To Henri POURRAT

SKETCH OF A PHENOMENOLOGY AND A METAPHYSIC OF HOPE[1]

In a study such as the one I am here undertaking there can be no question of starting from a particular definition and endeavouring to explain its content progressively, I propose rather to appeal to a special experience which it must be supposed you have. This experience, which is that of "I hope . . .", must, like the fundamental experience of faith, "I believe . . .", be purified; or, more exactly, we must pass from this experience in its diluted or diffused state to the same experience, touched—I do not say absolutely conceived—at its highest tension or again at its point of complete saturation.

You must not therefore be surprised to find me starting from an "I hope" of a very low order which will constitute a negative point of departure.

"I hope that James will arrive in time for lunch to-morrow and not just in the afternoon." This, of course, means that I hope so because I should like to have James with me for as long as possible; *and* I have reason to think that what I want will come about: I know that he does not intend to return to his office and could therefore catch an early train, etc.

We can already detect two elements here which are always found together: there is a wish and a certain belief. I am, however, right in calling this a diluted condition, because in such a case I am near to what we can term the point of indifference. After all, it is not very important if James only arrives at five o'clock; there is nothing there for me to *take to heart*—notice this expression which we shall need to remember. Moreover, I observe that the reasons for hoping are here exterior to myself, they are outside my being, far from having their roots in the very depths of what I am. In reality it is merely a calculation concerning certain chances I am considering, a practical little problem of probabilities. Moreover,

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if I find James boring or his visit is inconvenient, I might quite easily say: "I am afraid he will arrive in time for lunch."

Now let us suppose, on the contrary, that I am going through a time of trial, either in my private affairs or in those of the group to which I belong. I long for some deliverance which would bring the trial to an end. The "I hope" in all its strength is directed towards salvation. It really is a matter of my coming out of a darkness in which I am at present plunged, and which may be the darkness of illness, of separation, exile or slavery. It is obviously impossible in such cases to separate the "I hope" from a certain type of situation of which it is really a part. Hope is situated within the framework of the trial, not only corresponding to it, but constituting our being's veritable *response*. I have used the metaphorical term of darkness, but this metaphor has nothing accidental about it. It is, indeed, true that throughout a trial of the kind I have in mind, I find I am deprived for an indefinite period of a certain light for which I long. In fact, I should say that every trial of this order can be considered as a form of captivity.

Let us try to get a closer view of the meaning of the word captivity, or rather let us examine the characteristics of any state which can be described as "being a captive or prisoner." A special kind of endurance is, of course, involved, but what are the conditions under which endurance becomes part of the experience of captivity? Here we must emphasise the part played by duration. I should consider myself a captive if I found myself not merely precipitated into, but as it were pledged by external constraint to a compulsory mode of existence involving restrictions of every kind touching my personal actions. In addition, that which characterises all the situations we are evoking at the moment, is that they invariably imply the impossibility, not necessarily of moving or even of acting in a manner which is relatively free, but *of rising to a certain fullness of life, which may be in the realms of sensation or even of thought in the strict sense of the word.* It is quite clear, for instance, that the artist or the writer who suffers from a prolonged sterility has literally a sense of being in prison, or, if you prefer, in exile, as though he had really been taken out of the light in which he normally has his being. We can, therefore, say that all captivity partakes of the nature of alienation. It may be

in reality that, in tearing me out of myself, it gives me an opportunity of realising far more acutely than I should have done without it, the nature of that lost integrity which I now long to regain. This is illustrated in the case of the invalid for whom the word health arouses a wealth of associations generally unsuspected by those who are well. Yet, at the same time, we must determine not only what is positive but what is illusory in this idea of health which the sick man cherishes. A similar problem is presented when the beloved being whose disappearance I deplore seems to me more real and distinct now he is no longer with me than when I was able to enjoy a mutual and direct relationship with him.

I will not elaborate the details of the discussion which would take us away from our subject. I will merely remark that this method of reasoning does not seem to open the way for hope to us: quite on the contrary it is likely to land us in an anguish whence there is no escape, to make us prisoners of an experience which tears our hearts, where *fact* and *memory* are endlessly opposed and, far from merging together, are bound to contradict each other unrelentingly. All that we can say is that this form of reasoning brings into stronger relief the fundamental situation to which it is hope's mission to reply as to a signal of distress. But, it may be objected, are not some situations, where the tragic element seems to be absent, of such a nature as nevertheless to encourage or even to invite the exercise of hope? The woman who is expecting a baby, for instance, is literally inhabited by hope. It seems to me, however, that such examples, and I would even include that of the adolescent who anxiously awaits the coming of love, only seem to confirm what was said above. As a matter of fact, the soul always turns towards a light which it does not yet perceive, a light yet to be born, in the hope of being delivered from its present darkness, the darkness of waiting, a darkness which cannot be prolonged without dragging it in some way towards an organic dissolution. And might we not say in passing that it is from this point of view that such peculiarities as the aberrations frequent in adolescents and expectant mothers are to be explained?

In reality, we should probably go a step further in this direction and, interpreting the phenomena somewhat differently from Plato and the leaders of traditional spiritualism, recognise that

there is quite a general aspect under which human existence appears as a captivity and that, precisely when it takes on this form, it becomes so to speak subject to hope. It would actually be easy to show, and as we proceed we shall probably realise more fully, that there is also an ever-present possibility of degrading this same existence to a state in which it would gradually lose all capacity for hope. By a paradox which need surprise only the very superficial thinker, *the less life is experienced as a captivity the less the soul will be able to see the shining of that veiled, mysterious light,* which, we feel sure without any analysis, illumines the very centre of hope's dwelling-place. It is incontestable, for instance, that free-thought impregnated with naturalism, however it may struggle, alas with increasing success, to obliterate certain great contrasts and to flood the world with the harsh light of the lecture hall, however it may at the same time advertise what I have elsewhere styled the category of the *perfectly natural*—it is, I repeat, incontestable that such a dogmatically standardised free-thought eventually runs the risk of depriving souls of the very rudiments of secular hope.

But with what kind of hope are we really concerned? What exactly is its object?

It seems very important to me to stress here, in connection with what I have just said about existence in general being a captivity, that hope, by a *nisus* which is peculiar to it, tends inevitably to transcend the particular objects to which it at first seems to be attached. Later on we shall have to recognise clearly the metaphysical implications of this remark. But even now it is possible to appreciate the distinction in tone between "I hope . . .", the absolute statement, and "I hope that . . .". This distinction clearly runs parallel to that which obtains in all religious philosophy and which opposes "I believe" to "I believe that."

The philosopher must also consider another point of an equally decisive nature. It bears on the fundamental characteristics of the subject in "I hope . . .". This subject is indeed in no way identical with the "I myself . . .", who is nevertheless present, or at any rate is likely to come to the surface whenever there is a question not of hope but of certainty or even doubt. Here I must refer back to a group of ideas which I worked out a little while ago on the subject of the *Ego and Its Relation to Others*. The *ego*, I said, very

often, in fact almost invariably, needs to refer to some other person felt or conceived of as an opponent or a witness, or again merely summoned or imagined as an echo or a rectifier. "You have your doubts, because you are ill-informed or because you lack inner stability, or for any other reason; as for me, I am sure —and (be it understood) I am proud of the fact." Or, on the contrary, "You are quite sure of this because you are simple, or badly informed, or for any other reason; as for me, on the other hand, I have a more critical sense than you, therefore I am in doubt."

Naturally, I do not mean that *I am sure* or *I doubt* inevitably implies a position accentuated in this way; but what is certain is that the underlying meaning which animates the *I am sure* or *I doubt* is not really distorted, it does not lose its actual nature through such an accentuation. The case is quite different with *I hope*. Here there is not, and there cannot be the note of defiance or of provocation which, on the contrary, so easily becomes essential to *I doubt* and *I am sure*. What is the cause of this difference? It is surely due to the fact that "I hope" is not orientated in the same way: there is no statement directed towards, and at the same time against, some other person either present or imagined. Of course there is nothing to prevent me from saying in certain cases, "For my part, I hope, whilst you do not." But there would be none of that suggestion of aggressive self-complacency which, on the contrary, so often characterises "I am sure" or "I doubt".

This will be elucidated, I think, if we take the trouble to examine the difference between hope and optimism. It is a difference which may seem to be more of a musical than a logical order and which accordingly is easy enough to misunderstand. Its importance, however, should not be overlooked.

