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Tomáš Halík's Concept of God as the Depth of Reality

Abstract: The purpose of this article, whose point of reference are selected works of the Czech philosopher and theologian Tomáš Halík, is to critically analyse his concept of God. He distances himself from the idea of the Absolute as a construct of human reason and turns to the concept of God as an ontic foundation of the world. He rejects the concept of the Absolute alienated and separated from the world and embraces the vision of God hidden in the depths of reality and allowing us to experience his proximity in various ways. In the first part of the article, the philosophers' concept of God, identified with the First Mover of the world and the Supreme Being, is critiqued. In the second part, the vision of God as the foundation and depth of being and the related issues of pantheism, panentheism and the personality of God are outlined. In the third part, attention is given to the fundamental ways of experiencing His presence and proximity, which include the experience of nature and historical events, the experience of the human interior ("deeper self") and the encounter with another person, especially a wounded and suffering one.

Keywords: God, foundation and depth of being, panentheism, person, reality

Introduction

One of the recurring issues that humans have addressed is the origin and basis (*archē*) of all reality. This existential foundation of the world has often been associated with a material or immaterial Absolute. Over the centuries, reflections on the existence and nature of the absolute Being have assumed various forms. It has been examined in terms of immanence or transcendence using non-personal or personal categories. In the Western European tradition, the immanent and simultaneously transcendent personal absolute Being was referred to as God. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that

no unequivocal concept of the Absolute has yet been formulated. Moreover, it is very often contingent on preconceived philosophical or religious assumptions. Still, the contemporary human is subject to a certain “thirst” for the Absolute, which is envisioned not so much as an object of reasoning, but as an existential experience.

Czech philosopher and theologian Tomáš Halík is undoubtedly one of those who delve into the issue of God adopting such an approach. It is noteworthy that he wishes to be referred to as a “theophile” rather than a “theologian.” It is typical of a theologian to possess systematic knowledge of God and to write scholarly treatises concerning the matter, whereas a theophile loves God and seeks to bear witness to Him.¹ Thus, Halík does not intend to engage in mere theoretical reflection on the question of the Absolute but aspires, above all, to usher humans into the living experience of God.

In his efforts, the Czech intellectual draws inspiration from the concepts of Master Eckhart, John of the Cross, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, Romano Guardini, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Johann B. Metz, Hans Waldenfels, Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo, Jean-Luc Marion, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Richard Kearney, and René Girard.²

Using selected works by Halík as a point of reference, these reflections aim at a critical analysis of his concept of God, which has not yet received an adequate study in the literature. Commentators on Halík’s thought generally focus on his ideas related to social changes in Western Europe, transformation of religion, historically conditioned forms of Christianity and its role in the future, Church-world relations, social framework of experiencing faith and unfaith, cultural context of the transmission of the experience and content of faith, secularization and post-secularism, spiritual search of man and his spirituality, but do not reflect on the issue of God. Meanwhile, it seems to be crucial for Halík, whose view is that He

¹ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 54; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 12–13.

² Cf. Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 9; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 17; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 230–231.

is not an object of theoretical divagation, that is, a distant and alien “God of philosophy,” but rather a being possible to experience in the existence, i.e. a close and disclosing “God of religion.”

Halík therefore distances himself in his conception of God from the idea of the Absolute as a construct of human reason and espouses a notion in which God constitutes the “depth” of reality. The following deliberations consist of three main parts. The first will critically appraise the concept of the God of philosophers, who is identified as the Prime Mover of the world and the Supreme Being. The second part provides an outline of the vision of God as the foundation and “depth” of being and the associated concept of panentheism. Subsequently, the third part will focus on the essential forms of experiencing His presence, which include the experience of nature and history, the experience of human interiority and the encounter with the Other, especially with a person who has been afflicted by wounds and suffering.

1. Critique of the God of Philosophers

Halík's reflection on God sets out with the conviction that one must, first of all, distinguish between the living God of faith and the dead God of philosophers. The God of philosophers is a being enclosed within the confines of reason, an abstract construct and a peculiar caricature of God, which was disposed of through the efforts of the so-called “masters of suspicion.”³ It is argued by some that the Czech thinker places particular emphasis on the importance of pertinent critical endeavours by Friedrich Nietzsche, who is to become the teacher of modern religiosity.⁴ Therefore, God cannot be reduced to a product and object of analysis of human reason, which leads to the petrification, conceptualisation and fragmentation of reality. Instead, He should be the God of living human faith and authentic experience.

Halík draws particular attention to two moments in the development of human thought that proved pivotal in the making of the God

³ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 61–62.

⁴ Cf. Puczydłowski, “Friedrich Nietzsche,” 85, 108.

of philosophers: the emergence of the Aristotelian and the Enlightenment traditions. In either case, he believes God was objectified by being equated with the idea of the Prime Mover of the universe or the Supreme Being. Moreover, in both cases, He was separated from other beings and situated in the supernatural realm.

