, con su concepto del deber, el verdadero carácter de moral. Lo valores no necesitan ser imperados, atraen por si mismos al hombre. El hombre no es tan

²²⁰ Stephen Frederick Schneck, *Person and polis: Max Scheler's personalism as political theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 45.

²²¹ Johannes Hirschberger, *Historia de la filosofía II* (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1967), 399.

malo que necesite de un imperativo categórico. No está solicitado solo por el mal, sino también por el bien... El hombre posee una capacidad de 'sentimiento' para lo valioso ²²².

Looking at Scheler's theory of personalism we find that man is made person by values. His definition of a person is that of a being who is always acting, choosing what is valuable to himself; a person is a concrete unit of acts. This differentiates a person from other things who are mere beings deficient in acts. By acting, he makes himself through these values, which by themselves are a participation in the love of God inherent in his heart. Love thus becomes the source of all moral values for the human person:

Lo que hace persona a la persona son los valores. La persona es algo siempre actuante, un acto no sometido a la determinación causal, ni por parte de la masa hereditaria, ni del carácter, ni del mundo circundante; aprende en libertad el mundo de lo valioso y configura así al hombre en su valor supremo, justamente como persona. La persona no 'son', 'se hacen', al hacer efectivos los valores. Este obrar personal es en el fondo un amar, correspondientemente al orden interno del corazón, y este amor, en cuanto participación del mundo de los valores, es en último término, participación de la persona primitiva y originaria, que es Dios ²²³.

Therefore, unlike other objects, man can voluntarily execute his intentional acts in the world and even manipulate the world itself to live better. Scheler's work on sympathy, «*The nature of sympathy*» introduces us to the theme of intersubjectivity and alterity. The person's consciousness is always experienced and discerned within the context of the community. His conception of the person is more like that of «*zoon politikon*»²²⁴ of Aristotle where the social aspect of the human being is emphasized. There is in Scheler's perspective a total integration into society where the personality of the individual is respected, as well as that of the other subjects in the community. Such integration escapes by all means any objectivization of the person and thus creates an environment that fosters the growth of the individual in freedom, as well as those other individuals present:

Person community, the highest level of sociality, envisions a transcendence not only of the self as an object of the community, but of the community and others as objects of the self. In this instance, the community which disappears as a separate existence at the level

²²² Ibid., 401.

²²³ Ibid., 402-403.

²²⁴ Stephen Frederick Schneck, *Person and polis: Max Scheler's personalism as political theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 58.

of the society is reformed and transformed. In one sense, accepting the personhood and inherent dignity of others eliminates the subject-object relationship between the self and others. In another sense, however, personal individuality is most deeply affirmed in the acceptance of one's own personhood in the eyes of others and in the embrace of the community²²⁵ .

Scheler applies the term «*Gesamtperson*», that is, «*collective person*», to explain his conception of the person defined as: «*the unity of independent, spiritual, and individual single person 'in' an independent, spiritual, and individual collective person*»²²⁶. However, «*Gesamtperson*» does not indicate a collection of individuals in society, but in it each individual is taken as a being who executes and, therefore, there is respect for each individual person. It is a kind of intersubjectivity that respects each person from the fact that he is a being in action and cannot be treated as an object. Thus, Scheler's personalism transcends all forms of objectification by the fact that he defends the dignity and personality of the individual in society. Since other individuals cannot be treated as objects, the only way to know them is to enter into their free acts in a kind of co-experience through emphatic love:

Through co-acting or co-experiencing, therefore, "knowledge" is gained of the other by which the person perceives his own social character and origin. Through this "knowledge," in perceiving the immeasurable dignity of the other as person, the person is able to join responsibly and intentionally and to accept the highest sociality of the person community. In the Nature of Sympathy, Scheler discusses this same "co-experiencing" in its highest form as a "non-cosmic personal love," a concept which he locates atop a hierarchy of types of sympathy which he sees as the grounds of intersubjectivity²²⁷ .

As we have observed previously, persons are unity of acts and necessarily not objectifiable; they are also beings who perform intentional acts. This makes them ethically responsible in society. By being in relationship with one another, you are called to value and love the other. Not loving the other or engaging in acts of hatred is described as ethically irresponsible; it is actually morally evil, and this further reduces the value of

²²⁵ Ibid., 59.

²²⁶ Ibid., 60.

²²⁷ Ibid., 62.

the other to a lower level. In other words, personal love in society represents Scheler's highest form of intersubjectivity:

Hence, in the personal love which marks the highest intersubjectivity, one co-experiences the values of the other, thereby mutually sharing in the pursuit of the highest values appropriate for each unique person.... In the community of persons, or *Gesamtperson*, in which each individual person partakes, the implications of Scheler's value theory paint a somewhat fabulous, albeit attractive, vision. For, in the corporate person, as an intentional and responsible communion of free individual persons, a moral solidarity is achieved. Here the whole assumes the moral responsibility for the actions of each part and each part accepts the responsibility for the whole. The *Gesamtperson* and the individual person are freely entered into what can only be described as a "loving" relationship, where each pursues (in co-acting through the other) the fulfilment of the highest value of each ²²⁸.

At this juncture we would like to delve deeper into the idea of Scheler's alterity as interpreted by Pedro Laín Entralgo. We will do this by examining Scheler's concept of sympathy and love.

2.1. The Spheres of Being

In addition to the spiritual dimension of the human being, Scheler points out five other dimensions: the sphere of the divine and absolute, the sphere of you and us, that of the exterior world, that of the interior world, and that of one's own body²²⁹. These areas are irreducible to each other, and, for this reason, each will have its own personal and executive act. There is a genetic order that describes an individual development from childhood to adulthood in which the spheres, from the divine to that of the body itself, make their appearance progressively:

Las diversas esferas del ser no nos son dadas a la vez, sino con sujeción a un determinado orden genético... Nos es dada ante todo la esfera de lo divino; luego la esfera del tú y el nosotros; más tarde, la esfera del mundo exterior, la del mundo interior y la del cuerpo propio con su mundo en torno... Este orden genético, en fin, es a la vez psicológico e histórico, se cumple en el desarrollo individual (tránsito de la niñez a la edad adulta) y en el curso de la historia (paso de la vida «primitiva» a la vida «civilizada»)²³⁰.

²²⁸ Ibid., 65.

²²⁹ TRO1, 222.

²³⁰ Ibid., 223.

To answer the problem of the other, Scheler differentiates two types of knowledge: «*un primario saber acerca de la esencia de la comunidad y de la existencia de un tú en general*»²³¹. The «*tuidad*» or «*the you sphere* » it occupies a very fundamental space in human existence as a reality that appears in our consciousness and is concretely created. To defend the presence of a «*general you*» in human consciousness it is asked how a human being who has not had the opportunity to meet other similar beings like him can come to have the idea. This man, Scheler answers, will have the idea of a «*you general*» without a concrete description of the individuals in such a community. The basis of this idea of the sphere of «*you*» has its basis according to Lain's interpretation in an intuition of consciousness of emptiness, which: «*En él produciría la ejecución solitaria de aquellos actos de su vida psíquica que tienen su término en la realidad de otro hombre —por ejemplo: ciertos actos de responsabilidad o de amor— o que de algún modo la requieren*»²³².

Scheler distances himself from Descartes' idea by indicating that his idea of a «*general you*» is not born of innate ideas but of a psychic experience. Scheler's thought of proposing a prior knowledge of the general you in every human consciousness aims at showing that, one cannot think of the self without us. This presence of a you in general as we have said has a genetic process and such a tendency can be observed from the infant age of children. A child may seem to have a monologue while playing, but in reality, and as psychology observes, it is not just a talk as such, but refers to «*a collective monologue*». Here Lain explains this reality by quoting the following passage:

Si se observa a niños de tres a cinco años jugando a cualquier juego —escribe el psicólogo A. A. Grünbaum—, se advierte que cada niño está visiblemente preocupado solo de sí mismo y que, en realidad, solo de sí habla. Cuando se les oye de lejos, se creería que sostienen una conversación; pero si nos acercamos, pronto veremos que aquello no es sino un monólogo colectivo, en el cual los participantes ni se escuchan ni se responde entre sí... Este ejemplo, tan rotundo en apariencia, de la actitud egocentrista del niño, prueba más bien que el alma infantil vive vinculada a lo común... Los niños parecen conducirse sin miramiento alguno hacia los otros, precisamente porque se tratan sobre el supuesto de que todos sus pensamientos, incluso los mal expresados o no expresados en absoluto, son una propiedad común...²³³.

²³¹ Ibid., 226.

²³² Ibid., 227.

²³³ Ibid., 230-231.

This feeling and emotions, Scheler says, is not the product of a transfer that the child has received from the community. The child lives them psychically and gradually they form in a definite way. Then there is a slow and progressive step from a very living presence of a general self to a strange self and, in the end, you come to an awareness of yourself. In other words:

...convivir humanamente es ir pasando a través de distintos niveles de convivencia, desde el más elemental e instintivo, cuasi-animal, de la primera infancia, hasta el que rige el trato netamente interindividual o interpersonal de las sociedades civilizadas²³⁴.

Scheler will then show how human beings express themselves to other beings by creating a relationship. Human beings express themselves in a unitary way and not as a foreign body in front of others. That is, before thinking about the bodily reality of a human being, I have perceived his psychic totality. In other words, it must be said that human consciousness is the expressive reality; it is not closed in his inner psychic reality:

El ánimo amistoso u hostil de alguien para conmigo lo aprehendo en la unidad de expresión de su mirada mucho antes de que yo pueda indicar, por ejemplo, el color o el tamaño de sus ojos...En suma: el cuerpo del otro es para mí, ante todo, conciencia que se exterioriza, expresión perceptible e inmediatamente percibida²³⁵.

The idea of the expressive totality of the other allows me to live and participate in their emotional situation of joy, sadness, etc. because I perceive their activity not only in their external form, but also in their internal sense. Scheler proposes the possibility of a shared life, which is a radical response that goes against the whole tendency of the modern «yoísmo», which as we have said in the previous chapter was in crisis. Therefore, as has been said, psychic life is not a solipsistic reality, but consists of «*con-vivir vivencias comunes con quienes nos rodean: convivir con el otro, en tal caso, no es solo vivir junto a él, es también compartir las mismas vivencias...*»²³⁶.

For such a coexistence with others to be possible, it is important that everyone becomes aware of their own body and psychic reality. If this consciousness is missing, the reality of the neighbour, the psychic reality, is closed. In very concrete words we say that I can feel morally the pain you suffer, even if it is not physically; I can share your sufferings if I reach out to you. With this perception Scheler distances himself from the

²³⁴ Ibid., 233.

²³⁵ Ibid., 236.

²³⁶ Ibid., 243.

proposal that holds that there is a radical difference between the perception of oneself and that of the other.

2.2 Sympathy and Love

We shall address Scheler's understanding of the feelings of love and sympathy to penetrate the person of the other. The human individual for Scheler is a spiritual person and as we mentioned he is a unity of acts; the person is «*la concreta y esencial unidad entitativa de actos*»²³⁷. For this reason, the spiritual person cannot be reduced to an object. He adds that only by means of «*coejecución y comprensión*» we can enter and participate in the spiritual existence of the person of the other; a participation he calls knowing about the other:

Comprendiendo el sentido de los actos del otro —actividad radicalmente distinta de mi percepción de sus vivencias psíquicas—, yo participo en la esencia de la persona, en lo que ella libremente es. La constitutiva actividad de la persona no puede ser sabida; puede ser, en cambio, coejecutada y comprendida ²³⁸.

Therefore, through co-execution and understanding we enter the reality of the other, that is, through sympathy and love.

Laín lists some «*descriptive notes*»²³⁹ which characterize true sympathy. The first note is the «*participación no afectiva del simpatizante en el simpatizante*». This means that one can participate in the mood of another, for example, in his joy or sadness, but without participating affectionately in it. That is, there is a distinctive difference between compassion and suffering in the affective state. Sympathy also has an original character that arises from the genetic process we mentioned previously and, as the author states, sympathy is innate. Very clear trait of sympathy is its reactive and non-spontaneous character, and it is also blind of value. On the other hand, speaking of love, you can cite some of his «*descriptive notes*»²⁴⁰ that elevate him beyond sympathy. While sympathy is on the reactive level, love has its initiative character, and this implies that sympathy works best with the help of love:

²³⁷ Ibid., 244.

²³⁸ Ibid., 245.

²³⁹ Ibid., 247-249.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 249-252.

Por encima de la simpatía está el amor, sea este el amor al hombre en cuanto hombre, la filantropía, o —ya en su cima— el amor espiritual a la persona. El amor es independiente de los estados afectivos (podemos, por ejemplo, amar a quien nos entristece), difiere esencialmente de las tendencias psíquicas (con la ‘satisfacción’, la tendencia se apaga y el amor sigue igual o crece...²⁴¹.

We have pointed out that sympathy is reactive and not spontaneous; however, love has a spontaneous movement and not a reactive operation. While sympathy is blind in value, the movement of love moves toward the value of what one loves in search of a higher value. The movement towards a higher value implies that love also has a value-creating character; likewise, this movement does not end in value but in the valuable. What is valuable, in Scheler's language, is the person, that is, the core of the individual. Finally, the love movement is identified by its character of dedication among lovers. This dedication is what describes the interpersonal relationship that now goes beyond mere sympathy. As we have said, Scheler's conception eliminates any possibility of treating the other, or the other person as an object. The person, Scheler says:

Solo puede sermos dada coejecutando sus actos: cognoscitivamente, en el comprender y el convivir; moralmente... No es, pues, el ser empírico y objetivable del individuo, sino la verdad última de la persona, lo que constituye el término propio del amor espiritual. Amase en él, en definitiva, lo que la persona amada puede y debe ser, el adecuado cumplimiento de su íntima, tal vez desconocida vocación²⁴².

Loving the other is also a way of loving God where one can talk about living for each other in God or, in other words, loving in God.

3. MARTIN BUBER

Martin Buber (1878-1965) is one of the prolific philosophers who has devoted himself to the question of man and especially to the inescapable intersubjective and dialogical aspect of the existence of the human being. The question of «*what is man*» has been one of his concerns as can be seen in some of his writings. The philosopher Malebranche commenting on the importance of the study of the human being would say that the knowledge of man is the worthiest of all study, although the same knowledge is

²⁴¹ Ibid., 249.

²⁴² Ibid., 252.

not the most cultivated or the most developed of all that man possesses²⁴³. Emmanuel Kant lists the four important questions as follows²⁴⁴: What can I know? What should I do? What can I expect? and What is man? For Kant the fourth question becomes more fundamental since all the others are related to it. Martin Buber answers this anthropological question by presenting his dialogical principle in his books «*I and Thou*» (1923), «*Between Man and Man* » (1947) among others.

Buber differentiates two types of translations: the «*I and Thou*» and the «*I and It*». The first is characterized by openness, reciprocity and being there for the other in which you relate to respecting their uniqueness. Therefore, it does not matter the nature of the object with which one relates (be it a person or a tree, etc.), but it is important that there are these elements mentioned. In the second case, there is a subject-object relationship where one uses the other as a mere object and does not respect the very uniqueness of each creature. In order for a «*Thou*» relationship to occur both parties must be ready to respond mutually to one another otherwise it will remain at the level of «*It*» relation:

In *I and Thou*, Buber contrasts man's two primary attitudes—the two ways in which he approaches existence. One of these is the “I-Thou” relationship, the other the “I-It.” The difference between these two relationships is not the nature of the object to which one relates, as is often thought. Not every relation between persons is an I-Thou one, nor is every relation with an animal or thing an I-It. The difference, rather, is in the relationship itself. I-Thou is a relationship of openness, directness, mutuality, and presence. It may be between man and man, but it may also take place with a tree, a cat, a fragment of mica, a work of art—and through all of these with God, the “eternal Thou” in whom the parallel lines of relations meet. I-It, in contrast, is the typical subject-object relationship in which one knows and uses other persons or things without allowing them to exist for one self in their uniqueness: The tree that I meet is not a Thou before I meet it. It harbours no hidden personality that winks at me as I pass by. Yet if I meet it in its uniqueness, letting it have its impact on me without comparing it with other trees or analysing the type of leaf or wood or calculating the amount of firewood I may get out of it, then I may speak of an I-Thou relationship with it. The person that I meet is, by courtesy of our language and our attitudes, a “person” before I meet him. But he is not yet a Thou for me until I step into elemental relationship with him, and if I do not step into this relationship, even the politest forms of address do not prevent his remaining for me an It. I cannot, of course, produce

²⁴³ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947), 141.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

an I-Thou relationship by my own action and will, for it is really mutual only when the other comes to meet me as I him. But I can prevent such a relationship from coming into being if I am not ready to respond or if I attempt to respond with anything less than my whole being insofar as my resources in this particular situation allow²⁴⁵.

For Buber, therefore, life is an encounter with the other; it is a dialogue and not a monologue where one opens up to the other, but at the same time respects the uniqueness of each individual. This for him is what makes life authentic. Dialogue and communication with the other are part of the ontological reality of being where the human being can authenticate and realize himself. Buber wants to show that we cannot become real human beings without the presence of the other; the self becomes the real self only with the presence of other selves, something Charles Taylor had also affirmed. In other words, the relationship between men must move from the monologue characterized one, to a mature one based on the I-Thou:

Man becomes man with the other self. He would not be man at all without the I-Thou relationship. And man becomes more fully human through moving from the separateness of the man who is no longer a child to the mature I-Thou relationship²⁴⁶.

Now we analyse in detail the relationship between the I-Thou and the I-It to understand from this what the conception of alterity would look like. We will use Pedro Laín Entralgo's critical analysis of Buber's idea of alterity.

3.1. The Basic Words: I-Thou and I-It

Pedro Laín Entralgo attaches great importance to Buber's contribution to the understanding of alterity. The book «*I and Thou*» opens with a mention of the basic words that characterize the relationship between human beings and the world:

La actitud del ser humano es doble según la duplicidad de las palabras básicas que él puede pronunciar...Las palabras básicas no son palabras aisladas, sino pares de palabras. Una palabra básica es el par Yo-Tú. La otra palabra básica es el par Yo-Ello, donde, sin cambiar la palabra básica, en lugar de Ello pueden entrar también las palabras Él o Ella. Por eso también el Yo del ser humano es doble²⁴⁷.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., xii-xiii.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., xvii

²⁴⁷ Martin Buber, *Yo y Tú* (Madrid: Caparros editores 4ª edición, 2005), 11.

The existence of man in his relationship with what exists lies in these indicated primordial words.

Lain's research provides an enumeration of «*principal notes*»²⁴⁸ which describe this double dimension of human beings. It is about seeing what are the differences that exist between I-Thou and I-It relationships. In the first place, the relationship between I-It is characterized by some possession. That's why terms like «*I see something*» can be used. Here it is very clear a certain kind of objectivization of what one sees. But in the I-Thou relationship, on the contrary, there is no conception of possession, but an atmosphere of encounter. This relationship goes beyond mere observation and possession, so it can be said that it is a reality where «*quien dice Yo-Tú contempla y acepta*»²⁴⁹. Buber adds that mere contemplation cannot characterize the I-Thou relationship in the full sense. Contemplation must be open up to the intimate knowledge of the other:

...no es la contemplación, sino el “conocimiento íntimo”, aquel en que el otro, hallándome yo receptiva y aceptadoramente situado ante su realidad, “me dice algo a mí”, algo que exige mi respuesta²⁵⁰.

Another principal note is that the I-It relationship imagines an objective reality within his confinement; however, the I-Thou relationship has no limit: The Thou fills the horizon; that is, the other cannot be enclosed in fixed characteristics, but to the freedom of always being the other. The I-Thou relationship also does not accept a previous image on someone that can create anticipation by obstructing a genuine encounter. In this relationship it is necessary to eliminate anything that can block a pure presence between the two individuals. The other is not an object where I know everything about him; that is, pretending to know everything about each other would close the encounter:

Del hombre a quien llamo tú no tengo conocimiento empírico: estoy en relación con él en el al salir de ese santuario le conozco de nuevo por la experiencia. La experiencia es el alejamiento del tú²⁵¹.

The relationship between I-Thou and I-It also differs if we look at the dimension of freedom. While the I-Thou relationship is characterized by its freedom and originality; that of the I-It is defined by necessity and determination. The encounter in the I-Thou

²⁴⁸ TRO1, 259-264.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 259.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 260.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 261.

relationship is a free offering for each one; reciprocity that allows the genuine encounter. But if we look at the I-It relationship we find a different reality: «*Atenido al yo-ello, tratando a la realidad como mero objeto, el hombre existe bajo el yugo de la arbitrariedad y la fatalidad...*»²⁵². Fatalism, which is a lack of freedom, will always be for Buber the inability to fulfil man's final destiny. In addition, the I-Thou relationship involves the whole person, the person as a whole, respecting the being, the activity and the realization. On the contrary, when I say I-It, there is a partial interpretation of the other to the extent that I consider him as an object. The difference is accentuated if we take into account the definition of person proposed by Buber. Talking about the human being presents us with two poles of human existence: the condition of the person and the condition of the singular individual and this explains that: «*Ningún hombre es puramente persona, y ninguno es puramente individuo singular. Cada hombre concreto vive en el interior de un yo doble, en cuya trama predomina uno u otro de sus dos ingredientes*»²⁵³.

3.2 Historical and Psychological Process of Basic Words

We have already examined the genetic process of the spheres of being according to Scheler. The idea is repeated in Buber's philosophy regarding the realization of the double reality: I-Thou and I-It in humans. This implies that the human being needs a historical and psychological process to get to pronounce and distinguish the basic words. Buber's starting point is the conviction that the relationship was there from the beginning, a reality that is seen in primitive people, although in them this distinction is not clear because they are at the sensory level of the process:

Pero esta forma rudamente sensorial en que la vivencia del encuentro viene ahora expresada, indica por sí misma que en el alma del primitivo no existe todavía clara conciencia del yo, ni, por lo tanto, conciencia explícita de la distinción «*objetiva*» entre tú y ello²⁵⁴.

In the first case the reality is of natural bonding while in the second case the reality is of a «*distinción natural*»²⁵⁵. So far it can be seen that Scheler's innate idea is very

²⁵² Ibid., 262.

²⁵³ Ibid., 264.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 264.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 265.

present in Buber's proposal. With the development of this process will come an opportune moment in which through this Thou, man discovers himself in the self.

3.3 Metaphysical Structure of the I-Thou Relationship

Buber, just like Scheler, presents us with spheres of being that arise from the I-Thou relationship. There are three «*esferas del ser*»²⁵⁶ according to his conception. The first presupposes life with nature where the creatures that are presented to me do not reach the threshold of language. But in the second sphere, life is expressed in language, and thus it is possible to accept the existence of the Thou. In the third sphere of life with intelligible essential elements one feels called to respond by thinking and acting. The three spheres are based on the eternal Thou, an infinite giver of life; thus, in each sphere we feel a breath emanating from this Eternal Thou. If this metaphysical foundation is accepted, the created realities cannot even be felt as an object, but as free donations from the same eternal Thou:

...cuando esa singular realidad arbórea sea por mí vivida y aceptada como donación gratuita; en definitiva, cuando a través del árbol, hecho ya tú mudo, yo llegue a oír la voz secreta del Tú eterno y dispensador que le sirve de último fundamento. Es el momento en que el hombre puede franciscanamente hablar del 'hermano árbol' ²⁵⁷.

Buber adds that only the relationship between man and man can be a true relationship because the use of expressive language between them facilitates dialogue in reality.

There are three moments that, according to Buber, adequately express the metaphysical structure of the I-Thou relationship: people, the world, and the eternal Thou.

...en primer término, yo y tú, es decir, las personas que de manera directa nos relacionamos; en segundo lugar, el mundo, nuestro mundo; en tercero, el Tú eterno, la realidad misteriosa y fundamentante de Dios ²⁵⁸.

In the interpersonal relationship, that is, the human relationship, one feels that the other must be what he is. Here Buber's concept of alterity can thus be apprehended as: the

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 269.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 270.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 270.

being of the other is the other than me; where I want the other to be as he is. The interpersonal encounter described here is not a mere sociological reality, where the principle of unity is one with the other for the good of the group, but a metaphysical reality where an essential «we» is built characterized by one towards the other. It is a reality between, the «metapsychic» and «metacosmic» reality that accompanies this meeting that constitutes us. He says: «*Más allá de lo subjetivo, más acá de lo objetivo, en el delgado filo en que el yo y el tú se encuentran, se halla el dominio del nosotros*»²⁵⁹. Buber calls this intermediate love or spirit, which is a human response to the other; a true relationship between I and Thou. Here we use the words Laín uses to describe this reality:

El amor no es un sentimiento adherido al yo, del cual el tú sea el contenido o el objeto; el amor está entre el yo y el tú... El espíritu en su manifestación humana es una respuesta del hombre a su tú... El espíritu no está en el yo, sino entre yo y tú...El hombre vive en el espíritu cuando sabe responder a su tú, y lo puede cuando entra en la relación con todo su ser²⁶⁰.

We present a climate of reciprocity between Thou and I and a call in which everyone is obliged to respond so that a true dialogue and encounter may be born:

La relación interhumana es recíproca, porque el yo y el tú asumen, por lo demás, alternativamente el papel del tú en la estructura dialógica del preguntar y del responder, sin que ninguno preceda realmente al otro²⁶¹.

Now, what is the relationship between I-Thou and the eternal Thou? The eternal Thou acts as the true foundation that gives true consistency to this relationship. That is, and always following Buber's proposal, the encounter with people and things on the path of life allows the encounter with the eternal Thou. In other words, I can find God through creation itself. Therefore, the eternal Thou is the primary principle of every relationship:

Y porque el Tú eterno es fundamento primario de toda relación yo-tú, puede y debe ser a la vez término suyo...Cada tú particular abre una perspectiva sobre el Tú eterno. En cada tú particular, la palabra fundamental invoca el Tú eterno ²⁶².

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 272.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 273.

²⁶¹ Franco Riva, "Ética como sociabilidad: Buber, Marcel y Levinas" *Anuario Filosófico*, 38(2), serial online (June 2005): 633-655. Accessed January 2021, <https://dadun.unav.edu/bitstream/10171/5024/1/RIVA.pdf>

²⁶² TRO1, 275.

Here we have just exposed the divine sense of the world that the Buberian conception has. It is important to note that Buber has an immediate conception of God's presence in his creation and is very close to the universe and man. However, the Thou can never be exhausted in its relationship with the world, it has to rise to the eternal Thou that is its realization «*par excellence*».

3.4 Dialogue as the Beginning of the Encounter

The structure of the relationship that we have already established cannot be realized as a true encounter without an authentic dialogue between I and Thou. Here, dialogue does not have the meaning of mere exchange of words, but refers to the interior and intimate life, where the trust that makes the relationship possible is engendered. In authentic dialogue, one accepts the other with full confidence and gives his answer because he feels that he has a responsibility not only to him, but to the presence of the eternal Thou. This implies that my response to the other would somehow be a response to the eternal Thou. A true dialogue cannot be carried out without opening up towards the other by accepting in him the presence of the Other.

4. JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), is one of the impeccable contributors to Spanish philosophical thought. He has been pronounced as «*the greatest Spanish philosopher*». He is the founder of «*Revista de Occidente*» and also «*escuela de Madrid*» where the great Spanish thinkers were involved²⁶³. Like Charles Taylor, Ortega puts the study of man at the centre. In fact, for him the problem of life is man²⁶⁴. The Orteguian view of man's life is intersubjective because unlike Cartesian idealism we cannot speak of the subject without the things that surround him. He feels that we must begin everything by correcting the starting point of philosophy. The thinking self exists, but there is no way the self can exist without the world; the self thinks of the same world and therefore both exist in a correlation. Therefore, the subject cannot exist without the thoughts surrounding him:

²⁶³ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 430.

²⁶⁴ José Ortega Gasset, *Obras Completas Tomo I* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente 7ª edición, 1966), 480.

Necesitamos, pues, corregir el punto de partida de la filosofía. El dato radical del Universo no es simplemente: el pensamiento existe o yo pensante existo —sino que si existe el pensamiento existen, ipso facto, yo que pienso y el mundo en que pienso— y existe el uno con el otro, sin posible separación. Pero ni yo soy un ser sustancial ni el mundo tampoco —sino ambos somos en activa correlación: yo soy el que ve el mundo y el mundo es lo visto por mí. Yo soy para el mundo y el mundo es para mí. Si no hay cosas que ver, pensar e imaginar, yo no vería, pensaría o imaginaría —es decir, yo no sería²⁶⁵.

For Ortega, therefore, the starting point is a strong alterity because he is convinced that there is the existence of the other outside the subject. In other words, the existence of the world of things outside the thinking self is an undeniable radical reality. However, there is a difference between the existence of the thinking subject and that of other things in the world. Man does not exist in a simple way to be there like anything else. It is not a mere passive existence of being, but rather an active existence. Man is involved in the execution of acts unlike any other being in the world; a human being is a being of action as we had seen with the previous authors. This is his way of discovering the world around him, he is attentive and alert to what surrounds him:

El hombre vive alerta en las fronteras de sí mismo, asomado hacia afuera, absorto en la naturaleza, es decir, atento al exterior...Atención a la naturaleza es vida de acción. El puro animal es el puro hombre de acción²⁶⁶.

In its text «*Adán en el Paraíso*» Ortega explains the situation of the man who is in the garden with all his innocence, but, at the same time, recognizes that he has the capacity to live because he has been created in the image of God. Man, therefore, must come out of the innocence of paradise and discover himself and the environment. The moment Adam and Eve are exiled from the innocence of the garden, they discover the being of their persons and for these they feel ashamed and cover themselves; they feel naked. The covering of themselves is caused by their discovery of their subjectivity and realizing that they are not mere things but persons who cannot live like anything else²⁶⁷. Therefore, Adam in the garden becomes the first being to live and experience the tragedy and drama of life. He has to live contentedly with the infinite problem of life. In this situation man must live and discover his being among other things:

²⁶⁵ José Ortega Gasset, *¿Que es la filosofía?: unas lecciones de Metafísica* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 2004), 117.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

Adán en el Paraíso significa: yo en el mundo; y ese mundo no es propiamente una cosa o una suma de ellas, sino un escenario, porque la vida es tragedia o drama, algo que el hombre hace y le pasa con las cosas²⁶⁸.

Ortega observes that the modern idealism emanating from the Cartesian conception has made the self a solitary existence. His proposal towards overcoming this loneliness is the vital reason capable of encompassing the entire human reality that surrounds the human subject.

En suma, el yo necesita salir de sí mismo, hallar un mundo en su derredor. El idealismo ha estado a punto de cegar las fuentes de las energías vitales, de aflojar totalmente los resortes del vivir. Porque casi ha conseguido convencer al hombre, en serio, es decir, vitalmente de que cuanto le rodeaba era sólo imagen suya y él mismo²⁶⁹.

The self must go out of himself to discover reality out there but always without losing its intimacy and freedom according to Ortega. Therefore, it is a way out of itself that respects and preserves the being of individuals towards the discovery of the world out there different from their reality. This is the same position that Taylor proposes as argued before where the subject in recognizing other subjects outside of himself does not lose his subjectivity and individuality:

Sin embargo, es preciso que, sin perder esa intimidad, el yo encuentre un mundo radicalmente distinto de él y que salga, fuera de sí, a ese mundo. Por tanto, que el yo sea, a la vez, íntimo y exótico, recinto y campo libre, prisión y libertad²⁷⁰.

Ortega's invitation for the exit of the self from himself is informed by the fact that nothing in the universe is given; it is a search and innovation where the self must indulge in discovery. The outside world is neither an illusion nor subjective; it exists in reality. This is the life of man where he is involved with everything that happens around him without ignoring anything. As our author says it is: «*my life*» and «*our life*» where as a person I must be actively involved. This is the true meaning of philosophizing where I encounter everything that surrounds me actively on a daily basis. Philosophizing for Ortega, therefore, is living in an active way where you are discovering yourself and the world. This is undoubtedly a pure proposal of alterity where the human subject has to

²⁶⁸ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 437.

²⁶⁹ José Ortega Gasset, *¿Que es la filosofía?: unas lecciones de Metafísica* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 2004), 106.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

recognize that he is not alone but always with the world around him. He is not a solitary consciousness confined only to thinking about itself, but one that should be bothered with everything that happens. Man has to define his life by active participation in it. Each as a unique presence has this mission of defining himself. This is for Ortega the main task of Philosophy where the life of each individual as a non-transferable reality must be lived concretely and not remaining in the realm of abstraction:

No es verdad que radicalmente exista sólo la conciencia, el pensar, el yo. La verdad es que existo yo con mi mundo y en mi mundo —y yo consisto en ocuparme con ese mi mundo, en verlo, imaginarlo, pensarlo, amarlo, odiarlo, estar triste o alegre en él y por él, moverme en él, transformarlo y sufrirlo. Nada de esto podría serlo yo si el mundo no coexistiese conmigo, ante mí, en mi alrededor, apretándome, manifestándose, entusiasmándome, acongojándome... Por tanto, el problema radical de la filosofía es definir ese modo de ser, esa realidad primaria que llamamos «nuestra vida». Ahora bien, vivir es lo que nadie puede hacer por mí —la vida es intransferible—, no es un concepto abstracto, es mi ser individualísimo. Por vez primera, la filosofía parte de algo que no es una abstracción ²⁷¹.

Ortega goes on to say that: «*Existir es primordialmente coexistir —es ver yo algo que no soy yo, amar yo a otro ser, sufrir yo de las cosas*»²⁷². This is to show that coexistence is undeniable and conscience by relating to objects other than itself realizes itself. Things depend on each other in the world. However, this is not a unilateral dependence, but in Ortega a kind of relationship of interdependence between the subjects and the objects available in the world. It is an inverse dependence with the reason that the human subject also depends on them. Life in this world is made up of what we do with the objects around us. To put it well: «*Vida es lo que somos y lo que hacemos... vivir es saber que lo hacemos, es —en suma— encontrarse a sí mismo en el mundo y ocupado con las cosas y seres del mundo*»²⁷³. Simply put, life involves what we do when we encounter everything that coexists with us.

As has already been stated, before living involves an active commitment of the subject in all the circumstances in which he finds himself in the world. This involves all activities, situations in which the subject is pleased and where his interaction with all objects, whether things or creatures, is inevitable. Existence involves that man confronts

²⁷¹ Ibid., 118-120.

²⁷² Ibid., 122.

²⁷³ Ibid., 126-128.

daily with his circumstance. Existence implies that the man who is in the universe faces his situation in it; this is the only way to discover yourself. It has also been mentioned that «*nothing is given*» or rather using the author's words:

La vida nos es dada —mejor dicho, nos es arrojada o somos arrojados a ella, pero eso que nos es dado, la vida, es un problema que necesitamos resolver nosotros... Hemos sido arrojados en nuestra vida y, a la vez, eso en que hemos sido arrojados tenemos que hacerlo por nuestra cuenta, por decirlo así, fabricarlo. O, dicho de otro modo: nuestra vida es nuestro ser. Somos lo que ella sea y nada más —pero ese ser no está predeterminado, resuelto de antemano, sino que necesitamos decidirlo nosotros, tenemos que decidir lo que vamos a ser; por ejemplo, lo que vamos a hacer al salir de aquí²⁷⁴ .

If nothing in life is given, and if man has to solve the problem of life, then it means that our life becomes a project. In this inevitable project, the human subject is involved in the constant decision of what he wants to be. Life becomes, then, a constant construction and projection of what we want to be; it is the very creation of our future. It becomes a constant process of what we are not yet: «*la vida es una actividad que se ejecuta hacia adelante, y el presente o el pasado se descubre después, en relación con ese futuro. La vida es futurición, es lo que aún no es*»²⁷⁵. Life is a constant encounter with what we want to be; it is an encounter with our future. By deciding on what we want to be in a situation where nothing is given, therefore, we anticipate this future.

Up to this point, it is crystal clear that Ortega attaches great importance to the question of alterity or to the whole question of the other. The problem of the other in Ortega is closely related to his famous maxim that defines the self: «*I am I and my circumstance*». Let's analyse the meaning of this axiom and its implications as in respect to what pertains to the problem of the other.

4.1. I Am I and My Circumstance

The central point here is in the difference between a thing and a person. While things can simply be used, people have, in Kantian language, their own purposes, and therefore cannot be used as means. How can you define this non-utilization of the self or the person? Says Laín: «*...para mí lo no utilizable es en primer término ese íntimo centro*

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 129-131.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 132.

de operaciones que llamo 'yo' o 'yo mismo', desde el cual puedo utilizar cuanto no soy 'yo'...»²⁷⁶. Implicitly in Ortega's language it is about seeing the other as my neighbour or as myself and therefore one that cannot be used as a thing. So, what is the self, according to Ortega? The self, he says, is the executive: «*lo que continua y operativamente da centro y origen a mi vida real*»²⁷⁷. But then, what would it mean by «*I am I and my circumstance?*» That is to say that it is I to the extent that I execute in every circumstance. In each of the circumstances in which I find myself I am interpreting my life and that is why execution is my vocation, to the extent that I have to execute, act, whether I want it or not. Now, what does the term circumstance mean by Ortega? Here we use the words of Julián Marías who dedicates himself to analysing the radical reality of this condition:

Como circunstancia es todo lo que me rodea, mi vida aparece como la realidad radical en la que aparecen o se constituyen todas las demás, radicadas en ella. Es, pues, el ámbito o área en que acontece todo lo que es real, en cualquier sentido de esta palabra²⁷⁸.

The circumstance ultimately includes the whole reality I find myself in, in real life. Now, we are interested in our reflection to see how I relate to the other person who can't really be treated as a thing. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the «*radical reality*» of human life and, in it, to discover how the other becomes present in it.

4.2. Radical Reality of a Person's Life

According to Laín, Ortega's view would be to affirm that the life of the other is a «*radical reality*», that is, a radical and non-transferable solitude. One has to live, act and execute in the first person's singular, and this responsibility cannot be replaced by any other person. We use Laín's own words:

Por ser realidad radical y por ser mía, en el sentido más fuerte y primario de este vocablo, mi vida es rigurosamente intransferible. Cada cual tiene que hacerse y vivirse su propia vida, y nadie puede sustituirle en la faena de vivir. Pensar, sentir y querer son quehaceres que tengo que ejecutar yo solo; de otro modo no serían míos, ni auténticos. De lo cual resulta que "la vida humana sensu stricto es esencialmente soledad, radical soledad..."²⁷⁹.

²⁷⁶ TRO1, 282.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 282.

²⁷⁸ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 102.

²⁷⁹ TRO1, 283.

However, the use of radical solitude to express the radicality of life does not imply that Ortega falls into a selfish or solipsistic conception of the human being. This means that being my life does not mean that I am the only one living in the world. Already speaking of circumstances, we have shown that it includes everything that surrounds me and, therefore, you can never lose the awareness that there are other things and beings with which each personal life coexists. The idea of radical reality is directly linked to the fact that I am an executive self, a reality of the human being that I cannot avoid. So human life is about what you should do (*quehacer*, task). This is how Julián Marías puts it, that life is «*estrictamente personal, no un qué sino un quién, algo proyectivo...*»²⁸⁰. That is, my life is a circumstantial project in which I cannot remain as an observer, but must always be an executive being, in continuous interpretation. It is a vocation in which interpreting myself within my circumstance I make the future. We are talking about an unfinished, open situation, in which each circumstance gives me the opportunity to project myself into the future and this projection always implies openness to the different. Therefore, radical reality has nothing to do with closing oneself, but with an opening that involves living with the other who is different from me.

Ortega²⁸¹ affirms that being open is a permanent and constitutive state of man. The other, in the Orteguian language, is not a thing or body but one endowed with expression. This ability to express myself opens me to their intimacy as someone similar to me and able to live with me, not as a stone or an animal, but as someone capable of relating. The other for me, therefore, opens the problem of how I can live with him knowing that he is a being like me and capable of reciprocity. There are two operations in which reciprocity between us is possible: through action and knowledge; «*La acción —que yo actúe sobre él, y él sobre mí—; y el conocimiento- que yo vaya conociendo su peculiar e intransferible individualidad*»²⁸². As this mutually reciprocal action grows, so does the knowledge between us, creating a shared common world. That is, a coexistence and an interpersonal relationship is born in which the other is now a «*you*» and like another has its non-transferable reality. In this line, the other to some extent can be seen as «*alter ego*», in the sense that we have some similarity of possession of intimacy; but he is also different from me, because in him there is something inaccessible and different

²⁸⁰ Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid: 23ª Edición, 1971), 103.

²⁸¹ TRO1, 284.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 288.

from me. In other words: «*El otro, en suma, es a la vez 'otro yo' y 'puro otro', mi semejante y lo superlativamente distante y forastero de mí*»²⁸³.

However, the coexistence between us implies being able to open ourselves to the world of the other; and while this is happening, we create an objective world born of the knowledge of our openness. It is a knowledge that makes me more and more a «*you*» because through the different other I discover my individual traits and limits. But Ortega warns us that knowing each other is not like in scientific knowledge: closed and firm, but always open. Human being, «*sea otro o sea yo, no tiene un ser fijo o fijado: su ser es precisamente libertad de ser*»²⁸⁴. So, the key word in this sense is continuous openness that enables continuous knowledge of both parties. To the extent that there is openness, then there is more knowledge and coexistence where each one can be what he should be.

5. EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1996), who studied in France and Germany is a renowned critical disciple of Heidegger. He is a philosopher who cannot be ignored when it comes to alterity and personal interrelationship. In one of his writings, «*Alterity and Transcendence*» is dedicated in the first instance to rethinking transcendence in an effort to show that this phenomenon is present when we relate to our fellow human beings. He avoids the «*a priori*» vision of transcendence arguing that it is born of our intersubjective relationship with the other²⁸⁵. The face of the other person who is different from me becomes the very place of the infinite God who, though invisible, becomes visible through my encounter with my fellowmen. The other is that silent voice of Infinity speaking to me as I interrelate with others: «*Is not the face of one's fellow man the original locus in which transcendence calls an authority with a silent voice in which God comes to the mind? Original locus of the Infinite*»²⁸⁶.

²⁸³ Ibid., 291.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 293.

²⁸⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), xii.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 5.

5.1. An Infinite Nostalgia for the Other

For Levinas, ethics is the first philosophy for the simple reason that it is a dialogue and an encounter with the other person and that it uses language to facilitate such an encounter. It is not an easy encounter because the other is different from me; he is a stranger but a being to me whose nostalgic encounter with him is undeniable. It is a going out of oneself to address the other whose proximity to mine is still very important:

A going outside oneself that is addressed to the other, the stranger. It is between strangers that the encounter takes place; otherwise, it would be kinship. All thought is subordinated to the ethical relation, to the infinitely other in the other person, and to the infinitely other for which I am nostalgic. Thinking the other person is a part of the irreducible concern for the other²⁸⁷.

