

Community and the Order of Being

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Abstract

Human existence is intrinsically community-oriented. Persons find themselves as responsible in community. This is a classical and Christian insight that is supported by significant contemporary philosophers such as Gabriel Marcel and Emmanuel Levinas. This paper makes the claim that to thrive as a person is to belong; indeed, that it is the experience of belonging that satisfies the human need for meaning, value, and purpose. The paper proceeds by considering the term “community.” In itself, “community” is a common sense term. However, it is also a symbol with dimensions of meaning beyond common sense implicit within it. For the sake of a richer understanding of belonging, this paper proposes to discuss some of those dimensions under three headings: Dynamism; Communion; and Consummation. “Dynamism” relates to the members of a community whose mutual participation constitutes the characteristics of that community. “Communion” considers the emergence of genuine community, as opposed to general association, from the prior mutual will to accommodate the Other(s) in the self. “Consummation” considers the significance of communion as both the goal and fulfillment of each person and community. Put another way, consummation is the perfection of belonging.

Community and the Order of Being

The title of this panel is “Transcendence as the Horizon of Politics.” In imagining an horizon, one might immediately think of the place or region where the sky seems to touch the sea or ground. Horizons are regions of sameness and difference; that is,

horizons are where two different things can meet: different bodies; bodies and souls; the transcendent and the immanent. Horizons are the places of encounter and mutuality and the face-to-face of One to the Other. They are essentially metaxic in that they bridge and make possible a flow of sameness and difference. They are in themselves neither nothing nor something but the sameness that occurs in the congress between Others who remain irreducibly Other. He or she who grasps horizons immediately understands and transcends difference while remaining different: an Other for the Other. This is the paradox of the human person. Persons grasp horizons because each human being is already a horizon him- or herself, a participant in being who is both at home and not at home in the world. Furthermore, by a “macroanthropic” extension, human community is similarly both at home and not at home in the world.¹ This will be discussed below. Political community—as one kind of human community—participates in the human straddling of difference. Tilo Schabert tells us in his recent book, “John Adams certainly chose his words with care when he called the ‘science of politics’ a ‘divine’ science and said that it is the ‘science of social happiness.’ Precisely for this reason, the theory of politics is also always a theory of crisis. Normally, politics as practiced is not what politics is in its essence.”² Politics is a horizon where theory and practice both meet and miss each other, where the science of happiness can be found or lost in political community, yet simultaneously supersedes political community.

¹ On *macroanthropos*, see Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume I: Israel and Revelation*, in *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 14*, ed. Maurice P. Hogan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 44-45.

² Tilo Schabert, *The Second Birth: On the Political Beginnings of Human Existence*, trans. Javier Ibáñez-Noé (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 62-63.

Belonging

This paper is concerned with community, or more deeply, with the condition of genuine community that we can call communion (or *koinōnia*). The term “genuine community” (or *communitas*) refers to more than an association of interest or enterprise. It is, admittedly, controversial: Not every human association is a community founded in communion.³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to set out the full criteria that would differentiate genuine community from associations of interest or enterprise that claim the name community, but we tentatively suggest that, in the absence of interpersonal communion, such associations do not achieve *communitas*. A genuine community is one that has emerged from interpersonal communion.⁴ This paper will proceed by exploring the existential tension by which individuals and—again, by extension—communities live.⁵ The paper makes the claim that, if “existence is participation itself,”⁶ as Voegelin asserts, then existence is also concerned with belonging. That is, to belong is to find oneself already participating meaningfully in a community. This is a tension that is

³ Gabriel Marcel characterizes the “graduated scale” that is possible in human encounters, “with something like the mystical communion of souls in worship at the top end, and with something like an ad hoc association for some strictly practical and rigidly defined purpose at the bottom.” Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I, Reflection and Mystery* (Henry Regnery Company: Chicago, 1950), 178-79. See also note 56 below.

⁴ Marcel holds that it is bodiliness that is the source of a primordial intersubjective community out of which communion can occur. This paper is not concerned with chronology but with the experience of communion that forms *communitas*. Bodiliness is a burgeoning area of interest in phenomenology from at least Edith Stein or even—sparsely and very arguably—from Heidegger. On bodiliness in Marcel, see Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katherine Farrer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), 156. See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s work from *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012) to his *The Visible to the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968). These can be understood in large part as a phenomenological exploration of the body, not as a mere object in the world, but as a mode of belonging to the world; that is, belonging understood here as existing-from and -toward the world. Karol Wojtyła’s *The Acting Person: A Contribution to Phenomenological Anthropology, Volume 10 of Analecta Husserliana* (Springer, 1979) and his *Theology of the Body* teachings elaborate bodiliness as the expressive dimension of the unity of the person and the very possibility of interpersonal communion.

⁵ Levinas writes that “the concept of man has a single extension, and that is human fraternity.” See Emmanuel Levinas, “Transcendence and Height.” In Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 27.

⁶ Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 1

experienced in two directions: Firstly, to participate in a community is to be already held in some sense by it; for example, to find one's life as meaningful is already to be drawing meaning, value and purpose from community or to find oneself at home in communion with others. Secondly, to participate means also to move toward that very community by virtue of love, responsibility or some type of obligation. That is, if existence is participation, then participation can be characterized as belonging because belonging is constituted in existential tension whose two directional movements are here symbolized as "existence-from" and "existence-toward." To further refine the triad, existence-as-participation-as-belonging, belonging can be characterized as an existential indebtedness. We are brought into existence and held in existence by a ground not of our own. We are neither the ground of our own existence, nor is our existence necessary but eminently contingent. We might not have been.⁷ The fact or givenness of existence is not a giving of our own. To what do we owe our existence? What brought us forth, holds us and moves us?⁸ Indebtedness is an experience of existing-from something given while existing-toward the mystery of its givenness. This is the experience of belonging, of having one's proper place in being. There is an intimacy in the givenness of existence that is a source of wonderment and meaning. To exist as a human being is to be concerned with belonging; and belonging ultimately to the ground of all existence. That is, we are not "cosmic orphans" as Loren Eiseley had it.⁹ Rather, we have a home. But having a home is not the same as being at home. However, it is the precondition to finding ourselves as

⁷ Eric Voegelin writes "The experience of a cosmos existing in precarious balance on the edge of emergence from nothing and return to nothing must be acknowledged, therefore, as lying at the center of the primary experience of the cosmos." Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume 4: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 73.