According to the Czech intellectual, the dominance of Aristotelian thought and the related concept of the Prime Mover resulted in the elimination and death of the living God of the Bible and mysticism. His substitute assumed the form of a metaphysical idea, the death of which was subsequently pronounced by Nietzsche.⁵ Simultaneously, the idea of God was objectified. Furthermore, in the Platonic spirit, one maintained that the locus of His existence was in the supernatural realm.⁶ Still, it seems that God cannot be objectified and reduced to an idea. Moreover, it is impossible to approach Him using objective categories, whether in ontic or epistemic terms.

Consequently, Halík observes that God is never an object because if He were, He would become an idol. Meanwhile, God is thoroughly Other, that is, transcendent. He thus eludes human knowledge, description and proof.⁷ God's otherness manifests His transcendence, which has an existential and cognitive dimension, i.e. His manner of existence and cognition differs from other beings.

Elsewhere, drawing on the German mystic Master Eckhart, Halík states that God is "nothing" among things that are "something." He is to be conceived first and foremost as an ineffable mystery.⁸ A similar intuition is shared by the German theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich, who holds that the God of theism cannot be construed as a being alongside other beings, in other words, as a part of reality.

⁵ Cf. Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 289; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 9.

⁶ Cf. Halík, *Europejskie mówienie*, 28.

⁷ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 83, 88, 219; Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 17–18, 21.

⁸ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 72–73; Halík, "Church for the Seekers," 131; Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 109; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 60–61; Halík, *Hurra, nie jestem Bogiem*, 75, 84–85; Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 39; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 181. Some suggest certain inconsistency, because Halík seems to make an easy link between the concept of God as the Creator of a meaningful order of reality and the idea of God as an ineffable mystery, cf. Kočí – Roubík, "Searching the Altar," 123.

He cannot be subordinated to the objective structure of reality and its ontic categories. Rather, he refers to the Absolute as a mysterious “God above God,” a beingness that constitutes the foundation of all being.⁹

Elsewhere, Halík notes that his reflection on God aims primarily to defend the greatness of the divine mystery.¹⁰ Halík shares the belief of some theologians that mystery should be paid attention to because it is the core of religion. Awareness of mystery is also helpful in challenging simplistic forms of faith that lack the depth and richness of a lived experience of God.¹¹ Others emphasise that mystery is the heart of faith, which is not about accepting certain statements, but initiation into experiencing the mystery. It is worth keeping in mind that mystery is something irreducible, exceeding human understanding and yearning to conquer reality. A mystery cannot be mastered, but it masters us. Because we adapt our apprehension of the world to accommodate it, rather than reducing it to what we can intellectually manage. However, the mystery is not irrational, but inexhaustible. It cannot be reduced to the banalities of human reason. Therefore, mystery cannot be mastered epistemically or exhausted spiritually.¹²

Thus, according to Halík, God cannot be measured or demonstrated, but neither is He a feeling, a thought, or an idea. He cannot be borne out by any evidence, scientific evidence in particular. This is because science does not corroborate the existence or non-existence of God since such proof exceeds its competence. In any case, a proven God would be an idol.¹³

⁹ Cf. Tillich, *Męstwo bycia*, 189–190, 194–201; Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 68–69, 130–131.

¹⁰ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 28; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 231.

¹¹ Cf. McCabe, *God and Evil*, 128.

¹² Cf. McGrath, “On the Threshold,” 399.

¹³ Cf. Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 44, 84–85, 107, 121. According to some, the existence of God can be philosophically justified only in classical philosophy and in Thomist metaphysics. Only in Thomism does the existence of God impose itself irresistibly on human reason, since without God the existence of the world would be inherently contradictory (which it cannot be). No other philosophical current

Halík also rejects the Enlightenment God of philosophers, that is, the idea of a Supreme Being. Instead, he desires that there be the “God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus”: the Partner in the encounter and dialogue with the human.¹⁴ In the opinion of the Czech intellectual, the God of philosophers is primarily a product of the Enlightenment which, as a cultural revolution, featured three fundamental stages. The first saw the emancipation and the cult of reason (18th century), the second was dominated by the demands for authenticity, self-actualisation, the cult of emotions and libido (the revolution of the 1960s), while the third is characterised by the emancipation of nature, respect for minorities, responsibility for the environment and asceticism (modern times).¹⁵ The God of philosophers would thus be the outcome of the first stage of the Enlightenment, a construct of autonomous human reason. Halík, on the other hand, is anxious to show that God is different from all conceptual constructs and imaginings. He is utterly distinct because He transcends human thoughts and desires.

It is worth to remember that Halík was a student of the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, who made some significant critiques of modern account of God. Modernity developed according to him a new form of rationalism – the rationalism of mastery. Its basis was the insistence on a univocal sense of God, which is the first step of removing God’s mystery. The problem of God might be restated as the struggle between mystery and mastery of God. Thus, God becomes one of comprehensible and graspable things among others.¹⁶

The God is itself according to Halík a modernist construction, one of many inventions of the Enlightenment thinkers that need to be challenged and reconsidered. The death of God announced by Nietzsche and others was the death of the banal god of modern times and that that event could be liberating for religion and faith.¹⁷

provides a satisfactory answer in favour of the existence of God; none can conclusively refute that existence in spite of Thomistic metaphysics either, cf. Szopa, “Czy istnieje ateizm filozoficzny?” 160.