By reaching the other, the self has to overcome its natural egoism which tends to limit us only within ourselves. The transcendental being of the self cannot be self-sufficient; their need for the other awakens their desire and proximity for the other. The encounter of people with the other begins with the mere greeting and the arrival to the other according to Levinas. This greeting, or a mere way of saying «*Hello*» becomes a blessing and an invocation addressed to the other. It is the first transcendence of the self-out of himself:

All encounter begins with a benediction, contained in the word 'hello'; that 'hello' that all cogito, all reflection on oneself already presupposes and that would be a first transcendence. This greeting addressed to the other man is an invocation. I therefore insist on the primacy of the well-intentioned relation toward the other. Even when there may be ill will on the other's part, the attention, the receiving of the other, like his recognition, mark the priority of good in relation to evil²⁸⁸.

Levinas differs with Martin Buber's idea of reciprocity when it comes to relating to the other. Reciprocity can lead to what he calls «*commercial relation*» and «*the exchange of good behaviour*». Levinas prefers that this relationship be guided by generosity and responsibility rather than reciprocity²⁸⁹. Alterity for him is a phenomenon that precedes the knowledge of the other: «*Alterity's plot is born before knowledge*»²⁹⁰,

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 97-98.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 98.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 101.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 101.

and therefore, instead of being good to the other so that he reciprocates, I should do it because I have that obligation. It is a relationship where the freedom of each one is respected without the other party wanting to dominate or possess the other. The other in this relationship always remains the other. As he puts it: *«In that relation to the other, there is no fusion: the relation to the other is envisioned as alterity. The other is alterity»*²⁹¹.

5.2. Face of the Other as a Trace of Infinity

The face of the other for Levinas is a way of signifying the infinity or the Word of God who never takes a body or becomes a being in the right sense. The face of the other becomes in our case: *«the trace of Infinity»*²⁹². The epiphany of the human face marks that responsibility that whoever encounters it must feel compelled to honour it as an order that comes from God. The face of my neighbour imposes on me an order that carries *«a gratuitous and non-transferable responsibility»*²⁹³. The face of the other is that voice that reminds me not to let that person die. It is a helpless and unarmed presence that requires of me an ethical response without failure. It doesn't matter what kind of person appears before me, rich, poor, important, etc.; this neighbour's face comes with a requirement of responsibility on my part. I cannot be indifferent or ignore it whatever the case. There is a commandment of God enshrined in that face that forbids me to kill such a being:

This face of the other, without recourse, without security, exposed to my look and in its weakness and its mortality is also the one that orders me: 'Thou shalt not kill.' There is, in the face, the supreme authority that commands, and I always say it is the word of God. The face is the locus of the word of God. There is the word of God in the other, a non-thematized word. The face is that possibility of murder, that powerlessness of being and that authority that commands me: 'Thou shalt not kill'²⁹⁴.

Levinas' call to responsibility for the other is that of doing good to the other. Good by its very nature is not guided by any distinction. Every human being is capable of doing so, whether he believes in any religion, sect or not. As he says, it is the kind of goodness

²⁹¹ Ibid., 103.

²⁹² Ibid., 169

²⁹³ Ibid., 170.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 104.

that escapes all ideology that must accompany us throughout daily life guided by love for all living beings and their obligation to protect life. He compares this kindness to «*the kindness of an old lady who gives a piece of bread to a convict along the roadside. It is the kindness of a soldier who holds his canteen out to a wounded enemy*»²⁹⁵, etc. Levinas is aware that being responsible for the other is not an easy task because it is as if you feel that if something happens to the other you are responsible or you will be persecuted for the mere fact that you have not acted. The other in this case becomes a burden, but in general this is part of what describes kindness. My being responsible for the other thus becomes a call: «*The trace of the infinite is inscribed in my obligation toward the other, in this moment that corresponds to the call*»²⁹⁶.

5.2. Death of the Other as My Death

Levinas acknowledges the mystery of death by referring to it as «*the most unknown of unknowns*»²⁹⁷ and certainly an inexorable event that must certainly take place. All in all, there is a great connection between alterity and death. The dead man does not speak of his death; we are the ones who witness the other die to talk about such an experience. It is we who are the living who have that opportunity to narrate the death of our neighbour because he definitely disappears from our world. Levinas gives an example of Socrates' death that his friend Plato has to narrate it because Socrates no longer exists:

It is always the living, isn't it, who speak of the dead and death: we have just repeated that. The philosophers who wonder about death do so necessarily about the death of the other, since they have no more experience of their own than do the rest of us. Even Socrates, in whose veins the hemlock poison flows as he carries on his last conversation with his disciples, who speaks of death while he is in the process of dying, has not yet lived through death itself when he speaks of it. It is Plato who will speak of the dead Socrates²⁹⁸.

The death of the other gives the living the opportunity to manifest their humanity towards the lost brother and that is why the death of the other really becomes my death.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 108.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 106.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 153.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 153.

It is an event that awakens us and calls us not to be indifferent to such an occurrence. The other who is disappearing is a being whose shared existence with us involved the exchange of many things that cannot be forgotten just like that. Our lives with the dying before such an event were intertwined with ours. Therefore, it should not be interpreted simply as death. It is the death of love because the other has left on us marks of love that we share and remain there as a reminder of his being for us. It is our death that is announced in the death of the other:

...the death of love, in which the other took on for us the fullness of his being and life, and an identity irreducible to any other. It is impossible for it to pass unnoticed, that it be hidden; and when death touches the loved other, it touches our common love: it is our own death that is announced to us. When we lose one of our own, as the saying goes, we enter into intimate relations with death; its presence becomes more familiar, and we discover how much it is interwoven into our lives²⁹⁹.

Therefore, the death of our neighbour becomes a point of appeal, demands us and summons us to act. Any demonstrated indifference to a dying neighbour makes us accomplices in such a death. There is a call for us to do everything we can so that our neighbour does not die. Levinas is aware that death is inevitable, but this should not make us become murderers of our fellow human beings or even let them die in solitude. His point of view is a pure concern for the other in all dimensions.

Levinas, having undergone racial persecution in his life seems to devote much of his work to recovering the sense of the human being, that is, of man. He presents us with a philosophy of the responsibility of the other; the desire of the other «*of the absolutely other*»³⁰⁰ this can also be observed in his book: «*Totality and infinity*». In his dialogue with the other, he proposes ethics as a «*conditio sine qua non*» for establishing this responsibility. Here we can use the words of Miguel García Baró who summarizes the thesis of the work in question:

..., la tesis central del presente libro puede resumirse diciendo que en él su autor se ha propuesto mostrar como la ética es la óptica misma del filósofo en el sentido más radical: la filosofía primera. A fin de cuentas, la filosofía primera siempre consiste en la tarea de ejercer la crítica hasta el punto extremo en que sea posible³⁰¹.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 162.

³⁰⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalidad e infinito* (Salamanca: edición sígueme 2ª edición, 2012), 7-8.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

5.3. Opening Up to the Infinity

One cannot face the issue of alterity without talking about the metaphysical desire that Levinas proposes when rethinking the problem of true Infinity. Immanuel Kant in his philosophy presents us with the questions posed by philosophy: *what can I know? what should I do? what do I have the right to expect? and what is man?* In his interpretation of these questions Levinas states that the question *What can I know?* leads to finitude, but *what should I do?* and *What do I have the right to expect?* go further and, in any case, towards something other than finitude³⁰². Levinas' attempt is to create a priori hope from Kant's philosophy of finitude and concludes by pointing out that this will always be the great contribution of Kantian philosophy: *«Ahí está la gran fuerza de la filosofía practica de Kant: en la posibilidad de concebir, mediante la esperanza, un más allá del tiempo, aunque, evidentemente, no un más allá que prolongue el tiempo»*³⁰³.

As we have pointed out at the beginning, Levinas is concerned with recovering the meaning of human life in very difficult moments and situations, of persecution and war. He represents a voice that screams in the midst of a crisis where every source of meaning seems mute, seems to disappear, crack. For him, existence is a task where one has to look for meaning, because neither meaning nor its search is inherited. It is worth turning here to the proposal of philosophers such as: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber to analyse the crisis of human meaning from the time of Levinas to ours. At the end of the modern era, the philosopher Nietzsche surprised the world with his famous phrase of the death of God committed by us, men. Martin Heidegger adopted the idea of God's death by giving it a correct interpretation, according to Levinas:

Heidegger acepta la afirmación de Nietzsche sobre la muerte de Dios y la interpreta. Y es indudable que la interpreta correctamente. La frase Dios ha sido asesinado la entiende en el sentido de que el hombre de nuestra época ha desplazado el concepto de Dios desde la esfera de ser objetivo a la inmanencia de la subjetividad. En realidad, el pensamiento específicamente moderno ya no puede soportar un Dios que no éste confinado en nuestra subjetividad...³⁰⁴.

Buber, in his turn, prefers to use the term *«eclipse of God»* to describe the situation of the crisis of man of the modern age. So, what is the definition of God's eclipse, and

³⁰² Emmanuel Levinas, *Dios, la muerte y el tiempo* (Madrid: edición catedra 5ª edición, 2012), 75- 80.

³⁰³ Ibid., 80.

³⁰⁴ Martin Buber, *Eclipse de Dios* (Salamanca: ediciones sígueme, 2ª edición, 2014), 49.

why has the author chosen these words to describe the modern age? «*El eclipse de Dios se refiere a una situación donde Dios se ha vuelto irreal para el hombre contemporáneo*»³⁰⁵. The very denial of God, Buber thinks, ruins our relationship with Him. This is the reality, according to him, that characterizes the world today and the murderers are those who also reject the idea of transcendence. Here we use the author's own words:

Oscurecimiento de la luz del cielo, eclipse de Dios, tal es el carácter de la hora histórica que nos toca vivir. Pero no se trata de un proceso que se pueda comprender suficientemente a partir de los cambios que se han verificado en la humanidad. Que el sol se eclipse es un acontecimiento entre él y nuestros ojos, no algo que sucede dentro del sol mismo. La filosofía tampoco nos considera ciegos para lo divino... Quien se niega a someterse a la realidad actuante de la trascendencia, verdadero interlocutor nuestro, contribuye a la responsabilidad del hombre en el eclipse³⁰⁶.

Sartre interprets Nietzsche's proposal with maximum radicality: «*Dieu n'existe pas* », the only thing we touch now, is His corpse. He, who was speaking, is now silent. That is why, in our time what remains is the surviving of God; He who spoke to us has now been silent. God is silent, and that is why there is no universal morality and life has no «*a priori*» meaning. So, we live in a world where everything is allowed and where the need for someone to invent values arises. Like Sartre, Heidegger departs from the same Nietzsche phrase by Nietzsche about the death of God, but with a different perspective³⁰⁷:

A Heidegger le parece evidente que con esa frase Nietzsche no solo quiso eliminar a Dios, sino también a lo absoluto en todas sus manifestaciones; es decir pretende en el fondo suprimir no solo la religión, sino también la metafísica. Heidegger cree ciertamente que, sobre la base de esta extrema negación, se puede erigir una nueva posición con un nuevo pensamiento ontológico puro. Es la doctrina del ser, que alcanza su iluminación en el hombre o por medio de él³⁰⁸.

So far and according to Heidegger's interpretation, God's place is left without anyone, nor is it occupied by man. The destiny of man and the possibility of reaching his fullness as a superman remains in his hands. To the words of Nietzsche: «*Todos los dioses*

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 22.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 51.

³⁰⁷ Martin Buber, *Eclipse de Dios* (Salamanca: ediciones sígueme, 2ª edición, 2014), 88.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 93.

han muerto, ahora queremos que viva el hombre», Heidegger adds, in a rather strange tone, this warning:

El hombre nunca puede ponerse en el lugar de Dios, porque el ser del hombre nunca alcanza el ámbito del ser de Dios. Por el contrario, en proporción con esta imposibilidad, sí puede suceder algo más inquietante, cuya esencia apenas hemos comenzado a considerar. El lugar que metafísicamente hablando corresponde a Dios es el lugar en el que se realiza la producción y conservación de aquello que es ente en cuanto ser creado. Este lugar de Dios puede quedarse vacío. En su lugar puede aparecer otro, es decir, un lugar metafísicamente correspondiente, que no es idéntico ni al ámbito del ser de Dios ni al del ser del hombre, pero un lugar que el hombre puede alcanzar mediante una relación eminente. El superhombre no alcanza a ocupar ni jamás ocupará el lugar de Dios, sino que el lugar al que llega la voluntad de aquello que es ente en otro ser³⁰⁹.

So how can we help contemporary the man to emerge from the crisis of meaning? Sartre with his proposal leads us to see the human being as someone radically free; while Heidegger introduces us to a being closed in himself and has his destiny in his hands. Both lead us to a silence of the transcendent where the infinite remains in the realm of human finitude. The only way out and that is closer to that Levinas as we have seen before, is that of Martín Buber. The solution lies in what he calls, dialogical reality. He, along with Rosenzweig, Ebner and Marcel are known for initiating dialogical thinking. Buber aims at showing something beyond mere philosophical thought; in other words, he tries to speak a language beyond the philosophical one. It is worth reading here his confession on this point:

Yo no tengo una doctrina. Solo muestro algo. Muestro realidad, muestro algo en la realidad, algo que no es visto o es poco visto. A quien me escucha lo tomo de la mano y lo conduzco a la ventana; abro la ventana de par en par y le muestro lo que está ahí, fuera. Yo no tengo una doctrina, pero conduzco al dialogo³¹⁰.

Buber's starting point, as we have seen above, is that human reality is the dialogue with the other. Criticizing the Western philosophical tradition, says that we can list three great periods: cosmological and objectivist Antiquity, the theological Middle Ages, and Anthropological Modernity. This last period is characterized by conferring on the human subject the predominance in the process of knowledge of reality. The culmination of this

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 116.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

whole process has been the arrival of a transcendental philosophy dominated by the subject-object scheme where «*Dios mismo se ha reducido a un objeto de mi pensamiento*»³¹¹. In his 1923 book, «*I and Thou*», Buber places great emphasis on the dual attitude that characterizes human life. And thinking about them critically, we discover the third relationship, the founding relationship of those two, the relationship between the human self and the divine Thou.

5.4. Metaphysical Desire and the Other

In his work, «*Totality and Infinity*», Levinas invites us to consider the metaphysical desire, that is, the desire for infinity, or what he calls the desire for the invisible. He writes:

La verdadera vida está ausente; pero nosotros estamos en el mundo. La metafísica surge y se mantiene gracias a esta coartada. Está vuelta hacia otra parte y hacia lo de otro modo y hacia lo otro. El deseo metafísico tiende hacia algo totalmente otro, hacia lo absolutamente otro³¹².

Absence here refers to our world full of restlessness and disproportion that cries out and urgently for the need for a full meaning. The true search therefore requires a way out into the infinity. We are absolutely linked to infinity; it is a task with no escape. Metaphysics has to assume as a fundamental task to think about the infinity, because its absence makes us live as foreigners, without meaning, without home, without roots on this land. The very structure of human existence is also a going towards the infinity. It is an invitation not to remain in the realm of needs, that is, in the realm of the world where one remains closed in totality, to open oneself to metaphysical desire. This metaphysical desire can never be satisfied; it is not objectifiable. The closer we get to the other, the farther away; it grows always maintaining this distance that can never be overcome. It is an inviolable otherness, non-suppressible, but that will never indicate absence of relationship; in fact, the key word here is the ethics of relationship with another. Let us read Levinas to take charge of the meaning of this metaphysical desire:

El deseo metafísico no aspira a regresar, porque es deseo de un país en el que no nacimos. De un país extraño a toda la naturaleza, que no ha sido nuestra patria y al que nunca nos

³¹¹ Ibid., 18.

³¹² Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalidad e infinito* (Salamanca: edición sígueme 2ª edición, 2012), 27.

trasladaremos. El deseo metafísico no descansa sobre ningún parentesco..., El deseo metafísico tiene una intención distinta: desea lo de más allá de todo cuanto sencillamente puede completarlo. Es como la bondad: lo Deseado no lo llena, sino que lo ahonda..., El deseo es absoluto si el ser que desea es mortal y lo Deseado, invisible. La invisibilidad no indica ausencia de la relación: implica relaciones con lo que no está dado, con aquello de lo que no hay idea..., El deseo es deseo de lo absolutamente Otro. Fuera del hambre que satisfacemos, de la sed que apagamos y de los sentidos que calmamos, la metafísica desea lo Otro más allá de las satisfacciones...³¹³.

The metaphysical desire takes us to a height where one has to break with the totality or the tendency to close oneself in the realm of needs. According to Levinas the nature of other and also the self, breaks this totality. The transcendent characteristic of oneself and the other already breaks this totality. We have already said that we do not have a common homeland with each other; this means that to unite with him I have to break my totality and open myself to dialogue. The self, even if has identity, is not definitive; it is always on its way and the condition of possibility for this continuous pilgrimage of the self is that of opening up to alterity:

Ser yo es, más allá de toda individuación que provenga de un sistema de referencias, tener la identidad como contenido. El yo no es un ser que siempre permanece el mismo, sino el ser cuyo existir consiste en identificarse, en reencontrar su identidad a través de todo lo que le pasa. Es la identidad por excelencia, la obra original de la identificación³¹⁴.

In other words, in the realm of the relationship with the other, the self cannot remain indifferent but open itself to a dialogue with the other. Opening up to the other is not negativity. Negativity would involve closing in on oneself to the point of nausea by denying the continuous process of identification. Negativity would mean identification of oneself opposing the other: egoism. As Levinas says, «*la negatividad supone un ser instalado y colocado en un lugar en el que está en su casa*»³¹⁵; however, transcendence designates one step towards the other, or in the language of Levinas: a metaphysical relationship. Transcendence designates the field of the infinite, but always maintaining the distance to avoid any temptation of domination of the other. Levinas warns us that the infinite does not imply the annulment of one's own intimacy or of one's own inalienable solitude: «*La idea de lo Infinito supone la separación de Mismo respecto de Otro. Pero*

³¹³ Ibid., 28-29.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 36.

*esta separación no puede apoyarse en una oposición a Otro, que sería puramente antitética»*³¹⁶.

The separation here between Self and Other indicates the relationship that is as important as the truth, because as the Lithuanian philosopher proposes, without separation, without distance, there is no truth. Becoming aware of the other is an essential way to relate with the truth. It is pertinent for one to be self-aware. Levinas uses the term atheism to indicate the solitude of the individual. It is important to always keep in mind that being is always a «not yet» and, in addition, the structure of being also refutes atheism, that is, the tendency of reducing being to solitude.

Now, according to Levinas, the relationship with the Infinite is ethics. Ethics here would imply a call to responsibility for the other. It is an ethics of encounter that overrides every type of atheism of the individual. The face of the other expresses the idea of the infinity and calls me to my responsibility, as we have said before. To better explain this responsibility of the other, it would be important to touch on the theme of death again, but this time in the work entitled, «*Dios, la muerte y el tiempo*». We can summarize the thesis of this work in just one sentence: «*La cuestión de otro como pregunta dirigida a mí en el rostro del otro hombre*»³¹⁷. Levinas completely avoids any misunderstanding of the word death in so far as its relationship with time. Time for him is not that which is measurable, but the glimpse of the relationship with the future and the infinite; in this case death should not be understood as cessation of expressive movement of the human being. He says: the death of the other affects me; in the death of my neighbour my own identity is affected, and this constitutes my responsibility in his death:

El tiempo no es la limitación del ser, sino su relación con el infinito. La muerte no es anonadamiento, sino la pregunta necesaria para que esa relación con el infinito o el tiempo se produzca...., El tiempo es, a la vez, ese “Otro en el Mismo” y ese Otro que no puede estar unido al Mismo, no puedo ser sincrónico. El tiempo sería, por consiguiente, la inquietud del Mismo por el Otro, sin que el Mismo pueda jamás comprender al Otro, englobarlo...., El otro me afecta como prójimo. En cualquier muerte se acusa la cercanía del prójimo, la responsabilidad de superviviente, responsabilidad que el acceso a la proximidad mueve o conmueve³¹⁸.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

³¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dios, la muerte y el tiempo* (Madrid: edición catedra 5ª edición, 2012), 11.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 28-30.

This is to say that the death of my neighbour awakens in me to the infinite and calls me to a relationship and responsibility with him, from which I cannot escape. According to Levinas, one cannot reduce death only to anguish or understand man as the being for death, as Heidegger thinks. Death is not the maturity of being or its disappearance but a time of being that indicates a not yet. In short, thanks to death we can talk about our relationship with the Infinite. Being never ends with death, it remains because the structure of being is always a not yet. Death, as Levinas says, works with the face of the other and no one can remain indifferent to the death of a neighbour who dies. The death of the other produces in me an interrogation and restlessness that calls me to a responsibility and participation in the death of my neighbour. It is the return to the first philosophy or ethics where one cannot flee from his responsibility with the face of the other:

¿Acaso la proximidad del prójimo no se encuentra en mi responsabilidad por su muerte? Entonces, mi relación con el Infinito se invierte en esta responsabilidad. La muerte en el rostro del otro hombre es la modalidad según la cual la alteridad que afecta al Mismo hace estallar su identidad de Mismo como pregunta que surge dentro de él. Esta pregunta sobre la muerte es, en sí misma, su propia respuesta: es mi responsabilidad por la muerte de otro. El paso al plano ético es lo que constituye la respuesta a dicha pregunta³¹⁹.

With Levinas we have tried to show what it means to open up to the infinite of the human being. The search for meaning is inevitable for the human being in whatever situation he finds himself in. You cannot have the capacity of this search without exiting the totality by opening yourself to alterity. It is a path that calls the human being to go beyond his needs towards the metaphysical desire for the infinite without wanting to dominate it; that is, respecting the distance. It is a desire like goodness that maintains the relationship between one human being and another.

Hemos puesto la metafísica como Deseo. Hemos descrito el Deseo como la «*medida*» de lo Infinito que no detiene término alguno, que no para satisfacción ninguna (Deseo, opuesto a Necesidad). La discontinuidad de las generaciones- o sea, la muerte y la fecundidad- hace salir al Deseo de la prisión de su propia subjetividad y detiene la monotonía de su identidad. Poner la metafísica como Deseo es interpretar la producción

³¹⁹ Ibid., 138.

del ser-deseo que engendra el Deseo- como bondad y como más allá de la felicidad; es interpretar la producción de ser como ser para el otro³²⁰.

The desire of the other provokes an ethical awakening before the face of the neighbor who appeals to me asking for an answer. Catherine Chalier in her work, «*Por una moral más allá del saber*» wonders what it would mean by the term «*face*» in Levinasian language:

¿Qué significa entonces el rostro? ¿Cómo comprender que sea la fuente viva...del despertar ético? Levinas describe el rostro como ‘una miseria’, una vulnerabilidad y una indigencia que, en sí, sin necesidad de añadir palabras explícitas, suplica al sujeto. ‘Pero esta suplica es una exigencia’ de respuesta, una exigencia de apoyo y ayuda. ‘El rostro se me impone sin que pueda dejar de ser responsable de su miseria. La conciencia pierde su primacía’, cede el paso³²¹.

That is, in front of the face of the other I cannot remain indifferent without giving an ethical response to his situation. The desire for Infinity that provokes the face of the other forbids me to harm him, in fact, it forbids me not only not to kill him, but it requires that I put myself at his service.

With the theme of death according to Levinas we have exposed the idea that death is not the culmination of being, but a moment of being thanks to the conception of the duration of time and its relationship with the Infinite. At the same time, we said that the death of my neighbour is also mine in the sense that I have my responsibility to him as the other. The point of arrival is ethical responsibility as the true relationship with the other.

6. UBUNTU ETHICS AND ALTERITY

In this section, we intend to address the concept of alterity from the African perspective by exploring more specifically the famous Ubuntu ethics. As you will notice, this African ethics has many similarities with that of Taylor regarding the intersubjective vision of man.

³²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalidad e infinito* (Salamanca: edición sígueme 2ª edición, 2012), 344.

³²¹ Catherine Chalier, *Por una moral más allá del saber* (Madrid: Caparros editores, 2002), 51.

6.1. The Meaning of Ubuntu

The term Ubuntu finds its origin in the indigenous peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa, a word that could change its variant depending on which language is used but always maintaining its original meaning. The term may change but, in many cases, «*the augment prefix u-, the abstract prefix bu- and the noun stem -ntu*»³²², will be included in any language used. Generally speaking, Bantu groups will use terms such as: «*umuntu, umundu, undu, bumuntu*»³²³, etc but its meaning, that is, «*humaniness*» or «*humanity*», remains. It is a term that clearly indicates the intersubjectivity between persons and the insistence that one becomes human among other humans. Ubuntu insists on taking care of each other where the well-being of each individual is taken care of with the aim of building unity and mutual relationship in the community. Ubuntu is based on the spirit that we cannot become what we should be without others; others contribute immensely to our identity, and, in fact, we are because they are. Apart from our dependence on the other there is also the contribution and respect for the environment or cosmos where we are immersed. Ubuntu insists on respecting our world, which is seen as a gift and should not be used for any selfish benefit, but rather for the growth of the entire community. In other words:

Ubuntu is a worldview and a way of life shared by most Africans south of Sahara. Basically, Ubuntu underlines the often unrecognized role of relatedness and dependence of human individuality to other humans and the cosmos. The importance of relatedness to humanity is summarized by the two maxims of Ubuntu. The first is: a human being is human because of other human beings. The second maxim is an elaboration of the first. It goes; a human being is human because of the otherness of other human beings. John Mbiti combines those two maxims into, “I am because we are, and we are because I am.” Ubuntu worldview can provide insights about relationships with communities and the world...³²⁴.

³²² Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 12.

³²³ Ibid, 12.

³²⁴ Ibid., vii.

6.2. The Main Principles of Ubuntu Ethics

As we have mentioned, the spirit of Ubuntu is based on an ethics that is purely intersubjective and inclusive that puts not only the importance of the individual and community at the centre, but also that of the rest of the cosmos where that individual lives. Ubuntu as culture and ethics: *«refers to respectful treatment of all people as sharing, caring, and living in harmony with all creation»*³²⁵. Here we will examine some characteristics that define the ethics of Ubuntu bringing out the kind of alterity that this African way of thinking denotes.

6.2.1. Its Holistic Approach

Ubuntu's ethics qualifies to be holistic because of its *«anthropocentric»*, *«theocentric»* and *«cosmocentric»*³²⁶ look of nature. When we talk about Ubuntu's worldview, we can't follow the Protagoras saying mentioned before about seeing man as the measure of everything. Here we are seeing an inclusive vision where man, God and all creation have their importance when it comes to safeguarding life. At the centre of this view, therefore, is not man, but life itself. As Chuwa comments, life becomes sacred and therefore hurting the unity and interdependence of the three mentioned entities is like hurting oneself. Defending the dignity of others and of creation is a way of respecting the creator himself. In this sense, although God maintains his transcendence, his immanence is also seen through his creation. Therefore, human being is seen as: *«an organism within a bigger organism, the society. Human society is a part of the biosphere and the cosmos. God is both transcendent and immanent in the sense that he pervades reality while at the same time remains separate from it»*³²⁷. This perspective explains why in many indigenous African cultures there is invocation of the dead through the outpouring of libation as a way of maintaining this unity with them because the dead are never a part. God is invoked through these intermediaries who are also involved in the protection of life. In other words, Ubuntu ethics maintains this holistic physical and spiritual view of creation:

³²⁵ Ibid., 1.

³²⁶ Ibid., 13.

³²⁷ Ibid., 14.

In Ubuntu ethics, the physical and the spiritual, the living and the non-living, the human and the non-human are perceived as necessary in sustenance of human life. Human life comes from and is sustained by both organic and inorganic cosmos. For the sake of harmony, which is an ethical ideal, humans must treat each being fairly according to its moral status and claim³²⁸.

Going back to the two maxims on which Ubuntu's ethics is built, that is, where the person is seeing as a person through others and a human being is always a being through others, one thing comes clear, that is, Ubuntu is against any atomistic view of the individual³²⁹. At this point we see a great relationship between Taylor's theory of ethics and our argument here. According to Taylor, an individual needs others for his growth. He advocates the freedom of the individual, but not in the sense of separating that individual from the community. For both Taylor and Ubuntu, community becomes that pathway that fosters the growth of the individual because it gives the necessary conditions for such a development of the identity of the individual. In both points of view, therefore, there is a need for alterity; atomism is completely ruled out. In Ubuntu each individual must do their part, and this is by doing their individual duties towards community building. Each member has an obligation to cooperate and work with others because doing so builds the large community which is his home. Individuals become, therefore, parts of the larger whole which is the community; there is a clear symbiotic relationship between individuals and the community:

Since the community enables individuation and its basic rights, duties and obligations, the individual owes the community—just as the community owes the individual. Neither of the two survives without the other. The community is a product of its many individuals, just as the individual is a product of many members of the community...Mbiti explores the symbiotic relationship between sub-Sahara Africans and their respective ethnic communities. He notes that individual existence is only possible within corporate existence. Consequently, any particular individual is simply “part of the whole.” Separation from the community is not only impossible, it is inconceivable³³⁰.

However, as we had noted, the need for alterity does not end with the death of the individual. A member who dies in the community moves on to the next stage, that is, he is initiated to the living dead from where he continues to be part of the community. This

³²⁸ Ibid., 14.

³²⁹ Ibid., 15.

³³⁰ Ibid., 16.

explains why the dead are not buried far from the community, but rather inside the homestead because it is believed that they continue to be part of the living community. This explains once again why all of creation is always perceived as sacred and must always be treated with dignity. What affects the entire cosmos also affects living individuals. This clearly means that to harm part of creation is to harm the person. The being and need of the other, therefore, go beyond the mere physical world:

The phrase “being with others” in Ubuntu is of central importance. It is not limited to human beings. It includes the biosphere and the cosmos, since human action affects both humans and non-human universe³³¹.

6.2.2. Communitarianism

Ubuntu's ethics are basically communal, this is because the individual is nobody without the community. As in Taylor's form of communitarianism, the individual needs the context of the community to be what he should be. The identity of the individual is built within the community. From Ubuntu's perspective, it is impossible for one to live like a monad; there is the need and contribution of the other to the growth of each individual. Community is given priority over the individual to the extent that the goal of the community is always for the common good and growth of each individual. However, this does not mean that individual rights are not valued. The role of community is to facilitate the growth of all by reconciling what is good for the community and the individual: *«Ubuntu ethics is based on the premise that none of community members would be what he or she is without the community...the community takes precedence over the individual without underestimating individual personal rights»*³³². To ensure that this happens, each individual has his duties and obligations that must be fulfilled for the common good: *«Each member of the community has a right to self-determination which finds its limitation in common good»*³³³. Therefore, any individual rights that may harm others are not allowed in the Ubuntu view. At the same time, the community cannot be allowed to be oppressive of individuals because, once again, this goes against the common good. If each individual does what he is obligated to do towards others, this leads to his

³³¹ Ibid., 16.

³³² Ibid., 38.

³³³ Ibid., 38.

self-realization as well as to others. Therefore, interrelation becomes essential for self-realization. One finds his realization through others:

It is the community which defines a person and enables that person to find the self through the vehicle of human relationships...The self always stands in need of an-other both for the self and for the other, since there cannot be self without an-other³³⁴.

Communitarianism for Ubuntu practically means that you cannot separate the individual from the community. The two terms complement each other. By the time you mention «*individual*» there is already a reflection of plurality in it. A person can only become a person through community. There are several stages of initiation that one has to go through without skipping any. These stages become measures of whether one is becoming a person as one should be. He continues to acquire the necessary values stipulated by the community and thus acquire maturity. Moral maturity is impossible outside the community:

In Ubuntu culture, it is the community that defines a person by judging whether one has attained full moral maturity. This judgment is based on the individual's relationships with the community, that is, whether one has moral values, feelings and empathy that facilitate others' wellbeing. One contributes to the definition of oneself through everything one does. A person's identity or social status and the rights that are attached to that identity go hand in hand with that person's responsibility or sense of duty towards, and in relation to, others³³⁵.

The same argument stands when it comes to the question of individual freedom. The rights of the individual are dictated by the common good. To the extent that one's freedom is not a threat to others, there is no problem. Therefore «*Freedom is always relative to the freedom of others*»³³⁶, one can only be free when others are free. In other words, the community takes precedence in defining the rights of individuals and not the other way around. The assumption here is that the community always prioritizes the good of each member. Therefore, whatever the community decides is good for the members. Community exists for the good of the members:

Freedom in particular and virtue in general, therefore, are contingent to, and defined by community society and the common good. No individual is greater than the society;

³³⁴ Ibid., 38.

³³⁵ Ibid., 37.

³³⁶ Ibid., 36.

individual members of the society are parts of, and enabled by the society... Thus, strictly speaking, from the perspective of Ubuntu there can be no absolute individual rights. All individual rights are understood within the matrix of the community... Since the individual rights are based on, and facilitated by, common good, individuals in the culture of Ubuntu should act for themselves and the community rather than for themselves against the community³³⁷.

6.2.3. Mutual Reciprocity

Communitarianism is impossible without reciprocity in Ubuntu's ethics. In the same way that an individual receives and gains from others must also reciprocate by being there for them. Reciprocity contributes immensely to the stability of the community and each member has a noble duty to ensure that the community is maintained: «*Reciprocity is a sacred duty. Exploitation is unethical and immoral. Life from this perspective is only real if it is shared and shares in the lives of others*»³³⁸. In other words, neglecting one's duties to others is like stealing from the very community that has contributed to their well-being. The lack of reciprocity is, in itself, a violent action towards others; one must give back to the community voluntarily:

Ethics of Ubuntu rest on the assumption that as one is enabled by the community to find oneself and grow as human person, one should use one's potential for the good of the community. Life is about receiving and giving. Failure to reciprocate is tantamount to violence. It is unethical... Personal reciprocation of care creates, sustains and strengthens the community. Reciprocity in form of giving back to the community and proactive living for the community and others defines a person and his moral maturity³³⁹.

6.2.4 Ubuntu's Form of Justice

Ubuntu's form of justice can well be described in three adjectives among others: «*restorative*», «*distributive*» and «*communitarian*»³⁴⁰. «*Peace*» and «*order*» are the key pillars when it comes to Ubuntu's vision of the community. Any form of justice must aim at restoring these two aspects for the good of the community. This is why restorative

³³⁷ Ibid., 36.

³³⁸ Ibid., 39

³³⁹ Ibid., 39-40.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 44-49.

justice is more sought after in solving community problems rather than «*retributive*» or «*punitive*» justice³⁴¹. The assumption of this preference is that for any community to grow and function normally, peace must always reign. In this case, Ubuntu restorative justice aims at reaching a consensus where all parties involved agree to restore the lost harmony in the community. This is what advocates of peace in South Africa like Nelson Mandela stood for³⁴². Punitive justice harms not only the victim but also the offended:

The Ubuntu ideal of justice is restorative rather than retributive or punitive. Ubuntu restorative justice is founded on the understanding that human community is analogous to an organism. If one part is hurt the whole organism hurts. Restoration of tranquillity, equilibrium and order is the ethical ideal. Violence is harmful not only to its direct victim, but also to the perpetrator and the society...As a result, from the perspective of Ubuntu, retributive punitive justice is unethical and counterproductive. It is destructive of the ideal and objective Ubuntu³⁴³.

As we have said, restorative justice is impossible without a climate of consensus-building. The aim of reaching an agreement in which all parties are heard is, above all, to improve reconciliation. Each party has its right to state its reasons. This requires all parties to sit down and dialogue for the common good of the community: «*Without a common scale, i.e., without an agreement or consensus on criteria, the beliefs and practices of the other simply cannot be judged without violating them*»³⁴⁴. In the search for an agreement, all parties must be protected so as not to favour the majority. The majority must have an opinion, but the minority must also be heard. Diversity here is the key point where the individual party difference is respected. In this way, like Taylor, Ubuntu respects plurality and differences:

However, the desire to agree, which - within the context of Ubuntu - is supposed to safeguard the rights and opinions of individuals and minorities, is often exploited to enforce group solidarity. Because of its extreme emphasis on community...Note that the minority does not simply have to put up with or passively tolerate the overriding decisions

³⁴¹ Ibid., 44.

³⁴² Ibid., 44.

³⁴³ Ibid., 44-45.

³⁴⁴ Louw J. Dirk et. al, "African Renaissance and Ubuntu Philosophy," *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XV No. 1-2, (2001), 19. Accessed November 29, 2021, <https://1library.net/document/yrd08vpq-special-issue-african-renaissance-and-ubuntu-philosophy.html>.

of a majority. No, the minority agrees to disagree, which means that their constructive input is still acknowledged or recognised in communal decisions³⁴⁵.

Secondly, Ubuntu's form of justice can be termed as distributive, a challenge to classical Lockean libertarian justice where the possession of private property is linked to personal freedom³⁴⁶. Distributive justice arises from the fact that each individual is a key factor in community building and, in this case, participates in giving wealth to the community. In this sense we can firmly say that: «*Ownership of property is never absolutely personal*» because what is produced must serve the needs of the whole community. Where you earn more than you need, you should know that it is your personal responsibility to pass the surplus on to those who need it. However, this does not mean that Ubuntu advocates a kind of socialism where there should be an equitable distribution of wealth³⁴⁷. The problem is that every member should feel protected, including those who are unable to work because of certain disabilities or illnesses. On the one hand, it is the responsibility of community leadership to see that each member plays their part so that the community can have enough for their needs, but on the other hand, the same leadership must ensure that no one is missing. The basic principle, as we mentioned, is the protection of life where each individual finds a home in their community. When a member gets rich, each member feels that he is also rich:

People with disabilities, the sick, the orphaned, widows or elderly members of the African traditional society south of Sahara are naturally protected so that they don't feel insecure or inferior to the rest of the members of the society. If a member of an ethnic group is prosperous, the whole ethnic group is prosperous. If the ethnic group is prosperous each member considers himself/herself prosperous. Land is communally owned in that; no one has absolute right to it. Members of the community use it according to need³⁴⁸.

Finally, Ubuntu's form of justice can be referred to as communal. This is self-explanatory because all the types of justice mentioned are based on the community aspect. Any kind of justice in Ubuntu should aim at safeguarding life as its main pillar: «*Ubuntu ethics revolves around all that favours life. Each individual and the community as a whole have a sacred duty to promote life*»³⁴⁹. A just action in Ubuntu's perspective is one that

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 19,21.

³⁴⁶ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 45.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 48.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 48.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

promotes an intersubjective climate that fosters growth and self-realization for each member. The community must protect at all costs the rights of each individual because it is its sovereign duty to ensure that everyone is educated to become the persons they must become, that is, individuals capable of respecting the dignity of the other. Without community there is no possible justice.

6.2.5. Diversity, Plurality and Individual Autonomy in Ubuntu

One of the very close relationships between Charles Taylor and Ubuntu is that they both support the diversity and particularity of individuals in society. Diversity and particularity complement each other for the betterment of the entire community; it cannot be ignored. We have argued on several occasions that in the Ubuntu perspective we become who we are through others and therefore individuals can only self-realize only within the context of the many: «*The culture of Ubuntu realizes the importance of diversity for personal self-realization as human beings, for societal prosperity and for moral living*»³⁵⁰. Every individual, every culture, every value and opinion in Ubuntu culture to the extent that it promotes the well-being of the community is welcomed as a source of wealth because the community can only thrive on diversity. Therefore, plurality in the way of seeing things is not a threat, but rather a factor that contributes to the improvement of the community: «*...Ubuntu appreciates difference and diversity as richness. Diversity allows for variety of contribution to the community by each member for each member. Consequently, human society flourishes on diversity*»³⁵¹.

As we have previously pointed out, all the principles of Ubuntu ethics «*revolve around the mystery of human life*»³⁵²; plurality and diversity are also no exception to this rule. Any difference to the extent that it aims at safeguarding human life is welcome in accordance with the spirit of Ubuntu. Life is precious and sacred and must be protected at all costs. Even when the murder of the other occurs it can only be allowed as a form of «*self-defense*»³⁵³. Any individual who appears to pose a danger to the lives of others should be treated according to the established form of punishment, including his removal from the community. There is a general attempt to reconcile two important things here:

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 50.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 51.

³⁵² Ibid., 51.

³⁵³ Ibid., 51.

the community and the individual, so that both which are very important remain united. The individual must feel free to grow in his singularity and, at the same time, be able to enrich himself from the diversity that the community presents. These two aspects remain concomitant: «...*the community helps the individual become different and unique while at the same time instilling in him or her communitarian accepted moral norms and ideals*». Diversity becomes a way to strengthen the community spirit and its edification because each individual role is dictated by the skills and talents he has. Roles will be distributed according to the ability of the individual. Entrusting different roles and responsibilities according to their capabilities is a way of respecting diversity in itself, because persons have different talents. All training is aimed at promoting the growth of individual talents so that the community is served in all its aspects:

In the process of individual formation by all other individuals and in all formal processes of initiation individual uniqueness is not only accepted or tolerated, it is cherished and given a special role in the society. The person is helped to know that he or she is unique, thus a needed organ within the community. Diversity is a blessing to the community. To the individual, diversity and pluralism helps distinguish the self from the rest of the community members³⁵⁴.

When it comes to the issue of freedom and Ubuntu one has to understand it well to avoid interpreting it as dictatorial. Individual autonomy must be seen in the community perspective; it is impossible to speak of a free individual separated from the community. Any freedom that brings separation from others cannot be qualified as true freedom: «*There can only be freedom to relate, not to dissociate. Dissociation from the community is fatal*»³⁵⁵. One is free to the extent that what he does, does not threaten the being of others. Anything that threatens the existence of the others also threatens the existence of the individual. The basis of individual autonomy is the life of the community; individuality and communality in our perspective always go together. A person is free to the extent that he is a relational being. We are in a situation where the whole is made of parts and the parts make the whole; everything that affects the whole affects the parts and vice versa:

...whatever hurts the individual hurts the community and whatever hurts the community hurts the individual just as whatever hurts any part of an organism hurts the whole

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 52.53.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 55.

organism and whatever hurts the whole organism hurts all its parts. To be cut off from the community is tantamount to homicide...³⁵⁶.