⁸ St. Augustine writes "Thus temporal things do as much as was given them to do, and they repay their debt to God, to whom they owe the fact that they exist in whatever degree they exist." See Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Bk. III, ch. 15, trans. Thomas Williams (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993).

⁹ Loren Eiseley, "The Cosmic Orphan" <https://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1974feb23-00016>

yearning to come home or being homeward bound; similarly, this is how we can send ourselves into exile or alienation. Existence as belonging is a quest for the ground that both holds and draws us; it is also the possibility for overlooking or rejecting that ground.¹⁰

When we love, we love persons, peoples, places, times, things. Among them all, we make homes for ourselves and learn to belong in them and through them and because of them and for the sake of them. Our own selves are opened in belonging. Crucially, however, if existence-as-participation-as-belonging means to be in search of the ground, it can also be characterized as being in search of the home beyond all homes, where the restless heart can finally come to rest, as St. Augustine confesses to God as the consummation or *telos* of all restlessness.¹¹ Learning to belong in our homes in the present is really to begin living in a mode of openness toward the ground as the Augustinian final home. This is the “homewardness” of existence. To quest for the ground of existence is to participate in and to share already in the ground that both holds us and calls us to itself. In this sense, existence is a horizon: it is the having of a home and yet to be ever journeying homeward—even with all of the derailments, exiles, limbos, and types of homelessness imaginable. Existence has a direction toward a goal or end that even now is both achieved and not yet finally achieved. The goal is belonging, and belonging is an end that intrinsically involves others, that intrinsically involves community.

¹⁰ As Gabriel Marcel has it, “*it may be of my essence to be able not to be what I am*: in plain words, to be able to betray myself.” Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary*, trans. Katharine Farrer (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 106.

¹¹ St. Augustine expresses it thus, “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” St. Augustine, *Confessions*, bk. I, i, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.

The term “community” is a familiar symbol that is employed by all of us in common-sensical ways that need no explanation here. However, “community” evokes unlimitedly more than the common-sense meaning suggests. It is, after all, community that frames and fulfills our deepest longings because community is the interpersonal and social manifestation of communion or *koinōnia*; it is in *koinōnia* that community and belonging are achieved. Bernard Lonergan frames it thus: “As it is only within communities that men are conceived and born and reared, so too it is only with respect to the available common meanings of community that the individual becomes himself.”¹²

There are three characteristics of community that are implicit within the common-sense understanding of community, but which symbolize fields of reality beyond the common sense dimension of its meaning. (i) The first characteristic is simply that community is dynamic. The dynamism of any genuine community is self-generated and no community is simply a fact in the human landscape, but is constituted in itself as a world of meaning, a “cosmion.”¹³ A community moves spontaneously in a direction that it finds already in motion within itself. Its goods, values, myths and goals are all compelling movers that are embodied and expressed—even if only implicitly realized—by its members whose membership is already a communion with each other. (ii) This is the second characteristic: communion. We mean by this, a mutual participation of each in the others that can substantially be recognized and acknowledged as formative of *communitas*. (iii) The third characteristic of community is intimately related to both its dynamism and its engendering communion as a completion or perfection: consummation.

¹² Bernard Lonergan, “Existenz and Aggiornamento,” in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 245.

¹³ Voegelin writes that a society is “a cosmion of meaning, illuminated from within by its own self-interpretation ... a little world of meaning.” See Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, in *Collected Works, Volume 5*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 129.

Here is an ambiguity. Consummation is a way of saying that the dynamism of a community is for the sake of some good, that every communion—already the *telos* at the heart of *communitas*—nevertheless reaches out for, or awaits, its completion.

Communion is already a consummation, but as a consummation, communion is a participation in a perfection not yet complete. It is that perfection which has already given the communion its particular nature.¹⁴ Consummation is the horizon in which communion, among persons and in *communitas*, already exists. In the language of belonging, a consummation is that home to which those in communion have arrived and yet want to arrive. A consummation is not simply a chronologically posterior achievement, but is already anterior; an implicitly present order in each communion, a final cause, that gives the participating partners their unique *communitas* and structures them in their own perfection.

Of course, communities break down, communions dissolve and the final cause is not the only cause acting upon partners. St. Augustine reminds us that every efficient cause can be used as a deficient cause through a will that does not will the good, but chooses to turn from perfection to imperfection.¹⁵ Realistically then, each community, although structured in perfection, is beset with imperfections. But note: the perfection is the precondition for participation. That is, community is inevitably an imperfect participation in the perfection that has already participated in it. Such are horizons: the mutually participating encounters between orders, substances, and persons that reach out for that consummation which has already begun its own work of perfection in the

¹⁴ Aristotle wrote, "... the nature of a thing is its end [*telos* or consummation]. For what a thing is when fully developed, we call its nature." See Aristotle, *Politics* bk.1. ch.2, 1252b31, in *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1987.

¹⁵ See St. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. XII, chs. 5-8 (London: Penguin Books, 1984) and *On Free Choice of the Will*, bk. I, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993).

imperfection of its partners. That which is structured in perfection awaits its own perfection. Such is belonging. Such is community.