¹⁴ Cf. Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 11–12.

¹⁵ Cf. Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 178–187.

¹⁶ Cf. Kočí, “God in Question,” 51, 55–56.

¹⁷ Cf. Halík, *I Want You*, 59.

Modernity creates a false objective God, to be studied with scientific detachment, lacking any engagement with the interior world of human beings. The banal and emaciated gods of modernity must be discarded and replaced with the living God of the mystics, who defies the neat rational categorizations of modernist thinkers. Modernist approaches to God seem to offer in this situation a deficient account of God, which fails to do justice to the human concerns, needs, and interests.¹⁸ For this reason postmodern thinkers try to avoid the trap of rational categorizations because they fear the temptation to exhaust mystery in inappropriate words. Especially since the spectre of onto-theology portraying God in schematic definitions is still haunting around as an undesirable heritage of modernity.¹⁹ Some stress in this connection that postmodernity takes mystery seriously again.²⁰

In this context, one could cite the position of the Latin theologian Victor Codina, who speaks of the so-called “third enlightenment.” The first, he argues, involved liberation of the mind from irrational and infantile prejudices (Immanuel Kant), the second freed people from poverty (Karl Marx), while the third relied on the principle of distinctiveness and acknowledgement of cultural, religious, sexual, ecological, human, religious and theological otherness (Friedrich Nietzsche, Emmanuel Levinas, Jürgen Habermas).²¹ It seems that Halík would find some affinity with the latter understanding of the Enlightenment, as it would offer an opportunity to accentuate the otherness of God and His non-reducibility to human categories.

Halík explicitly emphasises that the true God is always an unknowable mystery.²² Yet despite his emphasis on mystery, Halík believes that it is possible to speak positively of God, because modern world needs to rediscover the transcendent dimensions of life. The unlimited reality of God is such that our reflections and actions can never capture the full reality of this mystery. It is something that must be encountered, experienced, and inadequately

¹⁸ Cf. McGrath, “On the Threshold,” 399.

¹⁹ Cf. Kočí, “A Postmodern Quest,” 87, 90.

²⁰ Cf. Kočí – Roubík, “Searching the Altar,” 120.

²¹ Cf. Codina, *Kościół wykluczonych*, 231–236.

²² Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwost w obec Boga*, 118; Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 21, 84; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 151; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 281–282.

expressed. However, we need to recognise the limits of any attempt to conceptualise God, in that this runs the risk of reducing God to human categories, and thus fails to grasp or express the conceptual immensity and existential inexhaustibility of Divine Being, which reason is unable to fully comprehend or master.²³ Others additionally emphasise that God's mystery exceeds our theological mastery, i.e. the knowledge of God, but the very fact that we call God a mystery is in one or another way a part of our knowledge of God.²⁴

It is, therefore, necessary to open oneself up to the truth of God's utter otherness and to face the divine mystery.²⁵ In this context, a distinction is sometimes made between *open-minded* and *closed-minded* people. The former ones remain open to mystery, the latter ones prefer to manipulate with it and have it "under control."²⁶ Mystery, meanwhile, cannot be conquered. Every man must wait patiently at its threshold and persevere in it.²⁷ According to Halík, the appropriate human response to the mystery of God is fear: an overwhelming experience of God's greatness and majesty or bewilderment at His greatness and incomprehensibility.²⁸ Here, Halík draws on the notions advanced by German philosopher, theologian and religious scholar Rudolf Otto, according to whom the human experiences two fundamental emotional states when confronted with the *numinosum*: *tremendum* or *fascinosum*, i.e. fear or rapture.

Critical of the objectifying approach to God, Halík notes that He is not portrayed in the Bible as the Prime Mover or the Supreme Being but rather as a God-nomad, a wanderer, appearing to people on the journey. This is well evinced in His name, which is not a static tautology ("I am who I am") but a name denoting an existential dynamism ("He acts! He shall act! He shall manifest!").²⁹ A similar interpretation of God's name is given by Irish philosopher Richard Kearney, who focuses on God's presence in the future ("I will be

²³ Cf. McGrath, "On the Threshold," 399.

²⁴ Cf. Kočí – Roubík, "Searching the Altar," 123.

²⁵ Cf. Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 104, 209.

²⁶ Cf. Hošek, "Introduction," 3.

²⁷ Cf. Kočí – Roubík, "Searching the Altar," 107.

²⁸ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 193–195.

²⁹ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 114, 311.

who I will be”) and His action in history (“God, who may be”).³⁰ The biblical God is thus not a static entity but a Being full of dynamism and manifesting throughout history in ever-new ways.

Hence, Halík finds that the attempt to explain the words with which God presented Himself to Moses in the desert was one of the decisive moments in the history of religious thought. “I am who I am” was intended to signify the oneness of being and essence, but God was objectivised when that designation was coined. However, it is argued as untenable in modern hermeneutics because God’s words should be translated as “I shall act. I shall be with you.” Thus, according to the Czech intellectual, God refuses to emerge from the depths of his mystery and does not consent to having His name revealed and having Himself used as if He were a thing. Instead, he wishes to be known as a liberating and redeeming God.³¹ In this situation, any image, concept, definition and name of God is, in Halík’s view, no more than an objectifying idol.³² It follows that God would, as such, not manifest the name that disclosed His essence and made Him liable to control but would rather assure one of His presence and action in the specific life of a human.