Finally, at this point, we must differentiate Ubuntu's respect for individuality and particularity from the modern individualistic and atomistic conception of the person. Ubuntu advises against «*individualism*» and «*collectivism*»³⁵⁷. Individualism will look at the human being as a self-sufficient existence that neglects the role of the community and often leads to a solitary search for existence. On the other hand, collectivism «*makes the same mistake, only on a larger scale. For the collectivist, society is nothing but a bunch or collection of separately existing, solitary (i.e., detached) individuals*»³⁵⁸. The individual in Ubuntu, as we observed, can only be referred to as such within the context of the community and not separated from it. Again, in the same line of thought Ubuntu creates an environment conducive to a harmonious interaction with the rest of the groups even if they are from different cultures and origins. In this case there is no place for individualism and collectivism. Ubuntu's conception of individuality is far removed from the solipsistic tendencies brought by the Cartesian dictum: «*cogito ergo sum*». On the contrary, it is not that «*I think, therefore I am*», but rather, «*I relate therefore I am*»; an individual cannot exist as an island and be self-sufficient:

But be it noted the individuality which Ubuntu respects, is not of Cartesian making. On the contrary, Ubuntu directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without thereby necessarily conceiving the other. The Cartesian individual exists prior to, or separately and independently from the rest of the community or society. The rest of society is nothing but an added extra to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being³⁵⁹.

6.2.6. The Dialogical Aspect

In his conception of the person, Taylor presented us with the dialogical aspect of the human person by strongly linking it with identity. Taylor's person is dialogical and

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 54.

³⁵⁷ Louw J. Dirk et. al, "African Renaissance and Ubuntu Philosophy," *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XV No. 1-2, (2001), 24. Accessed November 29, 2021, <https://1library.net/document/yrd08vpq-special-issue-african-renaissance-and-ubuntu-philosophy.html>.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 24.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 24.

needs the other so that he can grow as such. The view of Ubuntu in so far as this aspect is concerned is not different. In Ubuntu as it has been argued several times you become a person through other persons. In this case, persons are dialogical by their very nature. Prosperity and harmony in the community cannot be without communication and listening to each other. One has to be heard, but in the same case he also has to listen to the other. Therefore, dialogue becomes a basis for relationships. Dialogue has also been used as a way to resolve conflicts between individuals, groups and even between one community and another. Dialogue aims at reaching a consensus, but all this is for the benefit of safeguarding human life that faces a danger when people are in conflict. In dialogue you have to always put the community first. When personal interests pose a danger to the well-being of the community, the interests of the individual must be sacrificed.

It is worth mentioning again Martin Buber's dialogical aspect of existence because it has some relation with that of Ubuntu. As we have said, Buber presents us with two relationship approaches that define our existence: the «*I-Thou*» and the «*I-It*». He goes ahead to show that life is an encounter with the other, but it can only be possible where there is openness and respect for the other as a singularity. He advocates for the relationship «*I-Thou*» where the other cannot be treated as a mere object. In this case, the other is a Thou and not an It. Authentic dialogue can only occur when the other is fully understood as a Thou. Ubuntu's and Buber's kind of dialogical view have a lot in common in that: «*The two philosophies are about interdependence between I and Thou. The “I” stands always in the presence of the “Thou.” A human being realizes that his life is interlocked and contingent on other human lives...*»³⁶⁰. This insistence on interdependence, interrelation and the need for the other is what makes the two perspectives similar although using a different wording. In Ubuntu the other should always be treated as a human being and not as an object. We've put a lot of emphasis on the importance Ubuntu places on human life; you have to treat the other as a neighbour worthy of respect. The recognition of the other as uniquely created and worthy of respect is reflected in these two points of view. In both perspectives, the two maxims of Ubuntu's philosophy are repeated:

³⁶⁰ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 108.

Buber's existentialism verbalizes in a very realistic way Ubuntu philosophy represented in maxims: I am because you are; I am who I am because you are who you are; I am because we are; a human being is a human being because of other human beings; a human being is a human being because of the otherness of other human beings. All that the maxims explain is the fact that reality is an organism, a unity in plurality. The plurality and diversity within the essentially unified reality enables individualization and its realization. Arguing for individual rights that do not recognize other individuals' equal rights is *reductio ad absurdum*³⁶¹.

6.2.7. The Common Good

One of the reasons why community bonding in Ubuntu is important is because it allows a combined effort to work for the good of all. Everything one does must be oriented towards the achievement of the common good because in this way life remains safeguarded. When the interests of society are safeguarded, those of the individual also remain insured. It is an obligation and a duty for each individual to strive for the common good; it is actually interpreted as immoral when individual interests are put before those of the community:

Ubuntu ethics considers any human act which ignores the common good to be unethical on the grounds that personhood is facilitated by, and dependent on, human society. Moral maturity implies awareness that one is a product of present and previous generations of human community. Therefore, giving back to the common good is a matter of justice rather than charity³⁶².

Our point here might explain why prior to colonization in Africa, most cultures governed by Ubuntu ethics respected land as the property of all members, even though each had his own portion. The form of land use for this case was dictated more by the community. This is far from socialist ideas, as many Westerners misunderstood it³⁶³. The reason why community leadership controlled land use was to avoid any unequal distribution of resources where one benefits excessively leaving others with nothing. It was unethical and punishable by law where one accumulated more than one needed leaving others to devestate in poverty. Therefore, far from waiting to be forced to

³⁶¹ Ibid., 110.

³⁶² Ibid., 65-66.

³⁶³ Ibid., 66.

distribute his wealth for the benefit of all, each member did so as his natural duty: *«Distribution of wealth, was not forceful as is the case with political socialist approach, neither was it achieved through rhetorical persuasion. It rather happened naturally as an obvious moral requirement that everyone should observe»*³⁶⁴.

As we have said every member apart from the sick and very elderly was expected to work daily to earn a living. This way no form of sluggishness was condoned; in fact, *«every member of the society is enabled to participate both in personal and common good»*³⁶⁵. A wealthy community was such because each individual was serious about participating tirelessly in its production. Any community achievements were attributed to all members, and they celebrated together. In the same vein, when a problem arose, it was seen as a community problem and had to be solved by involving everyone: *«...Mbiti observes an implied but obvious bond between individuals so that when one suffers one does not suffer alone but one suffers with the whole group»*³⁶⁶. This contributed to a sense of belonging in which each individual felt they truly belonged and should do everything possible for the well-being and success of the community. Therefore, the community was a mother and father of all where everything was planned so that everyone knew their role to play in building the community.

6.2.8. Community Aspect of Marriage and Procreation

The argument here is also in line with our thinking about the survival of the community. In a community where marriage and procreation does not occur, it is a community toward extinction. In this case, the community leadership ensured that their sons and daughters were married and, above all, gave birth for the continuation of the community. We observe: *«...marriage is neither a personal decision nor a private matter. The community naturally expects everybody to marry both for personal immortality and for the sake of the community. It is a duty and an obligation»*³⁶⁷. This clearly explains why tendencies such as homosexuality and celibacy were meaningless because they seemed to go against the spirit of marriage and procreation. So far in many African countries, homosexuality is condemned and in many cases people with such

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 68.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 70.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 20.

tendencies are seen as outcasts: This clearly explains why tendencies such as homosexuality and celibacy were meaningless because they seemed to go against the spirit of marriage and procreation. So far in many African countries, homosexuality is doomed and in many cases people with such tendencies are seen as outcasts: «*Homosexuality is against real community, thus against life and human race. It is always considered evil and of great immorality*»³⁶⁸. Until a few years ago, many communities in Africa resisted celibacy as a way of life and, in fact, never allowed their sons and daughters to participate in that kind of life.

Marriage in all African cultures is taken as an indispensable responsibility; it is the fulfilment of a sacred duty without which the entire community remains in danger. Unlike current Western thinking, where everything seems normal to decide whether to marry or not, this would be unthinkable in the traditional African perspective. It is actually a command from the Creator if we were to echo the words of John Mbiti:

It is believed in many African societies that from the very beginning of human life, God commanded or taught people to get married and bear children. Therefore, marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. Failure to do so means in effect stopping the flow of life through the individual, and hence the diminishing of mankind upon the earth. Anything that deliberately goes towards the destruction or obstruction of human life is regarded as wicked and evil. Therefore, anybody who, under normal conditions, refuses to get married, is committing a major offence in the eyes of society and people will be against him. In all African societies everything possible is done to prepare people for marriage and to make them think in terms of marriage³⁶⁹.

In addition, it was perceived that the matrimonial environment linked three groups: those who died, the living and, obviously, new-borns. Marriage helped maintain this bond that ensured the continuity of the human species for the survival of the community³⁷⁰. The refusal of any member to marry amounted to: «*cutting off the vital link between death and life and destroying the buds which otherwise would sprout and grow on the human tree of life*»³⁷¹. As we noted, death in the African perspective remained a mystery, although there were attempts to show that the Creator's original purpose is that there should always be life. However, it was an accepted reality. Christianity, for

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 21.

³⁶⁹ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1986), 98.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 98.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 98.

example, under the mysterious fact of death, gives hope for resurrection, but in the traditional African perspective this hope is seen through the surrender of birth to ensure continuity. Through marriage we have a «...*counter-measure against the lost immortality which is talked about in so many traditional myths*»³⁷². While on the one hand death brings frustration and destruction, giving birth on the other hand brings hope and we can say in Christian perspective «*resurrection*» of the lost life:

African Religion does not tell people how to conquer or escape death. What it does emphasize, however, is that through marriage the effects of death are reduced and neutralized considerably. Therefore, marriage and childbearing are the medicines against death. While death continues to demolish life, marriage and childbearing keep ahead of it all the time. This makes sure that even if individuals die, human life as such does not die. Death captures individuals along the road, but because of marriage and childbearing it cannot keep pace with human life at large³⁷³.

The community and intersubjective aspect of the African perspective could also be clearly seen in the way preparations are made to welcome the new-born and even in the way the child is raised and educated. It is not enough to marry; a child has to be born to complete the entire purpose of marriage. Marriage is not worthy of the name until a child is born and even when one cannot have a child, a solution must be sought. This could explain why polygamy was widely accepted and practiced and even the maintenance of concubines in case the wife was sterile. In the event that the man was impotent, a brother of the impotent husband would give him a son. Having children was a sacred duty under all circumstances: «*The supreme purpose of marriage according to African peoples is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life, and to hand down the living torch of human existence*»³⁷⁴. A child in the African perspective belongs to the whole community. It is the responsibility of the community to ensure that this child is well educated in all aspects of human formation. Training the child in the right way becomes an advantage for the community in its well-being. Community involvement in new-born preparation begins immediately when conception has been noticed. It is the responsibility of the expectant mother to inform the husband of the pregnancy and in turn

³⁷² Ibid., 105.

³⁷³ Ibid., 99.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 105.

the husband shares this joy with the rest of the community. From this point, preparations begin so that the child to be born is protected by all means.

The best way to ensure that the child is safe in the mother's womb is to offer protection early in advance of the expectant mother. There are guided «*regulations*» and «*taboos*» to be adhered to so that this comes out as a success. These would vary from different African cultures including such things like avoidance to sleep with the husband and doing heavy activities which could otherwise harm the fetus³⁷⁵. All attention goes to the expectant mother, and it would be a crime to try to harm her. Any attempt to harm her or disrespect is seen as the harm to the whole community. She is no longer seen as an individual but individuals: «*Thus, all possible care is taken during pregnancy to protect and safeguard the mother and the baby...She carries two lives, and these lives deserve double consideration and care*»³⁷⁶. The new-born as a new member of the community has to undergo all the necessary initiation rites all the way to adulthood which happens under the guided watch of the community. The initiation rites are geared towards forming a responsible adult capable of spearheading further growth of the community. Traditional African educational system was geared to equipping the child with what it takes to face life challenges. At a certain stage the children would be secluded to give them ample time to acquire preparative skills:

During the seclusion part of the initiation rites, the young people undergo a period of education or traditional schooling. As we have said, this concerns tribal life and matters which equip them to live now as full members of their society. They also undergo physical training to overcome difficulties and pain, and to cultivate courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience. This educational experience equips them mentally, bodily, emotionally and morally, for adolescence and adulthood. They come away as young adults in the eyes of society³⁷⁷.

6.2.9. Communitarian Aspect of Death and Immortality

The question of death in the Ubuntu African perspective is closely linked with the religion. There is a strong believe in the life after and this is why the living and the dead form one community: of the living and the dead. Though the main aim is to protect life

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 82.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 84.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 96.

however, when it happens the community accepts it in the belief that the deceased is promoted to another level that of the living-dead. We are in a perspective where the individual is perpetually a community member: one is born in the community, is brought up community-wise, matures up in the community, is buried by the community and continues to the next stage of life in the community. Therefore, life has no end; life goes beyond death in this perspective:

Due to its reverence for life, Ubuntu ethics' objective is not only preservation of the ontological life on earth but also its survival after physical death. According to Ubuntu, human life is so central, so dignified, unrepeatable, sacred and unique that it should survive physical death. Strictly, from Ubuntu perspective human life does not end. Thus, death is yet another stage of initiation in the human life's process of continual and immortal initiation³⁷⁸.

We shall analyse the Ubuntu perspective of the immortality by close examining the Bantu African explanation of death guided by my earlier article which is in the process of being published in the journal *«Pensamiento»* of Pontifical University of Comillas, Madrid: *«La concepción Bantú-Africana de la muerte»*. The Bantu speakers are the largest group of Africa and are the greatest representatives of Ubuntu ethics. The belief in life after can just be seen from the phrases which the Bantus use to describe the fact of death. Such expressions as: *«has responded to the call, he/she is sleeping, he/she has closed the eyes, has gone back home, he/she has converted to God's property»*, etc, already indicate continuity of life. Death in this case becomes a transition to the next level and as John Mbiti affirms that there is life beyond the grave. Accepting death and moving on becomes a way forward towards forgetting what happened for whatever reason so that such a tragedy entered the world. As Mbiti affirms: *«People do not spend their energies regretting what happened after the creation of the first men The lost paradise was not the end of everything»*³⁷⁹. Even after death the presence of the dead remains felt through mentioning his name and all the good things he did. Death as we have observed becomes only a rite of passage, it is an escapable passage to join the world of the ancestors. Therefore, those who die continue to live and intervene in the lives of their loved ones; death, in fact, is the necessary step to reach the divine and the world of the ancestors who are their direct intermediaries as can be seen in my earlier mentioned article. Children

³⁷⁸ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 18.

³⁷⁹ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1986), 82.

are named too after the dead person and encouraged to emulate the good traits of such a person. He is incorporated to the stage of the living-dead. He is living-dead because his effects can still be felt but when he cannot be remembered he is believed to have fully incorporated to the world of the spirits. But, in addition, as can be observed in my said article about death, this concept of immortality is embodied in everyday life because the deceased lives, is present, in the memory of family and friends, in the memory of those who shared life with him. And as long as the memory lives on, the deceased will be a living dead. Death itself is seen as a necessary means by which every person must rise up to enter definitively into the great family that is the community of the invisible life, where one continues to live and intercede for every woman and every man.

Death in the African perspective is an accepted reality and many myths have been used to give meaning on how death entered our world. One thing is clear that God's original design was that men live forever. At the central of God's creation was that there may be life forever: life was God's intention. The twist of events lingers around an error or delay which man made and death entered our world. John Mbiti in his book gives us a variety of myths which explains the entrance of death in the world. Here we pick one:

In many myths spreading all over eastern, central and southern Africa, it is said that God sent a message to the first men that they would either live for ever or rise again if they died. This message was given to one of the animals to take to men. The animal is often said to have been the chameleon. But the chameleon lingered on the way and delayed the message. Meanwhile God sent another but faster animal, usually said to have been a bird, lizard or hare, with another message that people would die. The latter message reached people before that of immortality or resurrection, and since then death has remained in the world³⁸⁰.

The fact that there are many myths explaining the origin of death like the one cited means that the Africans want to give meaning to death but at the same time that man accept it because for them it is not the end of everything. When death happens to any of the members, the intersubjective and communitarian aspect comes out very clearly. This one is seen in the involvement of everyone. As we had said when any member suffers, the whole community shares the suffering, when one prospers all enjoy in one way or another this prosperity. It is the duty of every member to give hand in the preparation and burial of others.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 110.

6.2.10. Critics: Argument for Moderate Communitarianism

We have indicated earlier that Ubuntu type of communitarianism insists on the importance of the individual as well as other members in the community at large without neglecting any. It is for this reason that some African authors have argued for moderate communitarianism in African against any radical type of communitarianism. Kwame Gyekye is one of such authors who uses in his book, *«Tradition and Modernity: philosophical reflections on the African experience»*³⁸¹, Akan proverbs from Ghana to defend such a position. Moderate communitarianism avoids two extremes: on the one hand where the individual ignores the role of the community for his personal growth and on the other where the community seems not to give space for individual's rights and responsibilities towards the growth of the entire community. The importance of both the individual member and others in the community can be well illustrated in such proverbs as: *«When a human being descends from heaven, he [or she] descends into a human society»* and *«One tree does not constitute a forest»*³⁸². The first one emphasizes on the fact that a human being finds himself naturally inserted in the society context where he is born. One does not choose to be born in the community or not but rather finds himself there and this means that the society has a role to play in the individual's growth from the moment of his appearance in the society. In other words, the proverb demonstrates the natural communitarian aspect of the human being from the moment of his birth showing that is impossible for living in isolation:

The fact that the individual human being is born into an existing community must, it seems to me, suggest a conception of the person as a communal being by nature. This communitarian conception of the person implies that, since the human being does not voluntarily choose to enter into a human community, community life is not optional for the individual. It also suggests that he cannot—perhaps should not—live in isolation from other persons, that he is naturally oriented toward other persons and must have relationships with them. It suggests, further, that the person is constituted, at least partly, by social relationships in which he necessarily finds himself³⁸³.

The second mentioned proverb is self-explanatory because just like a forest is constituted of many trees, so the community is formed by many individuals. We talk of a

³⁸¹ Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: philosophical reflections on the African experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 38-41.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 38-39.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 38.

forest because of the many trees which form it something which cannot be said if the tree was just alone. It's true that a tree can grow alone but, in this case, it would not be termed as a forest. A human being in Ubuntu perspective grows and cherishes in a forest of other individuals where he actualizes himself becoming the person and the individual the society needs for its continuance and survival. The community offers to the individual this arena for his personal growth choosing his goals and plans insofar as such choices do not harm his existence and that of the others. Ubuntu type of communitarianism when well interpreted is not a radical one since it also gives individuals space for personal choices and plans. It is rather «*a moderate communitarianism, the model that acknowledges the intrinsic worth and dignity of the individual human person and recognizes individuality, individual responsibility and effort*»³⁸⁴.

Another Akan proverb that clearly dejects radical communitarianism state that: «*The clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand individually when closely approached*»³⁸⁵. This proverb discourages a collectivism kind of conception of communitarianism. Each individual keeps his own identity though within a community of other identities in a coexistence of individuals. The community is not a cluster of individuals who by being together lose their own individual values. Actually, the community is there no foster growth of each individual's identities bringing out an environment of mutual complementarianism. The argument for moderate communitarianism is based on our earlier discussion of the common good as a basic factor which makes the community hold together. For something to qualify to be a common good means that it is beneficial to all members of the community. It is something worthy its pursue because it enhances the individual growth and that of the community. In our view here a common good cannot be a cause of conflict between individual's needs and that of the community:

The common good literally and seriously means a good that is common to individual human beings—at least those embraced within a community, a good that can be said to be commonly, universally, shared by all human individuals, a good the possession of which is essential for the ordinary or basic functioning of the individual in a human society. It is linked, I think, to the concept of our common humanity and, thus, cannot consist of, or be derived from, the goods or preferences of particular individuals; thus, the

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 40.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 40.

common good is not a surrogate for the sum of the different individual goods. If, in fact, the common good were the aggregate of individual goods, it would only be contingently common and might, on that score, not be achieved, or might only partially be achieved. The notion of the common good is a notion of that set of goods that is essentially good for human beings as such; it may, in fact, be characterized as human good. On this showing, there should be no conceptual opposition or tension between the common good and the good of the individual member of the community: for the common good can be conceived as embracing the goods of all the members of the community. It should be understood that by "the goods of all the members" one is referring only to what can be regarded as the basic or essential goods to which every individual should have access. There is no human being who does not desire peace, freedom, respect, dignity, security, and satisfaction³⁸⁶.

Therefore, Ubuntu's communitarianism, if well understood, favours both individual and the community. Ubuntu ethics as we mentioned is strongly based on the safeguarding of human life. The issue of the common good is well articulated in Ubuntu ethics because it forms the basis for the protection of both the individual's life and that of the others. It forms the basis for the society organization in all its aspects. Indeed, «*The common good can, thus, be regarded as that which inspires the creation of a moral, social, or political system for enhancing the well-being of people in a community generally*»³⁸⁷. Gyekye's argument for moderate communitarianism in the African perspective is closely linked with the conception of personhood. In defining the human being, the communal and individual aspects must be included: «*The individual is by nature a social (communal) being, yes; but she is, also by nature, other things as well; that is, she possesses other attributes that may also be said to constitute her nature*»³⁸⁸.

The conception of a person from the African perspective is also linked with how one behaves morally and how he relates with the rest. Going back to the Akan people of Ghana: «*The word used for "person" in Akan is onipa. But this word also means "human being," and the plural form of it can also mean "people"*»³⁸⁹. In Swahili the word used for a person is «*Mtu*», which also means human being. In both examples when there are common moral guidelines which one has to adhere to so that he may qualify to be a person. These moral norms and virtues include such things as: «*kindness, generosity,*

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 46.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 47.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 49.

*compassion, benevolence, and respect and concern for others*³⁹⁰. If one was to behave contrary to the above and thus lacking concern for the well-being of the others in Akan he is described as: «*onnye onipa*»³⁹¹, meaning he is not a person. In Swahili we would say «*hana utu*». In other words, though the individual continues to be acknowledged as a human being however the moment he doesn't conform to what promotes a good relationship with the rest he loses the concept of a person. However, a single action of not conforming to what a person oughts to be does not amount to losing such a concept. One has to consistently behave badly to be termed as not being a person. A single failure cannot be used to describe the wickedness of an individual. «*He is not a person*» is therefore applicable to, «*one whose conduct is known to the community to be generally unethical, not one who occasionally experiences moral lapses or failure of moral commitment*»³⁹². Thus, the definition of a person is strictly linked with communitarianism whose aim is to produce morally acceptable individuals who can promote the well-being of all. That's why when one behaves in accordance with the norms of the community is talked of everywhere as a good person. He becomes an icon to the community and an example to be emulated by the others. Such a person is respected and listened to and given important responsibilities in the community. While everyone is born as a human being and a member of the community however, personhood in our perspective has to be achieved or earned since every individual is capable of such. Thus, the children: «*are persons only potentially and will achieve the status of personhood in the fullness of time when they are able to exercise their moral capacity*»³⁹³. No one therefore loses to become a human being or an individual, but the contrary is possible for personhood. The assumption here is that one is born with the capacity to do good and thus automatically become a person:

Personhood, in this model of humanity, is not innate but is earned in the ethical arena: it is an individual's moral achievement that earns him the status of a person. Every individual is capable of becoming a person inasmuch as he is capable of doing good and should therefore be treated (potentially) as a morally responsible agent³⁹⁴.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 50.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 49.

³⁹² Ibid., 50.

³⁹³ Ibid., 50.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 51.

The criticisms raised by Gyekye over radical communitarianism as expressed by many post-colonial African authors as John Mbiti and Menkiti aim at correcting the idea that personhood can fully be defined by the communal structure³⁹⁵. Without denying the importance of the community aspect in formation of personhood the argument for moderate communitarianism want to show that an individual should also have a personal freedom to define his personality. Just like Taylor, Gyekye is aware that an individual is capable of self-evaluation and moral judgements. An individual is a being capable of choices and thus the community cannot decide each and every action should take³⁹⁶. The community must provide an environment where the individual is able to self-realize among other individuals. Moderate communitarianism is for the idea that the community cannot fully define the personality; the communal structure can only do so partially: *«There is no denying the community's role in the complex process involved in the individual's realization of her goals and aspirations, though; yet, even so, the communal definition or constitution can only be partial»*³⁹⁷. An individual immersed in a network of relationship in the community should have freedom to choose what is good and valuable for him from what the cultural values presents. An individual should even question and re-evaluate such values even to an extent of rejecting what he deems not beneficial for his personal development³⁹⁸. The reason here is very simple: different people may share same cultural environment yet have different goals, plans and practices. This does not pose a danger to inter-personal relationship but rather should enrich coexistence of individuals. Moderate communitarianism upholds individuals' autonomy whereby an individual can decide and project his plans without coercion from the large community. Autonomy plays an important role in the development of personhood because each individual has a say also of what he wants to become:

The capacity for self-assertion that the individual can exercise presupposes, and in fact derives from, the autonomous nature of the person. By autonomy, I do not mean self-completeness but the having of a will, a rational will of one's own, that enables one to determine at least some of one's own goals and to pursue them, and to control one's destiny. From its Greek etymology, "autonomy" means, self-governing or self-directing. It is thus essentially the freedom of the person to choose his own goals and life plans in order to achieve some kind of self-realization. The actions and choice of goals of the

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 52.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 53.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 54.

individual emanate from his rational and moral will. Thus, the self-directing (or, self-determining) will also be self-assertive. Autonomy must be a fundamental feature of personhood, insofar as the realization of oneself—one's life plans, goals, and aspirations—greatly hinges on it, that is, on its exercise. Autonomy is, thus, valuable in itself³⁹⁹.

This moderate communitarianism as presented by Gyekye offers a solution to how an individual should relate with the community without losing the essential elements of personal freedom as well as without separating himself from the community. In this case personhood will be partly constituted on the one hand by the cultural community and on the other by individual's autonomy where he can choose what is good for him. Individual autonomy offers an avenue for personal «creativity», «inventiveness» and «imagination»⁴⁰⁰, which at the final end contribute immensely not only for personal growth but for the entire community. We know very well that extreme communitarianism has been used in some places to undermine individual's rights and in some cases has led to tyranny, political intolerance, and authoritarianism⁴⁰¹. Moderate communitarianism offers a moral framework whereby such extreme tendencies are eliminated by ensuring that individual rights are respected and protected. In this case limits are set so on one hand the individual does not feel coerced to act against his right but on the other does not neglect his cultural commitment to the community. This way every member in the community feels accommodated: «Moderate or restricted communitarianism gives accommodation to communal values as well as to values of individuality, to social commitments as well as to responsibilities to oneself»⁴⁰².

7. CONCLUSION

We have presented in this chapter some systematic attempts to overcome the crisis of the modern self from a critical reflection that puts alterity at the centre of metaphysics. Our attempt has been to show that man's solitude is against the nature of his being. The recognition of the other as someone indispensable and undeniable in the existence of the self has been an exposition of the utmost importance in this chapter. Adolphe Gesché

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 76.

speaking about the importance of otherness also rejects loneliness as something that can describe the genuine existence of the human being:

El hombre no está hecho para la soledad. Al contrario, salvo el caso de un modo de vida muy regulado, en la soledad uno se deteriora: muere de ausencia y de separación. El hombre es un ser de alteridad, 'alterado'. No somos Narciso, que solo busca mirarse en el espejo, sino Nicodemo, que intenta comprenderse. Y para no perderse en el espejo, hace falta la alteridad de un segundo (el prójimo) y la alteridad de un Tercero (Dios). Sin referente, yo no sería más que repetición de mismo, autosimilaridad, pleonasma retórico y entonces, justamente, ser inidentificable⁴⁰³.

In defence of the centrality of alterity, Max Scheler has shown us how sympathy and love help us create a relationship between human beings by describing the differences between the two traits. Martin Buber, in turn, with his dialogical conception of the human being has shown us how the Thou of the other cannot be treated as an object but as a person respecting the presence of an «*eternal Thou*» in him. Then with Ortega's ideas about the executive self we have seen his conviction of the radical reality of the self in its realization as a project, but, also, realizing that the executive self, lives with other similar ones who must be treated as persons and not as objects. At the same time, with Levinasian ethics we have analysed the infinite desire of the other and the call to the undeniable responsibility that one has with the face of the other.

Finally, we have examined the ethics of Ubuntu by showing that it supports alterity. From the etymology of the term Ubuntu, we have analysed the main principles of Ubuntu ethics from the point of view of the human relationship. Ubuntu's ethics has proven to be holistic putting at the centre not only man and God, but also the rest of creation as such. We have examined the Ubuntu type of communitarianism by bringing out its intersubjective view of the human person, an aspect that plays a great deal of importance in the issue of alterity. Ubuntu's form of alterity, as seen, embraces reciprocity, dialogue, diversity, plurality, but puts at the centre the autonomy of the individual to give space to his personal growth.

As mentioned, we have previously felt the desire and importance of bringing on board other authors to dialogue with Charles Taylor on the subject of alterity and intersubjectivity in order to enrich his ideas and complete them. Our goal is not only to

⁴⁰³ Adolphe Gesché, *El hombre* (Salamanca: ediciones sígueme, 2010), 128-129.

expose his views forgetting that there have been other authors who agree with him in his thinking. Therefore, it was worthy that in this second chapter we bring other views on the theme before embarking on the third chapter.

The third chapter focuses on a very important aspect in terms of intersubjectivity and alterity. We shall return to Taylor and examine the question of language. Taylor has called man a «*language animal*». Man is by nature a being capable of speaking and can therefore communicate with the other who is different from him and also with the rest of creation. A being capable of speaking is a being who cannot live in isolation. Our effort from the beginning has been to show how human beings are always beings of relationship and beings always «*with the-others*». Therefore, in the next chapter we examine the issue of language and see how Taylor clarifies his view of alterity.

CHAPTER III

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND ALTERITY

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, following our comparative approach, we have examined other points of views regarding the otherness and interpersonal relationship to enrich Taylor's perspective in order to come up with holistic and comprehensive understanding of the issue. This chapter examines in depth an aspect that we have mentioned before related to alterity in Taylor's vision which is also ours. This is the question of language as an indispensable dimension for understanding human life. Language is not a mere instrument of communication. It is a tool that expresses our being and the being of the others with whom we live. Language is deep-rooted in our lives. It is worthwhile, therefore, in this chapter to delve into this question with the aim of showing how language relates to alterity, our main concern in this research.

In the first instance, we want to show that language defines who we are. We are anthropologically and ontologically self-interpretive animals as seen earlier in this research. Language becomes an instrument to interpret ourselves as human beings allowing us to know ourselves and the others with whom we live.

Secondly, we shall explore the history diachronically to trace how the current misconceptions of language as a mere instrument of representation has been arrived at. Here we will return to the proper conception of the human being not only as a rational being but above all as a being of discourse.

Thirdly, we shall compare two great visions of language that are the fruit of our history. On the one hand, we will discuss the designative view of language that has been motivated by the epistemological view of the world born of Cartesian philosophy and inherited by Anglo-Saxon empiricists. Here the role of language has been reduced to a mere instrument, method or procedure of description. However, contrasting this view is the constitutive view of language that arises from the view of the Romantics and other proponents of the constitutive view. The holistic and expressive dimension of the constitutive vision of language must be emphasized here. The expressive dimension of language brought by the Romantics and emphasized by Taylor is revolutionary if we are to compare it with the traditional view. For example, in the case of art as one way in which the human being expresses himself, we shall see that with Romantics art was not a mere imitator of reality. Art for the Romantics and Taylor creates and makes things manifest. This revolutionary vision of art with the coming of the Romantics is comparable

with the birth of the vanguard art and especially with the emphasis of abstract art. To bring out this comparison we have seen it worthy to dialogue with the pioneer of abstract art himself, Vasili Kandinsky. The revolutionary aspect in Kandinsky is seen in his attempt to abandon the materialism of his time as will be seen. He criticizes the platonic aspect of mimesis in art something which Taylor also does. This similarity between Taylor and Kandinsky in their emphasis of creative aspect of art as a way of expression is what has made us take some time to analyse abstract art brought by the latter.

Fourthly, we will show the great connection between language and community. The language is born, taught and developed in the community. It has an intersubjective origin. Language is interpersonal, it is not at all a private matter. Therefore, dialogue and sharing characterize the issue of language in the community. Monologue as an approach to language is a misconception.

Fifthly, we will show the connection between language and meaning. We will look at the theories surrounding the subject of language with an attempt to arrive at a holistic theory. A holistic theory must take into account the entire background of the linguistic network because it contributes immensely to meaning. Any good theory of meaning must consider language as a network of a meaningful activity.

Eventually we will show that language is an activity that is deeply rooted in our way of life. Language describes human activity, it is our way of existence, it brings to light who we are. There is no way that language can be separated from our way of being. It constitutes our way of being.

2. A BEING OF LANGUAGE AS A SELF-INTERPRETIVE BEING

To capture the main ideas about how language is closely related to Taylor's understanding of alterity, we must go back to his conception of the human being as a self-interpreted animal as seen in chapter one. Self-interpretation in the human being is one of the ontological characteristics as we saw earlier. Taylor has defined human beings as animals of language. To understand who human beings are, we must explore their linguistic capacity that is experienced within a linguistic community. In other words, language as a tool of interpretation is essential to understand our identity within the

framework of a community. In this way, the connection between the linguistic capacity of human beings and the intersubjective dimension is very well highlighted:

My self-definition is understood as an answer to the question Who I am. And this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out⁴⁰⁴.

Taylor in some of his writings such as «*The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*» and «*Human Agency and Language*» has devoted his time to deeply exploring the subject of language. He feels that there has been a misconception in understanding this issue in the past that needs to be corrected. This can be seen in the preface of the first book cited, where it is stated: «*This is a book about the human linguistic capacity. In it I attempt to show that this is more multiform than has usually been supposed*»⁴⁰⁵. We want to trace this problem by bringing to light the debate between the designative and constitutive vision of language.

3. TRACING THE BACKGROUND OF THE QUESTION

Before we trace why there has been an erroneous paradigm of language, we must agree with Taylor that there has been a remarkable growth in the importance of the science of linguistics in the twentieth century⁴⁰⁶. Concern for linguistic issues is concern for meaning, since both go together. To penetrate deeply into the mystery of human nature, the question of language must be taken into account. The explosive growth of the question of language in the twentieth century can legitimately be associated with the great concern of the question of meaning and how the human mystery can be better understood:

The concern for language as a medium links up with the twentieth century concern with meaning. What is it that makes speech meaningful, or indeed that makes meaningful any of the things that have meaning?⁴⁰⁷.

⁴⁰⁴ SS,35.

⁴⁰⁵ LA, preface.

⁴⁰⁶ HAL, 215-216.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 216.

In order to properly track such confusion, Taylor puts together a diachronic investigation of the problem. Originally Aristotle had defined man as «'zoon logon echon', which means 'animal possessing logos'»⁴⁰⁸. This logos, well understood, should incorporate questions of discourse and meaning rather than associating man with the famous definition of being a rational animal. Logos, therefore,

...means, inter alia, 'word', 'thought', 'reasoning', 'reasoned account', as well as being used for the words deployed in such an account. It incorporates in its range of meanings a sense of the relation of speech and thought⁴⁰⁹.

The emphasis of this relationship between discourse and thought is what Taylor wants to insist on to finally show that it is intrinsically related to meaning. Taylor's sense of meaning is not a mere abstract definition of things, but rather how such meanings have value: «for us in virtue of our goals, aspirations, purposes»⁴¹⁰. To deepen this debate, we will look at two dimensions of significant objects that later contributed to two rival theories about meaning. In the first dimension that is designative, a word or a sign has meaning by the fact of pointing or referring to what it designates. Taylor uses the phrase: «The book is on the table»⁴¹¹, to explain this. Here the book and the table designate particular objects. In Taylor's words, «the whole phrase puts together the two referring expressions in such a way as to assert that the designatum of one is placed on the designatum of the other»⁴¹². However, in the expressive dimension this phrase not only shows what is designated by objects, but also expresses the thought, perception and belief of the one who proclaims such a statement⁴¹³. The expression is used here to indicate not a mere designation or significance of something, but rather the manifestation of what there is:

What is meant by 'expression' here? I think it means roughly this: something is expressed, when it is embodied in such a way as to be made manifest. And 'manifest' must be taken here in a strong sense. Something is manifest when it is directly available for all to see. It is not manifest when there are just signs of its presence, from which we can infer that it is there, such as when I 'see' that you are in your office because of your car being parked

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 218.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

outside. In this kind of case, there is an implied contrast with another kind of situation, in which I could see you directly⁴¹⁴.

The use of incarnation in the expression, a common vocabulary in Taylor, in no way indicates that what is manifested is absolute. As he indicates, «*a given expression may reveal what it conveys in a partial, or enigmatic, or fragmentary fashion*»⁴¹⁵. Expressive theories avoid any naturalistic conception of language. The mystery surrounding the question of language remains intact in this view. In contrast, designative theories that are motivated by the modern understanding of science try by all means to avoid mystery. The sign designates things as they are:

Designative theories, those which make designation fundamental, make meaning something relatively unpuzzling, unmysterious. That is a great part of their appeal. The meaning of words or sentences is explained by their relation to things or states of affairs in the world. There need be nothing more mysterious about meaning than there is about these things or states of affairs themselves...a designative theory accounts for meaning by correlating signs to bits of the world, and these can in principle be identified objectively. It offers the promise of a theory of language which can fit within the canons of modern natural science⁴¹⁶.

At this juncture we investigate what has brought this divergence in the vision of language historically. For Taylor, language as a concern begins with modernity. For the ancient world it was never a problem. The ancients focused their concern on thought rather than discourse:

The actual doctrines about language, about words, were rather unimportant and marginal among the ancients. They were not that concerned about speech; they were concerned about thought. But then how about the insight implicit in the many-meaning word *logos*? *Logos* meant 'word'; and the root it came from, *legein*, meant 'to say'. What underpinned this connection between saying, words and reason was what one could call a discourse-modelled notion of thought. Thought was seen as like discourse; it revealed things as discourse can do⁴¹⁷.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 219.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 220, 222.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 222.

For the ancients, therefore, words were «*mere external clothing of thought*»⁴¹⁸ and so language as such never has the importance that modernity gives it. However, this changed with the arrival of the Neoplatonists and the rise of the first Fathers. The new understanding of Christian theology was that of the words and thoughts that are incarnate. The created world becomes a form of incarnation of Plato's Ideas: «*The Platonic Ideas are the thoughts of God*»⁴¹⁹. This means that the created world becomes a clear expression of God's word and thoughts. We are now moving from mere thought to expressed reality. As St. Augustine would say: «*Just as our thought is clothed externally in our words, so is the thought of God, the Logos- the Verbum... This is, as it were, God's speech. That is why everything is a sign, if we can see it properly*»⁴²⁰. Now we are talking about an incarnate logos. The Fathers especially through St. Augustine brought a new change where words and thought began to be associated with the theme. In this case God becomes an expressivist of these words through creation. It is God who gives the world a meaningful order through the incarnation of His Ideas; this is creation:

So, what we have in Augustine and his successors is an expressive theory of meaning embedded in their ontology. The originator of meaning, God, is an expressivist. This sets the framework for the theories of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, what one could call the semiological ontologies, which pictured the world as a meaningful order, or a text⁴²¹.

However, the semiological view of the universe was still far from giving rise to the importance of language. With the advent of medieval nominalism, another change intervened. For nominalists «*The universal is not a feature of the world, but an effect of our language*»⁴²². In other words, the importance here shifts to things where each word designates a particular thing. This kind of vision was preparing the ground for the birth of such a dominant designative theory in the seventeenth century with the advent of the scientific revolution. The dominant proponents here were Descartes and the English empiricists who rejected the idea of the meaningful order of the universe⁴²³. After tracing

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 223.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid., 224.

⁴²³ Ibid.

this background, we now want to look in details at the two contrasting visions of language that emerge from this historical view.

4. DESIGNATIVE VERSUS CONSTITUTIVE VIEW OF LANGUAGE

In their quest to clear the confusion created in the understanding of language; Taylor contrasts two great defenders of different visions of language that emerge from the seventeenth century. The two major contrasting points of view are the type of designative theory (framing, descriptive, designative-instrumental) and the constitutive theory (constitutive expressive). To show this difference, he presents the proposal of different authors. Proponents of designative theory include Hobbes, Locke, and Condillac, while those of the constitutive view of language include Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt:

My inspiration has been the views on language developed in the 1790s in Germany, the time and place where what we think of as German Romanticism flowered. The main theorists I have drawn on are Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt— hence my name for the theory I have taken from them, the “HHH”. The contrast case to this outlook is one which developed in the great thinkers of early modernity, rationalist and empiricist, which were also responsible for the modern epistemological theories which grew out of, and sometimes partly against, the work of Descartes. The main early figures in this tradition which I cite here are Hobbes, Locke, and Condillac. Hence the shorthand title “HLC”⁴²⁴.

4.1. The Designative View

The fragmentary designative view of language gives birth to what Taylor calls framing theory. This theory is established from the seventeenth century with the ideas of Locke, Hobbes and Condillac as we have seen before. Other names that denote this theory include theory. «*Descriptive*» and «*designative-instrumental*». The HCL conception of language put briefly was dictated by «*the modern representational epistemology made dominant by Descartes. In the mind, there are “ideas”. These are bits of putative representation of reality, much of it “external”*»⁴²⁵. Language here becomes a mere instrument for conveying different ideas; in this way, framing theory denies language one

⁴²⁴ LA, preface.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 4.

of the important things in Taylor's perspective: that of articulation and evidence. With the mentality of enframing theory, «*Language is understood in terms of certain elements: ideas, signs, and their association, which precede its arising... What's new is that now the mind is in control*»⁴²⁶. The framing theory will become much clearer when you see the constitutive theory. It will be noted that the main role of language is not only descriptive-instrumental, but rather its active role in articulation and creation, thus becoming a way to change our world. In its articulation, the community dimension that has been our line of thought in insisting on the theme of alterity in human existence remains intact.

4.2 The Holistic View

We now come what we might call a holistic view of language. In this point of view, we will see how the expressive and constitutive character of language is emphasized. We examine the HHH tradition that contrasts the position of the HLC tradition that had reduced language to a descriptive-instrumental function.

The designative view of language received substantial challenges since the advent of the eighteenth century. The eighteenth-century view of language was characterized by what Taylor loosely calls Romanticism. The term, as he claims, is used lightly because there were other proponents with the same point of view, but who could be strictly referred to as romantic⁴²⁷. One of the greatest critics of the designative view was Herder, who, to begin with, attacks Condillac's theory of the origin of language. Condillac in his famous fable in the desert outlines how language could have been invented:

It is a fable of two children in the desert, who come to invent language. We assume certain cries and gestures as natural expressions of feeling. Condillac argues that each, seeing the other, say, cry out in distress, would come to see the cry as a sign of something (e.g., what causes distress), and would come to use it to refer. The children would thus have their first word. Their lexicon would then increase slowly, item by item⁴²⁸.

