



**Listening to Ordinary Narratives
of Faith: Affirming Transcendence
in Human Experience**

ABSTRACT

To be a church in the post-pandemic times is to be a listening church. This listening involves digging deep into the life narratives of people and being vigilant to the transcendent revelations that lie hidden within them. This paper aims to articulate the structures of faith narratives by looking into human experience. Such articulation looks at faith narratives from the perspectives of phenomenology and language. It then considers faith narratives as a traditioned human experience, an affirmation of the continuity of faith experiences in the unfolding of human encounters. Finally, this paper frames the whole discourse on faith narratives vis-à-vis human experience through Sir John Polkinghorne's vision of the human person in his integrated anthropology. The purpose of all of these is to establish the epistemic warrant of ordinary faith narratives.

MAKING SENSE OF ORDINARY FAITH NARRATIVES

The ordinary or everyday life is the stage of the unfolding of human reality. "Everyday life is, indisputably: the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor."¹ All democratically share the ordinary – no one can move out from the context of the everyday. Regardless of social status, everyone is anchored in the mundane.

The reality of the ordinary is weaved in the web of narratives. Storytelling is perhaps the most common way people make sense of their experiences and draw meaning from such experiences. The web of stories can be as intricate as the multitude of a particular community's collective encounters and affairs. Narratives, in essence, are the inescapable aspect of the everyday. Thus, an attentive perusal of every day's dynamic stories is revelatory of the consciousness, values, and mindsets that guide the course of our human story. In other words, deciphering human stories is instrumental in enunciating reality. However, one must take a precautionary measure in understanding everyday narratives because they are irreducible to any specific disciplinary and discursive method. Limiting to one framework, "the lived flavors and distinct intricacies of everyday life are easily tempered by attempts at full representation."²

¹ Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 77.

² Justin Derry and Martin Parrot, "Questioning Everyday Life" in *The Everyday: Experiences, Concepts, and Narratives*, ed. Justin Derry and Martin Parrot (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 2.

Narratives of faith pose an epistemological challenge. Unlike the epistemic ways of science, faith narratives are not systematic and straightforward. Ordinary stories of faith are not homologous and predictable. Their stories are sporadic in the sense that they are enunciations of various experiential perspectives, interpreted through the optic of faith. Therefore, one must listen attentively to the singularity of each story. This is a necessary starting point in understanding the meaning these narratives communicate.

This paper will elucidate only on faith narratives as a particular component in everyday life. This track is taken because narratives of every day are not necessarily narratives about faith. Stories of faith are among the many articulations of human experience as there are many layers and forms of stories that capture the diversity of human encounters. Therefore, to set the focus of the subsequent sections, central attention will be given to understanding ordinary faith narratives. While it is one among the many layers of stories in the mundane, it speaks significantly of the human person's nature and his/her perception of reality.

Ordinary Faith Narratives as Experience

Primarily, faith narratives are interpreted lived experiences. The Filipino theologian Jose De Mesa said, "to experience is to experience and interpret at the same time."³ In other words, embedded in faith narratives is the person's conscious deciphering of his/her experience of the presence of the Divine in his/her contact with reality. Evaluating this

³ Jose M. de Mesa and Lode L. Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1990), 22.

statement reveals three significant points that set the epistemic warrant of faith narratives: (1) the aspect of consciousness in one's experience, (2) the mine-ness of a particular experience, and (3) the existential mattering of the experience. These are phenomenological elements of experience that are not reducible to simple naturalistic terms.

A. The Aspect of Consciousness in Experience

Consciousness is the condition that makes a particular state an experience. Every account of experience presupposes a precondition of consciousness. However, what it is like to be conscious is intrinsically subjective. This subjectivity raises a concern that mirrors the problem presented by the philosopher Edmund Husserl. He said,

How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object? How can experiences be mutually legitimated or corrected by means of each other, and not merely replace each other or confirm each other subjectively? How can the play of consciousness whose logic is empirical make objectively valid statements, valid for things that are in and for themselves? Why are the playing rules . . . of consciousness not irrelevant for things?"⁴

The point here is that a person who consciously perceives reality is not situated in a vacuum. Every

⁴ Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 88.

perception contains a normative moment in that they purport to give or contact real objects in the world. Therefore, "consciousness is not the epiphenomenal garnishing of fundamentally objective and material reality; it is the route of our access to all reality."⁵ In other words, a normative understanding of what a particular object of experience should be like is fundamental to validate an experience. The normative content of experience provides the interpretative elements and models for perceiving reality. The normative set of expectations or thoughts makes it possible for the experiences to be mutually legitimated or corrected through each other. Simply, "experience is gained in a dialectical fashion through the interplay between perception and thought, and thought and perception."⁶ A framework of learned expectations validates the consciousness of reality. Consequently, those expectations are exposed to criticism and corrected, changed, and renewed by new experiences.