Halík, therefore, believes that God does not have a name by means of which one could invoke and manipulate Him. Our attempts to define or name Him are doomed to failure. The nameless God thus remains with humans anonymously: unrecognised, unnamed, and unsummoned.³³ In this regard, the thinker concurs with Tillich, who maintains that it is inappropriate to give God any names.³⁴ After all, as Halík asserts, God eludes human attempts to name Him, and sometimes even defends Himself against them. He is present in word and in silence because one can speak of or keep silent about God. Still, God is present above all in the lives of those who seek Him and those

³⁰ Cf. Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 1–8.

³¹ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 25; Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 29; Halík, *Europejskie mówienie*, 25–27; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 239–242.

³² Cf. Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 252.

³³ Cf. Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 97.

³⁴ Cf. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 69.

who struggle with Him.³⁵ In this regard, Halík values seekers who are attracted to the intellectual and spiritual vision of religion, but they steer away from its institutional dimension. They live their religious life in the midst of questions, doubts, hesitations and spiritual search. For Halík's special subject of interest is meaningfully and hopefully human life marked by uncertainty, hesitation, and lack of precise meaning.

Halík shares his thinking in this regard³⁶ with Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who makes a distinction between religious "seekers" and "dwellers." The future of religion depends in his opinion on finding one's own spiritual path and the opening up of traditional forms of religiosity to people seeking it. He also makes a clear thesis that the number of people seeking deeper spirituality will increase.³⁷ In this regard, both thinkers want to value spiritual seekers and draw attention to the need for traditional religions to support them, because man remains always ignorant in relation to God, unable to grasp and understand Him.

In this context, Jan Konarski stresses that Halík's primary goal is not to resolve the question of God's existence but to gain insight into the drama of the human heart, which never ceases asking about God in the midst of darkness and hesitation.³⁸ The personal adventure of encountering God takes place – as Polish philosopher and theologian Józef Życiński explains – against the background of struggle, loneliness, the experience of the night, despondency, disappointment, and illusions.³⁹

Another reason why Halík opposes the objectification of God is that it leads to idolatry⁴⁰, which especially arises when one does not treat religious representations as symbols that reveal a supernatural

³⁵ Cf. Halík, *Europejskie mówienie*, 6, 29; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 225–226, 238, 242, 244.

³⁶ Cf. Halík, "Church for the Seekers," 127–128; Halík, "Europe between Laicity and Christianity," 58.

³⁷ Cf. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 532–533; Taylor, "The Church speaks," 18, 21, 23.

³⁸ Cf. Konarski, "Wojciech Giertych OP," 54.

³⁹ Cf. Życiński, *Wiara wątpiących*, 84, 92.

⁴⁰ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 29, 100–101, 271; Halík, *Chcę, abys był*, 45.

reality, but as objects of veneration.⁴¹ The Czech intellectual thus follows Tillich, for whom idolatry consists in the absolutisation of the symbols of holiness and recognising them as synonymous with sanctity.⁴² In this situation, a certain form of atheism may function, in the opinion of some, as an interruption of idolatry and a way to the (re)discovery of the mystery of God.⁴³

Nonetheless, it is worth bearing in mind that symbols may be the natural way for humans to meet God, as suggested by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur.⁴⁴ Chantal Delsol further notes that the capacity for symbolisation, for seeing the invisible beyond the visible is a characteristic trait of human beings. Meanwhile, the rational thinking which leads to desymbolisation does not suffice because it does not answer the fundamental human questions.⁴⁵ Thus, Tillich asserts, the symbol betokens a hidden layer of reality and reveals it to the human. Although it is rooted in the collective unconscious, its essential feature is participation in the reality that is unveiled.⁴⁶ The meaning of the religious symbol thus derives from ontic participation in the absolute reality that it represents and discloses. The symbol belongs to the language of religion, for which it becomes a vital vehicle of expression.

In a likewise fashion, Halík finds that the truth about God is communicated primarily in the form of symbols. At the same time, he emphasises that they are only imperfect human constructs and images that attempt to delineate Someone who surpasses them utterly.⁴⁷ Hence, one must not abandon symbols in a relationship with God since they are useful means of discovering the truth about God. At the same time, a critical distance towards them has to be maintained since their origin and meaning are determined socially,

⁴¹ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 312; Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 251–252; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 85, 290.

⁴² Cf. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 141.

⁴³ Cf. Kočí – Roubík, “Searching the Altar,” 116, 118.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ricoeur, *Język*, 146.

⁴⁵ Cf. Delsol, *Kamienie węgielne*, 297.

⁴⁶ Cf. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 136–140, 148–151.

⁴⁷ Cf. Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 289; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 9.

historically, and culturally. Moreover, excessive focus on symbols can lead to their absolutisation and idolatry.