The optimist is he who has a firm conviction, or in certain cases just a vague feeling, that things tend to "turn out for the best". This may concern some definite situation, some precise difficulty: it may have to do with difficulties, conflict and contradictions in general. It goes without saying that optimism can take very different forms. There is a purely sentimental optimism and an optimism with pretensions to reason (which to tell the truth is perhaps merely a camouflaged sentimentality). There are some kinds of optimism which maintain that they are based on practical experience; others, on the contrary, claim to rest on meta-

physical or even religious arguments. I am inclined to think, however, that these differences are far less weighty than one might be tempted to believe at first. It is by no means certain that optimism does not always indicate the same disposition, the same *habitus*. Perhaps such a thing as deep optimism does not exist. The metaphysics of Leibnitz are deep, no doubt, but not in so far as they are optimistic, in so far as they are presented as a theodicy. When we come down to a final analysis, the optimist, as such, always relies upon an experience which is not drawn from the most intimate and living part of himself, but, on the contrary, is *considered from a sufficient distance* to allow certain contradictions to become alternated or fused into a general harmony. The optimist does not hesitate to extrapolate the conclusions which we are led to if only we are willing to "consider things" thoroughly, from a sufficient distance and over a wide enough stretch. "It always comes out right in the end. . . ."; "We shall be bound to see . . ."; "If only we don't allow ourselves to stop too soon . . ." such are the formulæ which constantly recur in the speeches of optimists. Notice that the word "speechs" is important here. The optimist is essentially a maker of speeches. There is in the natural and favourably directed development to which he so complacently clings something which readily lends itself to oratorical sequences and written expression. In parenthesis we note that there is a pessimism which is the exact counterpart of such optimism. It is oratorical in the same way, and there is no fundamental distinction between them. They are like the inside and outside of the same garment.

To go on from what has already been stated, we should say that this optimism (or, for the matter of that, this pessimism which does not really differ from it) remains strictly in the province of the "I myself." The optimist introduces himself indeed as a spectator with particularly keen sight. "If your vision is as good as mine, you are bound to see . . ."; "As your eyes are not as perfect as mine, do not hesitate to trust to my testimony and to my clear-sightedness. . . ." To be sure, the fact must be recognised that in the case of a given individual (seen in concrete reality and not through the writings of a theorist, be he economist or metaphysician), optimism cannot always be separated from an indistinct faith which cannot be shared by the spectator as such: but

what is important for us here is optimism in its essence, that is to say precisely in so far as it does not include the intervention of faith, or even the direct participation, the engagement, which comes into being as soon as life is regarded as something other than purely external. But we have already seen, and we recognise more and more clearly, that he who hopes, inasmuch as his hope is real and not to be reduced to a mere platonic wish, seems to himself to be involved in some kind of a process; and it is only from this point of view that it is possible to realise what is specific, and, I should add super-rational, perhaps also super-relational, in hope. For, to use once again the expression I have so often employed, hope is a mystery and not a problem. We might point out from the same point of view that hope is very difficult to describe. Indeed, when I try to represent it to myself I am almost inevitably led to alter its true nature and to consider it as presumption. It is thus that we come to substitute "to flatter myself" for "to hope". But in reality if we succeed in learning its meaning more accurately or, which comes to the same thing, in imagining vividly enough what hoping amounts to in one of the situations described further back, we shall recognise that "I hope" cannot ever be taken to imply: "I am in the secret, I know the purpose of God or of the gods, whilst you are a profane outsider; and moreover it is because I have the benefit of special enlightenment that I say what I do." Such an interpretation is as unfair and inaccurate as it is possible to be, it does not take into account all that there is of humility, of timidity, of *chastity* in the true character of hope. The difficult task of the philosopher is precisely to react strongly against such an interpretation, and at the same time to understand why it is so difficult to avoid making it. How can we fail to see that humility, modesty or chastity, by their essence, can never consent to be defined, that is to say they will never deliver their secret to the mercy of rationalistic investigation? Hence the fundamental insufficiency, the clumsy inadequacy of the interpretations we generally have to fall back upon in seeking to understand what I term the mystery of hope. For instance, adopting the realistic point of view, people are ready enough to say, "Does not the hope of the invalid, the prisoner or the exile boil down in the end to a sort of organic refusal to accept an intolerable situation as final? The amount of vitality which the

individual retains can be measured by this refusal, and do we not find that, if he has been worn down to a certain point of exhaustion, he will become incapable of exercising the hope which supported him in the first stages of his trial?"

It must be acknowledged that the notion of vitality here referred to is vague enough in itself. But what is extremely characteristic is the tendency of the argument to belittle hope: "Let us have no illusions, hope is not anything but . . ., etc." In this way its specific nature is disputed. It is a matter for reflection to discover the origin of this anxiety to depreciate. We shall return to this point further on. But at the same time it is to be noted that without any doubt the soul can be in a state of drowsiness which tends to paralyse every kind of reaction; it is quite clear, for instance, that cold or hunger can reduce me to a state in which I cannot concentrate my attention on any idea, or *a fortiori* use my powers of reflection; it would be no less absurd to draw materialistic conclusions from this as to the nature of attention or thought. As it happens, experience seems to establish that hope is able to survive an almost total ruin of the organism; if then it is vitality in some sense, it is very difficult to determine what that sense is, for it has nothing in common with the meaning we attribute to the word in speaking of the vitality of a healthy body. At any rate, the principle must be laid down that any physical theory of hope is absurd and, according to all appearances, contradictory; perhaps we might be justified in maintaining that hope coincides with the spiritual principle itself. Thus we must be careful not to think that we can understand it by psychological suppositions; these as a matter of fact are always imagined *a posteriori*, to explain something which is an abiding mystery by its nature. To convince ourselves of this it is enough to observe that we are quite unable to tell before an ordeal what that ordeal will do to us and what resources we shall find we possess with which to face it.

The truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome. The victory may not invariably involve any sense of effort: I should even be quite ready to go so far as to say that such a feeling is not compatible with hope in its purest form.

What then does it mean to despair? We will not stop short here

with symptoms and signs. What is the essence of the act of despair? It seems as though it were always capitulation before a certain *fatum* laid down by our judgment. But the difference between capitulation and non-capitulation, though certain, is hard to define. Let us suppose that I develop some incurable illness and that my condition shows no improvement. It may be that I say of myself, "I cannot be cured", or that it is the doctors who tell me, with or without tact, that there is no possible prospect of my recovery (they are, for instance, warning me in order to spare me from disappointments which would wear me out to no purpose). In the first case it seems as though I decide and defy any real or possible contradictions. "You, who claim to know something about it, say that I can get better; but I myself, who know how I feel and who have inner experience of all my symptoms, I tell you that you are mistaken and that I cannot recover." In this way, I pronounce my own sentence, and at the same time my relations and my doctor will no doubt feel that I have made conditions as unfavourable as possible for my constitution to put up an effective resistance. Is there not now every chance that, discouraged by this sentence, it will feel obliged to confirm it? So it comes about that, far from merely foreseeing my own destiny, I shall really have precipitated it. Strangely enough, things may very well happen quite differently in the second case we are considering. It may be that the verdict communicated to me, coming from outside, will arouse in me not merely the strength to deny it, but to prove it to be wrong in fact. At least we can say that in this second case I do not appear in principle to be furthering my non-recovery, unless I ratify and thus make my own the sentence which has been communicated to me. But it remains true that a certain margin is left me, a certain possibility of contradiction, precisely because it was someone else and not I who declared my recovery to be impossible.

However, it is still necessary here to distinguish between two inner attitudes which are very different and which help to decide the event itself. To capitulate, in the strongest sense of the word, is not only, perhaps is not at all, to accept the given sentence or even to recognise the inevitable as such, it is to go to pieces under this sentence, to disarm before the inevitable. It is at bottom to renounce the idea of remaining oneself, it is to be fascinated by

the idea of one's own destruction to the point of anticipating this very destruction itself. To accept, on the contrary, can mean to hold on and to keep a firm hold of oneself, that is to say to safeguard one's integrity. Because I am condemned never to recover from this illness, or not to come out of this prison I do not mean to give up, I do not consent, from this very moment, to be the useless creature which my illness or my captivity may finally make of me; I will counter the fascination which the idea of this creature might have for me with the firm determination to remain what I am. It may thus come about that by accepting an inevitable destiny which I refuse with all my strength to anticipate, I will find a way of inward consolidation, of proving my reality to myself, and at the same time I shall rise infinitely above this *fatum* to which I have never allowed myself to shut my eyes. Herein without any doubt lies the power and greatness of stoicism, but, at the same time, it must be recognised that the stoic is always imprisoned within himself. He strengthens himself, no doubt, but he does not radiate. I would go as far as to say that he affords us the highest expression, the greatest degree of sublimation of the "I myself". He bears himself—and that means that above all he controls his interior life—as though he had no neighbours, as though he were concerned only with himself and had no responsibility towards anyone else.