Let us explore these three characteristics of community further.

i. The Dynamism of Community

Most elementally, community depends upon individual members; members who, among themselves, become partners and whose partnership constitutes the life of community. Without the partnership of partners, there is simply no community. So for the purposes of this paper, the question arises: of what community or communities is each human being a member? There also arises the corollary question: with whom or with what is each human being a partner? We can immediately identify various communities of which we are already members: our nuclear and extended families, various groups of friends and acquaintances, associations and congregations and institutions, etc. that we simultaneously belong to. In all of these, we are aware of obligations that constitute our belonging, that require our responsibility, and that structure the range of our freedom. We are also aware that different communities involve different kinds of obligation and responsibility. In each kind of community that we belong to, we are always responsible before we are free. That is, community involves the experience and conviction that those who already give meaning to our lives require that our lives be lived in bonds of love and respect toward those who are sources of meaning. Community is a horizon where I encounter others in a mode where our sameness and difference are maintained in a tension of *caritas* sufficiently deep to radiate meaning and a reason to live.

Community in its depth dimension contains a primordiality that Eric Voegelin discusses. Drawing on sundry mythic, philosophical and revelatory symbols of historical human consciousness, he provides a memorable opening to his *Order and History* series with the statement that “God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being.”¹⁶ Being symbolizes the totality of all things. It is the imaginative Whole and yet discernible “within” the Whole is the primordial, fourfold community of partners in being. God and man, world and society can form a community of being because, from the perspective of the human quest for meaning, each of these constitutes a field of reality the human person participates in with all of his or her existence. As Voegelin reminds us, “Participation in being, however, is not a partial involvement of man; he is engaged with the whole of his existence, for participation is existence itself.”¹⁷ There is no perspective from the outside of being from which man could look down on being and grasp knowledge of the Whole. He/she is a participant in Being and as such, grasps the “quaternarian structure” not as a unit of knowledge but as a tension that makes different claims on us and to which we respond with “the whole of our existence.”¹⁸ John J. Ranieri writes,

... that these terms [the partners in the community of being] do not refer to objects that are ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered by the human seeker. Nor do the partners in the community of being occupy neatly compartmentalized areas of

¹⁶ Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “[The community with its quaternarian structure] is not a datum of experience in so far as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it.” *Ibid.*

reality. Instead, they represent the tensions of existence reflected in the questions we raise about our experience of participation.¹⁹

The partners in the community of being are tensions in the movement of human existence toward the ground of being. In the primary experience of the cosmos, there is the divine mystery that surrounds and supports the givenness of things; the abyss of one's own self; the immensity of, and order in, the cosmos; and there is the ethical-political, socio-historical realm of human others. While discernible in being as partners, the primordial and primary experience of the cosmos, according to Voegelin, is an experience of consubstantiality and attunement rather than on the discrete nature of separate partners.²⁰ With the weight on what is substantially the same in being, our substantial uniqueness or difference only surfaces in a secondary manner. That is, we find that the mode in which we exist is a mode that has already accommodated the others in our self so that the nature of the self is unclear. That is, we find ourselves as already constituted by the community of being and as already participating in what holds us and draws us.

Voegelin, in emphasizing that existence is participation, is saying that human consciousness is constituted by existential tension toward the ground. "Man, when he experiences himself as existent, discovers his specific humanity as that of the questioner for the where-from and the where-to, for the ground and the sense of his existence."²¹ But the ground is experienced by the human questioner to be the ground of all being—the quaternarian community of partners—not merely the ground of one's own being. The

¹⁹ John J. Ranieri, *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 10.

²⁰ See Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 3ff. See also Glenn Hughes, *Myth and Mystery in the Philosophy of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 46-47.

²¹ Voegelin, *Anamnesis*. In *Collected Works, Volume 12: Published Essays 1966-1985* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 268-69. Note the directions of existential tension of "where-from" and "where-to" that are thematic in this paper.

primary experience of the cosmos is an experience of a consubstantial matrix against which sameness the uniqueness and order of things is discovered. The primordial intimacy of sameness in being is not annulled by the eruption of insights through philosophic and revelatory experiences and symbolization, but is modified by that differentiation in the direction of difference. The primary experience of the cosmos does not stand to later differentiation as incorrect stands to correct, but as a compact experience awaiting its own unfolding. As such, the primary experience is inherently unstable. For example, the cosmos as the ground of being becomes unstable as a ground. Voegelin writes that "... the primary experience of reality is the experience of the 'cosmos' only because the non-existent [or transcendent] ground of existent things becomes, through the universe and the gods, part of a reality that is neither existent nor non-existent." The trouble with compact symbolism is that "... the astrophysical universe must be recognized as too much existent to function as the non-existent ground of reality, and the gods are discovered as too little existent to form a realm of intracosmic things."²²

Human existence can be symbolized as a questing or questioning toward that non-existent, ultimate ground of all things and sometimes as a restlessness in both the Aristotelian sense of being in ignorance and reaching out for knowledge, and the Augustinian sense of a deep yearning to rest at last in God.²³ Voegelin emphasized the

²² Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, 76-77. On this passage, Glenn Hughes writes "The destabilizing factor is the latent presence in questioning consciousness of the insight that no spatiotemporal reality provides a sufficiently convincing answer as to the why, the where-from, and the where-to of existing things." See Hughes, *Mystery and Myth in Eric Voegelin*, 48. Note in Hughes's comment the directional symbolism that the primary experience of the cosmos implicitly includes, but that the cosmos cannot in the end adequately symbolize.

²³ One of the most famous formulations is from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders); therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. I,

core dynamic of existential participation in his symbol of the Question in the fourth volume of *Order and History*. The Question is the epitome of the restlessness or tension of consciousness and the dynamic that generates human action. He writes that the Question is “the quest concerning the mysterious ground of all Being.”²⁴ Very nicely, Glenn Hughes comments

He means that the desire to know is, generally and comprehensively, a human being’s search for the meaning of his or her own existence. But since no one’s existence is the cause of itself, the meaning of anyone’s existence is ultimately to be found only in the cause of all existence. Therefore, any search for meaning is ipso facto a search for that ultimate cause, whether this fact is recognized or not.²⁵

The Question as embodied and made concrete is the consciousness of the human person who navigates through the pragmatic conditions of his or her life, all the while in search of the ground and all the while existing in tension with, and belonging with, the partners in being. The necessity to navigate is no mere biological survival, but the essential human need for meaning. It is the necessity to perceive, understand, deliberate, judge, act and ultimately to love—all the while troubled and propelled by the experience of tension toward the ground.²⁶

And yet, the Question that constitutes the dynamic yearning of each human being is not merely an introspective concern with the meaning of one’s own life, but also a concern

982b18ff, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 1554.