Herder looking at this story as an attempt to explain the origin of language identifies its weakness. Accuses Condillac of the fallacy of «*begging the question*»⁴²⁹.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴²⁷ HAL, 227.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ LA, 6.

This is a kind of presupposition that Taylor explains as follows: «...it presupposes just what we want to explain. It takes the relation of signifying for granted, as something the children already grasp, or that can unproblematically occur to them...»⁴³⁰. To better explain why Condillac could have assumed so much, Herder returns to our earlier theme of explaining the differences between man as a being of language and the rest of the animals. He investigates what makes human beings capable of associating signs with the meaning as Condillac assumes, without foundation. This is the mysterious part of language and, in fact, the one that differentiates us from animals. Better said: «*But what is this capacity which we have, and animals do not to endow sounds with meaning, to grasp them as referring to, as used to talk about things?* »⁴³¹. The best example we could use to illustrate this difference is Taylor's example of the triangle. Does a trained animal recognize that this object is a triangle in the same way that a human being recognizes it? The answer is obviously no. Let's follow this example:

Let us look at this. I have the word 'triangle' in my lexicon. This means that I can recognize things as triangles, identify them, pick them out as such. I can say, for example, 'This is a triangle.' But what does this capacity amount to? Let us see by comparing it with an analogous animal capacity. I might train an animal (a rat), to react differentially, say, to go through a door which had a triangle painted on it, as against one which had a circle. So my rat would be in a sense recognizing a triangle. But there is a crucial difference: the rat in a sense recognizes the triangle, because he reacts to it. But the human language-user recognizes that this is a triangle, he recognizes that 'triangle' is the right word to use here; that this is the right description. This capacity to recognize that X is the right description is essentially invoked in our capacity to use language⁴³².

What then is the difference between us humans and other animals when it comes to the awareness of things? In the case of the triangle, a human being due to his reflective ability will not only react to the triangle but will be able to «*describe*» it as such. In other words, a human being is endowed with a kind of consciousness that allows him to experience things «*in a fuller way*»⁴³³. You will be able to tell why this object is a triangle. Any other animal can be trained to react when the triangle is presented to it, but it can't really say what a triangle is, it can never describe it. Herder is preparing us for a new

⁴³⁰ HAL, 227.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 228.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

term that possibly Condillac in his designative vision of language did not realize. This is the «*reflective awareness*», an aspect that cannot be separated from language. It means that when we talk, unlike other animals, we realize what we are saying. This understanding is what is missing in the other animals. Therefore, language according to Herder cannot be a mere use of words, signs, and sounds, but rather a way of portraying this reflective consciousness:

Herder uses the term 'reflection' (Besonnenheit) for this awareness. And his point against Condillac is that this kind of reflection is inseparable from language. It cannot precede our learning our first word, which is what Condillac implicitly assumes. This is because only someone capable of using language to describe is capable of picking things out as - or recognizing things as-, in the strong sense. But this means that language is not just a set of words which designate things; it is the vehicle of this kind of reflective awareness. This reflection is a capacity we only realize in speech. Speaking is not only the expression of this capacity, but also its realization⁴³⁴.

4.2.1 Expressive Dimension of Language

Thus, Herder's idea of reflective consciousness is closely connected with discourse. This brings a very important aspect of language in human beings. This is the expressive dimension. But what is the relationship between the expressive dimension of language and reflective consciousness? One becomes the vehicle of the other. Discourse is important for the manifestation of this reflective consciousness: «...*we have to be able to speak, that is, give expression to this reflective awareness, because it is only through this expression, through speech, that this reflective awareness comes about*»⁴³⁵. Herder is bringing to light the idea of «*expressive theory*» which is only possible in human beings. Only human beings «*per se*» of which it can be said that they express themselves using language in a strong sense. It is a holistic theory in the sense that it is constitutive of language as opposed to the traditional view where the manifestation of God's Ideas was only seen through creation. Here the human being is fully involved in the use of language to express himself; man needs language to manifest his ideas to the world. Therefore, Herder's point is that language cannot be without expression:

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 228-229.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 229.

This is once again an expressive theory. But this time it is an expressive theory of language, rather than an expressive theory of the cosmos. On the traditional view, creation expresses the ideas of God; but these exist before/ outside creation. The new expressive theory of human language that we find in Herder is, by contrast, constitutive; that is, reflective consciousness only comes to exist in its expression. The expressive dimension is fundamental to language, because it is only in expression that language comes to be⁴³⁶.

The expressive turn expressed in HHH's proposals touched a wide range of fields. Music, poetry and art as forms of expression in the Romantic period were part of this great debate. As Taylor says: «*It is not an accident that the only speaking animal is also the one who dances, makes music, paints, and so on*»⁴³⁷. Here we want to examine the subject of art as one in which language is portrayed. As we have observed, language is language because it makes things manifest. For example, if we talk about the role of art in this manifestation, we find that it was a reinterpretation of how the human being expresses himself in art. The emphasis was not on the previous conception where art was a mere mimesis. Art was no longer seen as a mere imitation, but as a creative expression: «*...the artist strives to imitate not nature, but the author of nature. Art is now seen not as imitation, but as creative expression*»⁴³⁸. An artist traditionally was only viewed as a mere imitator of nature: «*Art imitates reality...But on the new understanding, art is not imitation, but expression in the sense discussed here. It makes something manifest while at the same time realizing it, completing it*»⁴³⁹. This means that in this work of art a certain meaning is expressed or rather manifested. The artist in this case can be said to participate in the creation; turns out to be «*a creator God*»⁴⁴⁰, in better terms, he becomes a co-creator. Herder's view of language brings to light a holistic view of everything that is involved, so that everything involved manifests the reflective consciousness of the subject, in this case the human subject. As Taylor says, the language here is not «*an assemblage of words, but the capacity to speak (express/ realize) the reflective awareness implicit in using words to say something*»⁴⁴¹.

We can say that there was a kind of revolution when in so far as seeing the artist and artwork. This reminds us of the revolutionary vanguard art of the twentieth century

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 236.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ SS, 377.

⁴⁴⁰ HAL, 230.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

that deserves its reflection here for its similar change it brought in the reinterpretation of art. The best example to examine what brought about abstract art during this period. Here we want to briefly examine the vision of art according to Vasili Kandinsky.

Vasili Kandinsky is undoubtedly one of the great characters who contributed immensely to the vanguard art of the twentieth century. He deserves to be called the pioneer of abstract art who left a revolutionary and impressive mark on his time. He was part of the movement, Der Blaue Reiter with Franc Marc and others. He was born in Moscow on the 5th of December and died in Paris in 1944 curiously in the same month. They say that he left Russia when he was young for Munich, where he began to paint by frequenting the course given by F.Stuck at an academy in Munich. In the same city he opened a painter's studio and from this time he was known throughout Europe. In Paris in the following years, he met the Fauves group (in French wild beasts. Creators of the Fauvism artistic movement) that is, a group of young painters almost being like their inspirer. This group had a great influence on him and what will follow as his line in art:

...en 1906 residió algún tiempo en Paris, donde se relacionó con el joven grupo de los 'fauves', cuya pintura había de influir en la suya de una manera definitiva. Casi como un precursor de ellos, en 1903 intentó ya, en un famoso cuadro titulado 'El caballero azul', librar al lenguaje pictórico de los vínculos naturalistas y hacerlo así obediente solo al sentimiento íntimo del pintor, o sea 'expresivo' en un sentido espiritualista y ajeno a cualquier reminiscencia académica: de esta suerte, un rostro podría ser negro, un árbol rojo y un caballero azul. Más impetuosamente revolucionaria que la suya, en este aspecto, y con una despreocupación y una audacia también mayores, la pintura de los 'fauves' parisienses tuvo para él u valor estimulante de confirmación; sin embargo, débale cierta superioridad sobre los seguidores del fauvismo el intimo convencimiento en que empapaba su obra al meditar silenciosamente la profunda, necesaria y completa independencia de esta. Y así no le resulto difícil ir más allá⁴⁴².

The year 1910 was of great importance in Kandinsky's life; it is said that during this time he painted his first abstract work and also wrote his best-known book, «*De lo espiritual en el arte*», which was published two years later. He was also fortunate to know the abstract experiences of Delaunay and together with Klee and Marc began a polemical activity in favour of the same art. In 1914 he returned to Moscow and there continued this revolutionary tendency. In 1919 he became a professor in a Moscow academy, becoming

⁴⁴² Montaner y Simón, *Diccionario de autores* (Barcelona: S. A, 1963),471.

the director of the Museum of Pictorial Culture. In 1920 he taught at the University of Moscow while founding the Russian Academy of Art Science⁴⁴³.

Now we will try to show his revolutionary vision of art based on his first theoretical treatise on abstraction, «*De lo espiritual en el arte*» del 1912. This book has its own language according to its time that certainly needed change; and Kandinsky being a Russian sometimes uses figurative language that can be difficult to understand:

En este contexto en esta época se sitúa el libro de Kandinsky y así se explica su efecto revolucionario. Sus ideas acompañaban a sus cuadros y fomentaban su discusión. No siempre favorable, pues algunos críticos no entendían la forma de expresión del artista, tanto como pintor que como teórico. Aun hoy el lector ha de tener en cuenta que Kandinsky, como ruso, se expresa en el lenguaje oriental lleno de analogías, y que resuelve los escollos del idioma por medio de asociaciones⁴⁴⁴.

Kandinsky can be regarded as a revolutionary in the vision of art. His new way of conceiving art came at the right time because it was a time of great change brought by the scientific revolution whose effects could already be seen in the minds of many. In Max Bill's introduction to this work, we find the following passage indicating Kandinsky's time:

Se iniciaban nuevos tiempos con nuevos problemas; la era atómica se intuía como notó Kandinsky en Rucblicke: ‘Un acontecimiento científico quito del camino uno de los obstáculos más importantes. Fue la desintegración del átomo. Esta fue en mi alma como la desintegración de todo el mundo. De pronto caían los muros más sólidos. Todo resultaba inseguro, vacilante, blando (...). Me parecía que la ciencia había sido aniquilada: sus fundamentos no eran más que una ilusión, un error de los científicos que no construían, rodeados de un nimbo, su edificio divino con mano segura y piedra a piedra, sino que buscaban las verdades a tientas en la oscuridad y confundían una cosa por otra’. Este enfoque, aún escéptico, de las nuevas teóricas de la física, a la que Ostmann y Plank habían añadido nuevos descubrimientos a finales del siglo XIX y que con la ‘Teoría de la relatividad de Albert Einstein (1905) había alcanzado una nueva cima, demuestra únicamente que en aquel tiempo la física atómica aún no ocupaba un puesto predominante en el pensamiento de la arista creativa. A pesar de ello Kandinsky desarrolló, paralelamente a la física, pensamientos parecidos, y es interesante comprobar que los resultados artísticos precedían a los físicos en el sentido de que pasaron de una

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Vasili Kandinsky, *De lo espiritual en arte* (Barcelona: Barral editores, 1973), 13.

manera más inmediata y directa de la teoría a la realidad al ser materia práctica de discusión⁴⁴⁵.

His time is one of great change and abandonment to the objectivism of growing science as also described by Michel Henry in his work, «*Ver lo invisible, Acerca de Kandinsky*»⁴⁴⁶. It was a time of anguish where materialism was abandoned, sheltering only the external aspect of art and consequently denying the true essence. Within this situation Kandinsky proposes a program of regeneration of art recovering the dimension that was almost disappearing. He aimed at making art realize the revelation of the invisible life that in essence constitutes the true life of man. His motive is to awaken man from his situation caused by much emphasis of the materialist age recovering the two similarities of art, one exterior and one interior:

Nuestra alma, que después de un largo periodo materialista se encuentra aún en los comienzos del despertar, contiene gérmenes de la desesperación, de la falta de fe, de la falta de meta y de sentido. Todavía no ha pasado toda la pesadilla de las ideas materialistas que convirtieron la vida del universo en un penoso juego sin sentido. El alma que despierta se halla aún bajo la impresión de esta pesadilla. Solo una débil luz alborea como un puntito único en un enorme círculo negro. Esta débil luz es solo un presentimiento que el alma no se atreve a ver, dudando si la luz será un sueño y el círculo negro realidad. Esta duda y los sufrimientos aún vigentes de la filosofía materialista diferencian nuestra alma de la de los 'primitivos'. Nuestra alma tiene una grieta que, cuando se consigue tocarla, suena como un valioso jarrón resquebrajado y reencontrado en las profundidades de la tierra. Por eso la tendencia primitiva a lo primitivo, como hoy la vivimos, francamente tomada de prestado, será de breve duración. Estos dos tipos de semejanza entre el arte nuevo y las formas de periodos pasados son diametralmente diferentes. El primero es externo y por eso no tiene futuro. El segundo es espiritual y por eso contiene el germen del futuro. Después del periodo de la tentación materialista, en la que aparentemente sucumbió, y que, sin embargo, rechaza como una mala tentación, el alma se eleva afinada por la lucha y el sufrimiento. Los sentimientos toscos como el miedo, la alegría, la tristeza, etc., que podrían servir en este periodo de tentación como contenido del arte, atraerán poco al artista. Este intentara despertar sentimientos más sutiles que actualmente no tienen nombre. El artista vive una vida compleja, sutil y la obra nacida de

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴⁶ Michel Henry, *Ver lo invisible, Acerca de Kandinsky* (Madrid: ediciones Siruela, 2008), 33.

él, provocara necesariamente en el espectador capaz de sentir las, emociones más matizadas que nuestras palabras no pueden expresar⁴⁴⁷.

Our author is aware that, «*Toda obra de arte es hija de su tiempo*» as he states, but also criticizes the Platonic concept of the mimesis where art had to imitate the visible dimension of the forgotten phenomenon of the invisible. We have already seen the same aspect in critics that the expressivist view of language had on Taylor's traditional view of language. This is the big reason why we are taking some time to analyse the revolutionary vision of art brought by Kandinsky. True art is capable of evolution, it is a child of its time, but it also has the ability to grow into the future, otherwise it would lack the prophetic dimension, it would be castrated and then dies. With this revolutionary motif Kandinsky launches a work that can recover the inner need of art and give a spiritual nourishment to the viewer.

But in what way is Kandinsky's vision of art revolutionary and why do we compare it with the change that romantics and proponents of the HHH model proposed by Taylor? First, we have observed Kandinsky's contrast with the traditional view of art that emphasized more on mimesis. Second, we need to examine his new abstract art characterized by a new form of knowledge. To understand this, it is a «*conditio sine qua non*», understand his idea of new art. It always avoids creating a separation between the outer and inner dimensions of art. It is narrated in a certain instant what happened to Kandinsky while he was at an exhibition in Moscow and how he was shocked by a painting:

Yo solo conocía el arte realista, casi exclusivamente el ruso; a menudo me quedaba largo rato contemplando la mano de Franz Liszt en el retrato de Repin y cosas por el estilo. De pronto vi por primera vez un cuadro. El catálogo me aclaró que se trataba de un montón de heno. Me molestó no haberlo reconocido. Además, me parecía que el pintor no tenía ningún derecho a pintar de una manera tan imprecisa. Sentía oscuramente que el cuadro no tenía objeto y notaba asombrado y confuso que no solo me cautivaba, sino que se marcaba indeleblemente en mi memoria y que flotaba, siempre inesperadamente, hasta el último detalle ante mis ojos. Todo esto no estaba muy claro y yo era incapaz de sacar las consecuencias simples de esta experiencia. Sin embargo, comprendí con toda claridad la fuerza insospechada, hasta entonces escondida de los colores, que iba más allá de todos mis sueños. De pronto la pintura era una fuerza maravillosa y magnífica. Al mismo

⁴⁴⁷ Vasili Kandinsky, *De lo espiritual en arte* (Barcelona: Barral editores, 1973), 22.

tiempo- e inevitablemente- se desacreditó por completo el objeto como elemento necesario del cuadro. En resumen, yo tenía la impresión de que una parte de mi Moscú legendario existía sobre aquel lienzo⁴⁴⁸.

This cited passage presents the two points of views of the work of art: its materiality and also its essence or the thing that is presented. The abstract for Kandinsky does not mean separation from reality but rather the ability of the work of art to express the invisible life of being. The medium used are instruments to express this invisible definitive reality. Abstraction presents life itself because as a reality having its origin in the world, refers to the spirit of the world as Michel Henry says:

Que la abstracción procede del mundo y se constituye cada vez como una de sus derivaciones posibles (...). Abstractas, es decir, construidas a partir de formas sensibles y por una especie de depuración de estas. ¿Qué es una línea sino un trazado sugerido por el límite de un cuerpo natural y en el que se ha decidido no tener en cuenta su espesor, color, etc.? Es de esta forma como se pasa de lo 'redondo' al círculo, de todas las incitaciones formales de la naturaleza a su arquetipo geométrico. Aunque tal actividad, en la que la geometría encuentra su origen, merece ser denominada 'ideación' y no 'abstracción' en la medida en que lo que hace es crear un ser nuevo, ideal, más que aislar un fragmento de lo real-, no por ello deja de tener su punto de partida en el mundo y a él remite como fundamento⁴⁴⁹.

That is, abstraction itself does not oppose nature, but discovers its essence. It is clear in this instance that art does not remain at the level of imitation but is life itself where one experiences oneself expressing one's inner dimension. Its emphasis is on the relationship between life and aesthetics or the spiritual in art. Abstraction does not mean only seeing but rather the expression, the embodiment of the feeling that this vision originates in the one who sees. We can conclude that it is a way of life because life is represented in it. Art opens up to us a moment of first knowledge of the artist's inner world and personality because the work itself exists in his mind before he produces it. Secondly, it shows us what is typical of its time and style, and also what is typical of art. These three dimensions are important because true and eternal art must represent all times. The most interesting thing about Kandinsky is his messianic idea of art. It is about

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

⁴⁴⁹ Michel Henry, *Ver lo invisible, Acerca de Kandinsky* (Madrid: ediciones Siruela, 2008), 26.

recovering and discovering the spiritual dimension that has been lost and that presents the invisible reality of the human person.

Another aspect of abstraction is the theme of the unveiling of pictoricity also related to the subject of knowledge. It is a process we can say of exposing the hidden things by opening the deep and inner reality that the work of art hides. In the words of Michel Henry referring to the unveiling:

Desvelamiento quiere decir aquí desvelamiento de la vida, y, como esta es en sí misma ese desvelamiento, como es, en la interioridad de su pathos, revelación de sí, es al más ineludible de sus poderes adonde la pintura reconduce la vida, siendo, en realidad, la exaltación de ese poder. El desvelamiento de la esencia de la vida, es decir, también, como podemos comprender, de la esencia de la pintura-por mediación del análisis de la letra es solo un ejemplo entre todos aquellos que la agilidad intelectual de Kandinsky propone a nuestra consideración. El caso de guión largo o raya es instructivo. Correctamente situado en una frase, tiene un valor de puntuación inmediatamente captado, tan fugitivo como la sonoridad interior que se une a él y a la que no prestamos atención. Si se lo prolonga indebidamente o si interviene a destiempo, despertará en el lector un sentimiento de malestar, el de un fallo de impresión; pues ese signo dotado de un sentido preciso no conviene a su nuevo lugar. Es decir que un significado lingüístico, y más en general utilitario, se separa con dificultad del término al que esta habitualmente asociado. Esa separación, no obstante, es lo único que nos da acceso al dominio de la pictoricidad pura, a la esfera autónoma del arte. Por eso los intentos de introducir en una obra de arte elementos tomados del mundo ordinario, y que se deshacen con dificultad de la cualidad que deben a su medio de origen, parecen con frecuencia tan inoportunos. Su pretensión de pasar por invenciones audaces fracasa penosamente, no difiriendo apenas la impresión que provocan de la que se saca de la percepción de un guión mal colocado⁴⁵⁰.

His sense of revelation is related to the eidetic analysis of Edmund Husserl. We know that Husserl in his transcendental phenomenology invites us to spend an ascetic moment or a reduction that allows us to overcome the deceptions of appearances to reach the essences. In fact, Husserl proclaims his truth, «*el espíritu*», and even more, only the spirit is the one that exists in itself and for itself. Kandinsky also acknowledges the exterior existence of painting, but the real foundation is within it. The spiritual life according to Kandinsky can be represented artistically. It is a sharp triangle where in each

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 54.

section there are artists⁴⁵¹. This spiritual triangle moves back and forth. It is a continuous movement of knowledge, of the search for spiritual bread. The true artist is the one who has the ability to see beyond his section; he is in fact a prophet:

El triángulo se mueve despacio, apenas perceptiblemente hacia adelante y hacia arriba; donde hoy se halla el vértice más alto, estará mañana la próxima sección. Es decir, lo que hoy es comprensible para el vértice más alto y resulta un disparate incomprensible al resto del triángulo, mañana será contenido razonable y sentido de la vida de la segunda sección. En el extremo del vértice más alto a veces se halla un solo hombre. Su contemplación gozosa es igual a su inconmensurable tristeza interior. Los que están más próximos a él no le comprenden, indignados le llaman farsante o loco. (...). Esta exposición esquemática no gota la imagen total de la vida espiritual. Entre otras cosas no muestra una de sus facetas negativas, una gran mancha muerta y negra. Porque sucede muchas veces que ese pan espiritual se convierte en el alimento de los que ya habitan en una sección superior. Para estos, el pan se convierte en veneno: en pequeñas dosis actúa de tal manera que el alma desciende paulatinamente de una sección superior a otra inferior; consumido en dosis grandes, el veneno conduce a la caída, que arroja al alma a secciones cada vez más bajas. En una de sus novelas, Sienkewicz compara la vida espiritual con la natación: el que no trabaja incasablemente y lucha sin cesar contra el naufragio acaba por hundirse sin remedio. Las dotes de un hombre, el talento (en el sentido del Evangelio), se convierten en una maldición- no solo para el artista que posee ese talento, sino para todos los que prueban ese pan venenoso⁴⁵².

Kandinsky uses the biblical figure of the prophet to indicate the role of a true artist in society. The artist is the representative of height in this triangle like Moses in the Bible coming down from an invisible mountain to bring wisdom to his people. When this prophetic voice is missing, the triangle moves downward, and the world goes into crisis and decay. It is very interesting the allegorical language that our author uses when exposing this process of knowledge towards essences. The artist must maintain this infinite desire not to follow the obscurity on the path of search. This infinite desire is comparable to the expressive vision of art in Taylor's vision where the artist becomes a creator-God in the continuous creation and improvement of the world. Kandinsky claims that using art for material purposes causes him to lose his soul and people feel abandoned because they lack spiritual bread.

⁴⁵¹ Edmund Husserl, *Invitación a la fenomenología* (Barcelona: Paidós ediciones, 1992), 10-22.

⁴⁵² Vasili Kandinsky, *De lo espiritual en arte* (Barcelona: Barral editores, 1973), 28.

Art influences all fields of society: political, religious and economic but only those who have the courage to ascend in the search reach what is called here the tomorrow's kingdom, which is only recognized through intuition. You have to ascend the spiritual triangle by passing levels of insecurity and fear upwards where there is no darkness. Only those who are not afraid to ask questions analysing the phenomenon, returning to the forgotten times, can come to the true light; they are professional sages who sacrifice themselves as soldiers crossing difficult times until they reach the truth.

Kandinsky insists on the importance of the collaboration of the different arts and their means in the construction of the spiritual pyramid or this path of knowledge. It is a path that rhymes with the words of Socrates.: «*conócete a ti mismo*» so each artist makes a deep study until he communicates the inner value. The call for art collaboration is also a call to otherness where each individual artist should also be concerned with knowing what another community of artists is saying. It is not the question that each art represents phenomena but expresses the inner life of the artist. For the spiritual pyramid to be realized it needs each art to delve into its area knowing that mutual learning from one to the other is super essential. Music, painting and all types of art must collaborate in this common endeavour of the search:

Al profundizar en sus propios medios, cada arte marca sus límites hacia las demás artes; la comparación las une de nuevo en un empeño interior común. Así se descubre que cada arte posee sus fuerzas, que no pueden ser sustituidas por las de otro arte. Y así se unen las fuerzas de las diversas artes. De esta unión nacerá con el tiempo el arte que ya hoy se presente: el verdadero arte monumental. Todo el que ahonde en los tesoros escondidos de su arte, es un envidiable colaborador en la construcción de la pirámide espiritual que un día llegará hasta el cielo⁴⁵³.

In the use of colours, you can also distinguish two effects or results: one is physical that is at the sensual level but does not last long; more important is the need not to stay at this level. The second effect that is more developed and contemplated is the psychological one. This is the result of contemplation, provoking what Kandinsky calls the soul vibration. The use of colours should create a harmony by arousing and producing the inner need that touches the soul. One should not stay in the form of the means of art but try to capture the abstract in them because in art it is achieved by intuition according to Kandinsky. The danger of materialism is to remain in the superficialities of the media

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 51.

avoiding putting the necessary effort to reach the inner levels. In addition, there is the importance of seeking a balance between pure abstraction and pure realism avoiding the danger of being the one sacrificing the other. In this work there is always the objective of awakening the viewer against the tending superiority:

Él espectador está demasiado acostumbrado a buscar la coherencia externa de las diversas partes del cuadro. El periodo materialista ha producido en la vida y, por lo tanto, también en el arte, un espectador incapaz de enfrentarse simplemente al cuadro (muy especialmente el llamado, experto en arte), en el que busca todo (imitación de la naturaleza, naturaleza a través del temperamento del artista, es decir, su temperamento, ambiente, pintura, anatomía, perspectiva, ambiente externo etc.), todos menos la vida interior del cuadro y su efecto sobre la sensibilidad. Cegado por los medios externos, el ojo espiritual del espectador no busca el contenido que se manifiesta a través de esos medios. Cuando tenemos una conversación interesante con una persona, intentamos bucear en su alma, buscamos su rostro interior, sus pensamientos y sentimientos y no pensamos que está utilizando palabras que constan de letras que estas no son más que sonidos que exigen la aspiración de aire por los pulmones (parte anatómica), que producen una vibración por la expulsión de aire por ellos y la colocación especial de la lengua y los labios (parte física) y que, finalmente, llegan por el tímpano a nuestra conciencia (parte psicológica) y obtienen un efecto nervioso (parte fisiológica), etc. Sabemos que todas estas partes son completamente secundarias, puramente accesorias en nuestra conversación, que las utilizamos como medios externos necesarios y que lo esencial del dialogo es la comunicación de ideas y sentimientos. La misma actitud habría que adoptar frente a la obra de arte y así conquistar el efecto directo y abstracto de la obra⁴⁵⁴.

Speaking about the artist and his work, Kandinsky is convinced that any work is born by mystical means, that is, it is born from the inner life of the artist. In it, the artist expresses something of his life. In art there is a power and language that speaks to the soul of man giving him what is called the daily bread here. Art is so powerful that it awakens inner beauty by renewing and giving a new life and strength to the human being. In fact, Kandinsky is convinced that there is nothing as important as what stimulates inner beauty as we can see in the following poetic passage:

Bello es lo que brota de la necesidad anímica interior. Bello es lo que es interiormente bello. Maeterlinck, uno de los paladines, y uno de los primeros compositores anímicos

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 104.

del arte moderno que producirá el arte de mañana, dice: 'No hay nada sobre la tierra que tienda con tanta fuerza a la belleza y se embellezca con mayor facilidad que el alma (...). Por eso muy pocas almas resisten en la tierra a un alma que se entrega a la belleza'. Esta característica del alma es el aceite con el que se hace posible el movimiento ascendente y progresivo del triángulo espiritual: movimiento lento, apenas perceptible, a veces aparentemente estancando, pero siempre constante e interrumpible⁴⁵⁵.

In this case the artist should take his work as a typical service to the people. It is a duty of sacred nature because it touches on man's own life. The artist is a creator-God if we are to use Taylor's language directly touching people's lives. The attitude of the artist should not be of a king but of a servant, a priest who helps the spiritual environment of the human person. Here it is of great importance to use the author's own words where he lists the responsibilities of an artist: The artist compared to the one who is not, has three responsibilities:

1. Ha de restituir el talento que le ha sido dado; 2. Sus actos, pensamientos y sentimientos, como los de todos los hombres, forman la atmosfera espiritual que aclaran o envenenan; 3. Sus actos, pensamientos y sentimientos son el material de sus creaciones que contribuyen a su vez a la atmosfera espiritual. No es 'rey', como le llamó San Peladan, en el sentido de que posee gran poder, sino de que su obligación también es muy grande. Si el artista es sacerdote de la belleza, esta debe ser buscada según el principio de valor interior que ya vimos. La 'belleza' solo puede medirse por el rasero de la grandeza y de la necesidad interior, que hasta aquí tan buenos servicios nos ha prestado⁴⁵⁶.

We have tried to present Kandinsky as the true creator of abstract art. A new art, which is awakening, that touches man in the depths of his being: his soul. It is a very balanced art because it touches the whole dimension of human life, whether external or internal. It is a revolutionary art because it is not a slave of its time but opens up the horizon by responding to the needs and questions of the future that surround existence. It is an art of essences that seeks to avoid all kinds of radicalism by opening up to the true path of the search for truth. As we have said before, Kandinsky's method is similar to that of Edmund Husserl when he became aware that the world needed to return to the true spirit of philosophy. Europe needed to wake up and be cured of its diseases and return to its genius, which is the true perennial philosophy. During his lecture in Vienna, it can be

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 116.

seen in his words as he initiates a call almost like Kandinsky's to the people of his time to see the need for change as the only way to change the situation:

En esta conferencia quiero intentar suscitar un nuevo interés hacia el tan debatido tema de la crisis europea, desarrollado la idea histórico-filosófica (o el sentido teleológico) de la humanidad europea. Al señalar, con ello, la función esencial que tienen que ejercer en tal sentido la filosofía y sus ramificaciones que son nuestras ciencias, la crisis europea logrará también un nuevo esclarecimiento⁴⁵⁷.

Husserl proposes to the European people a new phenomenological method, but it also invites them to recover the true spirit of philosophy as an infinite task. In our case Kandinsky proposes the new abstract art that responds entirely to human needs. Both calls of these authors take us to the essence of things. The expressive turn proposed by Taylor's HHH model also acts as a wake-up call to see art, which is a great component of the versus language in a traditional way where mimesis defined everything. Art is a creative activity that manifests who we are in our daily lives in the community of others. Kandinsky in his critique of the materialistic interpretation of art presents us with a holistic view comparable to that of the Romantic period where art was seen as totally poignant of human life. This is why art as a form of language of expression was even elevated above religion. As Taylor says, «*Language realizes man's humanity*» and art was no less than that⁴⁵⁸.

4.2.2. Expressive Dimension as Constitutive

Going back to our previous example of the triangle where we tried to show the greater capacity of the human being compared to other animals, we want to show other aspects that show that the expressive dimension is totally constitutive. Man as a being of language can contrast things. Saying this is a tree means you can tell why it's not a chair. In the case of the triangle as well, the recognition of something like a triangle goes along with the recognition of why the other object is not a triangle:

When I say, 'This is a triangle', I recognize it as a triangle. But to be able to recognize something as a triangle is to be able to recognize other things as non-triangles. For the notion 'triangle' to have a sense for me, there must be something(s) with which it contrasts;

⁴⁵⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Invitación a la fenomenología* (Barcelona: Paidós ediciones, 1992), 75.

⁴⁵⁸ HAL, 233.

I must have some notion of other kinds of figures, that is, be able to recognize other kinds of figure for the kinds they are. 'Triangle' has to contrast in my lexicon with other figure terms. Indeed, a word only has the meaning it does in our lexicon because of what it contrasts with. What would 'red' mean if we had no other colour terms? How would our colour terms change if some of our present ones dropped out?⁴⁵⁹.

The ability of the human being as an animal of language to contrast different things, is also accompanied by what Taylor calls «*intrinsic rightness*»⁴⁶⁰. This involves using the right word to describe a situation in language. Choosing this word and not the other means that you have some reasons of how and why of your choice. Also, to choose means that there are many words from which one has to choose from. In other words, in language there is the whole range of contrasting words from where one has to choose the right one to apply to a different situation. This brings us to what Humboldt calls «*Gewebe*», to indicate that words have meaning within a network of many other words:

So, it appears that a word like 'triangle' could not figure in our lexicon alone. It has to be surrounded by a skein of other terms, some which contrast with it, and some which situate it, as it were, give its property dimension, not to speak of the wider matrix of language in which the various activities are situated in which our talk of triangles figures: measurement, geometry, design-creation, and so on. The word only makes sense in this skein, in what Humboldt (who followed and developed Herder's thoughts on language) called the web (*Gewebe*) of language⁴⁶¹.

If a word has meaning only in relation and within the network of others, it means that language is a complex matter. Proponents of HLC model tried to simply deny its complexity and mystery. The HHH conception, on the other hand, wants to maintain this aspect of language by bringing the idea of a web. The language web explained by Humboldt is an ocean of countless words; the mystery of language is infinite. So, as Taylor says: «*To speak is to touch a bit of the web, and this is to make the whole resonate... Our language is always more than we can encompass; it is in a sense inexhaustible*»⁴⁶². Humboldt's idea of «*Gewebe*» it is vital to understand Taylor's idea of language. This «*Gewebe*» however, apart from restoring the inexhaustible nature of language, it brings us another idea. This is why language is not a mere tool. It is a question

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ LA, 7.

⁴⁶¹ HAL, 231.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

of what activity is done in the use of language. This activity is what Humboldt calls «*speech*». But the discourse in the sense of Humboldt is not deprived of its mystery. It is not a speech understood as a complete matter. It is an activity in continuous redoing and remodelling. We can say that discourse as an activity is used as a way of understanding and expressing a way of being. This way of being involves the human being and as we know he is a being who continues being a mystery. We use the right words Taylor uses to explain this important point:

As Humboldt puts it, we have to think of language as speech, and this as activity, not realized work; as *energeia*, not *ergon*. But if the language capacity comes to be in speech, then it is open to being continuously recreated in speech, continually extended, altered, reshaped. And this is what is constantly happening. Men are constantly shaping language, straining the limits of expression, minting new terms, displacing old ones, giving language a changed gamut of meanings...What then does language come to be on this view? A pattern of activity, by which we express/ realize a certain way of being in the world, that of reflective awareness, but a pattern which can only be deployed against a background which we can never fully dominate; and yet a background that we are never fully dominated by, because we are constantly reshaping it. Reshaping it without dominating it, or being able to oversee it, means that we never fully know what we are doing to it; we develop language without knowing fully what we are making it into⁴⁶³.

5. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY

The holistic view of language puts the issue of community at the centre. This is obvious because language, which has been a form of expression, needs a community where such expression takes place. We have already said that language is also an activity, but this activity cannot happen unless there are individuals who are involved in such an exchange. Here is a direct link between language and alterity, our main focus on this research. Humboldt brings us another aspect that connects language and community. This is the topic of the conversation. The main focus of the discourse is conversation, which means that in language there is an exchange between different individuals within the community. In this way, as Taylor points out: «*Language is fashioned and grows not principally in monologue, but in dialogue, or better, in the life of the speech*

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 232.

community»⁴⁶⁴. Language therefore opens the human being to relations with other fellow beings. It is no longer a private affair, but one in which the community is involved:

Language is shaped by speech, and so can only grow up in a speech community. The language I speak, the web which I can never fully dominate and oversee, can never be just my language, it is always largely our language. This opens another field of the constitutive functions of language. Speech also serves to express/constitute different relations in which we may stand to each other: intimate, formal, official, casual, joking, serious, and so on. From this point of view, we can see that it is not just the speech community which shapes and creates language, but language which constitutes and sustains the speech community⁴⁶⁵.

Therefore, the use of language helps society to direct its activities. Society consists of many activities, but they cannot be performed without discourse. The speech that has now become a conversation helps the community *«express/realize a certain way of being in the world»*⁴⁶⁶. This way of being in the world consists of a network of human relationships in a continuous exchange. It is not a mere description of events and happenings but an interpersonal relationship with others where human beings express their feelings and emotions and hence a way of being where they penetrate the lives of others with whom they relate. Taylor is convinced that our current world is defined by expressive reality whether we like it or not. It has become our way of life as expressive beings who can do nothing but manifest what they are in a network of individuals. Taylor, in other words, is telling us that language unites us; The monological interpretation of language has no place in a world where we are condemned by nature to live together. It is like in Heidegger's language: a state of thrownness. We are thrown into a situation that the best way to tolerate it, is to accept it as part of our natural being:

What I want to suggest is that we have all in fact become followers of the expressive view; not that we accept the detail of the various Romantic theories, but in that we have all been profoundly marked by this way of understanding thought and language, which has had a major impact on our civilization. I would venture to claim that even those who would want to reject expressive theories as metaphysical rubbish and obfuscatory mystification are nevertheless deeply affected by this outlook... language is no longer merely the external clothing of thought, nor a simple instrument which ought in principle

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 234.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

to be fully in our control and oversight. It is more like a medium in which we are plunged, and which we cannot fully plumb⁴⁶⁷.

6. IS A THEORY OF MEANING IMPORTANT?

We have briefly seen how the phenomenon of language is important in Taylor's analysis. What makes it important is the fact that it is an essential element⁴⁶⁸, a factor in human life and above all because being involved as stated above is an animal of language. The question we ask ourselves here, and which Taylor also asks, is whether language needs a theory that analyses the circumstances around it. To properly answer this question, it is good to look again at the relationship between the phenomenon of language and meaning. The human world is a world of meaning. But the search for meaning is a mysterious adventure since the subject involves the human being, which is a philosophical problem. This mysterious question deserves an investigation to give answers to this mystery. There, as Taylor points out, a theory is necessary and for this case a correct theory. We need a holistic theory that deals with all aspects of the human being:

We are in a sense surrounded by meaning; in the words we exchange, in all the signs we deploy, in the art, music, literature we create and enjoy, in the very shape of the man-made environment most of us live in; and not least, in the internal speech we rarely cease addressing to ourselves silently, or to absent others...Language must be a phenomenon of nature just like all others...It should be open to investigation, and ultimately understood/explained by some theory. The problem is just to find the right one⁴⁶⁹.

Taylor is aware that there have been attempts in history to find a theory of language dating back to the eighteenth century where Condillac⁴⁷⁰ as we had said, came up with a way to explain this phenomenon. Basically, this attempt is what we have associated with the HLC model dominated by the Anglo-Saxon empiricist worldview. The main purpose of this model was not *«finding a scientific understanding of language»* but rather *«finding an adequate language of science»* as Taylor comments on this⁴⁷¹. As

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 235.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 248-249.

we saw earlier, the proponents of HLC were influenced so much by the cartesian thinking of coming up with clear ideas and definition of language because for them the universe was orderly and therefore a clear method was possible even in the field of language. This strong nominalism pushed them to ignore the mystery surrounding the concept of language and its complexity. This Cartesian way of seeing things leads to disenchantment of the world, a phenomenon we had previously mentioned associated with the modern sciences:

One of the principal concerns of both Hobbes and Locke was to ground our picture of the empirical world in the firm foundations provided by clear unequivocal definitions of basic terms. But doing this meant demystifying language, showing it up to be a pliant instrument of thought, very important, but still an instrument. It was perverse to seek in language a domain of authority for our beliefs...The new nominalism was a centrepiece of what has been called the disenchantment of the world. It was close, that is, to the spirit of the nascent modern science⁴⁷².

Therefore, the HLC model led to a kind of representational theory that we previously called designative theory where words must be chosen carefully and clearly to mean what they indicate. It was simply a method of classifying ideas. It was a theory that led to the demystification of language, thus denying it its mystical character by reducing words to mere instruments of representation: *«What naturally emerges from this is a highly designative view of meaning. Words have meaning because they stand for things (or perhaps ideas, and thus only mediately for things). They 'signify' things...»*⁴⁷³. The designative theory as we saw was motivated by the then epistemological method and the naturalistic tendency where the movement was to *«to have an adequate language for valid knowledge»*⁴⁷⁴. Frege was one of the people who challenged the designative view of language. Mainly Frege's critique is based on the conviction that language is an activity, a term used before. Frege's emphasis in short is that we have to look at the whole context surrounding this activity and not reduce it to a particular term or sign. Frege is inviting proponents of the designative view to take a holistic view of language:

...what Frege shows to be wrong with a pure designative theory of meaning is that it ignores the activity underlying meaningful uses of language. Only in the context of a sentence does a word have meaning, because it takes a sentence to do what we do with

⁴⁷² Ibid., 249.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 250.

words, that is, in highly general terms, say something. The designativist, one who tries to explicate meaning in terms of the things designated by the terms, has to take account of this activity, because it affects how words relate to things⁴⁷⁵.

Frege wants to indicate that words have meaning yes, but the meaning must be seen in the context of all the activity involving the statements used. As Taylor says, «*we have to know what is being done with the words, and grasping this activity requires that we understand something of the roles different words play in the sentence*»⁴⁷⁶. In other words, to grasp the meaning well we have to see the sense in which these words have been used in a sentence. This involves keeping in mind what Taylor calls the referent. The referent in this case is the speaker, the subject. This is what we mean when we say that language is an activity. This activity is complex and, therefore, to understand the whole idea we have to accept it as such: «*Words are not just attached to referents like correlations we meet in nature; they are used to grasp these referents; that is, they figure in an activity*»⁴⁷⁷. Taylor feels that there is a need to overcome Anglo-Saxon representational and naturalistic theories of language that seem to deprive language of its full manifestation. Therefore, new theories are important. Taylor's theory of meaning follows the model of the HHH proponents mentioned here. We have previously used the term «*expressive*» to describe this theory. Other terms Taylor uses for it include "romantic" or family theories⁴⁷⁸. and also, the «*triple H theory*». It is important to remember here that the use of the term romantic must be understood with the necessary laxity since there are other authors mentioned by Taylor who are not necessarily part of the romantic period⁴⁷⁹.

Basically, Taylor's alternative theory is no different from what we had explained when we presented his holistic view of language. We can say that it adopts the ideas of the HHH model to arrive at a synthesis. Here we want to give a brief overview of the so-called triple H theory which is the model that Taylor prefers. The starting point in this argument flows from what Frege's critics have brought about designative theories. It is based on what Humboldt will insist on, namely the primacy of activity. The basic

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 251.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 252.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 256. The use of the term «*family theories*» here indicates the different views by the HHH conception of language. This does not in any way indicate that what Hamann, Herder and Humboldt are put together as one theory but rather their views agree somehow with what Taylor proposes.