It is obvious that in hope there is something which goes infinitely further than acceptance, or one might say more exactly that it is a non-acceptance, but positive and hence distinguishable from revolt. Non-acceptance can indeed be a mere stiffening or contraction. When it is this it is powerless and can be, in the same way as its opposite, abdication, a manner of working out one's own defeat, of relinquishing control. The important question for us is to know how it can take on the positive character. How, if I do not accept can I avoid tightening myself up, and, instead, relax in my very non-acceptance? We might compare this with the supple movements of the swimmer or the practised skier. But our difficulty is that it is very hard to conceive how there can be a suppleness and grace in something which, on the face of it, appears to be negation. We can begin to see the solution of this strange problem by reflecting that tightening up or stiffening, on whatever physical or spiritual level we may be considering it, always

suggests the presence of the same physical factor, which, if not exactly fear, is at any rate of the same order, a concentration of the self on the self, the essence of which is probably a certain impatience. If we introduce the element of patience into non-acceptance we at once come very much nearer to hope. It seems then that there exists a secret and rarely discovered connection between the way in which the *ego* is either centred or not centred in itself, and its reaction to the duration of time, or more precisely to the temporal order, that is to say to the fact that change is possible in reality. A simple expression borrowed from everyday language is a help here: *to take one's time.* He who stiffens and rebels does not know how to take his time. What exactly do these words, so foreign to the vocabulary of technical philosophy, mean? "Take your time", an examiner would say, for example, to a flurried candidate. That means, do not force the personal rhythm, the proper cadence of your reflection, or even of your memory, for if you do you will spoil your chances, you will be likely to say at random the first words which come into your head. It may seem that we have wandered very far from hope in the strict sense of the word. I do not think so, and this is how I am going to try to explain the analogy, or more exactly, perhaps, the secret affinity between hope and relaxation. Does not he who hopes, and, as we have seen, has to contend with a certail trial comparable to a form of captivity, tend to treat this trial and to proceed in regard to it as he who is patient towards himself treats his inexperienced young *ego*, the *ego* which needs educating and controlling. Above all he never lets it contract but, on the other hand, he does not allow it to kick over the traces or take control prematurely or unwarrantably. From this point of view, hope means first accepting the trial as an integral part of the self, but while so doing it considers it as destined to be absorbed and transmuted by the inner workings of a certain creative process.

Further back I spoke of patience with oneself; perhaps it is still more instructive now to consider patience with others. This most certainly consists in never hustling or being rough with another person, more exactly, in never trying to substitute our own rhythm for his by violence. Neither should the other person be treated as though he lacked an autonomous rhythm, and could accordingly be forced or bent to suit us. Let us say positively this

time that it consists in placing our confidence in a certain process of growth and development. To give one's confidence does not merely mean that one makes an act of theoretical acceptance with no idea of intervention, for that would, in fact, be to abandon the other purely and simply to himself. No, to have confidence here seems to mean to embrace this process, in a sense, so that we promote it from within. Patience seems, then, to suggest a certain temporal pluralism, a certain pluralisation of the self in time. It is radically opposed to the act by which I despair of the other person, declaring that he is good for nothing, or that he will never understand anything, or that he is incurable. That is, of course, the same despair which makes me proclaim that I shall never be cured, that I shall never see the end of my captivity, etc. It seems, strangely enough, that, in hoping, I develop in connection with the event, and perhaps above all through what it makes of me, a type of relationship, a kind of intimacy comparable to that which I have with the other person when I am patient with him. Perhaps we might go so far as to speak here of a certain *domesticating* of circumstances, which might otherwise, if we allowed them to get the better of us, frighten us into accepting them as a *fatum*. If we look no further than its etymological meaning, patience appears to be just a simple letting things alone, or allowing them to take their course, but if we take the analysis a little further we find that such non-interference is of a higher order than indifference and implies a subtle respect for the other person's need of time to preserve his vital rhythm, so that it tends to exercise a transforming influence upon him which is comparable to that which sometimes rewards love. It should moreover be shown how here and there pure causality is utterly left behind. Of course patience can easily be degraded; it can become mere weakness, or mere complacency, precisely in so far as it betrays the principle of charity which should animate it. But can it be overlooked that hope likewise is liable to degradations of the same order, when, for instance, it is found in the mere spectator who, without being in the least involved in the game or race at which he is present, hopes that one or other of the competitors will succeed, and at the same time, in a confused sort of way, congratulates himself that he is running no risk and has no direct part to play in the struggle.

To tell the truth, I have no doubt that the comparison I have suggested will appear paradoxical and absurd. In the case of patience there is question of a being, but here we are not dealing with a being but a situation which in its essence has nothing personal about it. On reflection, however, the gap tends to narrow, perhaps because I can hope or not hope in the being of whom I am in a sense in charge, and we shall have to ask ourselves if "I place my hope in you" is not really the most authentic form of "I hope". But it is not everything; the trial affects me, it attacks my being so that I am likely to be permanently altered by it. Thus there is a risk that illness will make of me that deformed creature, a catalogued and professionalised invalid, who thinks of himself as such and contracts in all respects the *habitus* of illness. It is the same with captivity or exile, etc., and, I should say, with every sort of misfortune. In so far as I hope, I detach myself from this inner determinism which is rather like a cramp, threatening, when the trial is upon me, to change me into one of those degraded, abnormal, and in the end perhaps hypnotised expressions of human personality produced by despair, because it is above all things a fascination.

We come here, I think, to one of the vital centres of our subject. But immediately an objection presents itself which must be squarely faced. It does not seem possible to consider hope purely and simply as an inner action of defence by which I should be able to safeguard my integrity when it is threatened by an obsession: or more exactly, it is not the actual safeguard which we are aiming at; if this is secured by hope, it can only be indirectly. Everything goes to show that hope does not bear upon what is in me, upon the region of my interior life, but much more on what arises independently of my possible action, and particularly of my action on myself: I hope—for the return of someone who is absent, for the defeat of the enemy, for peace, which will give back to my country the liberties of which disaster has robbed it. If it is permissible to say, as I already implied above, that hope has the power of making things fluid, it remains to be seen exactly how and upon what this power is exercised.

Let us again this time make use of an example. For a long time a father has been without news of his son. The boy had gone on a mission to a distant country, telling his relations not to worry

if he did not write for some time, but his silence is unduly prolonged and gives rise to the worst fears. Yet the father persists in hoping. Each day he awaits the letter which would bring his anxiety to an end. To despair would be to say, "I have been disappointed so many times there is every reason to expect that I shall be again to-day"; it would be to declare this wound incurable, this wound which not only is inflicted by separation but which *is* separation. "I shall never again be anything but the wounded, mutilated creature I am to-day. Death alone can end my trouble; and it will only do so by ending me myself. That is all destiny is able to do for me—destiny, that strange doctor which can only cure the disease by killing the sufferer." The despairing man not only contemplates and sets before himself the dismal repetition, the eternalisation of a situation in which he is caught like a ship in a sea of ice. By a paradox which is difficult to conceive, he anticipates this repetition. He sees it at the moment, and simultaneously he has the bitter certainty that this anticipation will not spare him from living through the same trial day by day until the extinction which, to tell the truth, he anticipates likewise, not seeing it as a remedy but as a supreme outrage to the departed for whom his mourning does at least ensure the shadow of survival. Despair here appears as an enchantment, or more exactly as a kind of witchcraft, whose evil action has a bearing on all which goes to form the very substance of a person's life.

Let us be still more precise. Each instant, my impressions, in the very general sense which Hume gives this word, stand out against a certain "background" in which reflection alone is able to discern, somewhat imperfectly perhaps, what belongs to the past or the future or what is only a horizon of floating possibilities. Contrary to what one is often tempted to admit, it is not true to argue that this "background" contrasts with given facts, as though it were merely imagined; it is also "given" in another form, that for instance in which we anticipate the future, and rejoice, grow sad or worry about a certain prospect. It is precisely because we place ourselves unwarrantably on the "ground of facts" that we are led to formulate the principle that the future is not given—and can therefore only be imagined. It would be much nearer the truth to say that in anticipating I receive, I

pocket in advance, I take a certain advance percentage, on a given fact which is to come, and is quite literally credited to me. Actually it does not greatly matter here if these advances are different from the rest which we shall effectively realise one day. What I just called the substance of life can now be separated from the act, almost impossible to describe, by which I am aware of this substance at a given moment as one is aware of the quality of a wine or the water of a precious stone. Reflective analysis will no doubt here suggest the idea of a relationship between the immediate, the anticipated and also the remembered which we might say backs the operation. If we kept to the idea of this relationship we should easily come to speak of a triangulation which each of us is making at every moment of his existence. That, however, would only be a very imperfect approximation, for by this triangulation I could never determine anything but my position at a given moment. Now, the appreciation which is here under discussion is something quite different from a simple registration, indeed it tends at each moment to convert itself into a global judgment, valid *ubique et semper* and thereby infinitely transcending everything which is limited to the *hic et nunc*.