B. Mineness of Experience

As there is no unconscious experience, there is also no such a thing as anonymous experience – an experience without an owner. A necessary precondition to account for an experience is each person's ownership or intentional standpoint. The student of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, in his book *Being and Time*, called this mineness.⁷ Mineness is that intrinsic feature of the first-

⁵ John Polkinghorne, *Beyond Science: The Wider Human Context* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 126.

⁶ de Mesa and Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes*, 22.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robins (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1965), 68.

person perspective that guarantees one's ownership of one's experience. It illustrates that a person tacitly or explicitly experiences every moment of experience as one's own. This feature implies that an experience exists by being subjectively experience. This aspect of experience provides the human person with two options: to take responsibility for his/her existence or evade such responsibility. "Mineness is the existential burden (or gift) of self-possession from which the irresponsible take flight and to which the responsible own up to be accountable for the standpoint they occupy."⁸

Furthermore, the "I" that experiences the experience is not an isolated being. The person is not a separately existing entity in the sphere of inter-experiential relations, but rather a dimension that is the first manifestation of the experience. Mineness does not root the person out from the context of inter-relationships in a particular space. In other words, this mineness places in the human person the genesis of every experience.

C. Existential Mattering of Experience

Another feature that is a necessary precondition for experience is mattering. It is the condition that creates the motivation and care to understand one's contact with reality in the person. This aspect means any endeavor to understand a particular reality does not move out from the sphere of what existentially matters to that person. Mattering provides that person the direction, meaning, and

⁸ Matthew Burch, "Religion and Scientism: A Shared Cognitive Conundrum," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 80 (2016): 232. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-016-9571-4>.

motivational basis for actions. This characteristic is one that is explicitly shared by scientific inquiries. Any inquiry is not value-neutral, which means that behind every inquiry is the inquirers' existential commitment. Why would a person pursue an investigation that does not matter? This feature is very closely related to mineness because a particular experience can only be interpreted from some point of view, "because a universe without mineness is a universe without mattering."⁹

The three aspects mentioned above are features of human experiences that cannot be reduced to naturalistic terms. In the context of faith narratives, these three features are indispensable. Faith narratives per se are external manifestations of a person's conscious embrace of one's creed, of his/her ownership of that faith-embrace, and finally, allowing that creed to provide an interpretative role for life's meaning. Moreover, they are not also exclusively embedded within narratives of faith but essentially in every human experience. Scientific endeavors as part and parcel of human experience also contain the mentioned three features. These characteristics pose a challenge to scientism. This challenge is because any scientific endeavor must be a conscious endeavor, a pursuit closely related to one's sense of ownership, and activity that necessitates a motivational impetus - that is, mattering. The affirmation of these three elements strengthens the epistemic warrant of faith claims against the charge of scientism.

⁹ Buch, "Religion and Scientism", 233.

FAITH NARRATIVES AND THE LOGIC OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

In addition to making sense of faith narratives through the enumerations of experience's characteristics, it is also enlightening to understand how faith narratives are structured and substantiated. The Filipino theologian Jose de Mesa believes that faith narratives are articulations of religious experiences using a language not verifiable by standard logic rules. Faith narratives use a language that has propositions that cannot be verified by empirical parameters of experience. Instead of using descriptive language, faith narratives are articulated through a "recourse to an 'odd' language or to a 'symbolic' language in which an experience is evoked."¹⁰ These languages are used to elicit the meaningful experiences of believers. As articulated by Ian Ramsey, odd language "functions by qualifying the terms of ordinary language to produce a particular sort of discourse which evokes an unusual and elusive kind of empirical situation."¹¹ It is a language that goes beyond the language of empirical observation to evoke God's reality. Consequently, that language evokes a disclosure of meaning.