²⁴ Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, 320.

²⁵ Glenn Hughes, *Myth and Mystery in Eric Voegelin*, 25.

²⁶ The word being used here is troubled. Voegelin also writes, “In its experiential depth, a theophanic event is a turbulence in reality.” Voegelin, *Ecumenic Age*, 252. The disturbance or turbulence can also affect man in socio-historical existence as a disruption: “With the gospel as the truth of reality, Western civilization has inherited extracosmic contraction as the possibility of its disruption.” Voegelin, “The Gospel and Culture,” in *Collected Works, Vol. 12*, 211.

for the meaning of the lives of others and the mysterious indebtedness of all existence. The Question is a wonderment at the givenness of things—that they exist at all—at the essential diversity of being—among divine, human and cosmic partners—and at the *koinōnia* that renders the Whole as a *kosmos* and not a *chaos*. As Plato wrote in the *Gorgias*,

The sages too say, Callicles, that the heavens and the earth, gods and men are bound together by communion, friendship, order, temperance, and justice, and for this reason, my friend, they call this universe order, and not disorder or intemperance.²⁷

The givenness of existing things, the essences of things, and their mutual interdependence provide the horizon within which human life moves and beyond which human life reaches out in search of the ground. That “mysterious ground of all Being” is the attractive tug (*helkein*) that prompts the quest (*zetesis*)²⁸, but the quest also concerns the quaternarian structure of the community of being among whom we exist. As such, the Question renders God and man, world and society as partners in the quest for the ground because existence is participation in the reality of each partner. Nor are these casual partners that we may choose to ignore, but are partners that present the Question to us over and over. The Question is a troubling. It holds and moves us in our existential indebtedness: What is the minimum that we owe to our parents, our spouses, our children, our neighbors; to our ancestors and their legacies; to those not yet born who even now lay moral claims upon us neither to deny nor to squander their future? What is the minimum that we owe to the material environment that is a source of provision and beauty and

²⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, 508a, (Bekker, 136). In *The Works of Plato*, trans. Henry Cary (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 211. The word “communion” is curiously absent in later translations.

²⁸ Voegelin, “Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. 12, 334.

which is in our charge for the duration of our lives? What, indeed, do we owe to God? Nor am I inconsequential to myself as I recognize that I too am a source of moral obligations that I must attend to. Questions such as these are manifestations of the fundamental, haunting and intimate Question concerning the ground of all being. These are questions that drive each human person toward fulfillment and meaning. These questions symbolize tensions that are modes of the fundamental tension of existence or metaxy.²⁹ Human existence as participation is lived in a mode of indebtedness that extends in the direction of our partners in being. Another way of saying all of this is that, in seeking the ground and its meaning, we are in search of where or how or with whom we belong. And to belong at last is enough to satisfy the restless human heart.

The primordial community of being among divine, human and cosmic partners is a community because it constitutes the field of existential participation. With the entirety of our being human, each man and woman is continuous with each of the partners in being. Tilo Schabert writes in his *The Second Birth* that, in birth, our bodily constitution is finished, but it is because of our bodily constitution that our “second birth” becomes necessary: our entering into civilization by means of consciousness and thought and action; by means of eros and law; by means of grace and the divine. Politics is a form of belonging, but it is as a form of belonging that politics nevertheless tends toward its own superseding. Wilhelmsen and Kendall argue, for example, that

Aristotle is always at hand to remind us, only gods and beasts can live alone; man, by nature, is a political animal whose very political life demands a politeia that involves an at least implicit code of manners and a tacit agreement on the

²⁹ Voegelin uses Plato’s symbol “metaxy” from the *Symposium* and *Philebus* and uses it to develop to elucidate the experience of “flowing presence.” See Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, in *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 6*, ed. David Walsh (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 329ff.

meaning of the good life, and, therefore, on the meaning of man within the total economy of existence.³⁰

If politics is an essential component of the human constitution, it is only because the human constitution is a horizon where the quaternarian structure of the community of being meets as a meaningful whole, where politics reaches out for its own transcendence by the transcendence that reaches into it. Our lives with each other must be ordered for the sake of many goods—including the fundamental good of existence—but such a necessity is directed by the abiding pre-political question and mystery: who are we? Indeed, who are we that a political order in the world for the sake of what is more than the world becomes a necessity? Such is human consciousness: a paradox of existential tension where the realized opens us to the still yet unrealized. But, in a further sense that is both mundane and transcendently sublime, to exist is to be concerned with how and with whom we belong. The “mysterious ground of all Being” holds and draws us, and does so by giving us each other as partners to live with, to live from and toward. The search for the ground is simultaneously an act of *eros* that moves in the directions of the divine, the self, the human world around us and the material cosmos that holds us.