The truth is that it is impossible to rest satisfied here with an interpretation expressed in terms of relationships. An amateur psychologist, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten, brought out in a paper, which I believe is still unpublished, the importance of what he very aptly called "*L'entrain à la vie* (enthusiasm for living)". The appreciation, or *a fortiori* the triangulation, of which I mentioned the possibility just now, is in reality nothing but the intellectualised and inadequate expression of that which is dynamically known to us as enthusiasm or ardour for life. This term of ardour, unphilosophical as it may be, has the merit of retaining and as it were incarnating a metaphor which we cannot reduce to abstract terms without thereby condemning ourselves to miss the essential and inescapable connection which exists between life and a flame. In passing, how can we help noticing like Dr. Minkowski, that certain metaphors furnish us with settings for the human experience "to exist" to such a point that we have the right to regard them as veritable concrete categories. It is on this flame, which is life, that the malevolent action of despair is exercised. We might say to put

it in another way that ardour renders soluble or volatile what without it would at every moment tend to prevent existence. It is turned towards a certain matter in the personal *becoming* which it is its function to consume. Where, however, "the evil spell" exists, this flame turns away from the matter which is its natural food, to devour itself. This is what we express admirably when we say of a being "he preys on himself".[1] From this point of view, despair can be compared to a certain spiritual autophagy. We must notice here, and keep in mind for all that follows, the part played by the *self*, that action which consists not only of reflecting but of making the self the centre.

Do these indications throw any light on our problem? In the example we were considering—that of the son of whom there is no news—it is clear that the disappointing fact, the arrival of the postman who does not bring the longed-for letter, illustrates what I was speaking of as something to be consumed or dissolved. The term of liquefaction expresses the same process. But we must not forget the criticism to which we have previously subjected the confused notion of vitality. We might say that a natural optimism exists, which reflects before everything else the perfect functioning of the organism, but which may also correspond to a thoroughly egoistical desire to husband one's forces, to save oneself useless anxiety for as long as possible; it goes without saying that this natural optimism is not to be confused any more than theoretical optimism with hope. The latter appears to us as inspired by love, or perhaps more exactly by a combination of scenes which this love conjures up and irradiates. But an objection at once arises which we must now face squarely and which seems likely to ruin any metaphysical theory of hope.

The objection consists of questioning the value of the belief implied in hope. If I wish ardently for a certain thing, it will be said, I shall represent it to myself very distinctly, I shall realise it in my imagination and immediately, by the same process, I shall believe it is actually going to happen. If this be so, must we not admit that hope implies an illusion of which critical reflection at once exposes the mechanism? This is exactly the illusion which makes us take our wishes for realities—our wishes or our fears: the mechanism is obviously the same in both cases.

[1] "*Il se consume.*"

We must now ask ourselves under what conditions it is possible to save hope, that is to say to recognise a value in it which such criticism cannot diminish, pertinent as it may be in a great number of particular cases.

It is here no doubt that we must remember the distinction made above between "to hope" and "to hope that". The more hope tends to reduce itself to a matter of dwelling on, or of becoming hypnotised over, something one has represented to oneself, the more the objection we have just formulated will be irrefutable. On the contrary, the more hope transcends imagination, so that I do not allow myself to imagine what I hope for, the more this objection seems to disappear.

It might, however, be asked whether that is not just an evasion. Indeed, from the very moment that I am called upon to endure some trial such as illness or exile, what all my wishes are bent upon is my liberation. I may represent more or less precisely the exact way in which it will happen, but in any case I realise it intensely, and by that very fact I tend to believe in it: it seems then that the psychological mechanism functions in the same way even where my consciousness is not hypnotised by a certain precise image.

But it must be answered that in reasoning thus we arbitrarily simplify an interior situation which includes, as has been expressly stated, the essential element of temptation to despair. The stifling conditions which surround and as it were hedge us in, tend to appear unchangeable to us. We feel that there is no reason to suppose that a *miracle* will transform them into conformity with our desires. Notice that here another psychological mechanism is working in a precisely opposite direction from that which was shown to bring about the illusion exposed at the heart of hope. It must then be recognised that, in the situation and trials we have in mind, consciousness has to contend with two mechanisms which tend to work in opposite directions and this observation, coming at the end of what we have already noticed, leads us to recognise the secret connection between hope and liberty. Both take for granted the overruling action of the judgment.

Let us, for example, consider the example of the invalid; it is obvious that he has set his mind upon recovering by the end of a

definite period; he is likely to despair if he is not cured at the appointed time. Here it would be the special function of the judgment to suggest that even if the time has passed without the expected recovery taking place, there is, all the same, plenty of room for hope. Here hope appears to be bound up with the use of a method of surmounting, by which thought rises above the imaginings and formulations upon which it had at first been tempted to depend. But, in this example, it depends no doubt on more than a question of dates. The very idea of recovery is capable, at any rate in a certain spiritual register, of being purified and transformed. "Everything is lost for me if I do not get well", the invalid is at first tempted to exclaim, naïvely identifying recovery with salvation. From the moment when he will have not only recognised in an abstract manner, but understood in the depths of his being, that is to say *seen*, that everything is not necessarily lost if there is no cure, it is more than likely that his inner attitude towards recovery or non-recovery will be radically changed; he will have regained the liberty, the faculty of relaxing to which we referred at length further back.

It really seems to be from this point of view that the distinction between believer and unbeliever stands out in its true meaning. The believer is he who will meet with no insurmountable obstacle on his way towards transcendence. Let us say again, to fix the meaning of the word obstacle more precisely, that in so far as I make my hope conditional I myself put up limits to the process by which I could triumph over all successive disappointments. Still more, I give a part of myself over to anguish; indeed I own implicitly that if my expectations are not fulfilled in some particular point, I shall have no possibility of escaping from the despair into which I must inevitably sink. We can, on the other hand, conceive, at least theoretically, of the inner disposition of one who, setting no condition or limit and abandoning himself in absolute confidence, would thus transcend all possible disappointment and would experience a security of his being, or in his being, which is contrary to the radical insecurity of *Having*.

This is what determines the ontological position of hope—absolute hope, inseparable from a faith which is likewise absolute, transcending all laying down of conditions, and for this very reason every kind of representation whatever it might be. The

only possible source from which this absolute hope springs must once more be stressed. It appears as a response of the creature to the infinite Being to whom it is conscious of owing everything that it has and upon whom it cannot impose any condition whatsoever without scandal. From the moment that I abase myself in some sense before the absolute Thou who in his infinite condescension has brought me forth out of nothingness, it seems as though I forbid myself ever again to despair, or, more exactly, that I implicitly accept the possibility of despair as an indication of treason, so that I could not give way to it without pronouncing my own condemnation. Indeed, seen in this perspective, what is the meaning of despair if not a declaration that God has withdrawn himself from me? In addition to the fact that such an accusation is incompatible with the nature of the absolute Thou, it is to be observed that in advancing it I am unwarrantably attributing to myself a distinct reality which I do not possess.

It would however be vain to try to hide the difficulties, from the human point of view, of this position of which no one would dream of contesting the metaphysical and religious purity. Does not this invincible hope arise from the ruins of all human and limited hopes? Must not the true believer be ready to accept the death and ruin of his dear ones, the temporal destruction of his country, as possibilities against which it is forbidden to rebel? To go further: if these things come about, must he not be ready to adore the divine will in them? We cannot be enough on our guard against the softening processes to which some people have recourse in order to reassure those whose faith might fail in the presence of such terrible happenings. I have in mind particularly the allegations of those who claim to calm us by observing that God, being infinitely good, cannot tempt us beyond our strength by driving us to despair which he has actually forbidden us. I am afraid that these are no more than verbal tricks; we know neither the real extent of our powers nor the ultimate designs of God; and, if the arguments were really possible to accept, it would in the long run amount to an implicit and as it were hypocritical way of laying down conditions which would bring hope once more within the limits of the relative. But then must it not be agreed that the absolute hope to which we are invited tends to become identified with despair itself—with a despair however which it is

no longer even permitted for us to indulge in, and which is perhaps no more than an infinite apathy?

On the other hand, it is to be wondered whether, in claiming to establish himself beyond the reach of any possible disappointment in a zone of utter metaphysical security, man does not become guilty of what might well be called treason from above. Does he not tend to violate in this way the fundamental conditions under which he is introduced into the world? To tell the truth, in falling back upon the idea of what I have called absolute hope, it seems that I elude my problems far more than I solve them and that I am juggling with the given facts.