⁴⁷⁹ HAL, 255-256.

argument here is to avoid the mistake of staying at the level of the lists of words used in language, but rather to focus on all the activity that these words perform. Hence, it is important to inquire about the nature of this activity remembering how we mentioned before not to stay at the interpretative level of language as only «*ergon*» forgetting that it is above all «*energeia*». Therefore, we need to investigate the nature of activity in language:

The most important concern the HHH conception of what is going on in language. Perhaps most of us would agree today on some version of the Humboldtian thesis of the primacy of activity. But the important question remains of what the activity or activities is/ are within which our lexicon, or linguistic resources, develop and change. Is the primary such activity that of framing representation? In Saussurian terminology, we know that the langue is formed by the many acts of parole. But what is the nature of this speaking activity?⁴⁸⁰.

Therefore, the nature of language activity is complex. This is what the designative view of language had ignored. In this activity there are countless things played by language. We had mentioned some of them when presenting the holistic view of language. Here we want to shed more light on the same thing. Language helps in formulating ideas to bring about what Herder called consciousness or a «*clearer awareness*» of what one needs to say⁴⁸¹. Formulation is a process, but with the aim of reaching the proper expression to use in order to properly bring this awareness. The formulation aims to reach the proper description for a proper articulation. This way «*Finding an adequate articulation for what I want to say about these matters brings them in focus. To find a description in this case is to identify a feature of the matter at hand...*»⁴⁸². Proper articulation, however, involves making the right choice of term, but in the midst of what we call a network of terms. One has to choose the right term from many terms on the web. This implies «*delimitation*» and «*making distinction*» among many terms⁴⁸³. As we said, choosing one term and not the other implies knowing the contrast of the chosen term. As Taylor comments:

The terms of language are inherently contractive, as Spinoza and Hegel argued. Which is why language is a capacity to apply a web of terms, and never the ability just to use a

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 256.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 257.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 258.

single term. A one-word lexicon is an impossibility, as Herder and Wittgenstein have both argued. It is language which enables us to draw boundaries, to pick some things out in contrast to others. Thus, through language we formulate things, and thus come to have an articulated view of the world. We become conscious of things, in one very common sense of this term, that is we come to have explicit awareness of things⁴⁸⁴.

The other crucial thing that language does is closely related to the community aspect of language. Language is not a private matter as we said. We live in a community of participants where everyone is involved in expression. Therefore, language serves as a means to «*putting things in the public space*». This public space is neither of a self nor of a you. It is a public space that is «*ours*»⁴⁸⁵. This is the scenario of the conversation where each interlocutor has a voice and must be heard for mutual understanding between the interlocutors. The public space is a zone of dialogue and not for monologue. Therefore, language through public space opens us to otherness. Helps connect community members by creating a «*rapport*»⁴⁸⁶ necessary to understand each other and thus allow mutual coexistence. Public space is not a stage for just «*communication of certain information*»⁴⁸⁷. Obviously, Taylor is aware that it is possible to communicate, but he wants to insist on dialogue between the interlocutors where «*mothers are placed before us*» to dialogue.

This is therefore another crucial feature about formulation in language. It creates the peculiarly human kind of rapport, of being together, that we are in conversation together. To express something, to formulate it, can be not only to get it in articulate focus, but also to place it in public space, and thus to bring us together qua participants in a common act of focussing...The matter talked about is no longer just for me or for you, but for us. This does not prevent us from putting severe limits on how much will be in the common realm⁴⁸⁸.

Another thing that is done by language is that of «*making the discriminations which are foundational to human concerns*»⁴⁸⁹, this is a topic we had touched on when we discussed the difference between us and other animals. We are animals of language in a different sense from other animals. We are concerned about wanting to express

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 259.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ HAL, 260.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

ourselves and manifest ourselves more than any other animal in the world. Taylor insists that wherever human beings converge, a relationship is created, whether we are able to converse or not. Here is an example of people traveling together on a train in a hot day. The mere act of wiping away sweat communicates to the other that you are experiencing heat. This gesture has already created a relationship where everyone is involved in experiencing this warmth: *«we have created a rapport... That is, we are now experiencing this heat/ discomfort together; this matter of the stifling heat is not just one for you and for me severally, it is now for us»*⁴⁹⁰. Language is therefore a complex field where even our gestures and signs have a lot to say and can lead us to a public space whether we like it or not; we have to discuss issues. As we said, language is not an abstract thing, but rather a component that is constitutive in the sense that it touches our own nature of life. Language touches our humanity in the sense that our expression and articulation manifests who we are. Language is not intended solely to describe or designate things, but *«Rather there are some phenomena, central to human life, which are partly constituted by language. Thus, the kind of explicit awareness which we call consciousness in the full sense is constituted by our articulations»*⁴⁹¹.

We've been talking about the need for a theory of meaning and Taylor has somehow given us insight into the kind of theory he prefers. Obviously, many criticize his point of view (we don't go into these critics here), but as he says, his way of thinking should not be a threat to the other theories, especially what he has called designative theories. His is just an invitation to also look at the other side of the coin and see what might be missing from these designative theories. As he comments:

Thus, we might imagine a neat division of labour; and the insights of the HHH would not threaten the truth-conditional theory in any way. It would simply point to other phenomena to be dealt with by other theories. Different philosophical schools would have pioneered theories in the different domains, but neither need be threatened by the other. And, it might be added, neither would be compelled to read the other's literature; and a long, audible sigh of relief rises on both sides of the Channel⁴⁹².

The argument of not creating any threat to anyone who comes with a different view is typical of Taylor's inclusion. He insists on dialogue and not on monologue.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 264.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 270.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 274.

Dialogue involves listening to the other and seeing what positive thing they might be saying, thus creating a common fund of mutual understanding. As we saw in previous chapters, Taylor insists on «*fusion of horizons*»⁴⁹³, an important thing that gives understanding its space. Language is a complex adventure and must be taken as such to understand it. Taylor warns that it is dangerous to take a «*detached observer's standpoint*» in studying our natural world. Language is part of this world and there is no way we can understand any language if we do not fully immerse ourselves in the mystery of it. Studying a language is analogous to studying past societies⁴⁹⁴ where you can't imagine that you are studying your own culture, but a culture that might be different from your own. In this case, the point of detached observer's view cannot be adopted. Studying a language implies penetrating the life of a people because it is through it that people articulate their values and beliefs. Like this, «*it is plainly impossible to learn a language as a detached observer. To understand a language, you need to understand the social life and outlook of those who speak it*»⁴⁹⁵.

7. LANGUAGE IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN OUR WAY OF LIFE

The connection between language and form of life brings us to what could have been the influences of Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Taylor as mentioned before. These two authors, though not part of the Romantics, are classified by Taylor as major contributors to what he calls the HHH conception of language. As he mentions, the two authors played a huge role in helping our world fight modern thought dominated by rationalism⁴⁹⁶. The two could be said to have helped the world awaken from the dream of the vision of the disconnected and detached observer of human life towards a conception in which the human being is fully rooted in his form of life: «*Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein had to struggle to recover an understanding of the agent as engaged, as embedded in a culture, a form of life...*»⁴⁹⁷. By engaging here, Taylor wants to show us that there is nothing in which an agent can be understood separate from his form of life, his history, as well as a bodily agent. These factors must always be put in place in order to penetrate the mystery of the human agent. The rationalism described by Taylor here

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁹⁴ Here we can see Taylor's influence by Gadamer view on how to study past societies.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁹⁶ PA, 61.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 61-62.

traces its origin from the Cartesian view of the world as we had mentioned with the Anglo-Saxon worldview, where what mattered was to devise a method, a procedure on how to classify terms. This was a partisan view of language rather than a holistic view that respects language as a concept fully integrated into the human form of life. We use a summary of Taylor's words to understand the sense in which he applies the term rationalism:

There are two facets of modern reason which are relevant here. The first is that the modern conception, starting with Descartes, focuses on procedure. Reason is not that faculty in us which connects us to an order of things in the universe which itself can be called rational. Rather reason is that faculty whereby we think properly. In its theoretical employment, reason serves to build a picture of the world. Rationality requires that we scrutinize this building closely, and not let our view of things just form itself distractedly, or self-indulgently, or following the prejudices of our day. Rationality involves a careful scrutiny by thinking of its own processes. This determines the reflexive turn of modern rationalism. Careful construction of our picture of things requires that we identify and follow a trustworthy procedure. Modern thinkers differ on what this is, and there is a crucial and hotly contested difference in the seventeenth century between, for instance, that defined by the clear and distinct perception of Descartes and that organized around the rules of believable evidence of Locke. But both views call for reflexive self-policing in the name of a canonical procedure⁴⁹⁸.

Taylor is also aware of Kant's contribution to the struggle against empiricism in the Anglo-Saxon world. In fact, even though he mentions the contribution of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and even Merleau-Ponty, he acknowledges that the pioneer in the attempt to overthrow empiricism was Kant himself⁴⁹⁹. Says: «*Kant overturns empiricism by showing that each individual impression is taken as a piece of potential information; this is the background understanding that lies under all of our perceptual discriminations*»⁵⁰⁰. Therefore, it is Kant who began this articulation of the background to fully understand the entire dimension of language. In short, as we have argued, Taylor wants to draw a parallel between Heidegger and Wittgenstein in the sense that both worked hard to recover the holistic view of language and, consequently, that of the human being. For example, from Wittgenstein, his concern is to place «*the meanings of our words in the*

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 90-91.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

context of our form of life (*Lebensform*)»⁵⁰¹. For him, «A word has meaning only within a lexicon and a context of language practices, which are ultimately embedded in a form of life»⁵⁰². The designative view of language as we saw it in using words as mere indicators of meaning had ignored this background. Language as a form of expression where the agent articulates some meaning must always consider this articulation as part of the «*Lebensform*». We won't dwell as much on the whole area of language as portrayed by Wittgenstein here but would like to see the parallel of Heidegger's vision with Taylor's.

While Wittgenstein uses the term «*Lebensform*» To show how the human agent is implicated, Heidegger uses the term «*finitude*»⁵⁰³ to show the way the human agent portrays itself as a «*being-in-the-world*». Taylor sees Heidegger as an opponent of what we had called the HLC conception of language and especially this is seen in Heidegger's later conception of language where he seems anti-subjectivist. Heidegger goes to an even more radical view of language seen it as the one that speaks and not the human being⁵⁰⁴. Heidegger could thus be classified along with the HHH tradition where language is seen as an important tool in the transformation of our world. Language cannot be a passive idea or separate from man's life as «*being-in-the-world*». Heidegger thus becomes a constitutive theorist against the designative theory of language. This can be seen well where he calls language as the «*house of being*», as well as the use of the term «*Lichtung*» which represents the ability of language to reveal the world of the human being:

I have developed this portrait of the constitutive-expressive theory at length because I think Heidegger's views on language stand squarely within this tradition. Heidegger is a constitutive theorist. By this I mean not just that he happens to have such a theory of language, but that it plays an essential role in his thinking. There may be some question about this in relation to Heidegger's early writings, but his thinking after "Die Kehre" (The Turning; 1949) seems to be articulating the central notions of the constitutive view. To describe language as the "house of being," for instance, is to give it more than instrumental status. Indeed, Heidegger repeatedly inveighs against those views of language which reduce it to a mere instrument of thought or communication. Language is essential to *Lichtung*) the clearing. Heidegger stands in the Herder tradition. But he transposes this mode of thinking in his own characteristic fashion. While Herder in inaugurating the constitutive view still speaks in terms of "reflection," which sounds like

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 93.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 101.

a form of consciousness, Heidegger clearly turns the issue around, and sees language as what opens access to meanings. Language discloses⁵⁰⁵.

In short, Heidegger like Taylor invites us to see human being as language animal. His invitation is that we go beyond the temptation to conceive the «*zoion ekhon logon*» (rational animal) of Aristotle as a mere indication of «*animal possessing logos*», but rather as a language animal⁵⁰⁶. This invitation is vital if we are to understand the fundamental nature of human life. Language helps, therefore, in Heidegger's terms in clearing (*lichtung*) or reveal the «*dasein*». There are other parallels between Taylor and Heidegger that we can locate, though not mentioned by Taylor, but that support Taylor's view of alterity. For example, if we go to previous writings of Heidegger like «*Sein und Zeit*» (Being and Time) we will notice that his great concern is that of meaning (*Sinn*)⁵⁰⁷ of being (*Dasein*). Going further Heidegger talks about the «*structures of being*» in contrast to the «*traditional categories*» where he clearly emphasizes that the most basic of these structures is the being-in-the-world for the «*Dasein*». Here he portrays «*Dasein*» as being engaged with things, a term familiar with the vocabulary of Taylor:

The most basic of the structures of the being of *Dasein* is what he will call being-in-the-world. *Dasein* is in the world not in the sense of one thing being spatially contained in another thing but rather in the sense of being engaged with things. *Dasein* is not a subject for which the world is an object over against it. It is possible for *Dasein* simply to behold things, but such mere beholding is only possible as a modification of engaged having-to-do-with things⁵⁰⁸.

From this we can see that the being of the «*Dasein*» is not a disengaged one. But even the meaning of «*world*» for Heidegger shows again that «*Dasein*» it is not a closed entity. The world is not there as an entity, but as that which helps the being of the «*Dasein*» be revealed. What is the world, therefore, in Heidegger's language? Is «*the web of significance which makes it possible for entities to show themselves or be encountered. World has to do, not so much with what is, but with the openness of what is*»⁵⁰⁹. If the world as used here implies openness, then it also means that this «*Dasein*» cannot close itself if it has to attain what we call «*Lichtung*». For sure Heidegger is aware that the

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 111-112.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁰⁷ Paul Gerner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: an introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 5

being of «*Dasein*» it is not abstract; is «someone's being». This is the «*self*» or the «*selfness*». The being of «*Dasein*» is mine⁵¹⁰. This brings us to what we can say is a great coincidence between Heidegger and Taylor in advocating for a shared world. The world whether understood as a web of significance in Heidegger's view or in Taylor's view as an entity cannot be a private affair. It exists as a «*shared*»⁵¹¹ «*world*». This is Heidegger's sense of «*mitsein*». As human beings we are «*beings-with*» and this «*being-with*» it involves the use of language as a means of reaching and understanding the other. Martin Heidegger in his «*mitsein*» agrees with Taylor that we are not isolated beings. In its description of the «*Dasein*» as a «*being-in-the-world*» holds that we are not the only ones in the world, but rather beings who are essentially «*with others*»⁵¹².

Heidegger's conception of the «*mitsein*» it reminds us of Taylor's pluralistic view of society. This does not mean that Heidegger refers to pluralism in the same way as Taylor. But the fact is that we are immersed in a world with people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions and orientations. This describes our status of «*thrownness*» (*Geworfenheit*)⁵¹³ using Heidegger's vocabulary. In other words, we find ourselves in a world we don't choose and with people we don't choose to be with, etc. But this is our world, whether we like it or not. It is in the same world where the being of «*Dasein*» is disclosed. It is in this state of thrownness that we can know ourselves if we use Socratic call to «*know yourself*». It is in this state that «*Dasein*» has to know itself by choosing its possibilities as a thrown projection⁵¹⁴. We do not wish to enter deeply in the debate of Heidegger's philosophy here, but our concern was to show that he fits well with the supporters of constitutive view of language against the designative view. To understand well the being of «*Dasein*» one will have to put in consideration the background of the human activity.

Human being as an animal language lives in a world with a bigger background where he has to interact with all that is involved. In this case when interpreting his language this background picture has to be considered. Ours is a social world with an interconnection of persons and other entities who nature our language. Language therefore captures a bigger context than one would imagine. This is the holism of

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.,56.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 6.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

language as advocated by the HHH conception of language. It's a web of significance like Humboldt had seen it. In stressing the point of holism at a certain time Humboldt will bring the analogy of a keyboard whereby playing only a single note makes the whole instrument vibrate⁵¹⁵. Holism of language also entails looking at the social context as a whole. Just as you have to consider the role played by the whole instrument as you play one note, you cannot ignore the social context where an individual lives. This is the spirit of alterity. The other cannot be ignored in the whole context of language. As Taylor puts it:

But the broader context is also social: we live among relatives, and in a village, perhaps also a nation. Within these contexts, familial or societal, we interact with people through different roles; we carry on different activities, which create different contexts. All this is captured in language, for instance the language of kinship, that of the different political and social positions— police officer, doctor, president; that of different activities and spheres— like the political, the economic, the religious, entertainment, and so on... To learn the language of society is to take on some imaginary of how society works and acts, of its history through time; of its relation to what is outside: nature, or the cosmos, or the divine⁵¹⁶.

The broader social context mentioned here is comparable to the sense in which Heidegger employed the phrase that language is a «*house of being*» which we mentioned earlier, and which again brings out the whole context of alterity. He portrays a house as a kind of environment where, «*things are arranged by our action and design, different rooms for different uses, for different people, or different times; or for storing different kinds of things; and the like*»⁵¹⁷. This ability for the language to relate different things, events, people, etc which describe our being qualifies it to be a house of being. In such a web of relations it is not possible the monological view of the human ontogeny advocated by the Descartes and his followers. Taylor is for the idea that the development of the self from the very start is intersubjective. This is the reason why he advocates for the dialogical and communitarian aspect of the society. From the very beginning the self as being of language is involved in interrelationships as we saw in chapter one. Taylor invites us to revert the thinking that the self comes before the community which has been adopted by the modern epistemology:

⁵¹⁵ LA, 21.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

One of the baleful features of the modern epistemology which stems from Descartes is its monological character. We start off with an awareness of the self, albeit in a very simple form from the beginning, for instance in our desires, or cravings. We come then to perceive others, and eventually to build some kind of intersubjective world with them. This has been very influential; we can see it even with figures who are as distant from Descartes in other respects as Freud⁵¹⁸.

Inverting the traditional view of monological character brings us many advantages as Taylor puts it. First it enables the human being to realise himself and flourish which is impossible without the community. In addition, it portrays the nature of human being as a linguistic animal in the world: «*it recognizes the crucial feature of the human self, which is inseparably and irrevocably a particular take on a common linguistically constituted world*»⁵¹⁹. It also enables human beings to appreciate different ways of viewing different perspectives. It enables them to appreciate the other who is different and whose orientations might be different. In summary the communitarian view brings communion and appreciation of the other. All this is possible because human beings are beings of expression and can dialogue towards a mutual understanding and consequently coexistence.

Language therefore brings a unitarian aspect of the human beings. This is what we have called communion. It enables people to be together to be involved in what we called a public space: «*To be inducted into language is to be in a relation of potential communion with others. To possess language is to be, and to be aware that one is, in social space*»⁵²⁰. Another essential feature of language is the discourse or expression. In this communion people are concerned with meaning and in seeking meaning they are express themselves articulating what they are. It becomes a discourse⁵²¹ or exchange of meaning; the emphasis here is on the creative power of discourse. Thus, people are involved in a meaningful relation by the help of language. This way language transforms the community; it makes it grow. This is in line with Herder's «*Besonnenheit*» as a transformative tool of our world. The world here used in the sense of being-in-the-world of Heidegger signifying a web of significance where the human being projects himself.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 99.

Language therefore is not an abstract affair but one which is intrinsically connected with human life.

We conclude this part by reiterating that language is not a one man's business. Language as an activity involves the «*We*» or the «*Us*». Where people gather to discuss their past, their present or even their future as narrative beings the communitarian aspect and the creative and the constitutive power of language is portrayed:

When I open a conversation with you, even a trivial one, initiated by “have you read any good books lately?”, or “nice weather we're having”, what we set up is a focus of joint attention...where what we are talking about is “mutually manifest”, that is, it is not just for me, and for you, but for us undivided. We interlocutors (and there can be more than two) form a circle, in which those within are recognized as persons (“I” and “you”, the first and second persons), and the humans or things that we are talking about are invoked indiscriminately in the “third person”, ... The speech event sets up a circle of communicators in a particular situation, which becomes the reference point for a host of deictic terms, which take their meaning from it: ‘here’, ‘there’, ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘yesterday’, ‘tomorrow’, and so on. In relation to this event is also what gives our use of tenses their concrete force: present, perfect, aorist, future, and so on. The verbs we use can even situate ourselves, or the historical events we talk about, more finely, through aspect⁵²².

As narrative beings interwoven in the community, we need to listen to each other story which might be different from mine through language «*Thus, language is not solely about atomistic, descriptive encoding, but more broadly 'about' webs of creative meaning that shape reality*»⁵²³. It is through the use of language as a powerful instrument that we can come to understand and appreciate our differences. This is alterity «*per se*». Alterity is a journey and an adventure which all generations should endeavour to uptake. In this journey language is an indispensable requirement.

8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have laboured to show how intrinsically connected is the issue of language with alterity. Language opens us to the other who is different. We have

⁵²² Ibid., 265.

⁵²³ Jason Blakely “Charles Taylor, The language animal: The full shape of the human linguistic capacity,” *Philosophy in Review* 36, (5), (October 2016): 229. Accessed April 2022, <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/pir/article/view/16030>.

briefly tried to trace the history of the problem which finally gave birth to two rivalry views of language: the designative and the constitutive view. We have seen how Taylor through the HHH conception tries to recuperate the holism view of language. The holistic view is revolutionary and emphasises on the expressivist dimension of language. Language is an activity which continually connects us and helps us understand our world. It is an active instrument capable of recuperating the dialogical and communitarian understanding of our world so much necessary today where individualism dominates our relationships. We have laboured to show that a right theory of meaning is important, a theory capable of analysing language holistically. We have ended up showing that language is constitutive and is embedded in our form of life. To understand what we are and the mystery of alterity we must investigate the issue of language.

In the last chapter we wish to investigate more on the concept of person which Taylor also briefly touched. We wish to investigate its problematic in relation with alterity. The concept of the person, its definition and its conception have a lot to describe how we understand alterity. We are convinced that any definition of the human person that ignores the issue of interpersonal relationship is inadequate. Therefore, our proposal in the next chapter is interpersonality as a core concept in the understanding of the other. Interpersonality defines the origin, the present and the future of the human person. This is the great novelty in our proposal. In a world where persons are concerned about the well-being and the where-about of the other persons, there is a better present and a better future. Alterity in our view involves thinking, caring and engaging the other who is different. This requires a sincere and open dialogue with the other and with the others. The future of our world hangs on the hands of dialogue and sincere interpersonal relationship. This is our line of thinking.

CHAPTER IV

OUR POSITION:

ALTERITY

UNDERSTOOD AS AN

INTERPERSONAL

ENCOUNTER

1.INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we have shown how language manifests and expresses the nature of the human person. We have extensively shown that language is not just a mere tool for communication but also a complex reality rooted in the nature of the human being, that is why Taylor defines him as being of language. In this last chapter, we intend to investigate the concept of «*person*» and its problematics. It is a theme that is intrinsically linked to alterity and, therefore, Taylor also reflects on it very carefully. Our emphasis here is on interpersonal because we are convinced that whichever way, we describe the human being, individualistic solipsism will never be able to understand him properly. We need a comprehensive understanding of the human person; a person is never an isolated being. The interpersonal relationship underscores our being in the world. For a proper encounter with the other who is different, the interpersonal dimension of our existence must be considered. We want to trace the history of how the concept of person has been understood from its beginnings to the present day. Being a very complex concept, we want to limit ourselves to topics related to alterity to show that a person is a person with other persons. For this reason, we do not want to pretend here to be in a position to present all the points of views on how the human person has been defined throughout history. Ours is to concentrate on what we believe will help us to defend our conception of alterity: that the person is always a reality who is open to other persons: he is interpersonal. To help us show how the understanding of the concept of person has developed historically, we shall rely on the position of Gabriel Amengual Coll, in his book «*La persona humana, el debate sobre su concepto*» of 2015⁵²⁴.

In addition, in order to present our view regarding interpersonal, we shall continue in the light of Laín Entralgo's position, which enriches Taylor's. And, of course, the proposal of Ubuntu ethics analysed in the previous chapter will resonate well with his position. These two views, along with Taylor's and in dialogue with others, will enable us to arrive at an informed position as we conclude our research on alterity.

To begin with, we would like to focus our attention on the complexity of the concept of person who, as we will see, has his own problems. We shall show how the concept is lacking in classical Greek's understanding where the term used (πρόσωπον)

⁵²⁴ Gabriel Amengual Coll, *La persona humana: El debate sobre su concepto* (Madrid: Editorial síntesis, 2015), 15-398.

lacks the actual hypostasis. We shall show that the concept of person has its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, by analysing the views of St. Augustine and Boethius, and finally to give a synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas' views.

The modern era will be another period of focus when it comes to the concept of person. Here Boethius' definition encounters challenges with the arrival of the modern era where the Cartesian view questions the classical definition of person.

The classical German understanding of the human person as a moral agent will also be analysed through Kant's critical understanding of it. Personalism is also another tendency to define the concept of the person. We shall examine some proponents of personalism in relation to the objectives of this research. And, finally, because of its importance in today's culture, we shall explore the inadequacies about the concept of person in some of the proposals of bioethics.

We shall then conclude by giving a systematic and radical critique of the naturalistic concept of person. As we know at this point in the discourse, Taylor is unnaturalistic when it comes to understanding the human agent. In his critics, he does not seek to refute naturalism, but his claim when it tries to explain everything under naturalistic tendencies.

After this historical view of the concept of the person, we shall make a kind of recovery of Taylor's idea of the human person. This will help us to make an informed position when it comes to understanding alterity. Eventually, we will present our own point of view on how the concept of person should be understood for a better understanding of alterity, which is the proper theme of our dissertation. Our position is relationally understood as an encounter between people.

2. THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CONCEPT «PERSON»

The concept of person is a complex concept because of the many different ways of understanding it, but above all because it addresses a complex and mysterious being, the human being. Its problems have intensified today especially with its involvement in ethical discussions brought about by neuroscience and bioethics, acting as a criterion to

defend the rights of people and even animals⁵²⁵. We would like in this section to briefly examine how the concept of person has been elaborated in the Western culture.

2.1. The Concept of Person in Ancient Greek and Latin Thought

The person as a concept is absent from the Greek view and it is not surprising that the term as we know appears in Latin: «*En la Grecia clasica, la cuna de la filosofia occidental, hay que constatar la ausencia de dicho concepto, extraño a la filosofia griega. De hecho, la misma palabra es Latina*»⁵²⁶. Yes, for example, when we look at Plato's understanding with his famous worldview of forms, the emphasis was on what is abstract and leading to a dualistic view of the human being. For him, ideas represent what is real and therefore concrete things only become a mere likeness of reality in the world of ideas. In this way it was ontologically difficult to explain what a person is⁵²⁷. In other words, if the person as a concept emphasizes what is «*concrete*», what is singular in the human being, that is, his original, unique and unrepeatable being, is impossible for Plato's proposal to conceive it from its abstract ideality⁵²⁸. To demonstrate the missing reality of the concept of person in Greek thought, we take a closer look at Aristotle's view of things. We observe the difference between Plato and Aristotle's view of reality. He criticizes Plato's theory of forms by insisting on a concrete world that is meaningful., «*According to Aristotle, the Forms are only a purposeless doubling of visible things. They are supposed to explain why the multitude of things in the world exist*»⁵²⁹. The human being for Aristotle is a composite being. He is a composition of body and soul. This is the theory of hylomorphism that he uses to overcome Plato's dichotomy where the body and soul remain ontologically separated. But even with this attempt Aristotle also fails in the proposal of the concept of person. The death of the human being as a composite being means the dissolution of everything:

Aristóteles, por su parte, empieza criticando la ontología o teoría de las ideas de Platón y pone su acento sobre lo concreto e individual, de modo que de entrada parecería que puede ofrecer una base para el concepto de persona, pero tampoco llega a dicho concepto.

⁵²⁵ PH, 15-16.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 27-29.

⁵²⁹ Frederick Copleston, *A history of philosophy: Greece and Rome* (New York: Vol I, Image books, The Newman Press, 1993), 292.

En principio parece superar la dificultad ontológica platónica, pero no lo consigue del todo, es incapaz de proporcionar estabilidad, algún tipo de comunidad y la ‘vida eterna’ a la entidad psicosomática total que es el hombre, hace imposible la unión de la persona y la ‘sustancia’ (*ousia*) del hombre. Falta base ontológica para el conjunto del hombre, que le dé unidad y persistencia...la persona resulta ser un concepto lógicamente imposible precisamente porque el alma está unida a lo concreto e ‘individual’: un hombre es una individualidad concreta⁵³⁰.

The absence of the concept of person in Greek could legitimately be attributed to their harmonious cosmological view where a certain order was supposed to govern things. This harmony was attributed to the original unity coming from the Greeks’ belief in monism. It was a kind of ontological monism where even god or gods belonged to the world of *physis* (to accentuate Greek polytheism)⁵³¹. The term person «*prósōpon, πρόσωπον*»⁵³² in ancient Greek had a negative connotation that could not explain what it expresses today significantly. It is in Homer that the term first emerges with its meaning «*the face of man*»⁵³³. Its association with the face of man or the mask is due to the fact that one had to fight with gods wearing the mask in theatres to gain the title of a person, in the world ruled by unity and order that gave no room for individual freedom. It never indicated what the human being possesses, but his struggle against destiny. In this case, the Greek *prósōpon* lacked the real hypostasis: «*Es precisamente en el teatro donde el hombre lucha por llegar a ser una ‘persona’, por levantarse y rebelarse contra esta armoniosa unidad que le oprime como una necesidad racional y moral*»⁵³⁴.

From the Latin world and especially looking at the concept of the person during the Roman Empire, we also notice the deficiencies in the way in which the concept was conceived. Among the Romans, teachers of law, the concept lies in the law. The definition of a person is legal: «*El derecho romano tiene como pieza central y fundamental el concepto jurídico de persona, entendida como un punto de imputación de derechos y deberes...*»⁵³⁵. The law acted as a way of governing, the arbiter where each person was supposed to exercise their rights. In this case, the concept of the person here is rather numerical where people are joined numerically by law. The purpose of the law was to aid

⁵³⁰ PH, 30.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 31 a 32.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

the administration of the empire composed of people rather than the basis of what forms a polis ethically⁵³⁶.

Therefore, at the dawn of philosophical thought and in Greek and Roman culture, the concept of person is clearly insufficient. There are very important dimensions that are missing. The prominence of the personal dimension, uniqueness and individuality of the person are lacking in the Greek underestimation of the term, as well as in the legal vision of the Romans. These dimensions will only emerge with the birth of the Christian philosophical and theological proposal.

2.2. The Birth of the Concept of Person with Christianity

The formation and growth in the understanding of the term person is undoubtedly of Christian origin. Here we shall compare two great personalities who helped in this debate. On the one hand, St. Augustine who basically argued about the point of view of the Trinity and, on the other hand, Boethius from the Christological problematic⁵³⁷.

Although St. Augustine does not give a complete definition of the person, we can nevertheless associate him with a⁵³⁸ use of the term especially in his explanation of the Trinity. The Trinitarian God is characterized by the relationship of the three persons, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; they are three persons, but one essence or substance: «...*las diferencias entre las personas no son diferencias de género o especie...son esencialmente iguales, una sola esencia o sustancia...Dios es una sola sustancia que consiste en tres personas*»⁵³⁹. The Trinitarian view of the person brings with it new ways of understanding the concept of the person. Without entering into the great theological debate about the Trinity we want to see how the concept of the person changes with Augustine's explanation. Although the term here is used to explain the Trinity, we know that it does not apply only to God; it applies to the human being created in the image of a Trinitarian God. According to Trinitarian usage, we have seen that there are three persons, but only one God. There is a plurality of persons in relation to each other. Therefore, the person here indicates a «*relation*»⁵⁴⁰. They are three different

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 58-75.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 62.

persons, but in mutual relationship. Each one as a person is unique, original and unrepeatable, but under common essence. Therefore, the need to think about their difference without making their real and intimate relationship impossible. In this way the idea that the relationship between persons is accidental becomes an impossibility. Relationship defines this intrinsically:

De esta manera, a partir de la reflexión sobre la Trinidad, se llega a un concepto de persona que no designa puramente un rol, una relación accidental, sino sustancial, subsistente, de manera que se consigue un concepto ontológico de persona. Se pasa de designar un rol accidental, a designar algo sustancial y esencial. San Agustín establece, pues, con mucha claridad el concepto de persona, como una combinación de autonomía y relación: la persona de por sí, es autónoma, y a la vez es relación: el padre es padre porque tiene un hijo, y viceversa⁵⁴¹.

In St. Augustine, in addition to defining the person as a relationship, there is also the conviction that each human person has an individual identity. This identity is formed throughout history in a narrative way⁵⁴². Each person has their own peculiar history formed in life. With St. Augustine the person is not only immersed in a mass of persons as we saw before. Little by little, we are slowly approaching a concrete conception of the human person.

The classical definition of person according to Boethius cannot be ignored when we are talking about this concept. We have seen St. Augustine's approach from the Trinitarian point of view. Boethius' approach is rather Christological in its attempt to explain the two natures of Christ, one divine and the other human, but always the same person of Christ. It is the so called «... *“unión hipostática”, unión personal, unión en una sola persona de las dos naturalezas divina y humana, en el sentido que hay un único suppositum, un único sujeto agente y paciente, un único responsable de sus acciones...*»⁵⁴³. Without entering into the deep debate about the two natures of Christ there are four points⁵⁴⁴ of which Boethius will draw his classical definition of the person. The first point is the recognition that not all nature is a person, although every person is nature. The second is that the person as a substance is not an accident. The third is that

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 66.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 70. Here the author of our book outlines the four steps which have read to the definition of a person as: individual substance of natural nature.

the rational nature of the person differentiates the person from other substances and the fourth is that that person is an individual and singular rather than a universal reality⁵⁴⁵. From these four steps Boethius' definition comes out clearly: «*La persona es una sustancia individual de naturaleza racional*». Boethius somehow adds some clarification to the previous explanation of the concept of the person by St. Augustine. Boethius recognizes the rationality, substantiality and uniqueness of the human person. Obviously, Boethius' definition is not perfect and for this reason it has been criticized over the centuries, but the truth is that he managed to differentiate some things:

Esta definición tuvo éxito y una larga historia efectiva. Boecio consigue definir la persona sin la complicación de las especulaciones trinitarias; consigue definir la diferencia entre naturaleza y persona, entre ousia e hipóstasis; y consigue una definición que vale también para el hombre⁵⁴⁶.

3. THE CONCEPT OF PERSON DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

In medieval times, the different conceptions of the term person will be greatly influenced by the ideas of St. Augustine and Boethius. As has been pointed out before, St. Augustine's starting point is the mystery of the Trinity while Boethius argues from the point of view of Christology. These are the two tendencies that led the two councils to discuss the same concept: The Council of Nicaea whose concern was the mystery of the Trinity and the Council of Chalcedon which was Christological⁵⁴⁷. Therefore, medieval times will basically follow these two trends where one will emphasize on the substantial relationship and the other on individuality and moral autonomy of the person:

Una tendencia es la agustiniana y franciscana, que pone el acento en la relación intersubjetiva, relación subsistente, esencial, cuyo contexto de descubrimiento es la cuestión de la Trinidad, donde la persona aparece como relación...La otra es la boeciana-tomasiana, que pone el acento en la incomunicabilidad o singularidad y más que definirse, se señala, y ello con atributos negativos, como la posesión en propio e incomunicada del ser que se es⁵⁴⁸.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

In this section, we would like to explore the concept of the person as synthesized by St. Thomas Aquinas, who in our view gives an elaborate explanation of medieval times. It aims at a better understanding of Boethius' definition of the person and from there giving a kind of synthesis of the previous definitions of the person⁵⁴⁹. With medieval times, the following characteristics of the person are emphasized: «*rationality*», «*freedom*» and «*individuality*»⁵⁵⁰. All this should be part of the definition of the human person. A person as an individual is an integral being. Possession of an individual substance differentiates a person from any other type of material substance. To do this «*un individuo debe caracterizarse por una cierta integridad, por ser de una sola pieza, como tal no puede ser individuo en partes que sean de la misma especie que el mismo*»⁵⁵¹. The body constitutes an essential dimension of the human being as a principle of individuation. Freedom and rationality are strictly related in the sense that the possession of rationality is «*la capacidad suprema natural*»⁵⁵². It gives the individual the freedom to make decisions and therefore makes him autonomous in choosing what to do or not to do.

The three features mentioned are also related to the issue of «*human dignity*»⁵⁵³ which is also reflected in St. Thomas' vision of the person. A person as an individual substance of a rational nature is created in the image of a perfect being, God. This makes him share the perfection of God by turning him into a being who must be treated with dignity. Obviously, human perfection cannot replace that of his creator, but this does not mean that he does not deserve his dignity. For St. Thomas, a person as a being with free will must be treated with dignity: «*Persona es, por tanto, una cualidad que en sí misma no implica limitación alguna, es perfección pura, de manera que puede aplicarse tanto a Dios y a los ángeles y a los hombres*»⁵⁵⁴.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 94, 98.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 102.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

4.THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON DURING THE MODERN AGE

With the arrival of modernity from Descartes, Boethius' definition is very much questioned. We have already pointed out seen how Descartes' epistemological view affects his view of alterity and the self. His concept of the person can also be deduced from the same vision. Mainly the modern era changes to «*conscience*»⁵⁵⁵ to explain the concept of the person. Descartes' starting point is the self-awareness of the human person. There is a shift from the insistence of the substantiality of the human person to the importance of conscience:

Rene Descartes...no trata de modo explicito el concepto de persona y, sin embargo, en el emerge un planteamiento que va a determinar un nuevo concepto de persona, que ya no se define con respeto a la autonomía en el ser, por su subsistencia o sustancialidad, sino en referencia a la autoconciencia, una modalidad de la naturaleza racional o un ejercicio de ella, aunque de hecho se la identifique con el conjunto de la vida psíquica⁵⁵⁶.

Descartes' self is associated with consciousness and not with rationality as understood by Aristotle including also the definition of the person. Aristotle had conceived rationality as that which differentiates the human being from other animals⁵⁵⁷. Descartes on the other hand insists on the «*cogito*»; that which the mind is capable of comprehending: «*Para Descartes la conciencia no la inteligencia o la racionalidad, es lo que constituye el criterio definitorio de lo mental. La mente, desde este punto de vista, es el reino de todo lo accesible a la introspección a la que se percibe en el cogito...*»⁵⁵⁸. Therefore, Descartes reduces the understanding of the human subject as we saw in the first chapter to his famous saying of «*I think therefore I am*» (Cogito ergo sum). The self and in our case the person comprehends what the mind can understand. But he also agrees that the human subject unlike other animals has the language ability that accompanies the conscious mind⁵⁵⁹. The tendency to prioritize the thinking mind causes Descartes to fall into the dualism of the internal (res cogitans) and the external (res extensa). Our bodies and the external world become part of the material substance that is different from the immaterial substance that defines what a subject is (persona):

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 111-151.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 112.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

Ahora bien, el contraste originario entre persona y cosa no se da solamente entre nosotros y el resto del mundo, sino en nosotros mismos, puesto que con nuestro cuerpo participamos de la sustancia material, puramente extensa (*res extensa*), y con nuestra consciencia, nuestra *mens*, de la sustancia inmaterial, puramente pensante (*res cogitans*)⁵⁶⁰.

In short, for Descartes, although he does not present such a detailed theory of the person, we can say that the self (in our case the person) is identified only with the capacity for self-awareness and that it goes hand in hand with linguistic capacity. These are the peculiar traits that differentiate the human being from the animals.

It is John Locke's conception of the person that leads to the realization of Descartes' ideas. Although we do not see a detailed theory of the person by Descartes as we have indicated, it is, however, Locke who clearly brings out the consequences that Descartes had presented⁵⁶¹. Locke's debate is about what constitutes the identity of the person: This identity according to him is constituted through consciousness. He totally refutes the idea that the substance constitutes the identity of the person⁵⁶². Locke goes against the entire Aristotelian tradition and takes to the extreme the cartesian «*cogito ergo sum*». A person's identity can be explained diachronically through his actions, but only to the extent that consciousness can attain. Memory is part of identity only to the extent that a person is aware of it, creating a problem of whether one can deny one's own memory. But this is understandable given that for Locke only self-awareness can be attributed to the identity of the person. The human body as mere «*res extensa*» cannot form part of the person's identity:

La identidad personal alcanza hasta donde alcance la conciencia, mediante la memoria de sus acciones o pensamientos pasados. En esta memoria cabe percibir una dimensión no solo cognitiva, sino constitutiva de la persona y su identidad. La persona es, pues, un ser que se define por la inteligencia (pensar, reflexión, razón), en todo caso se trata exclusivamente de predicados mentales, intelectuales, sin referencia a la corporalidad (que mas bien es excluida, puesto que pertenece a la identidad del hombre, no a la persona) ni en general a alguna relación intersubjetiva⁵⁶³.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 113-114.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 116.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 124.

Although Locke does not include substantial reality in the personal identity and definition of the person, he is nevertheless aware that this reality is of importance in what our author calls subjectivation. Substantial reality acts as a path to the formation of the subject: «...*el concepto de sustancias es el camino de acceso al concepto de sujeto/persona. Se trata de un proceso constructivo análogo...A esta subjetivación de la sustancia corresponde el concepto de persona*»⁵⁶⁴. The limitation of personal identity only to consciousness in both Descartes and Locke complicates the question of alterity. There is no place for intersubjectivity. The other becomes a distant reality and there is no place for genuine interpersonal encounter, which is the starting and finishing point in our argument.

Locke's idea of the person cannot go uncriticized based on the problems from it poses. One of the great critics of such a conception is Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. His starting point is metaphysical, especially in the way he explains the role played by what he calls the «*monads*»⁵⁶⁵. Leibniz goes against any form of «*materialization*» or even «*mechanization*» of the human spirit or even of the mind⁵⁶⁶. It is a mistake for Locke to associate substantial reality with «*res extensa*» because, as Leibniz says, «*La sustancia no es extension, sino energia*»⁵⁶⁷. Leibniz's attribution of the substance in the human person with a type of energy also makes him associate human action with the same energy. Another point is that the «*res cogitans*» does not apply only to the mind. He also associates it with the *res extensa*: «...*extiende la res cogitans hacia abajo, comprendiendo no solo la vida consciente, sino también la inconsciente, la sensitiva...*»⁵⁶⁸. This connection between what is conscious and unconscious, what is external and internal, what is material and immaterial is possible due to the presence of the «*metaphysical points that he calls monads*». They become points of connection and are present in all living things. We refer to the following definition of monads:

Son encarnadas solo por los vivientes (hombres, animales y plantas), no por cuerpos inorgánicos. La mónada es lo que da unidad a un organismo. Las mónadas son “puntos metafísicos”, inmateriales, que no pueden ser ni producidas ni destruidas de modo natural. Se caracterizan por un dinamismo propio, interno. Se distinguen solo por sus estados

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 132-137.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 136.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

internos, las percepciones; el estado interno se basa en un aspirar interno, el apetito, que hace avanzar la monada de un estado al siguiente⁵⁶⁹.