Schabert writes

There lies a “history” in things. From their beginning, they come apart, and they come together through their beginning. Here is chaos and creation. And here things exist in one as well as in the other, in chaos and in creation. They are “in between,” or to give a more precise formulation, they are the world-event ... in

³⁰ Frederick D. and Wilhelmsen Wilmoore Kendall Jr., “Cicero and the Politics of the Public Orthodoxy,” in *Christianity and Political Philosophy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977), 35-36. See also Jeffrey Herndon’s survey and discussion of civil theology in *Eric Voegelin and the Problem of Christian Political Order* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 20-22.

which everything that exists exists wholly only through something else. The whole is only in its parts and each part is only as part of the whole. ... [These] are then things, the world-event. They are the Earth, from out of Chaos, and above all a third thing: Eros, the “history.”³¹

Love is the history, the in between horizon, of all things where each is both itself and, by virtue of being itself, is another by communion. Love—as history, as horizon, as openness to being—is indebtedness. Each of us is indebted to others for our existence, these others who are the home we are sustained from and toward which we journey. To be troubled about the meaning of existence is to seek where we belong; it is to ask about a home that already holds us, claims us and calls us to return to. This is the horizon in *eros*: to be homeward-bound is to acknowledge that we already have a home and so to exist in the mode of homewardness. We must conclude that there is desire and thus a direction in the metaxic tension that holds and moves existence. Existing in the mode of homewardness is to be rooted and complete and yet restless and yearning to be finally at rest. The quest for ground—through the primordial partners in being—is an experience of, and quest for, belonging. Existence is participation, but it is also a quest—though fraught and full of perils—for belonging as a tension in its simultaneous directions of existing-from and existing-toward a home that we seek in and through the primordial community of being.

ii. Community as Communion

Glenn Hughes’s commentary on Voegelin’s treatment of participation helps to throw some light on communion and community. In discussing the importance of

³¹ Schabert, 79.

methexis (participation) and *koinōnia* (communion) in Plato's work, Hughes questions Voegelin's crediting of Aristotle for his use of the term *metalepsis*. While Aristotle dismissed both Plato's Forms and participation in those Forms as "empty" and "poetical metaphors,"³² he could not himself find a more appropriate symbol than *metalepsis* (communion, participation) when writing about *nous* (thought, intellect, reason). Hughes writes

Voegelin interprets this [*metalepsis*] to mean that the relationship between knower and known, thought and being, is neither a meeting of completely different realities, nor a merging into absolutely identical reality, but something in-between the two: the knower and what is known are, mysteriously, both the same and distinct. That is what participation means, then: a simultaneity of sameness and difference.³³

This is also what communion means: the horizon where two meet and can affect an intimacy; they become one in the communion, without merging one into the other. Communion conveys the notion of horizon as the place of simultaneous sameness and difference and where *communitas* becomes inseparable from that communion.

The symbol "community" itself has a history in that it has been used historically to denote a dimension of human society through the ages. From a sociological perspective, community merely denotes identifiable and quantifiable groups. Our focus lies with the qualitative dimension in each *communitas* that is communion. A brief survey about the historical career of the symbol can, nonetheless, tell us something about the deeper meaning of communion.

³² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 991a21 in *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, 1566.

³³ Hughes, *Myth and Mystery in Eric Voegelin*, 27-8.

While the term *civitas* was used to denote a specifically political community in Roman times, it was the term *communitas* that was used to refer to that fellowship or likemindedness that already marked the uniqueness of a society, political or otherwise.³⁴ *Communitas* was used to connote more the unifying condition by which a multitude becomes a people. In fact, in Christian late antiquity, *communitas* remained a general term that expressed that common condition, as when St. Ambrose of Milan wrote that, had Christ first begun to exist only in time through his birth, he would share only the human condition (*communitatem*).³⁵ If one could draw a simple conclusion, it would be that *communitas* in late antiquity was still very close to communion or *communio* in terms of meaning.³⁶ In post-Roman times in the Latin West, *communitas* became associated more particularly with monasticism, although not ceasing to be used in connection with lay groups.³⁷ It was used in the Rule of St. Benedict to refer to the

³⁴ See Voegelin's commentary on Heraclitus fragment "But though the Logos is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own" (B2). Voegelin writes "The Logos is what men have in common, and when they are in agreement with regard to the Logos (*homologia*) then they are truly in community." Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume 2: The World of the Polis*, in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 15* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 304.

³⁵ "For if I shall believe that the Word is eternal, which I do believe, I cannot doubt about the eternity of the Father, whose Son is eternal. If I think His generation to be temporal, He begins to have fellowship (*communitatem*) with us, so that the Father seems to have begun to be..." *De incarnationis Dominicae sacramento*. 3. 18. For the translation of Ambrose, <http://www.strobertbellarmine.net/books/CUAPS--044.pdf>, accessed June 1, 2016. For commentary on the historical development of "community" see Brown, Warren C. "Community." *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*, ed. Mark Bevir. Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Reference, 2010. 256-260. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. accessed June 1, 2016.

³⁶ St. Augustine discusses the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as a communion and the Holy Spirit as the essence or condition of communion of Father and Son: "Therefore the Holy Spirit is a certain unutterable communion of the Father and the Son; and on that account, perhaps, He is so called, because the same name is suitable to both the Father and the Son. For He Himself is called specially that which they are called in common; because both the Father is a spirit and the Son a spirit, both the Father is holy and the Son holy. In order, therefore, that the communion of both may be signified from a name which is suitable to both, the Holy Spirit is called the gift of both." Augustine, *De Trinitate*, V. 11, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130105.htm>, accessed August 9th, 2016. The Holy Spirit is *communio* because He is a gift mutually given and received. Adam Kotsko explores this theme and considers the implications for both the Church as a community and for the notion of proprietorship in the political community more generally. See Adam Kotsko, "Gift and Communion: The Holy Spirit in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 62 (2010): 1-12.

³⁷ As an example of a non-monastic group, the English barons referred to themselves in the Magna Carta of 1215 as speaking on behalf of the "*communitas regni*" which proved to be an evocative term in later

monastic community whose community was formed in the observance of the Rule.³⁸ The violation of the Rule could lead to excommunication, a formal procedure against the antagonist which responded to the rupture of communion with the community that the antagonist had caused.³⁹ That is, to be in community is to be in communion with others, to be united-with others. To fall out of community—that is, no longer to participate in community or not to belong any longer in a community—is to fall out of communion with other members as partners in that community. To be excommunicated is to be outside communion with the members of the community because one is no longer united with them. Gabriel Marcel asserts that pride is the attitude that sees the self as not dependent upon others.⁴⁰ In one's independence and self-sufficiency, it is by pride that one puts oneself outside communion and therefore the substance that constitutes that particular community.