But are we not then losing our way again in the inextricable? Here I take the example once more of the patriot who refuses to despair of the liberation of his native land which is provisionally conquered. In what, or in whom, does he place his hope? Does he not conditionalise his hope in the way which just now we decided was unwarrantable? Even if he recognises that there is no chance that he will himself witness the hoped-for liberation, he carries beyond his own existence the fulfilment of his desires, he refuses with all his being to admit that the darkness which has fallen upon his country can be enduring, he affirms that it is only an eclipse. Still more: it is not enough to say that he cannot believe in the death of his country, the truth is much more that he does not even consider he has the right to believe in it, and that it would seem to him that he was committing a real act of treason in admitting this possibility; and this is true whether he is a believer or not. In every case he has made a judgment, which lies outside all his power of reflection, that to despair would be disloyal, it would be to go over to the enemy. This judgment rests on a postulate which is actually very likely to remain implicit but which we must examine. It consists in the affirmation that in hoping for liberation I really help to prepare the way for it, and that, inversely, in raising a doubt about its possibility I reduce the chance of it to some degree. It is not that strictly speaking I impute a causal efficacy to the fact of hoping or not hoping. The truth is much rather that I am conscious that when I hope I strengthen, and when I despair, or simply doubt, I weaken or let go of, a certain bond which unites me to the matter in question. This bond shows every evidence of being religious in essence.

Here we come up, however, against a difficulty. Where the matter in question is strictly speaking my own fate, can we speak of a bond or indeed of religion? It is probably necessary here to introduce a distinction which we have previously had occasion to bring out. When I tremble for my own existence, it may be that I am giving way to the simple instinct of self-preservation: it is very doubtful if one can legitimately designate by the word "hope" the kind of organic attachment to myself which makes me imagine final liberation in the midst of danger, even where the future seems most threatening. It is different when piety towards oneself intervenes. By this I mean a reference to a certain spiritual interconnection at the heart of which my existence can preserve its meaning and its value. We are not dealing here with an abstraction, an impersonal order: if I inspire another being with love which I value and to which I respond, that will be enough to create this spiritual interconnection. The fact of the reciprocal love, the communion, will be enough to bring about a deep transformation in the nature of the bond which unites me to myself. Where the matter concerns me alone, or more exactly when I consider myself as though I were the only one concerned, the question of knowing what is going to happen to me may strike me as practically without interest or importance. This, however, will not prevent the instinct of self-preservation from remaining active in me with all that it entails. It is obviously not the same if I know that he whom I love is in some way dependent on me, and that what happens to me will affect him vitally. We might say in the manner of Hegel that my relationship to myself is mediated by the presence of the other person, by what he is for me and what I am for him. But it is of capital importance for our subject that we see at the same time that this spiritual interconnection of which I have only examined the simplest example here, invariably appears as veiled in mystery to him who is conscious of having a part in it. Here again, let us be as concrete as possible. To love anybody is to expect something from him, something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfil this expectation. Yes, paradoxical as it may seem, to expect is in some way to give: but the opposite is none the less true; no longer to expect is to strike with sterility the being from whom no more

is expected, it is then in some way to deprive him or take from him in advance what is surely a certain possibility of inventing or creating. Everything looks as though we can only speak of hope where the interaction exists between him who gives and him who receives, where there is that exchange which is the mark of all spiritual life.

But perhaps, without sinning through excessive subtlety, it might be pointed out that this delicate interplay of relationships can exist internally wherever there is genuine creation. In that case we need only put outside the category of hope the blind attachment which impels us simply to go on living, carrying out day by day the functions, organic or otherwise, which are exercised for ourselves alone without any superior object in view, be it intellectual, moral or aesthetic. If this is so, the ancient distinction of the Stoics upon which any critical examination of hope is invariably founded, the distinction between things which depend, and do not depend, upon ourselves, will lose a great deal of its significance: Further, how can we fail to recall the connection established above between hope and liberty? Not only does voluntary action not presuppose an objective judgment already formed by which I should see in advance what was in my power to do and what was beyond it, but it must on the contrary be maintained that the authentic formula of willing is *I will*, therefore *I can*; in other words, I decide that it is in my power to do a certain thing, to obtain a certain result precisely because it is my will (or because it is necessary) that this thing should be done and this result obtained. Actually we only have to remember that to act freely is always to innovate, in order to see that there would be a contradiction in admitting that I should be obliged in my willing to depend simply on the knowledge of what I had done before. It is, however only by starting from such knowledge that I could proceed to an objective setting of limits between what is in my power and what is beyond it.

It is not difficult to see how a positive philosophy of hope can be arrived at from these observations. We are actually going to find that all our foregoing remarks will come together as into a sheaf. When we said that hope was the very opposite of pretension or defiance, we were ready to recognise that it is essentially silent and modest, that it bears the mark of inviolable timidity except

where it develops in the department of the *us*, that is to say in fellowship. We talk to each other of our common hope but hate to express it before those who do not share it, as if it were really—and perhaps indeed it is—a secret. If hope is not a defiance, perhaps it is nevertheless conscious of appearing defiant or provocative in the eyes of those who claim that they are established on the firm rock of experience: "It has always been seen that . . ." or, on the contrary "It has never been found that . . .". Hope with scandalously carefree grace undertakes to prove these assertions false; by what right?

It seems as though hope is linked to a certain candour, a certain virginity untouched by experience. It belongs to those who have not been hardened by life. We are impelled to introduce a notion here which, from the point of view of objective knowledge, will appear to be devoid of sense: it is that of a sullying or withering which is connected with experience. The notion of experience itself is ambiguous. On the one hand there is an established and catalogued experience in the name of which judgments are pronounced by the pronoun "one". On the other hand there is an experience in the making which is only possible precisely when all the other kind of experience has been set on one side, even if finally and after having been duly desiccated, it is given a place in the herbarium of universal wisdom. It is quite evident that hope is intimately bound up with experience in the second sense and perhaps it might be claimed that hope is its spring. In the name of accepted experience people claim to trace some kind of circle of Popilius round us; "There is no way out"—that is the formula to which the experts of established experience fly. But postulated at the very basis of hope is the non-validity of such assertions, the truth that the more the real is real the less does it lend itself to a calculation of possibilities on the basis of accepted experience. Hope quite simply does not take any heed of this sum total. It might be said that in a sense hope is not interested in the *how*: and this fact shows how fundamentally untechnical it is, for technical thought, by definition, never separates the consideration of ends and means. An end does not exist for the technician, if he does not see approximately how to achieve it. This, however, is not true for the inventor or the discoverer who says, "There must be a way" and who adds:

"I am going to find it." He who hopes says simply: "It will be found." In hoping, I do not create in the strict sense of the word, but I appeal to the existence of a certain creative power in the world, or rather to the actual resources at the disposal of this creative power. Where, on the other hand, my spirit has been as it were tarnished by catalogued experience, I refuse to appeal to this creative power, I deny its existence; all outside me, and perhaps within me also (if I am logical) appears to me as simple repetition.

We have arrived then at the important conclusion that what is specific in hope is lost sight of if the attempt is made to judge and condemn it from the point of view of *established experience*. It misunderstands the teaching of such experience with insolent ingenuity, though it is actually definite enough. The truth is much more that hope is engaged in the weaving of experience now in process, or in other words in an adventure now going forward. This does not run counter to an authentic empiricism but to a certain dogmatism which, while claiming to be experience, fundamentally misunderstands its nature, just as a cult of the scientific may stand in the way of living science in its creative development.

It is not difficult to see that hope thus understood involves a fundamental relationship of consciousness to time which we must now try to analyse.

If we accept the perspective of established experience, we are led to suppose that time will bring nothing new beyond an illustration or an added confirmation, actually superfluous, of the pronouncements engraved on the tables of universal wisdom or merely of common sense. It is as much as to say that we are here in a world where time no longer *passes*, or, which comes to the same thing, where time merely passes without bringing anything, empty of any material which could serve to establish a new truth or inspire a new being. How can we help remembering here the impression, rightly termed *hopeless*, which every child and adolescent has received when his elders pronounce one or other of those axioms which claim to express *truths which are indisputable* and duly established. Such axioms seem to strike out of existence all the dreams, all the confused aspirations of him who not having had *his own* experience refuses to accept a so-called

proof with which he is in no way associated. We actually have grounds for wondering by what strange optical illusion the axiom which appears as hopeless and discouraging to him who is supposed to be instructed by it, causes such vanity and self-satisfaction in those who give it out. The reason is surely to be found in the sense of superiority which, rightly or wrongly, fills those people who imagine that they represent universal wisdom to youngsters whose wild presumption needs to be mortified as much as possible. We see the antagonism between the older and younger as an antagonism between someone who is trying to feel his way in life as we feel our way along a road, and who only has a flickering light to guide him, and someone who claims to be at the other side of this same life (and of his own life as well) and to be able to give out, from some abstract spot, truths acquired at a great price. It goes without saying that this conflict is at the heart of what is often called the problem of the generations and that no truly logical or rational solution can be found for it, because the antagonists are on different levels in time, because they have no real communion with each other and neither of them discusses with the other, but with a certain idea a certain *eidôlon* of the other.