In any case, symbols remain important means of discovering and communicating the truth about God, the fullness of which – according to Halík – is to be found in revelation, but its message tends to vary and depends on the historical and cultural circumstances.⁴⁸ As a result, the truth about God must be sought with humility. One may be aided in this regard by drawing inspiration from the so-called “negative theology” as a method to prevent objectification of the divine Mystery.⁴⁹ According to Konarski, human ineptitude in approaching the truth of God is an essential premise of negative theology. That truth cannot amount to simplistic affirmations since every human claim concerning God is truthful only to a certain extent. Negation, therefore, is not a denial of truth but rather a mode of approaching it. Moreover, it is a form of cleansing human beliefs of the superficial or definitive content in order to bring out the substance which is more complete and richer than anything the human may conceive.⁵⁰ Hence, in this case, we would be dealing with an approximative concept of truth, in which the human continually approaches the mystery of God and discovers its new dimensions. One could say that a new facet of God is revealed to them: a God who is always Other and makes His appearance in a specific existence of the human.

In consequence, Halík’s notions are not remote from the concept of atheism.⁵¹ The latter, formulated by Kearney, involves the critical recovery of sanctity and the return of divinity after its previous form disappeared.⁵² Above all, atheism means abandoning the God of metaphysics and searching for the signs of His presence in the current human existence.⁵³ Thus, atheism envisages the resurgence of divinity, which should take place through human

⁴⁸ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 20–21, 76–77.

⁴⁹ Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwość wobec Boga*, 33–35; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 100, 158.

⁵⁰ Cf. Konarski, “Wojciech Giertych OP,” 50.

⁵¹ Cf. Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 115–116.

⁵² Cf. Kearney, “Theism,” 79–83.

⁵³ Cf. Kearney, “Atheism,” 8, 16–17.

openness to experiencing the divine mystery in their present life.⁵⁴ Halík looks forward towards the return of God and the discovery of an ever fuller truth about Him. However, what he has in mind is not so much the deduced God of philosophers but rather the God of living human experience; not a God separated from the world but integrated into its structures and history. The Czech intellectual thus underlines the need to experience the presence of the divine Mystery in the realities of everyday life. That Mystery is radically “other” with respect to human perceptions and notions, and yet close to the human as the foundation of their existence and the “depth” of being of the world.

2. God as the Foundation and Depth of Being

Halík stresses that the hiddenness of the divine Being constitutes the first human experience.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, he notes that his reflection on God aims to highlight His radical hiddenness the importance of the “dark night” in the spiritual life of the human.⁵⁶ This statement of Halík brings him close to the Canadian philosopher John L. Schellenberg's concept of God's hiddenness. However, they draw different conclusions from the phenomenon of the hiddenness of God. Halík takes the side of theism, while Schellenberg advocates atheism.

God cannot exist, in the conviction of the Canadian intellectual, because if he did, he would not be hiding. For if a perfectly loving God existed, He would then be open to a personal relationship with human being, just as a parent is open and present with a child in order to provide opportunities for growth and help in moments of crisis.⁵⁷ Thus, for Halík, the experience of God's hiddenness is a way of His existence and an essential element of religious experience, while for Schellenberg it provides a rationale for questioning the existence of God and the possibility of spiritual experience.

⁵⁴ Cf. Kearney, “God Making,” 35–37.

⁵⁵ Cf. Halík, *Chce, abyš byl*, 62–63.

⁵⁶ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 28; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 231.

⁵⁷ Cf. Schellenberg, “Divine Hiddenness,” 33–34; Schellenberg, *The Hiddenness Argument*, 21, 103; Schellenberg, “The Hiddenness Argument,” 203.

To Halík, God exists first and foremost in hiddenness, not on the surface of reality.⁵⁸ He is invariably hidden and silent. For this reason, one must be aware that any human perception and expression relating to Him is problematic.⁵⁹ Moreover, it is observed elsewhere that although God dwells in hiddenness, the various forms of the sacred are visibly present. Consequently, the response to the hiddenness of God may be twofold. First, one may treat it as His death and find a substitute. Second, one may accept the absence as a new mode of His being for us⁶⁰, all the more so because the divine Mystery speaks through its silence and manifests in hiddenness. Its greatness is hidden in the small and inconspicuous.⁶¹ Halík seems to be in favour of the latter response. He does not want to question the existence of God but rather approaches His hiddenness as a form of presence.

In consequence, the Czech intellectual emphasises that a human is engaged in a dialogue of faith with a present, albeit hidden Partner. It is only after some time that a human can grasp that God has spoken to them in various ways (in their thoughts, encounters with other people, books, and in the events of life). They will then appreciate that those were not insignificant coincidences but diverse forms of God's presence.⁶² Halík also notes elsewhere that God is dynamic, coming and going, hiding and reappearing.⁶³ The experience of God's hiddenness is not only familiar to the modern human but was known in the biblical tradition as well. The Czech intellectual stresses its ontic dimension in particular, although its potential moral aspect should also be taken into account.