In his book, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community Cultural Memory in the Present*, Roberto Esposito takes a fruitful, etymological approach to analysis. There is an originary term from which “community” and other related words ultimately derive: *munus*. *Munus* can be translated as “service, duty; gift.”⁴¹ *Communitas* retains an inherent semantic complexity that was already present in *munus*.⁴² Esposito proceeds to show this larger semantic complexity among three terms that flow from

popular revolts. See Linda Clarke and Christine Carpenter, *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), 160.

³⁸ Brown, Warren C. "Community." Ibid.

³⁹ See *Rule of St. Benedict*, Chs. 23 and 24, “On Excommunication for Faults” and “What the Measure of Excommunication Should Be” respectively. <http://www.e-benedictine.com/rule/#ch23>

⁴⁰ In fact, Marcel criticizes Spinoza's definition of *superbia* in the *Ethics*: “‘Pride in an exaggeratedly good opinion of which arises from self-love.’ In reality this is a definition of vanity. As for pride, it consists in drawing one's strength solely from oneself. The proud man is cut off from a certain form of communion with his fellow men, which pride, acting as a principle of destruction, tends to break down.” See Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism* (New York: Kensington Publishing Company, 1984), 32.

⁴¹ *Collins Gem, Latin Dictionary* (Glasgow, UK: HarperCollins, 2004).

⁴² Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community Cultural Memory in the Present*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 3-4.

munus. They are *onus*, *officium*, and *donum*. "... [F]or the first two the meaning of duty ... is immediately clear: obligation, office, official, position and post. The third appears, however, to be more problematic. In what sense would a gift [*donum*] ... be a duty?"⁴³

This cluster of meanings that are related to *munus* as the species to the genus throws light on the also-related term "*communitas*." Esposito tells us that

it emerges that *communitas* is the totality of persons united not by a "property" [such as a likemindedness] but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an "addition" ... but by a "subtraction" As the complex though equally unambiguous etymology that we have till now undertaken demonstrates, the *munus* that the *communitas* shares isn't a property or a possession. ... It isn't having, but on the contrary, is a debt, a pledge, a gift that is to be given, and that therefore will establish a lack. The subjects of community are united by an obligation, in the sense that we say "I owe *you* something," but not "you owe *me* something."⁴⁴

For Esposito, etymology reveals the deeper semantic meaning of community in which we find ourselves as a people when we acknowledge and act upon the debt that is owed to others by virtue of simply living and moving among them. If the quaternarian structure of being is the experienced primordial community, then indebtedness is an accurate symbol of existential tension toward the ground of being in participation with the divine, human and cosmic partners. We belong in the community of being because, firstly, we exist-from the extraordinary mystery behind our givenness into existence by the ground; and, secondly, we exist-toward the ground in its modes of primordial partners. Existence is

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

indebtedness that is repaid in care, responsibility and loving creativeness. Indebtedness can be both an obligation and a gift. It is in the attitude of “what I owe you” that I can become concave to you: I find myself as lacking that you may make me full. We belong to each other when we acknowledge that everything is owed. Levinas writes: “The presence of the face thus signifies an irrecusable order, a command, which puts a stop to the availability of consciousness. Consciousness is called into question by the face. ... A face confounds the intentionality that aims at it.”⁴⁵

What of freedom in this emphasis upon obligation? And indeed, what of politics? Indebtedness at heart of belonging seems so far from a politics of liberty as to be unrecognizable as a politics, but it is the ethical foundation—if we listen to Levinas—of being human, the very condition of becoming a self. “The self is a *sub-jectum*: it is under the weight of the universe ... the unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent upon me from all sides, regards me, is my affair.”⁴⁶ A politics of liberty makes sense if we acknowledge that there is a prior ethical obligation owed to the Other and Others in responsibility. Without that acknowledgement, liberty can only be understood as license or legally sanctioned zone of autonomy. Liberty, understood as the opposite of obligation, is a path to loneliness, exile and homelessness. We are not the ground of our own existence, but always caught between the obligation that holds us and the freedom to respond. We are in-between want and completion. Plato recounts in his *Symposium* that *Eros* participates in the reality of both of his parents, *Poros* or Plenty and *Penia* or Poverty. Love is caught between the tensional poles of the soul in interpersonal reality, but is itself a transformative reality. That is, if existence is

⁴⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 54.

⁴⁶ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2011), 127.

indebtedness, then the role of love transforms an obligation into a gift. Justice is superseded by love where what is owed is given gladly for the sake of the Other. With love, indebtedness can become gift; and more precisely, a gift of belonging where, becoming mutually concave to each other, we find ourselves in the Other and the Other in ourselves. This mutual hollowing out of the self for the sake of the Other(s) is a communion manifesting as *communitas*; or at least, the beginning of *communitas* is the will and effort expended in excavating—however imperfectly—the shape of the Other(s) in one’s own self. The bonds of affection and care from which community grow are themselves manifestations of belonging which is fostered when the self makes way for the other(s). (Levinas’s famous “After you, sir.”)⁴⁷

Esposito continues

... it is only this first *munus* from on high that puts men in the position of having something in common with each other. And it is precisely this “given”—what is given to us, we ourselves as “given,” “donated,” “born from a gift”—that stands in the way of any hasty translation of *koinōnia* into a simple *philia*—“friendship,” “fellowship,” ... “camaraderie,” or “Freundschaft.”

Fellowship and likemindedness are certainly marks of community, but in themselves they do not capture the element of gift. *Communitas* is already a communion that is a subtraction, not an addition. Here is the negative or the lack. Becoming concave to the Other(s), communion can happen and *philia* manifest as a positive. The deeper point is existential, not political. Our lives are gifts and it is as gifts that we receive the Other(s) or give ourselves to the Other(s). As opposed to the Lockean or liberal sense of property

⁴⁷ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 89.

and ownership, existence is a gift given or donated from elsewhere. Again, existence is not its own ground, but we exist-from that ground that called us forth into existence.