All then prepares us to recognise that despair is in a certain sense the consciousness of time as closed or, more exactly still, of time as a prison—whilst hope appears as piercing through time; everything happens as though time, instead of hedging consciousness round, allowed something to pass through it. It was from this point of view that I previously drew attention to the prophetic character of hope. Of course one cannot say that hope sees what is going to happen; but it affirms as *if* it saw. One might say that it draws its authority from a hidden vision of which it is allowed to take account without enjoying it.

We might say again that if time is in its essence a separation and as it were a perpetual splitting up of the self in relation to itself, hope on the contrary aims at reunion, at recollection, at reconciliation: in that way, and in that way alone, it might be called a memory of the future.

One cannot however disguise the impatience, one might say the uneasiness, which such glimpses give rise to in spirits dominated by an anxiety for truth: "Is there to be nothing in these

explanations", it may be asked, "which enables us to discern if hope is anything but an illusion, if it is in any possible degree a light thrown upon a certain subsoil of things? And yet is not this, when we come down to the final analysis, the only question which matters?"

To reply to such a challenge, it will be well, I think, to introduce the idea of a certain human condition which we cannot hope to transcend by thought, for reflection shows that in trying to rise above it we make it unreal and impoverish it. The unpardonable mistake of a certain rationalism has consisted precisely in sacrificing the human as such, without anything to take its place, to certain *ideas*, whose regulative value we certainly should not think of questioning, but which lose all their meaning if we attempt to make of them a world existing by itself where "the human as such" will be counted as nothing but dross and rubbish. This general remark seems to me likely to throw light on the debate, which arises between those who want to save hope and those who on the contrary seek to banish it to the world of mirages.

The term "condition" is one which needs very careful definition. Perhaps we should see in the human condition a certain vital and spiritual order which we cannot violate without exposing ourselves to the loss not only of our equilibrium, but even of our integrity. As, however, the term condition may also be taken sometimes in a slightly different sense which is very nearly that of nature, we must recognise that it is a characteristic of man's condition in the second sense that he is able to fall short of his condition in the first sense. The condition-order implies a joint working which is always precarious between our nature and an acquired wisdom, infused into our will—a wisdom actually in no way bound to be explicitly conscious of itself. Again we must of course be careful not to confuse this wisdom with the dogmatic empiricism of which I have already pointed out the sterilising effect. Perhaps the human condition is characterised not only by the risks which go with it and which after all are bound up with life itself, even in its humblest forms, but also, and far more deeply, by the necessity to accept these risks and to refuse to believe that it would be possible—and, if we come to a final analysis, even an advantage—to succeed in removing them.

Experience teaches us, as a matter of fact, that we can never refuse to take risks except in appearance, or rather that the refusal itself conceals a risk which is the most serious of all, and that it is even possible for us finally to condemn ourselves in this way to lose the best of the very thing which by our avoidance we had intended to safeguard.

But it must be noticed that the attitude of those who in the name of reason take up their position against hope is in all points comparable with that of the people who claim to avoid risks. In both cases what they want to avoid is disappointment. But perhaps it is of the nature of disappointment that we have no right to anticipate it, as we do when we become preoccupied about its prevention. Perhaps, on the other hand, we have not sufficiently noticed that disappointment appears to him who undergoes it as a sort of breach of confidence on the part of—whom, or what? The reply usually remains uncertain, but in every case we tend to personify the experience which has failed to fulfil our expectations. I counted on *such a thing* happening: it did not happen: I seem to myself to be a creditor facing an insolvent debtor: why? It seems that in *counting on* I have given something, or I consider that I have given something, of my own: literally I have given credit—and the event or the mysterious source of the event has failed in its obligation towards me. Disappointment will then leave the soul all the more sore if in its depths it has had the presumption, or given way to the temptation, of somehow chaining reality down in advance as one binds a debtor with the agreement one forces upon him. But we have never ceased to insist that this claim, this presumption, is definitely foreign to hope which never stipulates the carrying out of a certain contract (which is, strangely enough, always a strictly one-sided contract). Perhaps it is simply that hope shows the originality and, I must add, the supreme dignity, of never claiming anything or insisting upon its rights. And it is permissible to consider the analogous situation of a being who is awaiting a gift or favour from another being but only on the grounds of his liberality, and that he is the first to protest that the favour he is asking is a grace, that is to say the exact opposite of an obligation.

Here the relationship which the words "hope in" express, appears in its originality and, I should add, in its perfection. It

seems as though a philosophy which revolves round the contractual idea is likely to misunderstand the value of the relationship. I should however add that here, as everywhere for that matter, a certain slipping or degradation inevitably tends to come about. "To hope in" becomes "to expect from" then "to have due to me", that is to say "to count on" and finally "to claim" or "to demand". The perpetually recurring difficulties which a philosophy of hope encounters are for the most part due to the fact that we have a tendency to substitute for an initial relationship, which is both pure and mysterious, subsequent relationships no doubt more intelligible, but at the same time more and more deficient as regards their ontological content.

Furthermore, it must be owned that the evolution of mentalities which we observe around us seems to follow the same slope, the same line of degradation. Men in general seem less and less capable of "hoping in"; it is indeed difficult to interpret as hope the idolatry which immense, fascinated masses show for leaders who have previously, by ceaseless propaganda, succeeded in paralysing not only any critical spirit in their minions, but all true sense of values. All that we can say is that this idolatrous attachment is the miserable substitute, I should be ready to say the toxic succedaneum, of the hope for which those same multitudes no doubt still have a nostalgic longing in the depths of their hearts, even if they show themselves actually incapable of exercising it. To be quite fair it must however be noted that democracy, considered not in its principles but in its actual achievements, has helped in the most baleful manner to encourage *claiming* in all its aspects, the demanding of rights—and indeed to bring a mercenary spirit into all human relationships. I mean by this that the democratic atmosphere tends to exclude more and more the idea of disinterested service born of fidelity, and a belief in the intrinsic value of such service. Each individual claims from the start to enjoy the same consideration and the same advantages as his neighbour; and, in fact, his self-respect tends to resolve itself into an attitude which is not only defensive but ever claiming rights from others. Thus he considers it beneath his dignity to do anything whatever for nothing. The abstract idea of a certain justice is here oddly connected with the anxiety not to be duped, not to allow another person to take advantage

of his simplicity or his good nature. But in this perspective how can the spirit of mistrust—mistrust not only of others, but of life itself—not tend to make the human soul less and less a possible dwelling place for hope, or indeed for joy? We seem here to touch the metaphysical roots of a denaturalisation which seems almost as though it were coextensive with a certain type of civilisation. It may be said in passing that the very fact that a certain belief in progress, far from arresting this evolution, has, on the contrary, helped to precipitate it, suffices to show how far such a belief is opposed to true hope, in spite of the fact that in its far distant origin it may have been a confusedly rationalised derivative of it.

We should not however hide from ourselves that all these considerations would not yet be enough to convince those who, under the influence of a stoicism or a more or less distorted form of the philosophy of Spinoza, persist in refusing to allow that hope has any metaphysical value. "Do you not", they say, "merely arrive at the very insignificant conclusion, for which it is really superfluous to use such complicated arguments, that hope is a tendency which constitutes the inner spring of human enterprises because it is calculated to stimulate usefully those who engage wholeheartedly in them?" This is as much as to say that in the last resort hope is only a subjective tendency, that by itself it would never be able to throw any light upon the inner meaning of things, and brings with it no guarantee that it will be realised.

But it must be replied that it is precisely such an opposition as we have here imagined that we have to repudiate or to transcend. Certainly there is no question of denying that this opposition has a meaning where an enterprise with some material aim is under consideration; the building of a port, or a pyramid; the hollowing out of a tunnel, or the damming of a river. Just because it is simply a question of producing certain material results, the inner disposition of the agent—or it would be better to say the instrument—can and should be regarded as a contingent fact in relation to the result to be produced. This in reality seems as though it could well be arrived at by pitiless masters driving a multitude of terrorised slaves with whips. But let us remember that such results do not in reality involve any genuine creation, any love of the thing created. Now it is precisely where such love exists, and only where it exists, that we can speak of hope, this love taking shape

in a reality which without it would not be what it is. When this has come about it is untrue to claim that hope is merely a subjective stimulant, it is, on the contrary, a vital aspect of the very process by which an act of creation is accomplished.