For Leibniz, the soul plays an important role when it comes to the identity of the person. Moreover, it is not only the human being who possesses the soul; other animals, as well as plants, possess the soul, but each according to the ontological level. The highest level is that of the rational soul or spirit, the second, empirical memory and the lowest is the vegetable level⁵⁷⁰. Without the soul it would be difficult to create a distinction and identity of these living beings. That's why «*El alma es, por tanto, el principio de identidad de todo viviente*»⁵⁷¹. We have mentioned before that, monads are responsible for unity in the organism, but the soul in this case is the one that gives reason for such unity⁵⁷². The soul is the logical principle of distinction articulated ontologically depending on each living being in the substantial unity brought by the monad. But in the case of the person there is the addition of what Leibniz calls the moral identity that is proper to persons only. Like this

Leibniz distingue entre identidad metafísica del yo (como sustancia inmaterial) y la identidad moral (como persona), que es constituida por la conciencia...El concepto de persona exige no solo la identidad de sustancia, sino también la de conciencia y esta viene dada por la peculiar naturaleza de la sustancia, que es el alma racional⁵⁷³.

The person of Leibniz is a moral being, a being of action and, consequently, a social being and, unlike Locke, where everything is centered on the consciousness of the self, Leibniz gives space to the other in the development of the identity of the self. In other words, the other plays a role in contributing to the identity of the self. Therefore, Leibniz's consciousness cannot be interpreted solely as the sole contributor to the identity of the self: «*La identidad de yo como persona moral puede ser establecida por el testimonio de otros...*»⁵⁷⁴. In short, the argument in favour of Leibniz is based on a metaphysical argument «*a priori*» where, although he does not refute the physical reality of the human being, he nevertheless recognizes that the foundation of such an existence

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 136-137.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 137-138.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 139.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

is metaphysical. The foundation, as we have seen, is the existence of the rational soul, which is a real identifier of the person as a principle of life, action and also unity.

Leibniz's metaphysical presupposition did not augur well with the empiricists like David Hume who criticizes the existence of a substantial self, identical to itself⁵⁷⁵. Hume's argument centres on the question of «*impresión sensible*»⁵⁷⁶ as a determinant of any idea that really exists. From this, Hume will come to the conclusion that the self does not really exist because it lacks a particular sensible impression. The self or the person will be for Hume a collection (bundles) of different impressions⁵⁷⁷. This is a real denial of substantial unity because there is a lack of sense of unity between the different types of impressions understood as «*bundles*». Therefore, their union can only be expressed as accidental: The «*“haz” (bundle) hace pensar en cosas que no tienen nada en común, sugiere un reunión accidental y no debida a principios de la naturaleza humana, algo así como manojito...*»⁵⁷⁸.

Hume's view of impressions that lack unity and in continuous movement leads us to the impossibility of having a unified self. It is difficult to say what a person is if the perceptions we have are presented as separate and distinct. Hume for this reason has been accused of presenting a purely mentalistic interpretation of the person: «*En el caso de Hume, el concepto de persona presupuesto es claramente mentalista, se la viene a identificar con la mente*»⁵⁷⁹.

The reduction of the person only to criteria of consciousness (referring to the few examples we have cited in the modern era) does not fully capture the full meaning of who the human person is. A better research is needed that leads to a holistic definition of the person.

5. THE PERSON AS A MORAL AGENT

The view of the person as a moral agent is clearly proposed by German philosophers such as Kant and Hegel whom we have mentioned earlier while expounding

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 151.

on their idea of alterity. Kant as such does not explicitly state the concept of the person⁵⁸⁰, but from his writings it can be said that his vision is based on his argument on practical reason. The person for Kant will be interpreted as a moral agent based on practical reason. We can summarize Kant's concept of person in the following points⁵⁸¹: The first point associates the person as a moral agent with his actions where he is involved and responsible for what he does,

... “Persona es el sujeto, cuyas acciones son imputables”. Las personas están caracterizadas por la responsabilidad de sus acciones y esto implica no solo la autoría de la acción, sino su calificación moral, es decir, la posibilidad de que puedan relacionar sus propias acciones con leyes. La persona consiste en la capacidad de responder de algo, a saber, su acción, ante alguien: una institución, la ley. La consciencia, un tribunal⁵⁸².

In simple terms, the person for Kant is a moral agent who has an obligation before the law to be responsible for what he does; he has a moral obligation to give an account of its actions and to act in accordance with that law. The second point demarcates the difference between Locke's conception of personality and Kant's. Kant emphasizes the moral character of the person, while Locke emphasizes the psychological character. We are talking about:

...la distinción entre la personalidad moral (“la Libertad de un ser racional sometido a leyes morales”) y la personalidad psicológica (“la facultad de hacerse consciente de la identidad de sí mismo en los distintos estados de la propia existencia”)⁵⁸³.

The third point flows directly from the first two. A person as a moral subject who has a moral obligation to act in accordance with it and be responsible for his actions is not a mere thing. We're talking about what differentiates the person from a thing⁵⁸⁴. Therefore, a person can be accused of not fulfilling his moral obligation, while a thing cannot. The fourth point supports the unity of the subject. Kant goes against the plurality of the self which is based on the distinction between the psychological character of the person and the moral character⁵⁸⁵.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 158-159.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 158.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 159.

Kant also introduces us to an autonomous person who enjoys his freedom but again based on the same argument of the moral law. In other words, the concept of the person is based on the moral law which in turn is the basis for the moral obligation of the person. This moral obligation is what constitutes the person who in turn makes a person enjoy his freedom and autonomy⁵⁸⁶. Thus, this ability to have freedom and personal autonomy elevates the person above the sensible world. A person is not a thing but a being capable of a moral obligation. The basis of a person's moral duty becomes the recognition of this obligatory characteristic. Therefore, personality will be defined by this freedom and autonomy of a being that who is governed by the obligation of moral practical laws. In other words:

...Kant trata del “origen” del reconocimiento del carácter obligatorio (vinculante) de la ley moral y, en su caso, del deber. Su argumentación en resumen es la siguiente: El origen del deber “no puede ser sino aquello que yergue al ser humano por encima de si mismo (como parte del mundo sensible) y le vincula con un orden de cosas que solo el entendimiento puede pensar, teniendo al mismo tiempo bajo si a todo el mundo sensible y con él a la existencia empíricamente determinable del ser humano en el tiempo, así como al conjunto de todos los fines (que únicamente se compadece con semejantes leyes practicas incondicionadas como ley moral)”⁵⁸⁷.

This argument of moral obligation brings us to Kant's idea of categorical imperative⁵⁸⁸ that makes it possible to consider the person as an end in himself because he has an absolute value as a rational being, as well as an unconditional duty. A being that is an end in himself again cannot be used as a means in all circumstances. In other words:

El imperativo categórico es aquel que manda independientemente del motivo subjetivo y para ello se enraíza en un motivo objetivo del querer y se orienta a un fin objetivo y por ello vale para todo ser racional y presenta un deber incondicional. El imperativo categórico solo es posible si hay algo, cuya existencia tenga en si misma un valor absoluto, como fin objetivo, como fin en sí mismo. Y esto es cabalmente la persona⁵⁸⁹.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 172.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

We have already pointed out in our argument that there is a big difference between a person and anything else in the world. This brings us to the question of human dignity⁵⁹⁰. A human being as a rational being and a being who has a moral duty is a being who must be treated with dignity. The moral law that governs the person for Kant is «*sacrosanct*»⁵⁹¹, it is inviolable in other words and, therefore, the human being must always receive his dignity for that reason. Dignity is priceless, it cannot be bought or exchanged for a certain price. While other things may come at a price equivalent to them, dignity is above that. Each person has a unique value that cannot be exchanged for any price. A person cannot be bought as any other mere thing to meet the needs of another person. Dignity involves the participation of a being who wishes to be in continuous relationships with other similar beings, a value that cannot be exchanged with anything else. We use the following words to clearly explain the difference between means and ends:

La distinción entre medios y fines se articula aquí por la diferencia entre precio y dignidad. Tiene precio todo lo que es equivalente y como tal puede ser intercambio. Tiene dignidad lo que no puede ser sometido a tal relación de intercambio, porque se caracteriza por su singularidad, la cual, a su vez, proviene de su carácter moral, de su sujeción a leyes prácticas puras, morales. La diferencia entre precio y dignidad radica en el carácter singular de la persona, condición que la convierte, en fin; mientras que las cosas que cubren las necesidades se dice que tienen equivalentes. Son intercambiables. La diferencia entre precio comercial y de afecto se explica con la terminología psicoanalítica: el precio comercial responde a la satisfacción de necesidades y el de afecto corresponde al deseo. La necesidad se caracteriza por su remisión a cosas, produce el intercambio de cosas equivalentes, por lo que, al ser satisfecha, desaparece; el deseo, en cambio, dice relación a personas, al otro, da lugar a las relaciones interpersonales y su satisfacción no solo no lo hace desaparecer, sino que lo perpetua y acrecienta⁵⁹².

Therefore, the human being, as a being with dignity is an end in himself something that prohibits his use as a means or object. This aspect is directly related to the issue of alterity. Man, as a worthy being lives with other similar beings whose dignity must also be respected. Giving dignity to others is equivalent to giving them humanity. Respecting others as beings with dignity is like a vocation that cannot be violated without committing a crime against humanity. In other words, one has a moral duty to respect others, as well

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 176.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 177.

as to respect oneself as a being with an inviolable price. In other words, we are human because we are beings worthy of dignity:

La humanidad misma es una dignidad; porque el hombre no puede ser utilizado únicamente como medio por ningún hombre (ni por otros, ni siquiera por su mismo) sino siempre a la vez como fin, y en esto consiste precisamente su dignidad...⁵⁹³.

Kant presents a fantastic theory about what the personality, dignity and autonomy of the human being implies, however, his argument, as we have said, is based only on practical reason. This brings the problem because Kant's language seems to present us with two worlds to which the person belongs: one sensitive and the other intelligible⁵⁹⁴. This reminds us of the two realms when it comes to knowledge: the «*Phenomenon*» y «*noumenon*», what we can know and what we cannot know. Kant will have a problem defending the existence of such ideas like the human soul, God, world, etc. These ideas for him are only a fruit of philosophical postulation. They are admitted as such⁵⁹⁵. The same argument applies to the concepts of person, personality, and human freedom; these belong to practical reason, but we cannot claim to have objective knowledge about them:

Los conceptos de persona y personalidad (como también el de libertad) no pertenecen al campo del conocimiento objetivo, teórico, sino al práctico. Han sufrido un proceso de desontologización o desustancialización, en el sentido de que han perdido su significación ontológica objetivista y han adquirido una significación práctica, fundado la nueva metafísica de la libertad o del ser moral. Estos conceptos forman parte del ámbito de la razón pura práctica, de las 'ideas' (mundo-libertad, alma, Dios)⁵⁹⁶.

Another figure worth reflecting on his conception of the person together with Kant is Hegel. We have seen what influences Hegel had for Taylor on the general understanding of alterity. Two things characterize the person of Hegel: «*inmediatez y universalidad*»⁵⁹⁷. The first case describes this immediate acceptance of the person's given as a being with his particularity and uniqueness and as a free spirit: «*Inmediatez significa que algo es dado sin mediación alguna...La persona se deduce como singularización del espíritu libre que se realiza objetivamente*»⁵⁹⁸. A person will be

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 177-178.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 179.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 182.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

referred to as a free spirit for this knowledge of himself as a free individual and this must be taken as such; this is the starting point:

Se denomina persona al espíritu en cuanto se sabe inmediatamente en la figura de la voluntad singular. Persona es por tanto todo individuo libre que de alguna manera sabe que es libre y se quiere como tal...Este carácter de inmediatez tiene el significado de algo de lo que hay que partir, algo dado, como lo es la naturaleza para el trabajo o la producción, algo que está ahí desde el inicio; como quien quiere hacer sociología ha de presuponer que hay sociedad, después la sociología tendrá precisamente la tarea de explicar que es la sociedad, de que se compone, como se estructura, en que consiste, etc⁵⁹⁹.

The person of Hegel, therefore, is credited with this ability to immediately know of his presence as a free, singular and unique being. Even if he doesn't explain the how of his being in full details, he at least knows that he exists as this free being. Obviously, from our previous debate about Hegel's Geist we know that the existence of a person is attributed to the absolute spirit. Man, as a finite spirit is free, but as we saw this does not mean that he surpasses the infinite spirit.

Once again, the person in Hegel's proposal is distinguished by his universal character⁶⁰⁰ which means that it is a fact that cuts through all humans and governs all persons by the very fact of their individuality as free spirits:

Ser persona consiste, por tanto, en reconocer dimensión universal al individuo humano. Ser persona consiste en la unión de ambos polos: el individuo y el universal; consiste en el juicio: “este singular es universal”, tiene validez universal; consiste en que el singular, por sí mismo, sea reconocido universalmente o tenga validez universal e indiscriminada, sea sujeto de leyes universales, tanto en el sentido de legislador, como en el de sometido a ellas, sujeto de derechos y obligaciones⁶⁰¹.

After examining Kant and Hegel's contributions to the understanding of the human person, we want to briefly look at other twentieth-century trends when it comes to understanding this concept. This historical journey of the concept of the person for this research is important as we said so that we finally arrive at an informed synthesis of the concept in order to show that whatever the form in which the concept of the human person is presented, it is necessary to include the interpersonal dimension. This has been our line

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

of thought throughout our research because we are convinced that alterity defines our existence. We now briefly investigate some of these tendencies and views of the person.

6. PERSONALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

We begin by defining what personalism entails in general terms. Personalism attributes to the person most of the characteristics that we have seen before. It represents a being who is self-aware, a being who is endowed with dignity and responsibility, a being who enjoys his rights and duties, a being who is an end in himself⁶⁰², etc. Personalism is thus:

...toda concepción filosófica que intente resaltar el modo de ser propio de la persona en tanto que ella es realización y expresión del individuo autoconsciente, libre y responsable, dotado de dignidad y por sí mismo titular de derechos y deberes y, dicho en términos kantianos, fin en sí mismo⁶⁰³.

One of the proponents of personalism and whom we believe his views in our research are appropriate is Emmanuel Mounier, a French philosopher (1905-1950)⁶⁰⁴. He has something in common with Taylor in the sense that his personalism can be strongly characterized as «*personalismo comunitario*»⁶⁰⁵. Taylor as we saw values the importance of community in the development of the identity of the person and its realization. In this sense, the person and the community complement each other according to these two authors. Mounier's person is incarnated in the community, which makes him an open individual who cannot close himself. An individual as a person in this sense goes beyond his individuality; he is an open conscience. Therefore, Mounier's personalism is not closed, in fact, it can be referred to as «*transpersonalism*» in the sense that it goes beyond all the limits of the individual as can be seen in the following quote:

(Mounier) Estudia a la persona en su pluralidad de dimensiones: 1) como vocación (dimensión espiritual hacia lo universal); 2) como encarnación (dimensión espiritual hacia abajo), en la historia y la sociedad; 3) como comunión (dimensión espiritual hacia lo ancho, horizontal). La persona trasciende mi individualidad, mi conciencia y mi personalidad, de ahí que el personalismo se define, por traspasar estos límites, como un

⁶⁰² Ibid., 193

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 196.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

transpersonalismo; persona y comunidad son contrarios complementarios dentro de la dialéctica de amor...⁶⁰⁶.

We can summarize Mounier's personalism with the following points⁶⁰⁷. First of all, the human subject is an incarnate existence and therefore, although it is a composition of body and spirit, its reality is of a subject. There is unity between the two. Therefore, the two principles (body and spirit) are important as far as the existence of the human subject is concerned, there is no dichotomy.

Secondly, Mounier presents that a person is a natural being but that he does not enclose himself in this nature. Thus, a person has the ability to transcend his nature because he is not purely natural; it is for this reason that man is able to transform his nature.: «*El hombre va más allá de la naturaleza por el conocimiento y por su acción, por su capacidad de transformar la naturaleza*»⁶⁰⁸.

Thirdly, and connected to a person's ability to transcend his nature, is the question of his ability to open up to the other. Man opens up to the other who is different because of his ability to communicate⁶⁰⁹. The ability to communicate opens the door for interpersonal encounter and exchange with others. In short: «*La persona se define por la apertura, la comunicación, el encuentro con el tu y, por el, con el nosotros*»⁶¹⁰.

Fourthly, the person for Mounier is a project. He is as we have said elsewhere a «*not yet*». He is a being in the making. The structure of the person is then «*dynamic*»⁶¹¹ because he forms himself in his encounter with different activities, different people and cultures and even through his work. This does not mean that a person gets lost in the mass losing his uniqueness, but that through this interaction and giving himself to others as he interacts with the world, he becomes the individual he should be:

La persona no es, sino que se hace. (...) De la misma manera que la persona implica la dinámica de hacerse, y ello la involucra con otros y la naturaleza, también este hacerse no puede estar centrado en ella, ella se hace dándose, haciendo para los otros. En esta relación dinámica con el mundo y con los demás la persona no queda absorbida por masas

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 197-199.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 198.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

anónimas (sean naturales o sociales), sino que, por el contrario, se singulariza, adquiere, en quinto lugar, su singularidad, su vocación singular que le es propia⁶¹².

Finally, there is the question of freedom that for Mounier gives the definition of the essence of the human being, but which is a gift that one can accept or reject. In this way, the possession of freedom for a person becomes a process and a journey that one has to go through; it is not a radical possession as Sartre would propose⁶¹³.

Another proponent of personalism is Martin Buber, whom we have presented extensively in the previous chapters. Buber's view of the person is dialogical because he believes that man as a being of language is capable of dialogue. As we have seen in his texts «*I and Thou*» and «*Between man and man*», man is confronted with a double reality that involves the two primordial words: «*I-Thou*» and «*I-It*». For a proper dialogue to take place, there must be the discovery and recognition of the other, the second person, with whom I meet in my relationship with him. This is the other one that is different, but with whom I have to enter into dialogue with him for a proper encounter. Life for Buber becomes an encounter with the other. This encounter requires reciprocity as we saw. One has to open up to the other for a genuine encounter to be a reality.

As we have already pointed out, there are two different ways in which we can relate to the other depending on the attitude we have towards him. From the primordial words, we can have two ways in which we can relate. In the first primordial denotation «*I-It*» the other for me becomes a mere instrument for use. Here the important thing is the role that the other plays in our relationship and how he responds to my needs or interests. There is a lack of genuine reciprocity. The other serves me for something; he is a mere thing. In Kant's language, the other here is not an end in himself. The other is merely the object for use. In this case there is no genuine encounter:

En la relación yo-ello el otro es visto de manera indirecta, mediata, a través o desde la perspectiva de metas determinadas o como objeto de conocimiento científico objetivador. El otro es usado para algo, cumple una determinada función. Por este encuadramiento dentro del propio proyecto de vida, el otro se convierte en medio para la realización de determinados intereses; se convierte de alguna manera en cosa. En este caso el otro es aquello de lo que se habla, pero no a quien se le dirige la palabra⁶¹⁴.

⁶¹² Ibid., 198-199.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 199.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 204.

On the contrary, the «*I-Thou*» the relationship is governed by a different attitude. Here we can affirm that there is the true discovery of the second person; there is the discovery of the «*Thou*». Here there is a genuine encounter in an immediate way by mutual reciprocal openness. The other is for me a person and not an object for use. Obviously, as we saw, this does not mean that the other cannot be useful; he can be useful in my life, but he cannot be used as a mere instrument according to my needs. The other is taken as an end in himself and without price. The other one for me is unique and cannot be replaced by anything else. Of importance here is the respect of the other as the other whose uniqueness and individuality are irreplaceable:

En la relación yo-tú se da el encuentro entre dos personas de modo inmediato, desde la perspectiva del yo se abre la de segunda persona, al yo corresponde el tu. Si se mira al otro independientemente de mis intereses y necesidades, esperanzas y angustias, entonces el yo mismo se encuentre ahí en su totalidad corporal-espiritual, en su plenitud. A diferencia de la relación funcional y objetivadora, esta relación descansa sobre la interacción reciproca entre las personas. La propia persona, irremplazable e insustituible, es el punto de partida para la relación, en la cual también el otro es percibido en su irremplazable singularidad⁶¹⁵.

A genuine encounter with the other in the I-Thou relationship, as we have pointed out, implies genuine reciprocity. Reciprocity in Buber's terms implies that the encounter between persons is free and immediate and that both parties open themselves to dialogue in a natural and unforced way⁶¹⁶. The encounter here does not depend on one side. The two sides must be willing to open up to a relationship without prejudice. Moreover, a genuine encounter is not a mere abstract mental creation; it is a real commitment from both sides: «*El encuentro no es ningún acto mental, sino que en él se encuentra comprometido el hombre entero. No se fundamenta ni en la razón ni tampoco en el sentimiento aisladamente, sino que los comprende a ambos*»⁶¹⁷.

For a genuine encounter, the importance of a genuine openness to the other is also vital, as we have pointed out before. This is possible because, in our own words, man is capable of transcendence. In Levinas' terms, man has to come out of his totality to reach the other. The genuine encounter in Buber's way of thinking should not be guided by the

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 205.

benefits I will gain from my encounter with the other. It is an integral participatory relationship where each member must do his part; it is not a one-sided matter. Therefore, for a genuine encounter one has to leave his comfort zone and let the other enter his circle.: *«Para la relación personal interpersonal es decisivo el autotrascendimiento, la salida de uno mismo, del círculo de los propios intereses; esta salida caracteriza la relación que establece el hombre y es la que posibilita la relación yo-tu»*⁶¹⁸.

In conclusion, Buber's personalism focuses on the question of «*Thou*». This is the starting point and the point of arrival. Without the discovery of the Thou in the other human being there is no possible encounter. In this case, the «*Thou*» should not be confused with the «*human being*», as can be seen in our next quote. The «*Thou*» here it indicates that personal character that cannot be conceived as an object. This is what is not subject to any use or objectivization:

Ser humano y Tu no son sinónimos, no designan lo mismo. El Tu designa el carácter personal del hombre, pero a la vez supera al hombre, pues el Tu no es nunca objeto, mientras que el hombre puede objetivarse. El Tu es una cifra o modo de expresar el carácter personal⁶¹⁹.

Much has been said before about Martin Buber's vision of alterity which also encompassed his vision of the human being and, consequently, his vision of the person. For this reason, we wanted here to stress on the points touching on his personalism briefly.

Another concept of personalism worth mentioning is that of Levinas, whose vision of alterity has already been examined. Although we cannot say that Levinas systematically handles the concept of the person⁶²⁰, however, from our previous vision of his concept of the other we can deduce without any problem what his vision of the person would be like. He will rarely use the term person, but other terms related to the person are used as our author points out:

Primeramente, hay que notar el uso escaso que Levinas hace del término persona, el cual, sin embargo, aparece aludido con los términos de yo, yo concreto, sujeto. Si mismo, mismo, hipostasis, o con los términos abstractos como subjetividad, ipseidad, identidad y semejantes⁶²¹.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 208.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 246.

⁶²¹ Ibid., 246.

The starting point for Levinas when it comes to the subject (in our case the person) is ethics. As we pointed out, ethics for Levinas is first philosophy. The ethical relationship must govern our relationship with the other who is different. Although the other is different from me, however, there is something common between us. For this reason, there is what Levinas calls the metaphysical desire for the other. This desire for the other creates a kind of Augustinian restlessness in the subject in such a way that one has to leave his comfort zone and his totality, towards infinity, which is the zone for the other. The desire of the other challenges our self-sufficiency and creates a space for our need for the other:

De este modo la autosuficiencia del goce se ve acompañada siempre por la inseguridad del goce. Esta inseguridad esencial marca una “frontera” que proviene de la nada, que late en la interioridad. En virtud de esta frontera que se abre es posible acoger la revelación de la trascendencia⁶²².

Before the «*face*» of the other we feel questioned as Levinas says⁶²³. The other in this case becomes a matter that requires ethical responsibility on our part. The other is presented to us as a naked face that awakens discomfort in our comfort zone where we are involved in the enjoyment of things. In this way before such a face one cannot remain indifferent; he has to act.

From what we have said and from our previous analysis of Levinas' position, we can say that his conception of person is represented as a responsible subject⁶²⁴. A person must feel responsible to the being that comes in his presence. In the face of the suffering of the other person, one cannot remain indifferent. The other person is in other words, my neighbour, whose whereabouts and well-being should become my bother. As we saw, the death of my neighbour becomes in a way my death. A person feels questioned in the presence of the other person. Levinas thus presents us with an ethics of responsibility in our presence with the other.

The great novelty of Levinas is his starting point. He starts from the point of view of the existence of the other, something that differentiates the vision of Levinas from many modern thinkers. Therefore, we can say that his point of view about the person enriches many modern views of the person. Its ethical dimension as our author comments

⁶²² Ibid., 252.

⁶²³ Ibid., 251.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 253.

in the following quote becomes an ontology. This other is not a simple «*alter ego*» whom I can approach with my own prejudices. The other remains the other and that must be addressed as a mystery and a sacred existence. The other should be accorded his due dignity as the other. However, as we have seen, although different, we have something in common that forbids me from harming him. In a way, harming the other is in a way harming myself. We quote the following to show in better terms the novelty of Levinas:

La gran aportación de Levinas al concepto de persona es el intento de pensarla no desde sí misma, desde su autonomía, sino desde el otro. Con ello lleva a cabo una verdadera inversión de paradigma moderno, que suele partir de la propia subjetividad y autonomía y a lo sumo a afirmar que no es un ser aislado, sino que pertenece esencialmente a una comunidad, sociedad, pero implantado siempre en lo mismo, donde, por tanto, la alteridad fácilmente es subsumida bajo la mismidad a la totalidad. La dimensión ética es de tal manera presente que se convierte en ontológica. Por lo tanto, no se pierde la concepción moderna de la persona como ser moral, sino que resulta ser su verdadero ser⁶²⁵.

7. INADEQUACIES OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSON IN SOME BIOETHICAL PROPOSALS

Bioethics is one of the areas that today has committed itself to the question of the person especially because it applies its ethics to respond to the problem of life. Here we do not intend to delve into the whole debate of Bioethics. Our intention is to give an overview of how Bioethics has treated the concept of the person. We begin by defining this term:

The word bioethics consists of two parts derived from Greek: bios meaning life and the adjective ethicos meaning good or bad, right or wrong. Ethics is the philosophy behind moral or the theoretical basis for moral (moral derived from the Latin word *moris* meaning manners). Based on this, bioethics should deal with ethical problems of life and also of death since death is a function of life. Ethics deals with values and bioethics should therefore deal with values related to life and life processes⁶²⁶.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 256-257.

⁶²⁶ Dag E. Helland et al., "Teaching bioethics: Report from a seminar." *Nordic Committee on Bioethics* no.2 (November 2001): 12, accessed March 29, 2022. <https://uni.hi.is/vilhjarn/files/2015/02/Teaching.Bioeth.pdf#page=11>.

Therefore, bioethics becomes an applied ethics on issues affecting life and the decision to be made, for example, on the issues of abortion, euthanasia, cloning, etc. As far as human life is concerned, bioethics, as our author comments through the words of Kathrin Braun, will try to answer questions such as: Who should live? who should die? and who should decide?⁶²⁷.

Michael Tooley, for example, in the response to the problem of abortion and infanticide⁶²⁸ addresses the problem on the basis of who has the right to life and who does not. This complicates the issue because it means that not all people can have such a right. Following a utilitarian criterion, Tooley will base his answer on the question of whether a person is capable of self-awareness or not. In this case he will conclude that the newborn fetus does not have such a right due to lack of self-awareness:

Tooley argumenta siguiendo el planteamiento utilitarista de la suma total del provecho (en conjunto) cuyo aumento es en definitiva la finalidad de la ética. Fetos y recién nacidos no tienen ningún derecho a la vida, porque no disponen de la “condición de la autoconciencia”⁶²⁹.

Tooley's criterion of deciding who is or is not a person in empirical terms leaves much to be desired. The question would be what happens when one loses one's capacity for self-awareness? Then it would mean that such a person loses his right to life.

Peter Singer following Tooley will also propose his criteria for deciding who is a person and who is not. Singer's criterion is based on whether one is aware of suffering or not. In this case there is no difference between man and other animals because animals also suffer⁶³⁰. In the same line of thought Hugo Tristan Engelhardt who mainly agrees that a person is a moral agent with his own moral duties⁶³¹, but nevertheless there are certain mental properties on which all this depends on:

El concepto de persona que propone Engelhardt es claramente moral, pero viene definido por un conjunto de propiedades mentales, que se resumen en la capacidad de autonomía, de dar permiso, y esta capacidad entendida en su ejercicio actual⁶³².

⁶²⁷ PH, 308.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 309.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 310.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 313-327.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 330.

⁶³² Ibid., 332.

Again, Engelhardt's view of the person is discriminatory just like that of Tooley and Singer. Here only those human beings who have the ability to give permission qualify to be persons. If one loses this ability, one does not qualify as a person. With these few examples of how Bioethics has interpreted the concept of the person we can see how influenced its conclusions by the scientific naturalistic view of things are. In this way as Amengual comments with the words of Tom L. Beauchamp: the concept of person in the interpretation of Bioethics is a failure:

De la exposición del pensamiento de estos bioéticos acerca del concepto de persona se puede, en efecto, sacar la conclusión que las teorías de la persona han fracasado, que el concepto de persona poco tiene que decir en bioética⁶³³.

In our own view, a person cannot be defined only by physical or mental criteria. The definition of who a person is must be holistic covering all dimensions of the human being.

8. NATURALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

Instead of delving into many definitions of naturalism and its history, we would like to explore the problems arising from a naturalistic definition of the human being with regard to the concept of the person. The biggest problem with naturalism is its claim that the natural sciences can give all the answers about life and with a scientific criterion. In this way, naturalism will respect only the conclusions that can be deduced in an empirical scientific way. This is a kind of reductionism and limits life to only what is scientifically verifiable. But we know that the human being can be studied and understood to some extent by the natural sciences, however, it cannot be limited only to the natural sciences. The problem of naturalism is, therefore, this pretense that all questions, even questions about metaphysics and ontology can be answered absolutely by our natural sciences. Therefore, it is not a question of condemning the natural sciences, but rather of their lack of respect for the limits to what science can and cannot respond to. We further clarify this problem with the following quotation:

El problema surge en el momento en que, desde las ciencias naturales, se intenta dar explicación de todo. Entonces surge lo que ha venido a denominarse naturalismo

⁶³³ Ibid., 337.

reduccionista y materialismo eliminativista, los cuales, asumiendo la pretensión exclusiva de las ciencias naturales, le dan un giro filosófico, por el cual dichas ciencias adquieren un monopolio, no solo epistemológico, sino también ontológico. Estas posiciones elevan la pretensión explicativa de las ciencias naturales convirtiéndola en una posición metafísica, de manera que las ciencias se convierten en juez sobre la ontología del mundo en su conjunto⁶³⁴.

Our emphasis here is that naturalism must make a clear demarcation of what questions the natural sciences can answer and what they cannot answer. The natural sciences cannot claim to be the only way to truth⁶³⁵. This is a lack of openness and dialogue with other forms of wisdom that propose access to truth in different ways. The human being for sure has his foundation⁶³⁶ in nature as a natural existence, but he is a being that transcends this physical reality. This means that there are questions about him that go beyond the «*a posteriori*» look that our sciences give.

Therefore, the problem is not to think or not to think naturalistically, but when naturalism becomes the only criterion of interpretation of life the real problem arises. Life, and especially human life, is a complex matter whose interpretation cannot be reduced to a single perspective. Our line of thinking in this research and in the Taylorian perspective must be inclusive and holistic: In other words:

...es posible pensar el concepto de persona en términos naturalistas, siempre que estos términos no sean reduccionistas o eliminativistas, es decir, que reflejen y den razón de toda la complejidad de la vida propiamente humana⁶³⁷.

It is worth mentioning here one of the individuals who has criticized the naturalistic conception of the human person along with Taylor. This is Robert Spaemann (1927). He also refutes some bioethical ideas about the human person such as those presented by Singer⁶³⁸. His main criticism is directed at ideas that try to create a gap between the human being and the person. His conviction is that all human beings are actually persons⁶³⁹ without putting distinction as some bioethical thinkers want to present it. Spaemann bases himself on «*a priori*» terms to support his point, as well as the

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 290.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 291.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 293.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 305.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 359

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 359-360.

recognition that the human being as a moral being deserves to be a person. In addition to this, the fact that the human being belongs to the human species is enough to qualify him to be a person. The human species cannot be at the same level with other species. Therefore, being a person does not depend on the physical or mental characteristics of the species as many bioethical proponents would like to present it. He illustrates these two points as follows:

Spaemann señala dos presupuestos para afirmar que todos los hombres son personas: ... Las personas se encuentran a priori en una relación recíproca basada en el reconocimiento. La persona se encuentre siempre en una comunidad moral de reconocimiento. Es la relación que a partir de Kant también se llama respeto... ¿Cómo llegamos al conocimiento de tal exigencia? Lo hacemos por razón de ciertas características de especie; pero, por lo que se refiere al reconocimiento o respeto de la persona, este no depende de que se den estas características, sino solo de la pertenencia del individuo a la especie, cuyos ejemplares típicos poseen dichas características. Y ello precisamente porque la relación de las personas humanas con su especie no es como la de los miembros de otras especies, puesto que las personas son individuos de modo eminente. Justamente por ello, dado el carácter singular de las personas, el reconocimiento de las personas no depende de los rasgos individuales de ciertas características de especie⁶⁴⁰.

For Spaemann, although a human being is a biological being and part of nature, he is nevertheless not like anything else. Paraphrasing Spaemann's idea of this we can say that the question of what a human being is does not exhaust all that he is. It is necessary to ask the question of who he is. A human being is not just something, but above all he is someone. A human being cannot be understood as any other empirical property⁶⁴¹ that can be understood and analyzed immediately. He is rather a being that relates to himself as well as to other things within nature. He is not in a passive relationship with his surroundings, but he is deeply involved in a reasonable and active relationship with nature. A being able to relate as we saw is a being worthy of dignity because the relationship cannot be bought or replaced: *«El hombre no es tal de manera inmediata, no es una realización inmediata de la especie, sino que se encuentra en relación con ella, como también se encuentra en relación con su naturaleza, se comporta con ella»*⁶⁴².

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 361.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 364.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

Spaemann challenges Singer and Engelhardt's criterions of what a person is, which were primarily descriptive. For him, «*El concepto de persona no es puramente descriptivo, contiene "una exigencia normativa"*»⁶⁴³. A person apart from being natural and biological is also guided by certain regulations that involve ethical decisions derived from his relationship with himself and with nature. Therefore, Spaemann's position, as we have indicated, is unnaturalistic. A human being cannot be interpreted solely on the basis of being natural; a human being has the ability to «*relate*» with nature thus differentiating himself from any other natural thing. Therefore, a human being is not something but rather someone:

Spaemann defiende la diferencia categorial entre 'algo' y 'alguien', es decir, entre cosas naturales y personas, contra una posición naturalista, por la que dicha diferencia estaría amenazada de perderse. Con ello se dirige contra naturalismo psicológico y biológico...Ser persona no es naturaleza, sino que constituye la característica relación del hombre con la naturaleza. Siguiendo la comprensión tradicional del ser persona como ser si-mismo, en el sentido aristotélico de sustancia, para Spaemann la singularidad es la característica esencial de la personalidad⁶⁴⁴.

Finally, Spaemann supports the idea of interpersonality like Taylor based on the plurality of persons with whom we are involved in interhuman relationships:

Como persona el hombre se encuentra envuelto en relaciones interhumanas, sociales, institucionales con otras personas. Estas relaciones, que no hay que separarlas de relaciones naturales o biológicos⁶⁴⁵.

The human being is continuously in relation with everything that exists. He relates with other human beings who are of his equal, but also to other things that are not persons. He relates to other things that are purely empirical, but also to other beings whose dignity is priceless. These fellowmen must be treated as our fellow equals, but whose uniqueness and originality cannot be replaced. They are beings like us who have their rights and obligations:

Respeto de estas posibilidades todos los hombres son iguales, tanto en sentido descriptivo como normativo. Cada uno es igualmente único e irremplazable sujeto de sus actos, con el mismo derecho a respeto de su dignidad humana, con los mismos derechos y

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 365.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 366.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 368.

obligaciones. En el concepto de hombre son por tanto igualmente originarias la experiencia de sí mismo y del otro, la dimensión normativa y la descriptiva⁶⁴⁶.

Spaemman disagrees with those who propose that the fetus and small babies are only «*persons in potency*»⁶⁴⁷. All human beings are persons without such criteria, he says: «...*todos los hombres son personas, independientemente de su personal constitución psíquico-mental*»⁶⁴⁸. Even when a person for whatever reasons lacks the possibility to express himself or give his own point of view on something, that human being is still a person. This refutes once again the previous criterion in which a person should be determined for the very reason of being able to give permission. Therefore, a person reserves all his rights⁶⁴⁹ of being always a person regardless of the physical or mental state in which he is. Amengual lists three reasons why a human being is a person independent of his psychic-mental state: one is because a person «*is*» therefore he does not only have characteristics of being a person. Secondly, all human individuals by the fact of «*being*», therefore, they are persons and thirdly a human subject is «*someone*» and not «*something*». We get the actual terms used by Amengual in detail:

¿Porque y en qué sentido se es persona independientemente de la constitución psíquico-mental? Por el hecho de que: a) la persona no tiene unas características, sino que es de una determinada manera, por tanto, no se trata de características que se den más o menos, sino el hecho de tenerlas, al menos en sí, por naturaleza, sin que uno las tenga que acreditar; b) por ello, todo individuo humano, por el solo hecho de serlo, es persona; c) el “supósito” o sujeto de estas cualidades no es una cosa, un “algo”, sino “alguien”. De esta manera, por una parte, se asume la aportación de la concepción sustancialista de la persona, poniendo un sujeto de atribución de las cualidades, pero, por otra, se trata de un sujeto personal, no sustancial o cósmico⁶⁵⁰.

Finally, on the proposition on the concept of person made by Spaemann, we can summarize them with «*six reasons*»⁶⁵¹ which he lists as his argument to support that all human beings are persons. We paraphrase these points immediately. The first reason is based on the conviction that all human beings are of the same species. This is the human species. In this way, humans are not just mere animals like other animals. The being

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 369.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 370-371.

animal here becomes a form of realization of this species, but it cannot reduce a human being to only animal characteristics. Secondly, the mutual recognition of this fact is based on being a person in that being and not the other way around. The person «*is*» as we have said and in such an original way that any reductionist idea of his being is unacceptable. Thirdly, characteristics such as intentionality, rationality and responsibility in the person are unquestionable, they go along with the capacity for self-interpretation and self-evaluation. Fourthly, those who for some reasons become mentally weak cannot thus lose their being people. They can be classified as sick, but they are still persons. Fifthly, it is wrong to think that the fetus and small babies are just potential persons. As quoted by Amengual «*De algo no se deviene alguien*»⁶⁵². Thus, the fetus and babies are classified as well as someone from the beginning of human life. What is subject to development is not the being of a person, but the structural characteristic of the person. And finally, being a person cannot be conditional and does not depend on empirical characteristics.

We want to conclude this part on how the concept of person has been interpreted throughout history by recovering Taylor's idea that it is above all unnaturalistic as we have hinted at before. After this recovery we will give our own vision on alterity supported largely by Pedro Laín Entralgo and the ethics of Ubuntu and in line with Charles Taylor. These three views support our proposition in this research: that a human being is by nature interpersonal; alterity implies interpersonality.

9. RECOVERING TAYLOR'S VIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

Taylor as we saw in his analysis of modernity is undoubtedly one of the greatest experts in the analysis of this period seen from his anthropological and religious interpretation of modern man⁶⁵³. In his moral and political theory as we saw he presents the person as a moral agent. He refutes both naturalism and mentalism to define the person by criticizing the cartesian definition⁶⁵⁴ of the person that has roots in the cartesian reductionist view of consciousness.

Taylor's person is self-interpretive. This means that he interprets the reality around him by giving his points of view, as well as making his decisions on what to do or not to.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 370.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 346.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 347.

In this way, he is an agent responsible for his actions. He makes plans and as we saw he is a respondent to life situations. This does not happen in a solipsistic way because this moral agent lives in an environment of other persons as well as other things⁶⁵⁵. In other words, Taylor's self-interpretive person has to respond to what he finds in his way. He interprets both his self and his environment:

Taylor viene a poner como base del ser de la persona el hecho que ella responde, que es respuesta y se hace respondiendo, es responsable: no solo reacciona al entorno, sino que responde con sus acciones, responde de ellas, responde a motivos y razones y a interrogantes o desafíos. Parece como si en ser respondedor viera Taylor la quintaesencia de la persona. (...) Taylor ha ofrecido un rico concepto de persona como agente moral y que como tal es también alguien que percibe, entiende e interpreta a sí mismo y a su entorno; es decir, es un ser que tiene representación (de realidad) y acción⁶⁵⁶.

Therefore, Taylor to clearly explain his concept of the person differentiates two visions on how modernity has answered this question. One of them as we have said is based on the cartesian form of interpretation where the person is pure consciousness and thus, only makes representation of reality⁶⁵⁷. This kind of view of reality sees nature as something orderly and not problematic⁶⁵⁸ and, therefore, what man does is only representing it the way it is. What man does is pure mimesis of reality if we are to use artistic terms as seen in the previous chapter. However, the second vision of man is more revolutionary. This is the vision that studies man as a moral agent⁶⁵⁹.

Human being studied as an agent implies a lot. Here we see what differentiates human beings from other animals. First of all, we have indicated the capacity of the human being to interpret himself. Human beings are beings who act using reason which implies making of choices. They are beings who have desires, but in a strong and original way; their desires are of the second order as we saw earlier. For this reason, humans cannot be identified as to what role they play. This would be a way of reducing them to machines or any other animal⁶⁶⁰. Machines are not self-interpretive, and, in this way, they cannot be asked to give their point of view of something. The human being as a being of purpose makes a meaningful assessment of what action he has to undertake or not. The

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 348.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 349.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

human agent as a reflective being is aware of a certain «*standard*»⁶⁶¹ that he utilizes to make his decisions. This standard is what is missing in other animals because they lack the second order of desires; their choices are guided by the first order of desires. Taylor's human action must always be viewed hermeneutically; therefore, the first description of a person as only consciousness must be rejected.