Esposito continues

Yes we are brothers, *koinonoi*, but brothers *in Christ*, in an otherness that withdraws us from our subjectivity, our own subjective property, so as to pin it, subjectivity, to a point that is “void of subject” from which we come and toward which we are called, just as long as we remain “grateful” so as to respond to that first *munus* with a corresponding gift.⁴⁸

We can come to communion with each other and subsequently become a *communitas* only if we can first become a self-given gift to each other; if we acknowledge our moral indebtedness and seek to repay some measure of what was given. But this will happen only to the extent that, in Voegelin’s language, we participate in the ground of being in an attitude of openness, in Question and Mystery, toward the ground that participated in us first by the elemental act of creation. The mysteriousness of the ground of all being ignites the experience of wondering, questioning consciousness. The ground is the Mystery toward which that consciousness exists. Consciousness discovers that it exists-from that same mysterious ground. What the ancient Hellenic language does not clarify—and what Voegelin’s analysis of the matter does not capture—is why Question and Mystery opens the self to communion and *communitas*. Esposito’s analysis of *munus* proceeds by way of a specifically Christian Trinitarian stratum of meaning that brings in the element of communion: the divine ground of being is a communion of persons. The divine ground, from-which we exist, is revealed in Christianity to be itself a mysterious communion of mutual self-giving. What this means is that when we achieve communion

⁴⁸ Esposito, *Communitas*, 10.

in *communitas*, when we participate in the ineffable personhood of each other in love, we are already participating in the ground of being. By existing-toward every another in gratitude and responsibility, we are participating the divine ground that has already participated in us and indeed our communion is a participation in the perfection of communion.

iii. Consummation

To belong is to exist in a tension between that which we exist-from and that which we exist-toward. To allow ourselves to be held by those we love or to acknowledge the moral debt owed to God, others, and the world is to exist-from what is already an indispensable part of who we are. The other condition for belonging is to exist-toward. This is desire: I must want to be held, I must will the good of others. I am concerned for the Other because he, she or they already matter. It can happen that one or both experienced directions of the existential tension of belonging can diminish. For example, the experience of losing what we exist-from is the trauma of becoming rootless, going into limbo, losing traction. To be exiled, banished or rejected, or to suffer the loss of the Other in death is to experience a home damaged, destroyed or removed from us. It is no small matter to recover our proper place in its aftermath.⁴⁹ It can also happen that the desire in existing-toward someone or something fades. This does not mean that we become indifferent to those people, places, times or things toward which we exist. It does,

⁴⁹ In commentary on the significance of love in Kierkegaard's thought, David Walsh has written that "Love is glimpsed most profoundly in relation to the dead, for whom nothing more can be done and from whom nothing can be received. 'The work of love in recollecting one who is dead is a work the **most unselfish** love' ... Someone dead, who is unchanging and does everything to make himself forgotten, can be held onto purely only by love. It is in such a work of love that love is praised because it makes us aware that we are nothing part from the love by which we are sustained in love." David Walsh, *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 454.

however, mean that we “move on.” We are in search of a new belonging, another home, finding that we belong less to that former home. Our proper place is not static.

Consummation becomes relevant in the context of the existential tension of belonging. Much is at stake. That direction in the metaxy of belonging we call existence-toward is a desire that draws us into communion with that which we find we are existing-from. Consummation is often the translation of the Greek symbol *telos* which can also be translated as “end.” But an end means more than a terminus. Firstly, a consummation is an end in the sense of a final cause or explanation. The consummation was the reason for some action, the end for which sake the action aimed. Secondly, a consummation can mean a realization or completion of that action. James Allen writes about the meaning of consummation in both of these senses in the Hellenic world: “For in paradigm cases of action it will be the fulfillment or consummation of the action that both brings it to a close and was the reason or that for whose sake the agent undertook it in the first place.”⁵⁰ Consummations are final causes whose finality can be achieved and whose causality or efficacy can be exhausted by the action that they called into existence. Consummations are the particular ends for the sake of which things of particular natures strive, but they are also the end of the striving itself. It was in this vein that Aristotle wrote of wisdom in his *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Therefore wisdom must plainly be the most finished [the consummation] of the forms of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore wisdom must be comprehension combined with

⁵⁰ James Allen, “Why are there ends of both goods and evils in ancient ethical theory,” in *Strategies of Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic*, ed. Mi-Kyoung Lee, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 240.

knowledge—knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its proper completion.⁵¹

Wisdom is an entelechy: through itself, it affords knowledge its rest. If wisdom was the consummation of knowledge in the sense of completion, then it was also the perfection which initiated the striving for knowledge, gave that striving its particular nature, and welcomed knowledge home. Consummation, we could say, is the perfection of a fit where things come to their proper place. Because there was wisdom anterior to the search for knowledge and because it was wisdom that first stirred or participated in human consciousness, there could be the response of existential tension we call the love of wisdom that guided the one who began to strive for that knowledge. The philosopher exists-from that wisdom and exists-toward it. It was for the sake of that wisdom that knowledge was sought. Indeed, it was wisdom that awaited the homecoming of knowledge; perhaps the homecoming of the one striving for knowledge. Knowledge and knower have found their proper place in wisdom which is their perfection.

As *telos*, a consummation is that toward which we exist. However, as final cause, it also signifies both that from which we exist and that toward which we exist: the ground of being—characterized perhaps as wisdom—is the source of existential tension that initiates wonderment in its prior participation in us; but also a goal in whose direction Questioning wonderment and desire move us. In writing about death in the *Phaedo*, Plato too writes about consummation as both a perfecting agent and a perfection.