Such a viewpoint is adopted by, e.g., the American philosopher Paul K. Moser, who draws attention to the incompatibility between the morally perfect divine will and the morally imperfect human will. We are thus faced with a conflict of two types of will. God can inspire a person to cooperate with His will, but a person may

⁵⁸ Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwość wobec Boga*, 9.

⁵⁹ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 15, 45, 150.

⁶⁰ Cf. Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 69, 112, 222.

⁶¹ Cf. Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 81.

⁶² Cf. Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 45–46.

⁶³ Cf. Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 9; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 77.

reject it. According to Moser, inspiration arises in the human interior because God guides a person through inner impulses. Moreover, He never compels one to a particular action but only encourages it. The hiddenness of God may therefore be the result of two situations. First, it will ensue due to the action of God, who conceals His will from certain people. Second, it will follow from human action when they reject the revealed will of God and refuse to cooperate with Him.⁶⁴ Still, it is important to note that both the matter of God's hiddenness and His inspiration may be ambiguous to a person who looks from the outside and interprets their inner experience in a different fashion.

Some argue that the experience of God's hiddenness is associated with the experience of His revelation, whereas the experience itself is important for three reasons. First, God is hidden because He is different from other beings. Second, the hiddenness of the Absolute aims to amend our understanding of God, abolish His false concepts and cause a more apposite notion of Him to crystallise. Third, the human may discover God as He genuinely and currently is.⁶⁵

In any case, Halík strives to emphatically underline that God is hidden whilst being near. Moreover, He is hidden because of His nearness, since He is the being of each and every being.⁶⁶ God must therefore be sought in the profound dimension of reality by transcending individual beings because He is the innermost core of the world.⁶⁷ Only the external manifestations of God's activity are therefore accessible to the human, but His essence is hidden.⁶⁸ Halík further notes that if a person orients one's life towards the divine depth of reality, it will subsequently transform into a dialogue.⁶⁹ The importance of the mysterious depth of reality is also mentioned by Taylor, who is mentally close to Halík in this case. However, this dimension of the world has been lost according to Taylor. As a result,

⁶⁴ Cf. Moser, "Experiential Dissonance," 30–39.

⁶⁵ Cf. Dobrzeniecki – King, "The Theology of Hiddenness," 117–119.

⁶⁶ Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwość wobec Boga*, 123, 133; Halík, *Hurra, nie jestem Bogiem*, 83; Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 100.

⁶⁷ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 84, 97–99; Halík, "Europe between Laicity and Christianity," 60.

⁶⁸ Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwość wobec Boga*, 58; Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 77–78.

⁶⁹ Cf. Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 32.

he postulates the need to return to the deeper and transcendent dimension of reality, so that it is not exposed to superficiality and lack of sense.⁷⁰

Hence, Halík maintains that humans must break through the outer sphere of reality in order to reach its foundation and depth that is synonymous with God. Here, the notions of the Czech intellectual appear to echo the much earlier concept of the “hidden God” (*Deus absconditus*), various iterations of which may be found in Nicholas of Cusa, Jacob Böhme or Martin Heidegger. Consequently, Halík’s reflection would focus on the hidden and gradually revealed “beingness,” which he believes possesses a divine quality.

There are two principal traditions of thinking about God according to Halík: the Aristotelian-Thomist paradigm, in which God is the supreme being, and the Platonic-Augustinian tradition, in which God is the foundation of all existence. The Czech intellectual leans towards the latter, which presumes God to constitute the basis and depth of reality, while the relationship to Him is internal. In such a situation, God exists both within the world (immanence) and transcends it (transcendence). We are thus faced, according to Halík, with the paradox of immanence and transcendence. If they are radically separated, one may descend into idolatry or the negation of God.⁷¹

Although he shares the notion of God as the existential foundation and depth of the world, Halík dissociates himself from pantheism. This is because the abiding of God in the creation and of the creation in God does not imply that they are one and the same. Indeed, a mysterious interpenetration takes place between God and creation, but God surpasses all creation at the same time.⁷² It is in Him that

⁷⁰ Cf. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 307–310, 342–349, 366–371, 693; Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 296–298.

⁷¹ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 110–111, 142–143, 273–274; Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 95; Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 166–167, 310; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 47–48; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 226.

⁷² Cf. Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 179, 199; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 144–145.

we “live, move and are”⁷³, but simultaneously He is always greater than we are.⁷⁴

Halík also draws attention to another way in which God exists in relation to the world of things: God does not exist in the sense in which things exist. He exists in a way, and yet, in a way, He does not. Both approaches are equally true, but only in conjunction.⁷⁵ God is thus experienced in the paradox of being and non-being.⁷⁶ It is impossible to say of God that He does or does not exist. Both statements are, in the opinion of the Czech intellectual, insufficient. Instead, God may be, because He comes to humans as a possibility, a call, a proposal, whereby it is not a purely human possibility, but rather a horizon of transcendence that expands our possibilities. If a human embraces and realises the spectrum of possibility, then they will know and experience Him. God thus comes as a possibility that must be embraced through faith.⁷⁷ It seems that Halík does not want to deny real existence to God but merely wishes to emphasise His distinct nature in relation to other beings. God exists in a way which is absolute and necessary, whereas the existence of other beings is relative and contingent. Moreover, his reflections on the existence of God proceed on the moral and existential rather than the ontic plane since he strives to articulate the possibility of God being existentially experienced by a person, instead of formulating metaphysical theses concerning His existence or nature.