"But", they will say again, "the hope we are discussing here is surely strangely different from that which was previously defined as a response to a situation which entailed captivity?" It may be taken that, in spite of appearances, this difference conceals a fundamental identity. Do not let us forget that, as a matter of fact, the general condition of man, even when his life appears to be quite normal, is always that of a captive, by reason of the enslavements of all kinds which he is called upon to endure, if only on account of the body, and more deeply still because of the night which shrouds his beginning and his end. We can be certain that all creative activity, whatever it may be, is bound up with this condition, in the double meaning which we have given to the word, and that it is in reality the only means given us of causing light to shine forth in our prison. It may be asked whether this is not to make of creation a diversion as Pascal would have understood it. I do not think so really, for the notion of Pascal involves the idea of the utter solitude of the creature struggling with the agony of his destiny, whereas we have seen, and we must return to it again, that hope is always associated with a communion, no matter how interior it may be. This is actually so true that one wonders if despair and solitude are not at bottom necessarily identical.

From this point of view the essential problem to which we are seeking to find the solution would be whether solitude is the last word, whether man is really condemned to live and to die alone, and whether it is only through the effect of a vivid illusion that he manages to conceal from himself the fact that such is indeed his fate. It is not possible to sit in judgment on the case of hope without at the same time trying the case of love.

It is curious to notice that a purely objective philosophy, in the name of which it is claimed to denounce the mirage of hope, is so near as to become identified with the radical subjectivity of a Proust, for whom love is a mis-knowing and resolves itself into nothing but illusions of perspective. There is every reason to think that it is by one and the same action that it is possible to free our-

selves from these two philosophies which are only opposed outwardly, that is to say in the formula given to them, but which agree in their negative aims. For the rest, Proust himself puts us on the way of truths to which he becomes more and more blind as his work develops and as he comes to propose to himself an image of life which is at the same time more systematic and impoverished. The subjective conception of love, with the justification it confers upon despair (since only the pure artist possesses the key of salvation) appears all the more unimpeachable as the being becomes increasingly the prisoner of an obsession of which the other being is less the object than the excuse, since he evades the grasp not only of intuition but of all knowledge worthy of the name. I *see* a being so much the less the more I am obsessed by him, for my obsession tends to substitute itself for him. It must be added that this obsession itself becomes all the more tyrannical the more I claim to possess him, to monopolise him, the more obstinately I set my mind to break all the bonds which unite him to other beings, in the hope of making him totally mine. This is the illusion of Arnolphe, and it is to be wondered whether Molière did not forestall and surpass Proust. One of two things must happen. Faced with this determination to monopolise him, the other person either makes his escape by flight or lying, or else he loses his own nature and becomes a nonentity. In either case it follows inexorably that, because love has thus failed in its mission and become perverted, it consummates its own loss.

But it is to be asked whether a logical process of the same kind, though far less clearly and easily discernible, is not working itself out wherever the fundamental relationship uniting the human soul and the mysterious reality which surrounds and at the same time confronts it becomes perverted. This relationship, when grasped in its truth, is a participation. This means that we do not only become guilty of an usurpation but that, in spite of all appearances, we become strangers to ourselves, in so far as we treat the reality as something which can be won and placed at our disposal. We might say again that this reality thus referred and enslaved to selfish ends loses its true nature also, and becomes a sham and an idol. But shams and idols always appear, to those who view them with enough penetration, as milestones, marking the road to despair.

Perhaps we can now feel authorised to formulate a few general propositions which will sum up most of the observations we have been able to make in the course of our all too winding journey.

In face of the particular trial, whatever it may be, which confronts me and which must always be but a specimen of the trial of humanity in general, I shall always be exposed to the temptation of shutting the door which encloses me within myself and at the same time encloses me within time, as though the future, drained of its substance and its mystery, were no longer to be anything but a place of pure repetition, as though some unspecifiable disordered mechanism were to go on working ceaselessly, undirected by any intelligent motivisation. But a future thus devitalised, no longer being a future for me or anybody else, would be rather a prospect of vacancy.

A systematised empiricism, crystallised into impersonal and permanent formulæ, would confer upon what is in truth only a movement of the soul, a retraction, an inward disloyalty, the theoretical (and fallacious) justification which such a step needs in order to establish itself in its own eyes.

Against this combination of temptations there is only one remedy, and it has two aspects: it is the remedy of communion, the remedy of hope. If it is true that man's trial is infinite in its varieties and can assume the innumerable forms under which we know privation, exile, or captivity, it is no less certain that by a symmetrical but inverted process, each one of us can rise by his own special path from the humble forms of communion which experience offers the most despised, to a communion which is both more intimate and more abundant, of which hope can be equally regarded as the foreshadowing or the outcome.

"I hope in thee for us"; such is perhaps the most adequate and the most elaborate expression of the act which the verb "to hope" suggests in a way which is still confused and ambiguous. "In thee —for us": between this "thou" and this "us" which only the most persistent reflection can finally discover in the act of hope, what is the vital link? Must we not reply that "Thou" is in some way the guarantee of the union which holds us together, myself to myself, or the one to the other, or these beings to those other beings? More than a guarantee which secures or confirms from outside a union which already exists, it is the very cement which

binds the whole into one. If this is the case, to despair of myself, or to despair of us, is essentially to despair of the Thou. Avowedly, it is conceivable that there is some difficulty in admitting that I form with myself a real community, an *us*: it is, however, only on this condition that I have my active share as a centre of intelligence, of love and of creation. This absolute Thou in whom I must hope but whom I also have always the possibility of denying, not only in theory but in practice, is at the heart of the city which I form with myself and which, as experience has given tragic proof, retains the power of reducing itself to ashes. It must be added that this city is not a monad and that it cannot establish itself as a distinct and isolated centre, without working for its own destruction, but that on the contrary it draws the elements of its life from what is brought to it along canals, often very badly marked out, from friendly cities, of which however it often scarcely knows the name or the situation. It is to a consciousness of these reciprocities, of this mysterious and incessant circulation, that I open my soul when I hope—a prophetic consciousness, as we have said, but vague and in danger of becoming obliterated to the extent that it seeks to pass itself off as second sight. If this is so, it must be said that to hope, as we have already hinted, is to live in hope instead of anxiously concentrating our attention on the poor little counters spread out in front of us which we feverishly reckon up over and over again without respite, tormented by the fear of being foiled or ruined. The more we allow ourselves to be the servants of Having, the more we shall let ourselves fall a prey to the gnawing anxiety which Having involves, the more we shall tend to lose not only the aptitude for hope, but even I should say the very belief, indistinct as it may be, of its possible reality. In this sense it is no doubt true that, strictly speaking, only those beings who are entirely free from the shackles of ownership in all its forms are able to know the divine light-heartedness of life in hope. But, as far as we can judge, this liberation, this exemption, must remain the privilege of a very small number of chosen souls. The vast majority of men are, as far as we can see, destined to remain entangled in the inextricable meshes of Having, and there are actually the gravest reasons for thinking that it is on this condition, burdensome as it may be, that humanity is able to discharge, well or badly as the case may be, the tasks, often so

thankless and obscure, which have been assigned to it. A final condemnation of Having would amount basically to the rashest repudiation of finite existence by finite man himself. Such could not be uttered without an excessive humility which would look so much like the most inordinate and blasphemous pride as to be confused with it. What, however, we might perhaps dare to say is that if, however feebly, we remain penetrated by hope, it can only be through the cracks and openings which are to be found in the armour of Having which covers us: the armour of our possessions, our attainments, our experience and our virtues, perhaps even more than our vices. Thus, and only thus can the breathing of the soul be maintained, but under conditions, alas, of irregular action and a dangerous uncertainty often on the increase so that it is always in danger of being blocked like the lungs or the bowels.

But in expressing ourselves thus, are we not led to make hope appear too much as a natural faculty? To go still deeper, what position should we adopt on the question as to whether it depends upon us or whether, on the contrary, it is either the fruit of an innate disposition, or a pure grace, and in final analysis the result of supernatural help? I will take care here not to venture upon theological ground. In the region of philosophic reflection, however, it seems as though it is equally true, and consequently equally false, to say that hope depends or does not depend upon me.

The meaning of this question does indeed become more obscure when it bears upon that which is most intimately myself. Does it depend upon me whether I am in love or whether I possess a certain creative faculty? Certainly not, but precisely because it does not depend upon me to be or not to be such as I am. Let us admit, on the contrary, without troubling about the philosophical controversies on free will with which we are not concerned, that it depends upon me whether I take a certain step, or make a certain journey, visit, gesture, etc., which anyone else in my place could equally well do. We are then led to the paradoxical conclusion that what depends upon me is the very thing which does not form part of me, which remains in a sense exterior (or indifferent) to me. It must however be added that a gift, whatever it may be, is never purely and simply *received* by a subject who has nothing to do but make a place for it in himself. The truth is much rather

that the gift is a call to which we have to make response; it is as though a harvest of possibilities had to be gathered from us, among which we had to choose, or more exactly it is as though we had to actualise those which accorded best with the urgency interiorly felt which is, in reality, only mediation between us and ourselves.