Moreover, faith narratives employ symbolic language. For Paul Ricoeur, symbols are structures of "signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first."¹² In other words, faith narratives

¹⁰ de Mesa and Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes*, 43.

¹¹ Cynthia B. Cohen, "The Logic of Religious Language" in *Religious Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 143.

¹² Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics" in *The Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 13.

carry deeper and latent meanings that go beyond the surface of ordinary language. This implies that faith narratives have their own experiential logic, which mirrors the human person's rich relationship with the transcendent. Such logic goes beyond the internal logic of language and the straightforward epistemology of scientific methodology.

The warrant of the epistemology of faith narratives is intertwined in the structure of human language as a symbolic tool to interpret reality. This points to the fact that language is an inescapable avenue in nuancing the odd reality of transcendence. However, one can go farther than using language as a translation of human experience because language also evokes an ethical response. The language-translation of reality calls for a commitment. An articulation of the experience of the Divine can maneuver a personal and social change. In other words, "the emergence of a continuous involvement with others. . . gives religious language the density of its reality."¹³ This means that faith narratives find their affirmation not only in their interpretation of reality but also in their response to the demands of such reality. In other words, the additional epistemic warrant of faith narratives lies in its soteriological alignment. It conjures in the person the commitment to create structures that are beneficial and salvific – a defiant hope that transcends the limits of one's condition.

Looking at the exemplary faith narratives of ordinary people whom I encountered during the pandemic, their vision of God allowed them to be defiant of the pandemic's constricting conditions. This, of course, must not be

¹³ de Mesa and Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes*, 44.

mistaken as a sensationalization of their resilience. It just proves that faith narratives can create a perspective that opens possibilities of salvation in a seemingly repressive context. Moreover, such action and response always reflexively point to the transcendent reality it is trying to evoke. Thus, such visions of salvation are always in a dialectical relationship with the transcendent reality it is coming from. Therefore, human experience is more than a hermeneutic category. It also has an epistemological significance. This is because "experiences influence interpretation and calls it forth, but at the same time the interpretation influences the experience."¹⁴

FAITH NARRATIVES AS TRADITIONED HUMAN EXPERIENCE

From the outside, one can perceive faith narratives as a product of a believer's whimsical imagination. They are reflections of an apparent reality that is not satisfactorily reliable. This could be the tendency evaluation if we fail to consider that faith narratives are basically a traditioned human experience. Those who believe in God's transcendent reality are not hallucinated to believe in such a reality. They primarily can grasp such articulations because they encounter the tradition of faith that gives them the symbolic language to comprehend Divine reality.

The symbolic framework they used to read their human experience "clearly went on as mothers taught children to pray; as people were formed in faith through participation in novenas, processions, and practices

¹⁴ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Sacrament of Encounter with God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 32.

throughout the liturgical year; and as women and men were inspired by the example of holy priests and nuns, relatives, and neighbors."¹⁵ This means to say that narratives of faith are fruits of an encounter with a traditioned tradition, handed on "in the day-to-day, informal life of the church – in what Latino theologian Orlando Espin calls "*lo cotidiano*."¹⁶ In other words, faith articulations today find their catalyst in the faith-contents of the past. The narratives of faith that come from the Church's faith journey cultivated in the people of today their "*sensus fidei*." Consequently, this sense of faith shapes their readings of their recent experiences.

Thus, the seemingly ordinary stories of faith from the grassroots must be placed within the panoramic reality of Christian tradition. This tradition "provides the expressions, symbols, and information from our ancestors in the faith that can help us come to a new depth and relevance as we seek to understand our faith more fully."¹⁷ In other words, their stories are deeply rooted in Revelation, Scriptures, and Tradition. They may be conscious or unconscious of that interconnectedness, but these faith-sources are indispensable in the translation of one's faith. They provide the framework and the lens in taking into cognizance the reality of faith. From this point of view, the epistemic warrant of faith narratives is not only anchored on its identity as traditioned experiences. What makes its warrant more emphatic is to realize that Revelation, Scriptures, and Tradition are also deeply rooted in human experiences. In short, human experience is the

¹⁵ Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, ed. Peter C. Phan (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 93.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

indispensable component in the articulation of this deposit of faith. Therefore, in the subsections below, we will look at Revelation, Scriptures, and Tradition as human experience.