La perspectiva de la acción hace imposible la primera visión de la persona, como mera conciencia; ni la acción, por su parte, puede explicarse de manera puramente funcional puesto que como tal acción se define por motivos y razones, por fines que implican significaciones e interpretaciones⁶⁶².

Therefore, Taylor's person is a moral agent who acts and makes plans. He is not passively involved with its environment. What surrounds him is important to him and for this reason he evaluates it as he makes decisions. Thus, he is aware of himself and his environment and gives his own point of view as a self-interpretive being⁶⁶³. As we saw without repeating everything, for Taylor the human being is a being of language. This implies that a person expresses himself and is therefore able to dialogue with the rest of his fellow human beings. This expression occurs in society. Society becomes a public space where there is the possibility of exchanging different points of view of different personalities, cultures and environments. Thus, Taylor's vision of the person cannot fit into the first vision that closes man in a mentalistic and Cartesian interpretation. His point of view supports the second model that does not reduce man to only consciousness but sees him as a being whose reflective capacity moves him to act. We summarize this point with the following:

La segunda visión supera el modelo mentalista de la mente y de la persona poniendo de relieve que la misma percepción implica una interpretación... Supera además el modelo mentalista por incluir la acción y con ella los motivos y razones y, por tanto, las situaciones. Desborda el planteamiento concienical mostrando que el sujeto no es solo cogitare, sino agere, con todo lo que implica de salida de si, proponiéndose fines que responden a una situación interpretada de la que surgen los fines y los motivos para obrar. La persona es un agente distinto por su “sensibilidad hacia ciertos estándares, hacia aquellos implicados en las metas propiamente humanas”⁶⁶⁴.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 352.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 350

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 352-353.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 353.

In short, Taylor's idea of the person is intersubjective, an aspect that is very important in articulating alterity. This can be attested by the way he emphatically refutes all solipsistic view of the person. The identity of the person finds its development and its realization in the community. As we saw Taylor values the individuality and uniqueness of the human subject, but he is also aware that this subject does not live alone. Therefore, the two sides of the coin must be seen; the importance of the uniqueness of the subject that cannot be swallowed and forgotten in a mass of people, but also the role of the other in the development of one's own identity. Taylor's view of the person is holistic and, as we have said, challenges the modern individualistic conception brought by the cartesian view of a person as self-sufficient forgetting the role of the other as can be noted in the following:

La filosofía moderna, desde Descartes y Locke, ha propendido a entender la identidad personal de un modo atómico o autorreferencial, al margen de cualquier conexión significativa con lo otro. Pero debemos a Ch. Taylor haber subrayado cómo los marcos referenciales en que se autoexpresa la naturaleza humana son indiscernibles de la identidad subjetiva y moral de cada persona⁶⁶⁵.

Therefore, Taylor's concept of person must be seen in a broad sense and not in limited context. The person can only be understood within his context, that is, his geographical and social context, the people with whom he lives with, his cultural background and history, etc. All these elements contribute immensely to the formation of the identity of the human agent who is in our case the person. For Taylor, alterity plays an important role in understanding the person:

Para el autor canadiense la identidad inconfundible de cada sujeto no puede exponerse si no es dentro de las coordenadas espaciales, temporal-narrativas y públicas que la sitúan, con anterioridad a todo acto consciente y, por tanto, antes de sus tomas de posición. Al nivel más elemental, no hay otro modo de reconocer la identidad de alguien si no es por sus patronímicos y por el nombre que otros le han impuesto⁶⁶⁶.

Urbano Ferrer Santos in his book «*¿Qué significa ser persona?* » quoted before, reminds us of the «*marcos referenciales*»⁶⁶⁷ that in the first chapter we called them «*inescapable frameworks*». They are inescapable and referential because they touch on

⁶⁶⁵ Urbano Ferrer Santos, *¿Qué significa ser persona?* (Madrid: Edición Palabra, 2002), 81.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 82-93.

our responsibilities to others, the meaning and sense of life and the dignity of the person and thus provide a solid background for our moral life. In other words, they connect us to whom we are as moral agents who live with other moral agents who contribute to defining who we are. They become the basis of our moral responses in society because they care about the value of human life and our moral obligations to others. Taylor feels that while these moral frameworks are fundamental, they nevertheless seem less articulated in our society. They are in addition intrinsically connected to the good. The more we articulate these moral frameworks, the more we connect with the good.

The first moral framework to highlight here is that of public space and the role it plays in understanding the concept of the person. We discussed public space at length in the chapter on language, but it is worth talking more about its importance when it comes to the development of the person's identity. Taylor is convinced that the subject cannot realize himself in an isolated state. Solipsism cannot define our reality. The human subject is by nature involved in a web of relationships that greatly complement what he is not. Although each subject is different in certain respects, however, he needs others to challenge him to grow. These public spaces become places of dialogue. It can be remembered that dialogue is an aspect that defines Taylor's point of view of alterity. Public spaces thus become spaces for dialogue where different people, cultures, points of view, professions, etc., find the possibility of exchange. Here different interlocutors or participants meet each other with their own point of view. Therefore, public spaces become not only points of interaction, but also points of mutual understanding and growth for the community. No subject, culture, points of view, etc., can claim to be self-sufficient or the best. Public spaces become these frameworks for which different points of views challenge themselves to open up to different realities:

...para Taylor lo público es necesario para la configuración de lo privado. Pues, en vez de definirse lo privado aisladamente por unas elecciones inderivables, toma las autointerpretaciones con que cada sujeto define su identidad de una red significativa de interlocución, accesible públicamente a los distintos participantes. Así, el sujeto muestra su identidad a partir de lugares públicos comunes, como su país, su profesión, su generación..., biográficamente significativos en cada caso en función de los proyectos singulares. Por ello, la noción de sujeto autónomo y desvinculado, predominante en la

Filosofía moderna, se revela inadecuada para la conformación de la identidad personal pública⁶⁶⁸.

Taylor's vision of public space augurs well with what we saw in his political theory that focused on the importance of recognizing everyone in the community. As we said for the growth of authentic freedom in the community, there must be a recognition of the other subject not as a limitation to my freedom, but as the condition of possibility of true freedom and personal identity. Taylor laments the differences created by false political theories that ignore those aspects of our identities that we share and that should actually unite us. Therefore, the other complements my growth. We have to accept our differences and take them as a springboard for personal growth, as well as that of other members.

Another «*marco referencial*» as Ferrer reminds us, is the one of historical possibilities. We previously presented the historical and narrative nature of Taylor's view of the self. This explains why Taylor has been able to analyse the modern self in a very extensive way. The historical nature of the self is related to what we have said when talking about public space as an arena of interaction and self-interpretation. Taylor's self (in our case here, the person) is historical and narrative in nature, but this always happens in a pluralistic atmosphere. Therefore, our historical being as persons requires looking at reality in a pluralistic way. Taylor's self is surrounded by different historical situations and contexts, whether it is what has had in the past, the present, and what he expects in the future. It is important to accept this fact for our coexistence with different interpretations from different eras. This reminds us of the hermeneutic view of history so common in Taylor.

In our own words, these historical differences should not be seen as conflicting, but, on the contrary, should be seen as constructive and contributing to what should be an authentic human identity. They must challenge the individual and the community to grow up learning from the past and from different points of view from different understandings of history. Therefore, understanding the historicist view of the person as an important framework requires taking into consideration the plurality of different histories and interpretations:

Así, pues, tanto si nos situamos hacia delante como hacia atrás, ser histórico es estar enmarcado en una pluralidad de contornos, sin disponer de una medida unívoca por la

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 84-85.

que privilegiar alguno de entre ellos. Soy a la vez hispano, europeo, perteneciente a la era postindustrial, inscrito en una tradición occidental determinada... Desde aquí surge inevitable el pluralismo cultural cuando convertimos la historia en relato, según que ensayemos uno u otro punto de mira. También la pluralidad de paisajes, costumbres, tipos humanos... guarda alguna correspondencia con la historicidad constitutiva de los hombres, por cuanto desde el inicio abre ésta el paso a lo variable⁶⁶⁹.

Another obvious framework that any Taylor reader finds is that of language. Taylor's person is self-expressive. Through language the subject expresses what he is. Language becomes a means of articulating and manifesting what a person is. Therefore, anyone who studies any culture or the way of being of the other must take into account the issue of language. Language, according to Taylor, manifests personal identity. However, as we said, language must be understood and taken into a holistic view. Language is not a mere representation as the HLC model had presented it. Words in any language are not mere signs of representation as the Anglo-Saxon empiricists presented it. A word must be understood within its web of meaning; this means that the entire context must be taken into consideration to capture its meaning. Therefore, language as a means of expression for the human subject remains inexhaustible just as the subject in question remains an inexhaustible mystery:

...la expresión plural de la naturaleza del hombre en una diversidad de culturas tiene su correspondencia, a propósito de la lengua, en que la inagotabilidad de lo expresado lleva a su ramificación en los diversos modos de decir. Los autores representacionistas se imaginaron el lenguaje como una capacidad de operar con signos, de tal modo que aprender a usar el signo equivaliera a aprender a aplicarlo apropiadamente para conseguir algún propósito⁶⁷⁰.

Language as a framework, therefore, for Taylor carries a constitutive interpretation that, as we saw, is the vision of the HHH model that completely refuted the designative-instrumental vision of Descartes and his followers. Language is an activity that opens up man to the different points of view of different persons, cultures, etc. It becomes the means of communication for the person in the public space; not a mere instrument for exchanging information, but for dialogue.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., 90-91.

Another aspect that is closely related to what we have addressed is the question of culture⁶⁷¹. Culture also becomes part of the important moral framework for the understanding of the person. Taylor if we remember in his political theory of the recognition of the other, welcomes the subject of multiculturalism widely dealt with in his book: «*Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*». For Taylor the plurality of cultures is not a problem but a kind of treasure because each culture brings itself with its own wealth. The problem Taylor sees is the way some political theories have tried to ignore this aspect. The identity of the person grows and is created when there is a dialogue between different cultures, something that some political theorists have ignored. Again, it is in the context of different cultures that the articulation of the good is possible. To ignore the plurality of cultures would mean to ignore the different points of view of different people and the consequence of this is that the good that comes from these other cultures different from yours will not be articulated. We observe this in the following words:

La dirección hacia el bien no se efectúa en abstracto, sino dentro de las condiciones culturales concretas que proveen de un cauce definido a las realizaciones morales, no sólo porque hayan de poder contar con el reconocimiento próximo de aquéllos que participan de las mismas formas de vida comunitaria, sino también porque el bien es el horizonte cualitativo ineludible desde el que se despejan las diferencias culturales significativas. Cada tejido culturalmente particularizado de términos valorativos es lo que hace posible centrar en el bien las elecciones que ellos permiten⁶⁷².

We would like to conclude this brief historical vision of how the concept of person has been understood. This part has culminated in a brief recovery of Taylor's idea of the person with the aim of linking us with our personal position on the whole issue of alterity, which is our next task. Our position is guided by the conviction that alterity can only be adequately understood from the point of view of interpersonal encounter. In other words, interpersonality describes our relationships as a fact that cannot be ignored for a proper understanding of interpersonal coexistence. Our position of interpersonality is largely in line with Taylor's view of alterity, as can be seen throughout our research. Our personal position on alterity will be deeply informed by Pedro Laín's position on it and also by the African ethics of Ubuntu that we have examined at length in the previous chapter. At this

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁷² Ibid., 92.

juncture we want to begin by examining Laín's vision of interpersonal encounter followed by a brief synthesis of Ubuntu ethics on it.

10. INTERPERSONAL ENCOUNTER

10.1 Introduction

Our purpose here is to briefly highlight the dynamics of the personal encounter from the position of Laín in the second volume of his book *«Teoría y realidad del otro»*⁶⁷³. We will limit ourselves to the three relational elements that make up this encounter: object, person and neighbour. Laín starts from the parable of the Samaritan as a paradigmatic example of love for a neighbor: *«Entre todos los encuentros interhumanos, reales o imaginarios, ninguno más ejemplar e ilustre que el de un Samaritano y un hombre maltratado y herido cierto día en que aquel bajaba de Jerusalén a Jericó»*⁶⁷⁴. We remind ourselves of the version used by Laín (Lc. X, 25-27):

Luego un doctor en la Ley se presentó, y para ponerle en un aprieto le dijo: —Maestro, ¿qué haré para tener parte en la vida eterna? —. Él le dijo: — ¿Qué está escrito en la Ley? ¿Cómo lo entiendes? —. Él contestó: —Amarás al Señor tu Dios con todo tu corazón y con toda tu alma y con toda tu fuerza y con toda tu inteligencia, y a tu prójimo como a ti mismo—. Él le dijo: —Bien has contestado: haz eso y vivirás—. Pero él, queriendo justificarse, le dijo a Jesús: — ¿Y quién es mi prójimo? —. Jesús continuó: —Un hombre bajaba de Jerusalén a Jericó, y le salieron al paso unos ladrones que le despojaron y le molieron a golpes, dejándole medio muerto al marcharse. Por casualidad, un sacerdote bajaba por aquel camino, y al verle pasó al otro lado del camino. Igualmente, un levita que también pasaba por aquel lugar, al verle pasó al otro lado. Pero un samaritano que iba de viaje, se le acercó, y al verle sintió misericordia. Llegó a él, le vendó las heridas, bañándolas con aceite y vino, y subiéndole en su propia cabalgadura le llevó a la posada y se cuidó de él. Y al día siguiente sacó dos denarios y los dio al posadero, diciéndole: Cuida de este, y lo que gastes de más, yo te lo pagaré cuando vuelva. ¿Cuál de estos tres

⁶⁷³ Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Teoría y realidad del otro: Tomo II* (Madrid: Editorial Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1968), 15-402.

⁶⁷⁴ TRO2, 19.

se mostró prójimo con el que había caído en manos de los ladrones? —. Él dijo: —Aquel que practicó con él la compasión—. Jesús le dijo: —Ve, pues, y haz lo mismo⁶⁷⁵.

This parable is exemplary because in it we can list the essential assumptions in the interhuman encounter. The behaviour of the Samaritan shows us that the neighbour is not only the one who is close in terms of distance, but every man to whom good can be done. The Samaritan not only sees and observes the wounded man, as the priest and the Levite do, but discovers him as «*doliente y menesteroso*»⁶⁷⁶. He feels the need to approach the wounded person personally and thus begins the encounter. In addition to getting closer, he feels mercy for him. That is: «*...vive en todo su ser, en su alma y en su cuerpo, un sentimiento de solidaridad amorosa y conmovida; en este caso, de compasión...*»⁶⁷⁷. Mercy is realized by action when the Samaritan takes charge of helping the wounded man freely, without any coercion or condition. The first step for one to be a neighbour is the personal encounter, one has to meet the other. Let us analyse, therefore, what an encounter is and in what forms can be carried out.

10. 2. The Encounter with the Other

Many thinkers today agree that any teaching that does not promote interpersonal encounter cannot be beneficial to our world. Of course, there are also currents that identify themselves with individualism and solitude of human being, but in our opinion, this is a denial of what the human being is. On this matter Francisco Roger Garzón tells us precisely:

La filosofía del siglo XX principalmente Max Scheler, Martin Buber, Ortega y Gasset, han demostrado la imposibilidad de la existencia de un 'yo' cerrado. El solipsismo es un imposible metafísico, porque toda conciencia es 'conciencia de' y está referida necesariamente a otras realidades ya sean cosas u hombres. Ya decía Martin Buber que: Toda vida verdadera es encuentro, y el poeta Jorge Guillen escribía el certero y profundo verso: 'Yo soy porque tú eres', con la cual el hombre no podrá lograr su realización plena como persona, si no se encuentra y relaciona auténticamente con sus semejantes⁶⁷⁸.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 172.

This passage is an affirmation of the dialogical philosophy, which places emphasis on the idea that the human being is a being in relation and, therefore, the encounter constitutes the central nucleus of its anthropological constitution. There is no denying that the interpersonal relationship is an obvious fact and something that accompanies us daily; it is an undeniable fact. The difficulty of the encounter perhaps begins from the etymological definition of it, in which its root: «*in contra*», it leads us towards a very hostile and conflictive image. «*In contra*» would mean crushing/running into the other in a more or less hostile way⁶⁷⁹. Laín does not agree with this conception. He considers that it is a false perception of the encounter because it emphasizes only the act of colliding with another, which implies the consideration of the other as an object. Therefore, there is the need to critically and broadly analyse the different forms of encounter. These are born from the very fact of treating the other in a certain way, that is, the treatment given to the other will determine the form of the encounter. In this sense we can treat the other as an object, person or even as a neighbour. Beyond this, there is also the supreme or exemplary form of the encounter: encounter with God. In this analysis it is significant that the concept of love be «*conditio sine qua non*» so that an authentic encounter matures. Of course, indifference and hatred can characterize our way of relationship. However, love characterizes what the true human being should be and is the ultimate goal for the human person as Roger Garzón observes with the words of Joyce Brothers observes:

El amor es la más poderosa herramienta psicológica y una herramienta maravillosa. Extrae lo mejor de nosotros mismos, y puede ser la forma suprema de poder. El amor es manipulación invertida. No pensamos en lo que queremos, sino en lo que quiere la otra persona, en cómo ayudarla a encontrar lo que quiere. Hay en esto una grandeza que no existe ni siquiera en la mayor concentración de poder político, financiero o de cualquier otro orden mundano. Es el poder de la realización humana. El amor comienza donde termina la manipulación; está presente cuando uno se atreve a revelarse por entero. Cuando uno se atreve a ser vulnerable. Este es el gran secreto del amor: permitirse ser vulnerable. Es también el salto más valiente a lo desconocido que el espíritu puede dar. Pero, para ganar y mantener el amor, es preciso atreverse a exponer el ser interior ante la persona amada. Exige valor confiarse a otro⁶⁸⁰.

⁶⁷⁹ Martin Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento del Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 250.

⁶⁸⁰ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 173-174.

The main question then would be: What is love? How could we really define it? Many thinkers accept that it is absolutely impossible to define love. Defining love would mean that it ceases to be what it is, some will say. Sigmund Freud would say that: «*sabemos muy poco acerca del amor*» y añadía: «*No he encontrado valor para formular afirmaciones generales acerca de la esencia del amor. Nuestros conocimientos son insuficientes*»⁶⁸¹. However, considering the difficulty and mysteries nature of love one thing is clear: loving is a fundamental human activity, and the world would not exist without love. The important thing, therefore, is not to define it, but to live this invincible dimension. Laín presents us with three possible forms of interpersonal love: distant love, instant love, and constant love. You can also find these three forms regarding the issue of hatred, being able to speak of distant hatred, instant hatred and constant hatred, but we leave this reflection for now. In the following pages we will expose the three modes of interpersonal love. According to Laín they are the foundation of the three typical modes of interhuman encounter: The other may be an object for me (relación de objetividad); can also be a person (relación de personidad); or, from my response to him, the other may be a neighbor (relación de proximidad).

10.2.1. The Other as an Object

The other for me can be seen as an object: it all depends on the type of response that is given in a relationship. This does not mean that the person changes to an object himself, but that the type of treatment we give him qualifies him as an object. What is at stake in each relationship is the freedom of each in choosing what kind of response to give. In reality, the other is always a person and should be treated as such, but our freedom to give the response we want can change everything. So how does the decision scheme proceed in this type of relationship?

En ti y por ti, tú eres una persona; pero siendo tú persona —pudiendo y debiendo yo, por tanto, verte y tratarte como a tal persona—, yo decido con mi respuesta a tu presencia que tú seas para mí mero objeto, algo puesto ante mí o lanzado hacia mí —obiectum— en el camino de mi vida⁶⁸².

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., 176.

⁶⁸² TRO, Tomo II, 232.

Now, it is clear that this responsive mode can be defined as a relationship of treating the other as a mere object. We can mention some descriptive notes⁶⁸³, that characterize the other insofar as he is for me an object, following Laín. The appearance of the other will be seen as a containable reality (abarcabilidad). That is, the person will be reduced to a series of data, such as, for example, has such intelligence, such height, such appearance etc. And closely related to this description, is that of «*acabamiento*» which we can translate as a finished reality for the sake of understanding it. A finished reality indicates that the relationship is closed to any kind of novelty: everything is done, and the future would be the result of what we have now, and only what we are experiencing. As we can read in the following:

...el futuro del otro será para mí un despliegue de lo que en potencia él está siendo ahora. Lo cual vale tanto como decir que el otro, en principio, no podrá mostrar nada cualitativa y verdaderamente nuevo, nada 'original': se limitará a patentizar lo que ya era⁶⁸⁴.

A finished conception of the human being denies his possibility of growth and, also, contradicts his essentiality as a being that is becoming in openness to novelty. Moreover, if we treat the other as an object, their reality will be conceived as countable (numerability). It is a numerable and additive reality as Laín puts it in which the word of Exodus 33⁶⁸⁵: «*I have known you by name*», it's worthless. By himself, the person cannot be countable but nameable, a nomination that must respect and welcome his creative dimension. The other seen as an object is a quantifiable reality (quantification) that is, he is a comparable reality and, therefore, quantifiable. On the contrary, «*En un mundo de personas, los valores personales surgen como realidades cualitativamente incomparables*»⁶⁸⁶. In this relationship there is also a distance between the participants. The other for me will be seen as an external and distant reality. This distance by indifference, in which the other is regarded as anything in the world. In short, the relationship with the other as an object removes all the descriptive notes of the human being as a person, notes that we will analyse in detail later.

There is no doubt the relation with the other as an object cannot be qualified in any way whatsoever as a loving relationship. From this relationship are born conflictive

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 232-235.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 233.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., 234.

forms where the other appears for me as an obstacle, as an instrument, in short, as Laín says, like «*nadie*» (nobody). The other conceived as an obstacle will be seen purely according to the descriptive notes mentioned before. But what is the danger of seeing the other as an object?

Lo grave comienza cuando yo no quiero limitarme a considerar al otro como obstáculo y paso a tratarle como a tal; esto es, cuando siento su realidad como estorbo y trato de eliminarle de mi camino⁶⁸⁷.

In order, to prevent the other from hindering me, I can decide to physically suppress him (physical murder) so that my path is cleared, paved. I can also refuse to respect his freedom as a human person (personal murder) or avoid him completely (mere avoidance) by deviating from his path as the priest and Levite did in the parable of Samaritan. In this case the other is reduced to nobody:

La evitación del otro, digo, es la forma más tenue y solapada de su anonadamiento. Evitando el encuentro con el herido de la parábola del Samaritano, el sacerdote y el levita tratan de que ese hombre no sea en sus vidas respectivas. Procurarán olvidarlo, y si alguien les pregunta si en el camino de Jerusalén a Jericó han visto a un hombre herido, lo más probable es que respondan así: ‘No, no me he encontrado con nadie’⁶⁸⁸.

The other as an object can be a mere instrument for my service. That is, I use him or enslave him, turning him into an instrument at the service of my needs. The other in this case is at my disposal; he is my possession. It is the relationship between lordship and servant that we already reviewed in our first chapter. Here the freedom of the human being is never valued, but the priority is service. Finally, another conflicting form that arises from the treating the other as an object is that of seeing him as a nobody. Now it is no longer an avoidance, but the consideration of the other as nobody in its most radical sense. To conceive of the other as nobody means to reduce him to an object available for my use; thus, only my life counts, and I actually live alone. The author's words clearly describe this conception:

Pero ahora me estoy refiriendo a algo más grave: a la conducta de los hombres para quienes en principio no hay en el mundo ‘nadie’. Tratan estos en su vida, claro está, con individuos humanos, y no vacilan en llamarles ‘hombres’, como en torno a ellos es general costumbre. Es tan arraigado y fuerte, sin embargo, su hábito de tratar

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 238.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 239.

objetivamente al otro, que jamás entablan con este una relación estrictamente personal. Viven, pues, en un mundo de puros objetos, genérica y funcionalmente ordenados en cosas, plantas, animales y unos seres humanos que no pasan de ser obstáculo, instrumento o espectáculo. Un cartesiano doctrinariamente puro, un sujeto que ante los bultos que pasan bajo su ventana tenga que decidir reflexivamente si son muñecos u hombres, es un ente para quien en el mundo no hay personas, no hay 'nadie'. Y si ese ente humano es un pensador, su doctrina será el solipsismo⁶⁸⁹.

Let us conclude this part by saying that turning the other into an object, as Lain proposes, implies «*some violence*», because as we know a human being in his nature is a person and should be treated as such. Therefore, it is necessary that we make a reflection on the characteristics of personal encounter.

10.2.2. The Other as a Person

We begin our reflection on the other as a person by showing the decision outline in the other as a person in relation: «*En mi relación contigo, yo quiero que tú seas para mí lo que en ti y por ti eres; quiero que me seas persona*»⁶⁹⁰. The other in a true interhuman relationship must be a person because it is his intimate being. In a relationship with the other it is very important to maintain the difference between personality and personhood. It is a distinction without which the true meaning of being person cannot be understood: «*La personalidad es algo que se adquiere y a que se llega, es un proceso; la personeidad es algo de que se parte. La personalidad se tiene; la personeidad se es, desde el instante mismo de la concepción*»⁶⁹¹. That is, while we have the personhood from birth, the personality is an on-going life process, something unfinished and that needs opening up. Now, we have previously listed the descriptive notes of how the other appears in an object view of relation; now we shall analyse, in contrast to the «*descriptive notes*»⁶⁹² that describe the other when taken as a person for me. The unfinished nature of the person forbids us to conceive of the other as a set of containable characters or properties; that is, the other cannot be described as one more thing among the things of the world. The «*inacabamiento*» which we have translated as the unfinished nature of the

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 245.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 267.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 270.

⁶⁹² Ibid., 271-273.

person, thus describes the human person. The reality of the human being is endless. He is not a being that has in its potency what awaits him to be; he is a being «*who is*», but «*Not yet*»; his future is not determined but open to many possibilities. He is, therefore:

...una realidad siempre inacabada, siempre creadora y originalmente proyectada hacia el futuro. Ir siendo no es en ella un despliegue de potencias, algo por lo cual un ente llega a ser explícitamente lo que implícitamente ya era; en la medida en que el hombre puede ‘crear’, el ir siendo de la persona es una creación de posibilidades. Como dice Zubiri, lo propio de la persona humana es ‘hacer un poder’, llegar a poder lo que antes no podía⁶⁹³.

To emphasize the endless reality of man, we are using the term that describes man as «*creado creador*» (created creator) by Adolphe Gesché. This author insists that God has created man with the ability to participate in ongoing creation as «*co-creador*». This possibility is a gift that God gives to man, thus basing his freedom. So, man being a created creator carries with himself the creative responsibility of things, but also of creating himself, because God has not created him as a finished being. Gesché writes:

La libertad creadora de Dios incluso llega a confiarnos a nosotros mismos en nuestras manos. Tal es, sin duda, el secreto fundamental de la ética cristiana, ética cuyo sentido es metafísico y no simplemente moral... En este sentido radical y profundo, por consiguiente ontológico, se debe decir que el hombre es un ser moral. Su libertad no se ejerce solamente en el universo externo y en la construcción de las cosas, sino también en su propio ser personal. Lo cual jamás ha significado que pueda hacer lo que le venga en gana, porque libertad no quiere decir libertinaje. Y porque la palabra libertad está aquí asociada a la palabra creación. Un creador no hace cualquier cosa. En el fondo, en la palabra creación se contiene más que en la sola palabra libertad. Aquí la palabra libertad quiere decir verdaderamente lo que quiere decir: responsabilidad creadora, coraje de inventar lo mejor, confianza de poder realizarse en el seno de un proyecto generoso. Repitémoslo: el hombre no ha de tener miedo a ese poder de libertad creadora: le ha sido dada. Su libertad es una libertad esencial, no una libertad accidental o de casualidad... Dios ha creado al hombre lo menos posible (Blanc de Saint-Boinnet). El hombre ha sido creado autónomo, no autómatas. Y esta autonomía le viene de Dios⁶⁹⁴.

If a person's metaphysical reality is endless/unfinished, it cannot be counted either. The «*innumerabilidad*» of the person implies that his being is unique, creative, free and escapes any kind of quantification. Non-probability also characterizes the relation of the

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 272.

⁶⁹⁴ Adolphe Gesché, *El hombre* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2010), 90-91.

other as a person too. The other cannot be something probable but an immediate presence that characterizes my experience in the world where it is experienced that there is the other. In the end, if I treat the other as a person, we cannot speak of indifference. My encounter with another person affects me and cannot leave me indifferent:

Una persona no me es, no puede serme indiferente. Tan pronto como me abro a ella, su existencia me llega al corazón; tan pronto como la he tratado como a tal persona, su pérdida —tenga en la ruptura o en la muerte su causa— es para mí literalmente irreparable. El encuentro con una persona, por lo tanto, no puede no ser afectante⁶⁹⁵.

In short, in a relationship that respects the other as a person, indifference has no place. The other, as Levinas proposes, calls for my responsibility and in our case needs a positive response where I look at him as a «*Thou*» and never like an «*It*».

10.3. Executive Dimension in the Personal Relationship

For the other to be what he should be, that is, a person, the relationship should be characterized by a participation in what really constitutes the personal life of the other. What characterizes the being of the other is their personal intimacy; an intimacy as we have seen which is free and creative. This is the dimension of the «*executive self*». Here it is worth remembering Ortega's dictum in the previous chapter: «*I am I and my circumstance*» to say that the executive self, and, in our case, the personal intimate self is realized in its vital project through its execution. Participating in the intimacy of the other means that I must co-execute in their actions that build their personal lives; that is, in other words, that I participate in their vital projects. Let's re-read Lain:

...para que yo conviva personalmente con el otro, para que yo participe en su vida personal, será necesario que en la intimidad de mi propia persona yo co-ejecute las acciones que su yo íntimo ejecuta en el momento de nuestro encuentro; esas acciones en que, como diría Zubiri, el hombre va realizando su personidad y constituyendo su personalidad. Muy claramente supo verlo Scheler: la convivencia personal es fundamentalmente «*co-ejecución*», ...El otro no es ahora para mí obstáculo, ni instrumento, ni espectáculo, ni objeto transformable, sino persona; mi relación con él no consiste en contemplación o en manejo, sino en coejecución⁶⁹⁶.

⁶⁹⁵TRO2, 273.

⁶⁹⁶Ibid., 274.

For an experience to be co-executive, it is necessary to distinguish, according to Lain, three cardinal moments⁶⁹⁷ that characterize the personal relationship: one is co-executive, another is compassionate, and the other is cognitive. To explain the co-executive moments (cooperative and active moment) we need to ask ourselves, how can one participate in the pain of the other who has lost a loved one? We know that it is humanly impossible for one to physically participate in the pain of the other, however that moment of sadness can be lived with the other morally. That is:

Viendo y oyendo el dolor de mi amigo —viviendo en mí la intención de sus expresiones, — yo «ejecuto» o «hago» en mí los actos espirituales de su dolor... yo los realizo en mi alma; esto es: yo hago mi vida viviendo realmente que la pérdida que mi amigo sufre es también pérdida para mí, y precisamente porque es suya; como él, y por la misma razón que él, yo ejecuto manca y penosamente mi propia vida⁶⁹⁸.

So, the co-executive moment makes me share what the other lives making their situation mine as well. And so, along with the cooperative moment, the compassionate moment (co-affective moment) appears. The fact of feeling the suffering of the other implies the action of compassion on the part of the one who co-executes the pain. The compassionate moment implies this psychic feeling in which, as Lain says, I suffer, that is, I suffer with the other his pain; their pain is our pain: shared pain. The first two moments are conscious and in fact involve the third moment (cognitive moment) in which I know the vital and existential situation that characterizes the other, that is, I take charge of the situation of the other:

...la virtualidad propia de mi acción coejecutivo-compasiva me hace a esta consciente: yo vivo tal acción sintiéndome en determinada situación vital...como determinación básica de la existencia⁶⁹⁹.

The co-executive interpersonal relationship involves co-executing love or instant love, a term we will explain later. In short, co-execution love implies what we have already mentioned: it is the fact of being-in it, at the very root of the other's life; in the bosom of their intimacy⁷⁰⁰. To penetrate the intimacy of the other, interpersonal communication and mutual exchange are pertinent. This implies having a certain

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 275-277.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 275-276.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 277.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 293.

availability and openness for each one to penetrate the intimacy of the other. In this sense the other becomes a Thou for me and I then become a Thou for him. This explains the process of understanding in co-executing love:

Para que yo comprenda psicológicamente al otro y él me comprenda a mí, es necesario que yo penetre en su intimidad y que él penetre en la mía, y este doble acto de penetración no sería posible sin una mutua apertura de nuestras almas. Como Gabriel Marcel nos ha enseñado a decir, él no sería tú para mí y yo no sería tú para él, si ambos no estuviésemos en recíproca disponibilidad⁷⁰¹.

10.4. The Other as a Neighbour

We have seen how the other in the interpersonal relationship is for me and it must be so because this is what personhood implies. We have also briefly analysed what is co-execution love, however, as we hinted at above, true friendship culminates when the other not only happens to be my friend, but as also as a neighbour.: *«Para que mi amigo real y verdaderamente me acompañe, es preciso que, además de ser mi amigo, sea mi ‘prójimo’»*⁷⁰². The example cited before of the Samaritan will help us here to understand what characterizes the love of *«proximidad»* (love for your neighbour). While love of friend may be limited to a certain man, love of neighbour can be to any needy man who presents himself as a person in my path. Now, how does the loving action of the Samaritan towards the wounded man begin? The first step, as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is the conviction to believe in what is presented to me in my present; that is, it is about acquiring the awareness of having in front of me a suffering and needy human being, who needs an immediate response of help. So, to believe and consider real the needy situation in my presence is a *«conditio sine qua non»* in the relationship of *«proximidad»*:

‘Creyéndole’: tal es la palabra clave. Viendo heridas corporales o escuchando palabras de súplica, el misericordioso comienza efectivamente a serlo creyendo en la menesterosidad del hombre con que se encuentra, considerando real esa menesterosidad...Sin creer de veras en la realidad del menester del otro —un menester

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 295.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 312.

cuyo mínimo grado es el simple deseo de compañía—, nunca podré yo hacerme su prójimo, y nunca él llegará a ser ‘prójimo’ mío⁷⁰³.

The belief in the need of the other who suffers arouses in me when I see him a need to offer remedy to the situation; this provocation will be transformed into a work of love. The co-execution of love (friendship) and love of «*proximidad*» are inseparable; they are complementary for love to mature. Now, we complete the analysis of love for our neighbour by exposing the terms: distant love, instant love and constant love, which Laín presents to differentiate the three main forms of interpersonal relationship. The following passage introduces us to these terms:

Cuando el otro me es objeto, la principal forma directiva de mi relación con él...es el amor de contemplación o distante. Cuando el otro es para mí persona, mi primaria vinculación con él es el amor de coejecución o instante. Cuando para el otro yo soy a la vez amigo y prójimo, ¿cuál será el vínculo amoroso que con él me una?⁷⁰⁴.

We already know the answer to the question at the end of the passage cited. This kind of loving bond is what Laín calls «*co-fusion*» or constant love. The explanation of this will be seen below.

10.5. Distant Love

Another equivalent term is love from a distance. We have examined the characteristics of this love when we addressed the relationship with the other as an object. Briefly, distant love, as Laín claims, occurs when someone is admired like an object. That is, in this type of relationship the other is practically reduced to an object. The human being is treated like anything else in the world and, therefore, subjected to all kinds of manipulation. We know that the human being is much more than a thing; his volitional dimension elevates him to a personal reality worthy of respect and freedom. To properly substantiate a true interpersonal relationship, any instrumentalizing description of the human being must be avoided, because his nature is not of an object:

Aunque en sentido estricto, en si por sí misma, la persona no es y no puede ser objeto, sí que puede ser tratada como tal. Yo puedo decidir con mi respuesta a tu presencia que seas para mi mero objeto. La intención objetivadora hace del otro un ser abarcable, acabado,

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 316.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 318-319.

patente, numerable, cuantificable, analizadas ya por Scheler o Buber, quedan bien expresadas diciendo que, el otro es siempre él y nunca tú para quien con su respuesta le objetiva⁷⁰⁵.

As we shall see later, the human being is never a finished being. His projective dimension differentiates him from the other things in the world. Treating others as objects would result in a violation of the very nature of the person. It is a lack of recognition of their expressive reality and personal, free and creative intimacy.

10.6. Instant Love

Instant love is another level of qualification. It is the level of person already mentioned earlier in this chapter. We remember that at the level of person it is not proper to objectify or make a reification of human being. Pedro Laín affirms:

La persona no puede ser reducida a objeto, no es objetivable, por la razón potísima de no ser un objeto: es un centro de actos, de los cuales el más esencial es ir siendo, haciéndose a sí misma. Por lo tanto, el amor a una persona no puede ser nunca una admiración contemplativa, sino un penetrar activo dentro de ella, y no admirando el valor de lo ya realizado, sino coejecutando con ella actos valiosos: estando activamente dentro de ella, in-estándola⁷⁰⁶.

Here we need to go beyond seeing a being only as a thing, because it is about being in company, where coexistence with others will be characterized by active penetration. The other at this level cannot be an obstacle or instrument; he will be seen as a Thou, and never as It. The reality of the other will be conceived as unrepeatable and unique in its way towards its future realization. We are talking about a relationship between two realities where each one is a being for the other and the relationship is intimate and at the same time free without any hint of manipulation:

Las notas principales con que el otro-persona se presenta son diametralmente opuestas a las del otro-objeto, pues la persona es inabarcable, una realidad inacabada, creadora, proyectada hacia el futuro, inaccesible, una realidad única, innumerable, no cuantificable, no menos ni más que otro, que no se revela en la exterioridad y de la que tengo

⁷⁰⁵ Martin Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento del Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 269.

⁷⁰⁶ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 178.

certidumbre inmediata y firme. Pero lo que, sobre todo, una persona no puede serme es algo indiferente. Su pérdida sería irreparable. Cuando me abro a ella su pena me llega al corazón. Para quien trata al otro como persona, el otro es siempre ‘tú’ y nunca ‘él’, a diferencia de quien como objeto le responde. La relación interpersonal solo es posible desde la igualdad constitutiva como personas... El otro no es ahora para mi obstáculo, sino persona; mi relación con él no consiste en contemplación o en manejo, sino en coejecución»⁷⁰⁷.

At this juncture, there is need to recuperate the important moments where persons integrate and interpenetrate: one co-executive, one co-affective and one cognitive⁷⁰⁸. Co-execution is possible if when relating to another I co-execute in his acts: it is then a co-execution of my activity with him in a co-affective coexistence. It is a moment where I am involved in each other's actions sharing their moments of joy, pain, sadness and happiness. And through this compassionate and interpersonal relationship I come to know (cognitive moment) the other; however, there is something that always escapes me from the other. In this sense Laín will say that knowing the other is not mere possession, nor mere contemplation. In mere contemplation you love a «*what*» and not a «*who*»⁷⁰⁹.

10.7. Constant Love

We can apply other terms to name this kind of love as Laín himself does: believing love, concrete love, personal love, and co-fusion love. It is a personal love because it avoids all confusions you may have with sympathy, compassion or also piety. Of course, these characteristics can accompany it, but without confusing it. It is an authentic love that respects not only the freedom of the person and his autonomy but also reveals his intimacy. With the words of Max Scheler: «*Es precisamente en el amor más profundo y perfecto cuando exclusivamente se os revelan los límites de la persona absolutamente íntima*»⁷¹⁰. It consists of a loving and believing belief in the sense that it guides us to discover an authentic and common destiny as human beings. Manuel Camarasa as cited

⁷⁰⁷ Martín Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento del Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 272.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 272

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁷¹⁰ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 181.

by Francisco Roger Garzón in the following passage, in addition to what is already said, expresses why Laín uses the term constant love:

Se llama amor constante, porque da constancia auténtica de sí, es expansión o éxtasis de la perfección personal, que ya se es. Es amor constante para quien lo ejecuta, porque le consta, le es patente; y es creyente para quien lo recibe, ya que solo con la creencia, el hombre puede ponerse en contacto con la realidad compresente del otro⁷¹¹.

Here, too, Laín warns us about the use of the adjective «*constant*»:

Constante no en el sentido de permanente y perdurable, porque de hecho puede extinguirse, sino en el sentido etimológico y primario de la palabra: constar, con-stare, significa ser cierta y manifiesta una cosa; el constar del que dice eso me consta⁷¹².

It is a «*concreyente*» love with the term that uses Laín because it consists of self-donation; that is, it does not remain at the level of just knowing, but is a loving donation of oneself to the other:

Mas para que el amor entre dos personas sea en este sentido constante, es preciso que sea concreyente, que esté basado en un mutuo creerse. Porque creo en la verdad subjetiva de lo que otro me dice y hace, porque estoy íntimamente seguro de que verdaderamente siente dentro de sí lo que para mí hace y dice, me consta su amor⁷¹³.

Laín insists on distinguishing between two forms of loving donation but at the same time complementary: the love of «*proximidad*» (love for the neighbour) and the friendship love. While in the first «*se ama a cualquier persona, a toda persona, sin saber quién es, solo por ser persona y padecer necesidad, en el segundo se ama una persona concreta por ser la persona que él es*»⁷¹⁴. Laín's starting point on the relationship of love for the neighbour, we said is biblical; man has a likeness of God. Therefore, its use is as mentioned in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We have already said that in constant love there is the tendency of self-donation and surrender to the other; in other words, we can say each participates intimately in the circumstances of the other:

Dándose uno a otro algo de lo tienen por más suyo o de lo que personal e íntimamente son. 'Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia', dice la tan repetida frase auroral de Ortega. Frase a

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 171.

⁷¹² Ibid., 181.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 181-182.

la cual cabe dar esta otra expresión: ‘Yo soy yo y lo mío’, entendiendo por ‘lo mío’ todo lo que de mi circunstancia yo he hecho auténtica e íntima parte personal de mi yo⁷¹⁵.