It is from this general observation that we must start if we would recognise that it is both true and false to say that it depends on us whether we hope or not. At the root of hope there is something which is literally offered to us: but we can refuse hope just as we can refuse love. Moreover, we can no doubt deny hope, just as we can deny or degrade our love. Both here and there the rôle of *Kaïros* seems to be to give our liberty an opportunity of exercising and spreading itself as it could never do if it were left to itself—a hypothesis which is probably contradictory, anyway.

We see from this why it is legitimate to consider hope as a virtue; the truth is that all virtue is the particularisation of a certain interior force, and that to live in hope is to obtain from oneself that one should remain faithful in the hour of darkness to that which in its origin was perhaps only an inspiration, an exaltation, a transport. But there is no doubt that this faithfulness cannot be put into practice except by virtue of a co-operation, whose principle will always remain a mystery, between the goodwill which is after all the only positive contribution of which we are capable and certain promptings whose centre remains beyond our reach, in those realms where values are divine gifts.

Perhaps, if we would elucidate the nature of hope more completely, at least, as far as such elucidation is possible, we should now tackle directly the question of the relationship connecting hope with our reasons for hoping. It may be best to state the problem in its most extreme form: can one hope when the reasons for so doing are insufficient or even completely lacking?

Let us notice first of all that this question must inevitably be asked by anyone who treats hope as an external phenomenon and wonders under what conditions it can appear. I will call such a one the observer in what is to follow.

Reflection soon shows us, however, that thinking in these terms of hope is the very way to stifle it.

First of all, the meaning of the word *can* is ambiguous.

(*a*) Can it in fact happen that anyone hopes without any reasons for hoping? Or on the other hand—

(*b*) Is it permissible to hope where the reasons are insufficient or lacking?

Let us notice first that in both cases we admit implicitly that the proposition "there is no reason, or at least no sufficient reason, for hope", has some meaning. We must not however be taken in by words; we cannot speak of the non-existence or existence of such reasons as of the non-existence or existence of something which could form part of anyone's experience. Here "there is" or "there is not" is necessarily related to a definite subject. We mean that in the eyes of X there is or there is not good enough reason for hope. But in the statement of our problem what subject is implied? Let us consider in particular question (*a*). Do we mean "Can it in fact happen that someone hopes under conditions which, for me who am asking the question, afford no grounds for hope?" or "under conditions which *for the subject himself* afford no grounds for it?"

We must obviously answer the first question in the affirmative: it is quite clear that the other can keep on hoping where the observer considers that reasons for hope do not exist, that is to say where they are invisible to him. This first question then is insignificant and idle.

Has the second a more precise meaning? Can anyone, in fact, hope where he himself admits that the reasons are insufficient or lacking? But, if he truly recognises in all sincerity that these reasons are non-existent or insufficient, he himself admits that he does not really hope (unless, of course, he has succumbed to human respect by granting to some interlocutor what he does not believe in his own heart; but such a case is outside our hypothesis). Moreover, the use of the word "sufficient" implies a contradiction, for, if the subject hopes, it would surely seem that the reasons for hoping are sufficient for him, whatever the observer may think about them.

But in reality the question which the subject is supposed to ask himself, and in this particular case to answer in the negative, does not arise for him unless he detaches himself in some degree from his hope. Actually, it comes into a different register and springs from a calculating faculty of the reason which, with the very approximate means at its disposal, proceeds to carry out a

regular balancing up of chances. Without any doubt it may happen that, on consideration, hope gives in for a variable space of time to those calculations of the reason; above all if the subject is engaged in a discussion with someone whom he wants to convince: It is none the less true, however, that hope and the calculating faculty of reason are essentially distinct and everything will be lost if we try to combine them. On the other hand, in the statement (*b*), when we bring in the idea of a right to hope we are entering precisely upon this very process of reasoning by computation which at bottom means a calculation of probabilities. It is as though to hope were to argue in a certain way and as though there were a possibility of enquiring into the validity of the arguments. Looked at from this point of view, the answer to the question is obvious. It is absurd to claim that it can be legitimate to hope without sufficient reasons for hope. But we must repeat once more that here the meaning of the word hope has been completely distorted.

It seems as though we shall thus be led to an utterly negative conclusion and that we shall have to deny that the words "reasons for hoping" have any meaning whatsoever. If so, in this matter we shall have to subscribe to an irrationalism or a radical fideism. But faced with the facts of experience, such a thesis appears nothing short of absurd.

Take, for instance, a mother who persists in hoping that she will see her son again although his death has been certified in the most definite manner by witnesses who found his body, buried it, etc. Is not the observer justified in saying that there are no reasons for hoping that this son is still alive?

However subtle and irritating in certain respects the distinction I am going to introduce here may appear, perhaps we should reply to the objection in the following way: In so far as the hope of the mother is expressed as an objective judgment, "It is possible that John will come back", we have the right to say: "No, objectively speaking, the return must be considered as impossible." But at the root of the mother's objective judgment, which, as such, cannot be accepted, she has within her a loving thought which repudiates or transcends the facts, and it seems as though there was something absurd or even scandalous in disputing her right to hope, that is to say to love, against all hope. More exactly, what is absurd is the very idea of a right which we can recognise or dispute.

We are not at the end of our difficulties, however. Common sense will retort that it is not permissible to identify hope and love here. "Whatever may be the love which I feel for a certain individual, it cannot be admitted that in virtue of this love, I can assume the right to exceed the limits of logic." It is a mere sophism to say, "I cannot bear the idea that he will not come back, therefore it is possible that he will". But here again, hope is considered from outside and entered in a register where it does not belong. What hope gives us is the simple affirmation, "You are coming back". And this "you are coming back" is beyond the reach of objective criticism. Such criticism could only deal with it legitimately if it were translated into the language of prevision or of a judgment based on probabilities.

It cannot be denied that each of us is exposed to the temptation of carrying out such a substitution on our own account. We have already seen how hope loses its true nature by the very fact that it tends to offer itself for the approbation of the subject himself and also of other people. In this way it loses its essential elasticity, but it only loses it because it denies its own nature and this denial is a fall.

This, which at first appears very paradoxical, seems to me to be elucidated if we keep in mind the fundamental distinction between hope and desire and if we recall the observations which were made further back. We might say that hope only escapes from a particular metaphysical ruling on condition that it transcends desire—that is to say, that it does not remain centred upon the subject himself. Once again we are led to draw attention to the indissoluble connection which binds together hope and love. The more egoistical love is, the more the alluringly prophetic declarations it inspires should be regarded with caution as likely to be literally contradicted by experience; on the other hand, the nearer it approaches to true charity, the more the meaning of its declarations is inflected and tends to become full of an unconditional quality which is the very sign of a presence. This presence is incarnated in the "us" for whom "I hope in Thee", that is to say in a communion of which I proclaim the indestructibility. No doubt, as always, critical thought will immediately take up its position against this assertion. It will invoke the evidence of experience, and of the spectacle of endless visible destruction which it presents to us. But this evidence itself can only be chal-

lenged in the name of a certitude which we have already seen is not based on established experience—the certitude that all such arguments are only true in a very fleeting sense, and that the incessant changes to which critical pessimism claims to give so much importance, cannot touch the only authentic reality. This assertion is precisely what we discover when we reach the intelligible core of hope; what characterises it is *the very movement by which it challenges the evidence upon which men claim to challenge it itself.* We must add that this conception of hope is both symbolised and supported by all experiences of renewal, not considered in their philosophical or even physical processes, but in the infinite echo which they awaken in those who are called upon either to live through them directly, or to share sympathetically in the blessings they bring. So what we said above about the relationship which hope establishes between the soul and time is elucidated and completed. Might we not say that hope always implies the superlogical connection between a return (*nostos*) and something completely new (*Kaïnon ti*)? Following from this it is to be wondered whether preservation or restoration, on the one hand, and revolution or renewal on the other, are not the two movements, the two abstractly dissociated aspects of one and the same unity, which dwells in hope and is beyond the reach of all our faculties of reasoning or of conceptual formulation. This aspiration can be approximately expressed in the simple but contradictory words: *as before, but differently and better than before.* Here we undoubtedly come once again upon the theme of liberation, for it is never a simple return to the *status quo*, a simple return to our being, it is that and much more, and even the contrary of that: an undreamed-of promotion, a transfiguration.

Perhaps after these considerations we might at last attempt to give the definition which we would not allow ourselves to place at the beginning of our analysis: we might say that hope is essentially the availability of a soul which has entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge the transcendent act—the act establishing the vital regeneration of which this experience affords both the pledge and the first-fruits.

LE PEUCH.

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