A. Revelation as Human Experience

The Second Vatican Council defines revelation¹⁸ as God's gratuitous self-communication so that the human person can have a direct access to the Father and share in God's divine nature. To quote, "In his goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (Eph 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4)."¹⁹ Central to this understanding of revelation is the conception that revelation is primarily about God's epiphany, which finds its ultimate manifestation in the Incarnation. This highlights the relational aspect of revelation. This is contrary to the understanding of revelation as a set of propositions about God, an understanding held and taught before Vatican II.

¹⁸ In his book, *Models of Revelation*, the Jesuit Avery Dulles recognizes the various forms in understanding what revelation is. As a response to such diverse understanding of revelation, Dulles presented Five Models of Revelation, namely: as Doctrine, as History, as Inner Experience, as Dialectical Presence, and as New Awareness. Awareness of these models is a helpful background in this section of our discussion. While not dismissing these models, the focus of this paper lies on the basic understanding of Revelation as God's self-communication, which is systematically transcribed in doctrines, history, and is continually nuanced in human experience. For a helpful discussion, cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1983).

¹⁹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965), sec. 2.

This relational aspect of revelation points to the fact that God communicates God-self in the context of concrete human reality. Therefore, God's disclosure is comprehended and substantiated through the optic of human experience. There can be "no revelation without human experience."²⁰ This implies that human experience is the locus of discerning revelation. However, one must remember that revelation is not equivalent to the human experience. The God-self of God is larger than human experiences. God's divine communication is greater than the particularity of human experience. However, it is only through such particularity that the Absolute is mediated. The human experience is the point of insertion of God's revelatory activity.

Therefore, it reaffirms our fundamental conviction that "God's revelation is first and foremost about life and not about eternally valid supernatural truths which has no valid connection to human experiences."²¹ God's offer of life comes through the concreteness of the human person's struggle to make sense of his/her various existential concerns. Consequently, it cannot be dismissed that revelation happens in and through human experiences. Eventually, the comprehension of such an offer creates in the person a sense of meaning. Through this dimension of faith, the human person can affirm the presence of an "Other" or a "Source or Giver of Life."²² This is richly complemented in the next section as we attempt to articulate the scripture as a human experience.

²⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Reports on the Books Jesus and Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 11.

²¹ de Mesa and Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes*, 53.

²² *Ibid.*

B. Scripture as Human Experience

Scripture, first and foremost, is a narrative of faith that is rooted in human persons' lived experience. The people's lived experiences of God are the first moment in the creation of the Scriptures.²³ These experiences anchored in their memory and reinterpreted through the optic of faith are seminal in the Bible's writing. Consequently, looking at scripture from the optic of lived experience "can lead people to know the truth about God and the human condition."²⁴ The Bible, therefore, is a testament to the human person's capacity to nuance the transcendent reality of God in the concreteness of human experiences. The scripture eloquently paints the human person's ability to structure meaning and ethical responses to the Divine's reality. In short, it is a record of the foundational Jewish-Christian experiences of God and the human responses they evoke. Prospectively, reading the Scriptures can also prompt religious experiences to its present readers.

Moreover, a necessary point of consideration is that scripture is written by human persons who are divinely inspired. Indispensable in reading the truth of the Bible is the element of inspiration, the impulse of the Holy Spirit through the personal and historical context of the authors. Inspiration, therefore, is the "active presence of God in the faith consciousness of a people who have produced these books in a long history."²⁵ Dismissing this conviction leads to an incomplete reading of the scripture. In other words,

²³ Roderick Pabillo, *The Bible: 100% Human, 100% Divine* (Philippines: Salesiana Publishers, Inc. 2000), 33.

²⁴ Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221.

²⁵ de Mesa and Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes*, 60.

reading the Bible also evokes an openness to the Spirit. This means that a purely technical reading of the Bible cannot automatically assure the truth of the Bible. "One may know the 'letter' but not the 'Spirit' of the Scriptures."²⁶

Considering the central role of human experience and the inspiration of the Spirit in the formation of the Bible leads to the fact that the scripture may not be free of errors or inerrant. The Bible is not a set of propositions that must be judged in conformity to facts. However, it points to the truth that the human person can grasp and comprehend beyond the limits of the material world.