Not in favour of pantheism, Halík appears to be partial to the concept of panentheism, whose proponents include Martin Buber, Alfred N. Whitehead and Nikolai Bierdaev, as well as Józef Życiński in Poland. As the latter observes, panentheism emphasises both God's presence in nature and God's transcendence with respect to the material world. Still, this transcendence should not be conceived of in

⁷³ Cf. Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 283–284.

⁷⁴ Cf. Halík, *Cierpliwość wobec Boga*, 64–65; Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 253.

⁷⁵ Cf. Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 289–292.

⁷⁶ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 52, 63, 105–107; Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 17; Halík, *Wzywany czy niewzywany*, 290–293.

⁷⁷ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abys był*, 27–28; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 39–40; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 38–41; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 143–144.

a spatial sense. Instead, the notion of transcendence serves to describe the existential depth hidden in the observable components of the physical world, in other words, a mode of existence at a different level of beingness.⁷⁸ Thus, God is integral to the world as the ontic basis of every being and intervenes from within in the process of its development. Nature then evinces the presence of God, but He is not reduced to its dimension.⁷⁹ Such a vision is akin to the perspective of the Bible, which contemplates God, who permeates the world and manifests Himself in it.⁸⁰ At the core of such a vision is a specific kind of ontology, which assumes the existence of a fundamental unity underlying a variety of objects and their explaining by reference to this single foundation of being (monism).⁸¹ However, some point out that the basis of the panentheistic project are naturalistic assumptions that threaten to make the concept of divine influence ontologically superfluous.⁸² Naturalistic assumptions, however, are alien to Halík, who rather interprets the reality in relation to the supernatural (immaterial) being that is the mysterious foundation and depth of being.

However, at this point, it may be worthwhile to ask the question concerning the nature of God as the depth of reality. Is He the impersonal foundation of the world, or is He a personal God?

Halík finds that humans employ the metaphor of “person” to describe God, so as to underscore that He is not a thing. Moreover, he argues, the Western culture does not know a more elevated category than the person. God, however, cannot be equated with it, as this would be a form of idolatry. Using the metaphor of “person” in relation to God, one strives to express two things, according to the Czech intellectual. First, God lives in a relationship. Secondly, God speaks and can be spoken to. All the same, Halík emphasises that a statement about God as a person is not a statement about who God is but rather conveys who He is not. Specifically, He is no object

⁷⁸ Cf. Žyciński, *Bóg Abrahama i Whiteheada*, 137.

⁷⁹ Cf. Žyciński, *Teizm i filozofia analityczna*, II, 142–143, 150–151; Žyciński, *Trzy kultury*, 181–186.

⁸⁰ Cf. Žyciński, *Głębia bytu*, 89–91; Žyciński, *Trzy kultury*, 183; Žyciński, *W kręgu nauki i wiary*, 166.

⁸¹ Cf. Karuvelil, “Constructing ‘God,’” 36–43.

⁸² Cf. Leidenhag, “Is Panentheism Naturalistic?,” 210.

nor any amorphous being. At the same time, it must be remembered that He is more than a person.⁸³ A similar conviction is expressed by Tillich, who holds that God can be spoken of non-symbolically (God as beingness, the foundation and power of beingness) and symbolically (God as a person). Nonetheless, he stresses that the beingness of God corresponds to our form of personhood as the highest degree of beingness, yet at the same time, it infinitely transcends our experience of being a person.⁸⁴

Thus, Halík understands a person in terms of relations as opposed to substance. For him, the essence of personhood lies in relationality.⁸⁵ Here, the Czech intellectual concurs with Buber and Tillich, according to whom the foundation of being a person is an existence lived in a dialogical relationship with other beings, thanks to which their uniqueness and essence may be discovered. God would therefore enter into a relationship with a person and dialogue with them through other beings.⁸⁶ In this sense, He would be a person who reaches out to a person through created beings and establishes an existential relationship with them. In this regard, Halík emphasises the peculiar “depth” of beings that exist and are the object of experience because, apart from the external sphere, they possess an internal foundation. A person would then have two possibilities. First, to establish a relationship with individual beings, go beyond their external layer in order to reach their existential depths and, thereby, enter into a dialogue with the divine being. Second, when interacting with individual beings, they may respond to the challenge received from them, interpreting it as a call for response and dialogue originating with the divine foundation of existence.

Halík appears to pursue two fundamental goals in his observations on the personality of God. First, he wishes to emphasise the ontic and epistemic mystery of God and His otherness in relation to various things. Second, Halík does not seek to deny the attribute

⁸³ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 46–48; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 71; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 187; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 165.

⁸⁴ Cf. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 142.

⁸⁵ Cf. Manikowski, “Dialogiczność wiary,” 195–200.