10.8. The Prepositional Structure of Constant Love

Constant love is also characterized by a prepositional structure and here the author uses three prepositions: «en», «hacia» y «para». He states emphatically that: «La preposición es, gramatical y filosóficamente hablado, el término que expresa la relación de un ente o de un estado con lo que uno y otro no son...»⁷¹⁶. The «en» of constant love is explained in two ways: «en de implantación» and «en de instalación». The «en de implantación» implies that human existence is implanted in reality and also through its beliefs. Beliefs are generic when they are shared by all; typical beliefs only affect one group; and, finally, personal beliefs refer to persons in so far as they coincide in their life and reality⁷¹⁷. The «en de implantación» it implies that every human being is in his reality through his situation of belief. However, the human being, even if he has own beliefs (generic, typical, personal), coexists with others. My beliefs and yours have something in common (areas of coincidence) that make interpersonal relationship possible. If this were not the case, man would end up in radical solitude:

Otro es el caso de la relación interpersonal amorosa y constante. En ella, mi ‘en’ y el ‘en’ del otro tienen zonas de coincidencia, no solo de carácter genérico y típico, también de carácter estricta y genuinamente personal. La concreencia afecta ahora a nuestras personas en cuanto tales; y este personalísimo concreer o creer en común es justamente lo que nos permite creernos, creer el uno en el otro. La concreencia personal es el fundamento de la creencia mutua⁷¹⁸.

The «en de instalación» implies that there is a «en temporal» and a «en espacial», because the human being is installed in a temporal and spatial reality. Constant love in terms of «en» of spatiality is characterized by its unconditionality, unlimitedness, incessant fullness and welcome, in other words:

La incondicionalidad se da en el amor constante porque el espacio del otro es incondicionado, no es excluyente, en el amor mi espacio y tu espacio constituyen

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 182.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 183.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ TRO2, 322.

nuestro espacio. Cualquier lugar será adecuado para los amantes... Los que se aman, en todas partes y en ninguna tienen su casa⁷¹⁹.

Now, after exposing the «*en*» of constant love, it is necessary to continue the inquiry in order to understand the meaning of the «*hacia*» in human life. The «*futurición*» or the (towards future), constitutes a natural and very important dimension for the human being. It is unthinkable that man should live as a mere thing that does not ask about the future. The «*hacia algo*» (towards something) of a man it is also built within the realm of freedom and, therefore, each man can have a different goal from the others. Here it is worth reading carefully the following words:

El existir humano – en el fondo, todo existir concreto- tiene una ‘*hacia*’, se mueve hacia algo, hacia una meta. Pues bien: la meta de la coexistencia plenamente amorosa no es meramente proyectiva (no es tan solo el cumplimiento de un determinado proyecto, aunque dentro de ella se inscriba la proyección: dos enamorados pueden proyectar muy diversas cosas; por ejemplo, comprar la casa en que van a vivir); esa meta es, además de proyectiva, elpídica, tocante a la esperanza: dando fundamento a sus proyectos, los amantes esperan seguir existiendo en la felicidad; esperar por consiguiente, *todo*⁷²⁰.

The variation of ends of each man does not eliminate the possibility of an encounter, since as social beings we have very common things. That is, each one has his projection towards the future, but in terms of constant love, I in my project, I am implicated also in your project. So, we can speak of two dimensions: an objective dimension where I in future projection is involved in yours in the form of mere sharing; and a personal dimension where «*mi fruición implica la suya y su fruición implica la mía*»⁷²¹. All this would involve an infinite task and, therefore, a constant effort, because living together is not something easy. This is the characteristic of love; we already know that loving does not mean possession or domination, nor would it mean looking in the same direction. In the language of Laín as we have observed, love implies surrender and donation where one is involved in the project of the other. In this sense we can speak of a human existence where there are projects and where one feels truly responsible for the fruition of the project of the other.

⁷¹⁹ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 185.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

Another aspect that constitutes the towards-something of man's doing is hope; so, we can talk about the «*hacia elpídico o esperanzado*». Unlike mere things, objects in the world, man is defined by a peculiar desire to be more. That is to say, that I in my reality today support myself on a transcendent reality and I hope to continue being towards my fruition and fulfillment. Thus, this hopeful looking towards the future has different goals:

El hacia elpidico tiene varias metas: una, conseguir la autorrealización personal que incluye lograr objetivos concretos; otra que atañe a los amantes en su búsqueda y posesión compartida del bien, la verdad y a la belleza particulares, y una última meta lograr la plena proximidad en el Sumo Bien, que supone una perfecta relación personal con el otro⁷²².

In other words, the same argument on common projection can also be applied here when talking about hope. We can talk of «*coesperanza interpersonal*» where in a loving relationship a common goal is formed because the fact of living with others implies that my life is surrounded by the life of the other and vice versa, this is the ethical foundation of the encounter.

The last aspect to be discussed here is the «*para*» of constant love. Here too there are different relationships that identify this dative character of the human being, as it is called by Laín. We list three dimensions⁷²³. The first group is of relationships that tend to objectify the person and where the importance of the person of the other is not given but only concentrates on the benefits of a project, that is, the other is an object for me. The second group is of the relationships of «*promijidad*» where the other person is valued by giving him something which is proper, such as, for example, time, etc. But finally, there is also the «*para*» of the relationships of constant love, where one gives another something of himself and this says Laín, builds the most sublime act of love. Thus, to be for another would truly be a loving gift and a constant aspiration until reaching full «*proximidad*». To reach this it is important to cultivate confidence in interpersonal relationship.

10.9. Balance

Our support for an interpersonal encounter in this section is interpreted by Laín in trying to understand the problem of alterity is of great importance for our research, above all, as we said, it enriches the whole idea of Charles Taylor, the author with whom we are

⁷²² Ibid., 188.

⁷²³ Ibid., 189.

dialoguing. In our first chapter we also used Laín's ideas to outline the historical view of how otherness has been interpreted. As we saw, there are many similarities in the way Laín introduces such a history and the way Taylor understands it. Laín realizes the problem of the other, as a challenge facing human coexistence (that is, relationship between persons) and with great philosophical energy runs through the history of the problem to this day. His objective is that the human being can establish relationships of authenticity with the other, avoiding their possible deviations:

... lo que busca Pedro Laín es saber, cuando se da una auténtica comunicación interpersonal, una comunicación verdadera entre personas. Ha diferenciado una comunicación superficial, fría y objetiva, de una verdadera y auténtica comunicación interpersonal. Señala como ejemplo de comunicación superficial, rutinaria, fría, no afectante el saludo en la calle de dos conocidos. Hay en ello, un mutuo entendimiento, sentido objetivo, comprensión lógica, del mensaje y un mundo común, pero no hay una verdadera comunicación con la realidad de la persona del otro⁷²⁴.

So, the relationship between humans cannot exist without interpersonal communication. Communication involves several things according to the dictionary: «*descubrir, manifestar, consultar, referir, examinar, hacer a otro participar de lo uno tiene*»⁷²⁵, etc., however, what interests us here, as Laín will show, is to try to reach a true interpersonal communication, taking into account the reality of the other and without falling into any type of reductionism. Communication or expressiveness, therefore, constitutes a fundamental dimension of the human being that reveals the most proper thing of his intimacy, until he can say that I am because I can express myself in the interpersonal relationship. In other words, the manifestation of this expressive dimension, especially through language, is therefore accompanied by a strong ethical requirement:

El lenguaje es, por tanto, una de las manifestaciones humanas que revelan con más claridad la estructura dialogal e interpersonal de la existencia. La palabra procede de un sujeto personal y va dirigida a otro sujeto personal. Es siempre uno el que interpela a otro llamándole por su nombre, dirigiéndose a un tú, de ahí su dimensión ética⁷²⁶.

And it can never be forgotten that the other appears before the other human being as a Mystery that demands respect, that is, impossibility of dominion, of possession.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 168-169.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., 168.

⁷²⁶ Martín Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento del Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 256.

Therefore: In the interpersonal relationship, «*la vida personal del otro se me escapa, y mi vida personal se escapa al otro*»⁷²⁷.

The very title of the book says a lot about the method followed by Laín: it analyses the theories proposed by various authors about the relational character of man in history and his reality as the application in real life. Martín Hidalgo Serrano comments on this matter:

Laín es consciente de que la mejor manera de entender que es el hombre es subrayando su carácter relacional, analizando el modo como su persona se constituye en el mismo acto de abrirse y darse a las demás personas, más que desvinculándose de los otros. Para adquirir conciencia de uno mismo, para poder comprendernos a nosotros mismos es necesario relacionarnos con el otro. Se trata, por tanto, de analizar la relación con el otro desde la teoría y desde la realidad; desde la teoría porque tendrá en cuenta lo que otros pensadores han dicho acerca de este tema, no solo para dejarles hablar, también para asumir aquello de lo que mejor hablaron; desde la realidad porque expondrá lo que descriptivamente es el trato y el encuentro con los demás⁷²⁸.

Lain's proposal of the encounter with the other is a call to ethical responsibility for the other. Today more than ever the world needs this ethics so that every human being can be considered as a person and neighbour without restriction. Lain's argument regarding the human person is very optimistic and in fact rejects theories that describe the human being as governed by hatred and loneliness. He is aware that they are present in the human path, but what can and should characterize this walk is love. Love characterizes human life, and this should be our strength and hope for the future:

En varios sitios ha expuesto las claves para interpretar su teoría. La desesperación angustiada y la soledad por incomunicación son frecuentes en el mundo y ambas situaciones no son los más propios de nuestra existencia. Si bien es verdad que el odio y el resentimiento, el desacuerdo o la incompreensión, las diferencias o el conflicto nos acompañan en nuestro vivir diario, el ser humano, desde su raíz misma, vive en la esperanza y en la convivencia; es decir, aunque el odio y el resentimiento pertenezcan a

⁷²⁷ Francisco Roger Garzón, *El concepto de persona y amistad en Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Valencia: Imprenta provincial, 2011), 170.

⁷²⁸ Martín Hidalgo Serrano, *Moral y ética en el pensamiento de Pedro Laín Entralgo* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 243.

nuestra naturaleza de una forma irremediable, la existencia humana posee, también a radice, una condición amorosa, filica y potencial o incoativamente agapética⁷²⁹.

So, for Laín, love underpins interpersonal relationships or in other terms: «*El amor es la conducta moral de más alto valor... Solo cuando el amor se convierte en el vínculo entre seres humanos es humana y digna la convivencia entre ellos*»⁷³⁰. Here, in this proposal, in this ethics of responsibility for the other, is where dialogue with Levinas becomes possible. It is an ethics of care for the other as exemplified by the parable of the Good Samaritan:

La ética de Laín es también una ética de responsabilidad, pues en el análisis de las estructuras fundamentales del animal humano se revela el carácter responsivo del mismo. Po el hecho de que el otro existe, de que esta ahí delante de mí, su misma presencia es ya una llamada que exige reconocimiento. No es posible dejar de responder y por eso no es posible no ser responsable. Vivir humanamente es responder ‘de’, ‘ante’ y ‘a’ y por eso hay que aceptar que toda respuesta lleva consigo cierta responsabilidad. La responsabilidad la entendió Laín como una responsabilidad dialógica y no recíproca y cuyo modelo ejemplar lo representa la parábola de Buen Samaritano. La responsabilidad es entonces un movimiento compasivo y solidario que tiene su fundamento en el concepto de persona una realidad con valor en sí mismo. Sera el valor en sí del propio objeto o sujeto el que nos haga actuar por su causa, nos disponga a apoyar con nuestra acción la exigencia del otro a su existencia⁷³¹.

Alterity, for Laín, consists in maintaining the individual dimension and the community dimension as two fields for the realization of the human being, in complementarity, supporting each other. And this is the great similarity between Laín and Taylor and the reason why we had to incorporate Laín's ideas here. That is to say that the self cannot be realized without others; that is to mean, that the individual dimension of human life is built in the realm of the «*us*». In this realm nothing of these two dimensions of human life is annulled, but rather there is an enrichment that enhances human freedom. Carlos Beorlegui has the same vision of our author when he says:

Por tanto, la convivencia interpersonal no es algo accidental o extrínseco a la persona humana. En el núcleo intransferible del yo personal, todo ser humano está llamado a la comunidad interpersonal; la apertura al ‘tú’ (el otro respecto a mi) es constitutiva del ‘yo’;

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 286-287.

⁷³¹ Ibid., 290.

tal es también la apertura del 'yo' y del 'tú' a la comunidad humana. Lejos, pues, de excluirse mutuamente, la dimensión individual/personal y la interpersonal y comunitaria se incluyen recíprocamente: la persona no puede realizarse sino en la alteridad, es decir, en el darse a los otros y en el recibir de ellos. La subjetividad humana es, pues, esencialmente intersubjetividad, subjetividad dialogal, encuentro entre sujeto y sujeto. Se manifiesta así un aspecto nuevo de la cuestión del hombre: la libertad personal de todo hombre está por sí misma referida a la libertad del otro: relación de mi libertad, en cuanto libertad, a la libertad del otro como libertad⁷³².

Our world today needs a certain ethics capable of promoting interpersonal relationships. Therefore, we want to conclude our research by presenting the ethics of Ubuntu as a possible solution to restore the almost lost meaning of this dimension so important for human coexistence. We will present here a brief synthesis referring to the development carried out previously.

10.10. Ubuntu Ethics: A Solution to Recover the Interpersonal Dimension

This idea is inspired by the recent publication of Desmond Tutu's granddaughter, Mungi Ngomane with the title: «*Ubuntu, lecciones de sabiduría africana para vivir mejor*». It is a book whose prologue is written by Desmond Tutu himself and where his granddaughter outlines fourteen lessons based on the wisdom of Ubuntu to help our troubled world, improve our human relationships by creating bridges of unity and not walls of separation⁷³³.

In a challenging world like ours, a world where human existence is threatened by an increasing occurrence of pandemics and dangerous diseases, a world suffocated by unhealthy divisions and competitions, enmity and mistrust, etc., there is a need for individual and collective reflection on how the future of humanity can be safeguarded from a possible extinction. Today we are hearing about conflicts and rumours of wars ignited by human egoism and selfishness where the key factor is competition for resources and excessive desire for power and control of the world. The poor are still poor, and the

⁷³² Carlos Beorlegui, *Antropología filosófica: dimensiones de la realidad humana* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2016), 386.

⁷³³ Mungi Ngomane, *Ubuntu, lecciones de sabiduría africana para vivir mejor* (Madrid: Edición Grijalbo, 2020), accessed April 8, 2022. <https://www.amazon.es/Ubuntu-Lecciones-sabiduria-africana-vivir/dp/8417752374>.

rich are still rich and only a few of us remain aware of collective responsibility. What characterizes our world is not the Aristotelian conception of man as «*animalis socialis*» but the Hobbesian «*homo homini lupus*»: man in his state of nature at war with all: «*bellum omnium contra omnes*». The effects of the Cartesian solipsist interpretation of man arising from his famous saying: «*cogito ergo sum*» seem to have borne fruit; isolation and individualism seem to have enslaved modern man.

To save the described type of our world we think that a total renewal of mentality and perspective is a «*conditio sine qua non*». We need a kind of Platonian «*reminiscence*», a kind of «*recollection*» or the memory to help us return to the essence of who we are. We need to get back to the «*form of things*» where the understanding of who we are as a human race with a common origin and destiny must be rediscovered. It is the high time the world took seriously the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical: «*Fratelli Tutti*», where he strongly states that: life cannot be faced in isolation and in the same way no one can be saved alone, but rather a total redemption⁷³⁴. Our world needs a kind of ethics capable of recovering «*per se*» who is the human person. We need to recover the original meaning of the human person as a «*purposeful being*» but a purpose that cannot be achieved in isolation. A human being as many have echoed throughout history is «*a being-with*». He is a «*being of language*» able to dialogue with the rest of creation and, therefore, able to collaborate with each other to give solutions to the problem of life as persons who share a common cosmic reality. This new kind of ethics, whatever name we give it, should be able to recreate the world, where all reality as it exists is seen as a common heritage and not as an individual possession for a particular group, nation or even generation.

We need an ethics capable of bringing our world out of the malaise of modernity born of individualism and selfishness. Today, as we speak, the world is struggling with a global pandemic called COVID-19, a pandemic that has put our lives in an awkward position and whose origin is the effects of the struggle for power and control of the world. It's a pandemic that has shaken everyone, and this should serve as a wake-up call for everyone who thinks they can save their lives alone. The pandemic should awaken us from the lethargy of modern man's individualism and steer us in a new direction in which

⁷³⁴ Pope Francis, "Encyclical Letter on fraternity and social friendship: Fratelli Tutti," no. 8 (October 2020), accessed April 2022.
https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

each individual should responsibly participate in acts aimed at saving our world. We cannot forget the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia and other wars in the world which are examples of what we can call the lack of human dialogue in our world today. We need a kind of ethics, which becomes for us the «*First philosophy*», a goal for us and an inclusive exercise where no one feels excluded or favoured but feels an integral part of this humble enterprise; in fact, a son and daughter of the universe. We need a type of ethics that promotes the equitable distribution of resources and where the advancement of technology of one group or nation becomes an advantage for the rest of the groups. It is a type of ethics where no one is treated as an object or means to an end; but always as a human person where the dignity of each one is defended. It is an ethics as our research indicates, which promotes intersubjectivity and interpersonal relationships.

It's our humble proposition that Ubuntu could be this kind of ethics. It is the moment when the world reviews the spirit of Ubuntu's philosophy, whose ethics, if well understood, could be of great importance. Here we wish to re-examine again, the spirit of Ubuntu ethics and see how such a spirit helps to redirect our world towards its humane position.

10.11. Ubuntu Maxims

Our choice of Ubuntu ethics to solve our global problems today is deliberate because «*The culture of Ubuntu presents a communal mindset for ethical decisions whereby individuals, community, and the world are connected together*»⁷³⁵. The origin of the term, ubuntu as we saw in the second chapter, has its roots in sub-Saharan indigenous Africa where the term can change depending on the language used. For example, for the Swahili people the term becomes «*utu*», for the Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya the term is «*Umundu*», the Meru people of Kenya use the term «*Umuntu*» while the Sukuma people of Tanzania use the term «*Bumuntu*»⁷³⁶, etc. However, whatever language is used, the term emphasizes fraternity and family spirit where values such as humanity, care, sharing, respect and compassion aimed at building a dignified society are pertinent⁷³⁷. Ubuntu dreams of a world of interdependence and interrelationship where the existence of each

⁷³⁵ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 12.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

individual is fundamentally and ontologically connected to the existence of others. Man is involved in an infinite connection with other men and with the rest of the cosmos. We can talk about two maxims that summarize the spirit of Ubuntu:

The first is: a human being is human because of other human beings. The second maxim is an elaboration of the first. It goes; a human being is human because of the otherness of other human beings. John Mbiti combines those two maxims into, "I am because we are, and we are because I am"⁷³⁸.

10.12. Why Ubuntu's Ethics?

The reader of our reflections might justifiably ask why in this conclusion of our research we propose the ethics of Ubuntu as a possible solution to the problem of life for modern man. What really makes Ubuntu's way of being special and really beneficial today? For our knowledge, it is important to note that the Ubuntu lifestyle has been widely applied in many fields today ranging from social management, the world of computers, etc. Above all, our choice of the spirit of Ubuntu in this research is animated by its holistic approach and its way of situating life and the human person as its focus. Today more than ever there are tendencies that try to reduce man to a mere object; in fact, a useful instrument that emphasizes only on the functional aspect of the human person. The world is forgetting that the human person is a being of purpose and dignity; traits that make it difficult to treat anyone as an object. When it comes to the human being the question of «*What is it?* », cannot respond exhaustively to everything related to man. We have to go further and ask ourselves the essential question of «*who is?* » This question elevates man to a higher level; a level that makes him more than an object. This point can well be understood if we listen to Emmanuel Levinas in his book, «*Alterity and Transcendence*». In this book as we saw earlier the author dedicates his time to rethink transcendence in order to rediscover the original meaning of this term. Levinas dismantles the traditional understanding of transcendence falsely understood in «*a priori*» terms and shows the «*new transcendence*» as the true meaning of «*the human*». In this context, transcendence is born of the intersubjective relationship where the other must be treated humanely⁷³⁹. Levinas while addressing the idea of Infinity says that the «*face*» the other is the place of

⁷³⁸ Ibid., vii.

⁷³⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), xii.

transcendence. Asks: «*Is not the face of one's fellow man the original locus in which transcendence calls an authority with a silent voice in which God comes to the mind?*»⁷⁴⁰. Our choice of Ubuntu ethics is precisely the point Levinas is emphasizing on. It is the priority of human life where man must be treated at all costs as a human being.

The ethics of Ubuntu, as we have said, is holistic: it is a culture that many have called «anthropocentric», «theocentric» and «cosmocentric»⁷⁴¹ with life as the founding truth. The African man has been described by John Mbiti and others as «*notoriously religious*» indicating the importance of the Creator in African life and religion that permeates all compartments of life. In other words, although the anthropocentric aspect is the starting point, nevertheless, all other aspects are included for the reason that all life is sacred and is considered interdependent⁷⁴². Ubuntu's ethics opens to, proposes an inclusive culture, and this can be seen in its endless enterprise by calling for unity and diversity, seeking a radical complementarity between individual and community. We will examine the Ubuntu type of communitarianism by exploring some of the differences between those who advocate for moderate communitarianism and those who prefer extreme communitarianism. Ours is to bring out the main doctrines of this culture that we consider of great importance to help our times to face the humanitarian crises derived from the modern vision of the human person.

10.13. Ubuntu Ethics and Its Doctrines

Today, more than ever, our world is thirsty for a more inclusive culture where no discrimination of any kind is allowed to enslave us, be it geographical discrimination, technological discrimination, racial discrimination, etc. We thirst for a world where all continents, nations, groups and individuals feel at home. The Ubuntu type of communitarianism presents more or less this dream. However, there are critics who see the African form of communitarianism as tyrannical and therefore does not give room for autonomy and individual growth. For this reason, we want to clarify again between what some authors have called moderate and extreme communitarianism. Some of the postcolonial African authors such as John Mbiti and Menkiti have been accused of

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁴¹ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 13.

⁷⁴² Ibid., 13.

advocating for radical/extreme communitarianism, however, in this research we advocate for moderate communitarianism supported by authors such as Kwame Gyekye and others. Ubuntu's kind of communitarianism, when well understood, is actually moderate. Although community in the proper interpretation of communitarianism precedes the individual, however, this does not mean that individual rights and autonomy are underestimated⁷⁴³. The individual is no one without community and community is never formed without individuals. The two in this case remain equally important:

Ubuntu relates to bonding with others. This is in line with what the word expresses in most African languages: being self because of others. This is also in line with the popular Zulu saying: ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. Such sayings as I am because we are and I am human because I belong, express this tenet⁷⁴⁴.

At the heart of this community spirit is the common good and the protection of life. Communitarianism in this sense is only allowed when it protects both the individual and the community. Any tendency to oppress the individual in Ubuntu ethics is discouraged at all costs. Community and individual are two terms that imply each other. By the time you mention one, the other is already implicit. Therefore, this research discourages any tendency to interpret African communitarianism as in any way oppressive or radical. We analyze the main characteristics of moderate communitarianism defended by Ubuntu.

10.13.1. A Call to Respect Our Ontological Diversity and Plurality

We are living in a pluralistic society where people from different cultures, backgrounds, orientations, religions and beliefs are in a state of «*thrownness*», if we are to use the language of Martin Heidegger in his «*Being and Time*». By nature, we are in the world; we are thrown into the world, as Heidegger would say. We find ourselves in the world with people we don't choose to live with, in places we don't choose to be, and with cultures we don't choose to interact with. Although we are free created persons, however, we find ourselves immersed among other persons with whom we are radically condemned to live by nature:

⁷⁴³ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁴⁴ Mugumbate et al., "Exploring African philosophy: The value of Ubuntu in social work," *African Journal of Social Work*, 3, 1 (August 2013), 84.

The sense in which Dasein is a self is one which involves the possibility of choosing ways of existing. But that the being of Dasein is always mine does not mean that Dasein is something essentially private and isolated. The being of Dasein is being-in-the-world, but the world is not my private possession but a shared world. Being-in-the-world is being-with-others-in-the-world. Relationship to others is not just a contingent fact about Dasein, the fact that I am not the only one of my kind. Being alone is a possibility but it is only possible on the basis of being-with⁷⁴⁵.

In other words, whether we like it or not, our existence is pluralistic. Ours is a shared world where every individual, group or nation has a share and must have a right to existence. We are condemned to exist with one another. We have to learn to live with this fact that is an ontological fact that cannot be eliminated. This is a fact that the traditional African man specifically in Ubuntu ethics had realized. The realization of community is impossible without the realization of individuals. There is a need to accommodate all individuals and groups with their different cultures to benefit from such diversity of richness necessary to build community. Today more than ever, we must consider plurality and diversity not as a catalyst for conflict and division, but as a call to work together, enriching and complementing each other for the survival of humanity. This is what the spirit of Ubuntu stands for: «...*Ubuntu appreciates difference and diversity as richness. Diversity allows for variety of contribution to the community by each member for each member. Consequently, human society flourishes on diversity*»⁷⁴⁶.

For the great benefit of all, there must be a dialogue between these cultures at all levels so that no individual, group or culture lives in isolation. As we have argued in Ubuntu, a person becomes a person through other persons. By extension, nations become nations through other nations, etc. For our world to thrive and even handle pandemics like the one we are having, dialogue at all levels is necessary, including dialogue in technological and intellectual know how.

⁷⁴⁵ Paul Gerner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: an introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5

⁷⁴⁶ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 51.

10.13.2. A Call to think about the Common Good

Our understanding of the common good in the African perspective, specifically speaking of Ubuntu ethics, is not different from the Aristotelian Greek perspective. Aristotle recognizes the importance of individual good, yet he admits that there is a greater value in the common good than in the individual good. Aristotle's common good is that which can be achieved through community, but, of course, shared by its members. This understanding is no different from the African view of it. As reasoned before: «*The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man*»⁷⁴⁷. From this definition of individual in the African sense, the idea of the common good begins. Community exists primarily to safeguard the lives of individuals. This can only be possible if such a community safeguards the common good of all individuals. This explains why many authors agree that: «*No individual is greater than the society; individual members of the society are parts of and enabled by the society*»⁷⁴⁸. This does not mean that the individual rights emanating from freedom are undermined from our perspective. There is always a balancing act and a symbiotic mutuality between what is good for the individual and good for the community. The community defends the rights of individuals for the common good. A person in Ubuntu can only be autonomous among other autonomous persons. Therefore, in the same line of thinking:

Since the individual rights are based on, and facilitated by, common good, individuals in the culture of Ubuntu should act for themselves and the community rather than for themselves against the community...Freedom in particular and virtue in general, therefore, are contingent to, and defined by community society and the common good⁷⁴⁹.

The reason why land in the African perspective continued to be respected as a community property is not because individuals were not allowed to own land. The emphasis on common property was to show that no individual would maliciously accumulate wealth at the expense of denying the rest a good life. Community leaders had to ensure that no individual suffered at the expense of those who had a tendency to accumulate more than they needed. Once again, the same leadership made sure that

⁷⁴⁷ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, 1970), 141.

⁷⁴⁸ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 36.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

everyone worked for the common good. Everyone in the society was a worker. Even in the case where the elderly were allowed to rest, it is because throughout their lives had worked for the common good. This should somehow explain why it was the children's responsibility to care for their elderly parents.

Our world needs to regain this understanding of the common good and especially now as we face deadly pandemics like the new COVID-19 pandemic. The community spirit of working together to ensure that vaccines are available to all people must be cultivated, including the sharing of technological knowledge about how such vaccines are manufactured. No person or nation should use their technological know-how as a tool to exploit others.

10.13.3. A Call for Ethical Responsibility before the Death of the Other

The question of death has always been difficult to address since ancient times. The mystery surrounding this subject is enormous and no metaphysical explanation to date has managed to give conclusive and absolute answers. Although man has sometimes tried to escape such an important question, however, the reality of it is inevitable. Some philosophers like Fink preferred to remain silent on the question of death. For Fink death is a cause of scandal, in fact, a rupture for man:

Es preciso acoger la muerte en silencio, aunque la filosofía pueda decir la razón de este silencio. Conocemos la muerte, pero no podemos concebirla; la conocemos sin poder reflexionar sobre ella. En tal sentido es la verdadera ruptura y en tal sentido debe ser acogida en silencio⁷⁵⁰.

However, as philosophers, we cannot remain silent on this pertinent question that touches on our own being. Death is a given event that accompanies each contingent being from the moment of appearance in the cosmos until the moment of the disappearance of such a being. Perhaps Martin Heidegger has given one of the best definitions of this inescapable and sure event for every human being:

Death is not something which happens to Dasein. The being of Dasein is being towards death. Death is the possibility which is most my own, the possibility with regard to which

⁷⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dios, la Muerte y el Tiempo* (Madrid: Catedra Colección Teorema Tercera ed., 2005), 110.

there can be no deputising...It is also the most extreme possibility in the sense that it is the possibility of the impossibility of any comportment to anything and in this sense cannot be surpassed⁷⁵¹.

Death for Heidegger, therefore, becomes the «*possibility of the impossibility*», the end of the «*Dasein*». For him death brings the annihilation of man's being, the «*Dasein*». Heidegger could easily be accused of presenting an interpretation of man who is purely finite by forgetting the infinite side of our existence and closing the door to transcendence. However, one has to understand its main focus in his «*Being and Time*». His interest is basically the question of man's being the «*Dasein*» and how man can benefit from his being as a finite and contingent being who at a given moment is destined to die; the being of the «*Dasein*» is heading towards death. This radical form of interpretation of man is a call to wake us up from the dogmatic slumber of ignoring the truth about death. Man has to face death not by ignoring it, but by understanding it, accepting it and accommodating it as the «*possibility of impossibility*». This is a call to an authentic life dedicated to auto-revelation and projection of one's life within the possible possibilities where man in his «*thrownness*» finds himself. For Heidegger, man has to rediscover the proper sense of time as an answer to the question of being. The being has to be conceived in terms of time; time not understood as mere sequence of «*nows*» but rather as «*ecstatic temporality*», a time of self-understanding and revelation of the «*Dasein*»⁷⁵².

There is need to approach death in a different way if the modern man wants to find possibilities to face all the challenges of life today, including the current pandemic. Emmanuel Levinas different from Heidegger and possibly who through his criticisms of Heidegger's vision opens up to transcendence could be of great help at this juncture. Like Heidegger, Levinas' starting point is the call to recover the original meaning of time. Heidegger understands time from the point of view of death, while Levinas understands death from the point of view of time. In this case, death can only be understood if we begin by understanding the meaning of time. Time for Levinas is the revelation that enables our relationship with the Other, our relationship with the infinite. The question of death revolves around the «*face*» of the other. The face of the other becomes the

⁷⁵¹ Paul Gerner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: an introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7-8.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

expression of the commandment: «*Thou shall not kill*»⁷⁵³. In one of his writings he interrogates himself:

¿Podemos buscar el sentido de la muerte a partir del tiempo? ¿No se muestra en la diacronía del tiempo entendido como relación con el otro? ¿Podemos entender el tiempo como relación con el Otro en lugar de ver en él la relación con el final?⁷⁵⁴.

Levinas recognizes the mystery surrounding the question of death; in fact, he refers to death as the «*the most unknown of unknowns*»⁷⁵⁵. For him death transcends our world, it is our connection with the infinite: «*La muerte no pertenece al mundo. Es siempre un escándalo y, en ese sentido, trasciende siempre el mundo*»⁷⁵⁶. Levinas answers the question about death by bringing out her new idea in ethics: the «*face-to-face*» relationship with the other who is different from me. The face of the other becomes the «*the trace of Infinity*»⁷⁵⁷ and calls for an ethical response. The face of the other becomes that voice that calls me to respond to a human being who suffers and dies. It calls me not to remain indifferent. It is the voice of conscience that awakens me to respond ethically. The death of the other according to Levinas moves me, it requires my performance. The death of the other is my death. The «*face-to-face encounter*» with the other becomes the springboard for ethics, which for Levinas is the «*First Philosophy*».

This view of death according to Levinas is not much different from Ubuntu's perspective. The African view of death also recognizes the mystery and transcendence of death, and this can be seen in different myths that try to explain the «*Why*» and the «*What*» of death. In almost all these myths, one thing is clear, that the Creator in His original plan did not want man to die. Death for an African becomes only a passage to the next stage of life and this explains why time in this context is conceived as a «*continuum*»:

According to Ubuntu, human life is so central, so dignified, unrepeatable, sacred and unique that it should survive physical death. Strictly, from Ubuntu perspective human life

⁷⁵³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dios, la Muerte y el Tiempo* (Madrid: Catedra Colección Teorema Tercera ed., 2005), 127.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 153.

⁷⁵⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dios, la Muerte y el Tiempo* (Madrid: Catedra Colección Teorema Tercera ed., 2005), 134.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., 169.

does not end. Thus, death is yet another stage of initiation in the human life's process of continual and immortal initiation⁷⁵⁸.

However, the most interesting thing is the communal aspect of death expressed in Ubuntu ethics as we saw in previous chapters. Death joins other aspects such as marriage and procreation that «*per se*» are not a private matter but a concern of the community because they bind the living and the dead⁷⁵⁹. Children's education is a community issue because they are seen as the future of the community itself. At the same time, when death occurs, the participation of each member is clearly expressed. Even before one dies, this concern would be seen where men of traditional medicine would be contacted to care for a sick member and try by all means to stop any possible loss of life. The attention for and caring for the sick and elderly was not just a business for the immediate family, but the concern of the entire community. The burial and its preparation again were a concern for all. Therefore, in summary:

Ubuntu healthcare for the terminally ill and the dying is rich with meaning and symbolism. The whole community participates in this significant initiation of that member into the community of the living-dead⁷⁶⁰.

This unity of concern around the issue of death was traditionally guided by the primacy of life and its sacredness. Our world has lost this and there is a need to recover the lost spirit of Ubuntu. Today the issues of marriage, procreation and death are «*quasi*» private matters. Every individual today or family has to struggle almost alone when problems of illness, marriage and death arise. Our world has changed, and individualism has taken the day.

The era of COVID-19 has arrived and has found an individualistic world where even the issue of the vaccine and the attention of those suffering from this pandemic remains almost a private matter. There are efforts to ensure that health security becomes a reality for all, but even this is far from an achievement for everyone. Advanced economies continue to vaccinate their young children, while in poor countries, even the most vulnerable, the elderly have not received any doses. Intellectual knowledge about these vaccines remains the property of the discoverers, earning them billions from the

⁷⁵⁸ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 18.

⁷⁵⁹ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1986), 98.

⁷⁶⁰ Leonard Tumaini Chuwa, *African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics: Interpreting Ubuntu* (New York: Springer, 2014), 19.

huge sale of these vaccines. Individualism has taken over our world. Our world has become a place of survival where the advanced in technology becomes the most powerful and strong and therefore survives. Our world needs an urgent redemption from the malaise of modernity. Our world needs to be created, a new world where each of us becomes the Good Samaritan of that stranger who is suffering and dying. The suffering and death of the other should be my concern; I should feel compelled to act ethically. I should not let the other die. Is it not the living who are left to narrate the death of others who otherwise cannot speak of their death? Does Socrates live to narrate his death after drinking the poison of hemlock? Is it not Plato who will stay to tell us about Socrates' death?⁷⁶¹ The death of Socrates becomes the death of Plato who through his narration has to experience the pain of the unjust condemnation. The dead do not live to narrate their death. It is we who are the living who experience this loss. The death of the other should become my concern. I should not let the other die. Is it not the high time we rediscovered the spirit of Ubuntu as a possible remedy for our sick world? We are convinced that Ubuntu's ethics can help our world revive our interpersonal dimension, which in turn will revive our concern for the other. Alterity and interpersonal relationships should always define our existence.

10.14. CONCLUSION

Our main focus in this last chapter has been content of the concept of alterity. We have insisted on the holistic vision of the concept to overcome any tendency that tends to isolate the human being from his fellow human beings. Our focus throughout this study has been that the human being is not only with others but also forms himself among others. In this last chapter we have focused on the concept of the person that is important to help us understand alterity. We have traced the origin of the concept of the person from its beginnings seeing how its understanding has evolved since its origin. Finally, after this historical view, we have settled into a position that we believe can help us understand alterity. This position is based on the interpersonal view of our existence. We believe that human beings cannot understand each other or live in mutual coexistence without admitting that interpersonality defines their existence.

⁷⁶¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 153.

FINAL CONCLUSION

This study has dealt entirely with alterity, a theme that defines our intersubjective and interpersonal relationship with the other. We still insist on its importance in human life, knowing that the relationship with others will always be problematic, an endless task that requires commitment and improvement every moment of human coexistence. Coexistence characterizes human existence, and Taylor in dialogue with other authors, gives an account of this truth by critically analysing the reality of the other and how the human being can achieve this alterity while respecting the diversity. So, the concept of coexistence defines human life. Isolation for human beings would be a contradiction of who they are and would mean the end of who they are. Carlo Beorlegui writes:

La vida humana es esencialmente con-vivencia, vivir con los demás, con los otros. ‘Una persona aislada, dice Unamuno, dejaría de serlo... ¿A quién, en efecto, amaría? Y si no ama, no es persona’. ‘Solamente entre hombres, dice a su vez Fichte, llega el hombre a ser hombre’⁷⁶².

Taylor, in our opinion, has given us a very balanced view of alterity. He has shown that the human being needs to be respected with all his individuality and uniqueness as a unique being who is unrepeatable and irreplaceable. In this way, all persons, regardless of their social status or any other classification, should be treated with due dignity. But at the same time, he has shown us that human beings are not meant to be isolated from one another. On the contrary, they are made to be with others, and this is a natural fact that is inescapable. Therefore, an individual is incomplete without other individuals. No individual can claim to be self-sufficient in any way. That is why Taylor also sees the importance of community in the development of the individual. The point of departure for Taylor is that both the community and the individual need each other; This is «*per se*» a recognition of alterity.

Taylor's advocacy for alterity is seen everywhere in his moral and political theories, as he presents us with the intersubjective characteristics of the self that should allow for cohesive coexistence with the other selves. He has insisted on the importance of articulating everything that promotes coexistence, something that our modern culture has completely forgotten. He has highlighted what is worthy of praise in the modern world

⁷⁶² Carlos Beorlegui, *Antropología filosófica: dimensiones de la realidad humana* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2016), 385.

and he has condemned individualistic tendencies that try to push our world back. This can be seen in his analysis of the lost moral ontology that arises from the dominant Cartesian perspective of reality. His pluralistic, dialogical and communal vision of society creates an environment of mutual coexistence because he advocates an accommodation of the other that might have a different margin of «*Weltanschauung*».

In the spirit of alterity and respecting our comparative method, our study has enriched Taylor's ideas with very important ideas from other thinkers. Max Scheler for example, has shown us how the human being is able to transcend to the other above all by his ability to love. Martin Buber challenges our world to rise to the level of dialogical encounter with the other by discovering a «*Thou*» in every relationship for a genuine encounter. Ortega reminds us of the radicality of the human person as a being of action, but also realizing that such a being lives with others. Levinas by advocating for ethics as the first philosophy reminds us of our ethical responsibility to the other who cannot be ignored. Ubuntu's ethics with its pluralistic and communal vision of society crowns everything up by calling our attention to the respect for humanity.

Taylor has shown us the role that language plays when it comes to promoting alterity. Language is not a mere pronunciation of words. Language as we have pointed out is something complex and is intrinsically rooted in our lives. Taylor's approach to language is holistic because through it, we can get to know a person's life. Language becomes a manifestation of who we are and thus opens our capacity for an interpersonal encounter. Joseph Gevaert while talking about the role played by language in our relationship with others represents it as the most universal action in the world. Language for him manifests the dialogical and interpersonal structure of our existence. No wonder many philosophies have had language as a starting point. To explain this idea we use his very words:

Para mostrar lo evidente que es la relación primaria con el otro se recurre mucho al lenguaje. No hay ningún hecho tan universal y significativamente «*humano*» como este. Dondequiera se esté en presencia de seres humanos, se está en presencia de formas elaboradas de lenguaje. Lenguaje es cualquier palabra que dirijo al otro y que el otro me dirige a mí. De ahí que muchos filósofos contemporáneos busquen en el lenguaje el punto de partida privilegiado para la filosofía del hombre. La palabra es una de las manifestaciones humanas que revelan claramente la estructura dialogal e interpersonal de

la existencia humana. Por un lado, la palabra vive en el ámbito de las relaciones sociales. Y por otro, la inteligencia personal no logra realizarse fuera del ámbito de la palabra⁷⁶³.

It is through language that we open ourselves to others with all our cultures and different visions of our world. It becomes a means to reach others and to move to different parts of the world, giving meaning to life as our mentioned author says: «*La palabra permite al hombre moverse en este mundo y lograr que su existencia tenga sentido*»⁷⁶⁴. Support for the holistic view of language for Taylor takes an expressive turn that proponents of the HHH model had taught in contradiction to what the designative view of language had proposed. Language for Taylor reveals what the human being is: it manifests our being. But as Gevaert adds and in line with Taylor, language also reveals not only persons but also the environment where that person is located. In other words, for us to understand our world and all that there is, language is an indispensable tool. Language reveals our world and encompasses a wide spectrum like we saw in Taylor, such as areas of music, art, poetry, etc. The quote below says more about this concept of language as a form of revelation:

La palabra no es solamente desvelamiento del mundo y de las cosas. Es también esencialmente revelación de las personas. En la palabra el otro en persona se anuncia y explica, manifestando y comunicando la propia riqueza, su misterio, sus alegrías y esperanzas. La inconfundible novedad de su existencia. La palabra es el lugar mismo de la «revelación», en el que la realidad metafísica y trascendente del otro se anuncia a sí misma. Algunas formas de palabra, como la poesía, el arte, el lenguaje de amor, la filosofía, el discurso religioso, etc., expresan por otro lado más específicamente la dimensión de la «revelación». La categoría «revelación» o manifestación por su propia fuerza pertenece a la condición humana⁷⁶⁵.

Language for Taylor is, therefore, an activity that reveals our being. It becomes an important tool for connecting with everything around us, whether it is the other human being or anything else.

Alterity could not be a reality if it did not lead us to a genuine interpersonal encounter. This has been the point of departure of this study. In a world where the tendency is towards individualism, it is worth articulating the importance of interpersonal

⁷⁶³ Joseph Gevaert, *El problema del hombre* (Salamanca: edición sígueme, 2008), 46.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 49.

encounter. For interpersonal encounter to be a reality, both parties must be able to open up to each other without any prejudice or bias. Each one in this meeting must be respected as a person, but above all as a neighbour to whom I have an ethical responsibility towards. The interpersonal encounter must be characterized by the donation of genuine love to the other, because without love alterity is impossible.

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