C. Tradition as Human Experience

Another element of the Christian faith that is contributive to the shaping of ordinary faith narratives is Tradition. Tradition is the entirety of faith that the Church receives and hands on from one generation to the other. In the words of *Dei Verbum*, "now what was handed down by the apostles includes everything which contributes to the holiness of life, and the increase in faith of the People of God; and so, the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations and that she herself is, all that she believes."²⁷ The Tradition or the fullness of the Church's faith is traditioned through traditions – practices and expressions which Christian communities in different places and at different times have

²⁶ Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology*, 222. See also Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church *Verbum Domini* (Rome: September 30, 2010), sec. 19.

²⁷ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965), sec. 8.

given birth. Tradition, therefore, is the history of Christian faith experiences: human experiences that, by their embodiment in the Christian history and narratives become experienced as Christian experiences. This means to say that in a comprehensive sense,

Tradition is not primarily a "something," an objectified datum. It is not exclusively, when taken in its full sense, either the transmission of the word of God in Scripture or the handing on of truths and forms of piety not committed to writing. It is the faith of the Church in action, which is more than its expression in propositions both because Christ works in this faith and because not all that is done in faith is adequately accessible to reflection and expression."²⁸

What we have is not a dead tradition but a living tradition. This is primarily because Tradition is also a narrative of faith that is anchored on concrete human experiences. This bespeaks of the fundamental role of human experience in comprehending the faith of the Church and the development of her faith. Human experiences, therefore, are the vital pools of understanding the faith the Church receives. Thus, the process of traditioning must continuously dialogue the fullness of the Church's faith to particular human contexts and experiences. We may also get things wrong by forgetting that our experience remains partial. In fact, all our experiences, before the end of the world, remains partial

²⁸ Karl-Heinz Weger, "Tradition," in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 6, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 269.

and provisional. We can rush toward error if we "absolutize some experience and refuse to be open to the evidence of new experiences which may modify what we have already learned."²⁹ In this way, the people of today also can have access to the nascent Church's faith experience of God in Jesus.

As fundamentally human experiences, Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition point to the human person's capacity to organize perceptions and interpretations of their experiences, each according to the particularity of one's context. From this capacity, the human person was able to establish and qualify meanings and truths. This is a signpost to the reality that the human person is a vexingly complex reality. Therefore, it is called for that we maintain the complex character of the human person. Helpful in this intention is Sir John Polkinghorne's vision on the human person – the primary manifestation of experience. By looking at the human person, we can also add an epistemic warrant to faith narratives.

FAITH NARRATIVES AND POLKINGHORNE'S INTEGRATED ANTHROPOLOGY

The account of Sir Polkinghorne's verisimilitude is also echoed in his conception of the human person. In his Templeton Lecture in 2002 entitled "The Person, the Soul, and Genetic Engineering," he said,

My hope and expectation for the science of the twenty-first century is that an entirely new and

²⁹ Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 46.

fertile way of thinking about nature will develop, complementing the reductionist/constituent way in which we have thought over the last 350 years. The physics of the past generation was based on a bits and pieces approach, thinking in terms of the exchange of energy between particles. That approach was certainly not wrong, but it has turned out not to be wholly adequate. We need also to be able to think holistically in terms of overall behavior, and the key to understanding such pattern generation will lie in a suitably enhanced and generalized concept of information, the means by which patterned behavior can be specified and described in dynamical terms.³⁰

The primary consideration of Sir Polkinghorne in articulating the nature of the human person is the holistic conception of the human person's overall behavior. This implicitly means that the human person is composed of so many layers and factors that cannot be simply reduced to naturalistic terms. This is why Sir Polkinghorne believes in an anthropology that sees a person as psychosomatic unities. This means that the human person is a package deal with mind and matter in an inseparably complementary relationship.