... [T]he true philosophers, Simmias, are always occupied in the practice of dying, wherefore to them least of all men is death terrible. ... How inconsistent would they be if they trembled and repined, instead of rejoicing, at their departure to that

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141a16-19, in *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, 1801.

place where, when they arrive, they hope to gain that which in life they desired – and this was wisdom.⁵²

The philosopher is the lover of wisdom and from the start it was wisdom that structured the life of the philosopher. Wisdom is the perfecting agent, the Logos, that participated in man first, constituting him/her as a philosopher; and wisdom is the perfection that awaits the homecoming of the philosopher. For Plato, Socrates has the courage to meet death because death, for Socrates, has the precise meaning of the consummation of the philosophical life. The separation of the soul from the body in death, for Socrates, means that the soul, in its philosophical self-cultivation, goes to its proper place: divine wisdom. It was always for the sake of wisdom that Socrates was a philosopher. It was wisdom that Socrates existed-from and existed-toward. It was wisdom, indeed, that Socrates belonged to through love. So death acquires a sacramentality in the *Phaedo*. That is, death reveals the extraordinariness of all that was perceived as merely ordinary and it is philosophy as the “art of dying” that was the ongoing revelation of extraordinariness that both precedes and perfects the ordinary. The sacramentality of death requires the ritual dressing of the body and the almsgiving that we see Socrates doing at the end of the *Phaedo* because, in gratitude, Socrates expects his consummation as a lover of wisdom. His life, constituted by love of wisdom, will now be perfected in death. Death as sacramental signifies the mysterious *telos* and completion of what the love of wisdom was always moved from and moved toward. Death is a consummation because, in the *Phaedo*, it is literally the final homecoming of the lover of wisdom into the divine home of wisdom. Socrates had cultivated this belonging all his life long.

⁵² Plato, *Phaedo*, 67e. Trans. B. Jowett, in *The Dialogues of Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), 207.

So here is another facet of belonging that is uncovered by consummation: sacramentality.⁵³ It is here that belonging potentially opens into eschatology, an area that falls outside the scope of this paper.⁵⁴ The eschatological dimension of belonging applies equally to persons and to the communion among persons (*communitas*), but its significance can only be characterized by an *apostrophe* or gap. It is a waiting-to-see or a pregnant pause that suggests that not all has been exhausted and not everything has been achieved. Aristotle puts it rather crudely in his *On the Parts of Animals* when he writes that everything that Nature makes is means to an end,⁵⁵ but for persons, who are horizons of both nature and spirit, that end is nonetheless present in the means. The perfection is present, but subject to the imperfections of corruption and defective wills. For our purposes here, every belonging in human life is already participating in its own eschatological perfection because that perfection is already participating in each human life. Existence-as-belonging is indeed a horizon: existence is where the difference between perfection and imperfection meet. The consummation of existence—between the lover and the beloved, between immanence and transcendence, between perfection and imperfection—is in communion. Belonging is the sacramental pause that awaits the eschaton.

Conclusion

⁵³ John 19:31 “*Consummatum est.*”

⁵⁴ It suffices to mention that the connection between consummation and sacramentality has long sanctified the experience of life for Christians most obviously through Matrimony and the Eucharist.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, I.i, in *Complete Works*, Vol. 1 in *Complete Works*, 994-1000.

This paper set out to explore the experience of belonging by focusing on the term “community.” We identified three characteristics of community that are implicit in the common sense understanding of the term.

The first was the dynamism of community. This led us to consider the source of that dynamism in the partners or members of the community. It was here that we saw that there are many communities that each person participates in and belongs to, including the primordial community of being which is the primary experience of the cosmos or the Whole diversified into fields of experienced reality. As part of this experience, we encounter the lasting and passing orders of being and find that our lives are not necessary but very much contingent. We are not the ground of our own existence, but exist-from that ground. We stand indebted to that ground—again, diversified through the discernible fields of reality that we know as God and man, world and society—for the good which is existence. In existing-toward what we exist-from, we find that we already belong; we have a place among others, a place and a time in the cosmos.

The second characteristic was communion. Implicit within the term “community” is the experience of communion. It is due to the nature of communion that not all human associations amount to genuine communities. Interest groups, for example, can gather around the same purpose and their unifying point is a common external.⁵⁶ Communion is an internal gathering of otherness in the self where that gathering involves the will to hollow out the self for the sake of the Other. Communion is always a horizon where

⁵⁶ Michael Oakeshott discusses two ways in which society can be considered an association: civil and enterprise. He discusses the European nation state of his day as an uneasy combination of civil association (*societas*) and of enterprise association (*universitas*). The former is the spontaneous formation of bonds of affection among individuals and groups in society that are expressions of communion and the second is the co-opting of the institutions of society for a corporate aim. See Michael Oakeshott, “Character of a Modern European State,” in *On Human Conduct* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1975), 197-203, 314-315.

otherness not only meets but where each renders him or herself responsible—or as Marcel expresses it, “*disponible*”⁵⁷—to the Other. Communion is the prior condition that takes form as *philia* and *communitas*. It is the prior condition of the self, or the dynamic ground out of which the self continually emerges.

The third characteristic was consummation which is another way to consider communion. Communion as consummation revealed the sacramental dimension that graces human existence in its belonging with others. Throughout the paper, we considered belonging using the hermeneutic of existential tension in its two directions of existence-from and existence-toward. It was this that left open the possibility that interpersonal and socio-political communion in the present is already a participation in the eschatological consummation to come because existence is already that consummation in its process toward perfection. Simply put, human existence in its range from personal to social to historical existence finds its purpose in living homeward-bound wherever that home may be.

⁵⁷ “Let us say that the *ego* ... is ruled by a sort of vague fascination, which is localised, almost by chance, in objects arousing sometimes desires, sometimes terror. It is, however, precisely against such a condition that what I consider the essential characteristic of the person is opposed, the characteristic, that is to say, of availability (*disponibilité*).” Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. Emma Craufurd (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 23.