This anthropological vision is a step ahead of the Platonic-Cartesian-influenced conception of the human person as an embodied being: composed of body and spirit, understood in distinguishable and separable ways. This

³⁰ John Polkinghorne, "The Person, the Soul, and Genetic Engineering" in *Journal of Medical Ethics* (November 30, 2004), 594.

dualist conception of the human person remains to be plausible. However, it is "much more persuasive to think of humans as animated bodies, a kind of a 'package deal' of the material and the mental and spiritual in the form of a complementary and inseparable relationship."³¹ The purpose of this is to articulate adequate anthropology that will do justice to the multiple dimensions of humanity. Sir Polkinghorne describes the human person as an intersection of many dimensions of a rich reality. He said,

We are *physical entities* made out of elements that were created in the nuclear furnaces of the stars and in the death-throes of a supernova explosion. We are *biological beings* whose evolutionary ancestry implies a kinship with other animals. We are *self-conscious beings*, aware of ourselves through complex modes of reflexivity and possessing the ability to look into the far future in order to form expectations and hopes of what is yet to come. We are *language-users*, able to communicate with our contemporaries and with other human generations, both past and yet to come, by means of this almost infinitely subtle and supple resource. We are *creative beings*, expressing deep feelings and exploring profound delights through participation in the mysterious powers of music, art, and literature. We are *intellectual beings*, capable of comprehending through science the history and processes of the vast universe that gave us birth. We are *religious*

³¹ Polkinghorne, *Exploring Reality*, 46.

*beings, encountering the sacred reality of God in occasions of awe and worship.*³² (*italics mine*)

The human person, therefore, is a vexingly complex reality that must not be diminished through an appeal to some single and allegedly all-sufficient explanatory principle. The human person is "not just a genetic survival machine . . . or a collection of molecules."³³ This points to the fact of the richness of human experience. An attempt to reduce or even disregard a single component of the human person's vexingly complex reality neglects a vital realm of human experience. Reducing the human person to objects is tantamount to treating the human being not as a person. Thus, faith narratives are indispensable from the human person. Despite not sufficiently warranted by the parameters of natural sciences, faith narratives and the recognition of transcendence are plausible entities of human experience.

Accordingly, the faith narratives of Nanay Flora are signposts to who they are as persons. They are not simply machines trying to survive the pandemic. They are employing their inherent capacity to see the transcendent reality to re-read their experiences during the pandemic. This vision has given them an ethical stance to dissent to the limiting condition of Covid 19. When the world pushes them to their limits, their visions of the Divine empower them to stand up. In other words, their vision calls for the establishment of a liberating structure that can challenge their present condition.

³² John C. Polkinghorne, "Towards an Integrated Anthropology" in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Michael Welker (United Kingdom: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 79.

³³ *Ibid.*, 79.

CONCLUSION

Faith narratives are the indispensable component of the landscape of every day. Located within the web of stories confined in the democratic space of every day, establishing the epistemic warrant of ordinary stories of faith poses a challenge. The difficulty comes through because these narratives are sporadic. And they cannot be simply reduced and interpreted using one lens. Making sense of faith narratives requires a multidisciplinary approach to avoid misrepresentation. This is why in this chapter, we look at faith narratives through a phenomenological perspective – deciphering the elements of faith narratives that are irreducible to naturalistic terms. Also, of equal importance is our framing of the whole phenomenological survey of human experience within Sir John Polkinghorne's concept of the human person.

The elements of consciousness, mineness, and mattering are the inherent component of every human experience. Features that are present not only in faith narratives but essentially in every human pursuit, science included. These are aspects of experience that cannot be simply dismissed because they cannot be subjected to empirical observations. Furthermore, we realize that faith narratives are not merely interpretations of a God-reality but one that evokes an ethical response. The soteriological alignment called for by faith narratives also adds to the epistemic warrant of ordinary stories of faith. Besides, we have surpassed the impression that faith stories are seemingly whimsical and are products of the human person's imagination. Fundamentally believing in God's initiative to communicate God-self to the human person,

the believer's comprehension of such communication is framed by his/her encounter with tradition: revelation, scripture, and (T)tradition – pools of faith that are deeply rooted in human experience. These structures of reality, which are subsequently organized into sources of meaning and ethical response, are an exercise of the nature of the human person. Dismissing these aspects from the human person's dynamics reduces the human person to an object, a survival machine, and a collection of molecules. Finally, this leads us to the plausibility of faith narratives, which guarantees that they are potent contributions to the integral becoming of society.

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