⁸⁶ Cf. Buber, *Werke*, I, 84, 120, 128, 154, 414, 422–423; Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 88–92.

of personhood to God but rather to underscore the analogy between His personhood and that of humans. In doing so, it is important to bear in mind that a person is understood in terms of a relation, not substance. Halík thus entertains a personalist vision of God as a depth of reality, one with whom the human can engage in an interpersonal dialogue through individual beings.

3. The Codes of God's Presence

By portraying God as a personal depth of reality, Halík lists specific ways in which He reveals Himself to the human and enables them to experience His presence. However, they are marked by that peculiar paradox of divine hiddenness and revelation, which consists of the disclosure of the infinite in the finite. In this context, Halík draws attention to the experience of nature and history, the experience of human interiority and the encounter with the fellow human, especially one who is afflicted by wounds and suffering.

According to Halík, God may be discovered through exposure to nature and history. Admittedly, God is not nature and history but constitutes their foundation and depth.⁸⁷ God is, therefore, present in everything, although He transcends all at the same time. Consequently, it is a crucial challenge for humans to seek and find traces of God's presence in all things and historical events.⁸⁸ As He is the context of nature and history, God will become the context of human life as well, even though this context is not entirely available to us, revealing itself in its fullness only at the end of days. As a result, it must be patiently discovered.⁸⁹ Thus, orienting the human towards the natural world and historical events is the first step if one is to experience the depth of being and subsequently discover the divine presence. It should be sought everywhere, even in the smallest and inconspicuous things. Halík thus alludes to Christianity's intuition

⁸⁷ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 170–171; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 71; Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 176; Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 357; Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 35; Halík, *Teatr dla aniołów*, 234.

⁸⁸ Cf. Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 211–212, 217–218, 314–315.

⁸⁹ Cf. Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 157; Halík – Dostatni, *Różnorodność pojednana*, 166.

about the sacramental character of natural reality, which is a symbol of the underlying supernatural reality. God appears as an absolute and root-reaching mystery that permeates everything and manifests itself in everything. Immanent things and historical events thus become transparent to the divine Transcendence, which reveals itself in them as their being depth.

The experience of human interiority is another way of discovering God.⁹⁰ Halík repeats after Augustine of Hippo that human knowledge leads to finding God since He dwells in the interior of the human soul, whose depth He is. God and the human are thus united. Therefore, the task of a person is to know their own soul and discover the presence of God within.⁹¹ Tillich believes likewise, asserting that humans have the experience of God as the foundation of personal life in the depths of their souls.⁹² That being is none other than the living God as the source of human existence.

In Halík's view, it follows that the path towards God leads through the human self. A person discovers God above all in their deeper self, which is distinct from the superficial equivalent (ego). "The deeper self" is the source of human existence, the centre of human life, the dwelling of God and the "soul of the human soul." God is, therefore, the soul of the human soul, the depth of its depths, the intimacy of its interiority, the Self of the human self. In this respect, Halík cites Master Eckhart and the distinction the latter drew from the Bible, namely between the "inner human," who knows the depth of the deity that surpasses all imagination and thought, and the "external human," who knows the idol which is a projection of human desires.⁹³ Drawing on Immanuel Kant, one could say that God is the transcendental self for the empirical self of the human, i.e. a prerequisite of their existence and action. Man's existence is thus based on the inner, the deep and the spiritual centre.

⁹⁰ Cf. Halík, *Hurra, nie jestem Bogiem*, 37–40; Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 78–79; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 41, 45.

⁹¹ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 16–19; Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 226.

⁹² Cf. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, 130–131.

⁹³ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 71–72, 81, 127, 149–150; Halík, *Co nie jest chwiejne*, 21–22.

Therefore, Halík argues that God cannot be spoken of without reference to one's own self, as otherwise, He would be no more than an abstract being. A person finds and comes to know God only by finding and knowing themselves.⁹⁴ God is thus the depth of being of a person while being thoroughly different. His immanence is strictly associated with His transcendence.⁹⁵ Moreover, the transcendent God directs the human from within.⁹⁶ According to Halík, conscience – in which the voice of God resounds – represents a particular expression of that depth and inner guidance.⁹⁷ The Czech intellectual shares this intuition with German theologian and philosopher Romano Guardini, for whom conscience is the instrument of God's realness and nearness, as well as His inner voice that reveals the good and calls for a specific action.⁹⁸

In this context, American intellectual Michael Novak notes that God is the inner dynamism of inquiry, understanding and love in human life. He is the inner and creative light as well as the inner and dynamic striving. The inner life of the human is thus the path to finding God and standing in His presence.⁹⁹

Considering the process of discovering the presence of God in the depths of the human self, Halík draws attention to the associated risk of absolutisation and self-idolisation of the human, in which case meeting God and hearing His voice would become impossible.¹⁰⁰ Instead, the individual – or their self in particular – would be sacralised in what would amount to hierophany.¹⁰¹ Incidentally, it may be noted that modern times have witnessed a structural transformation of the sacred and its dispersion. The sacred has shifted from places hitherto considered sacred to where such a quality is absent. That shift of the sacred may be evinced, among other things, in the sacralisation

⁹⁴ Cf. Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 19–20.

⁹⁵ Cf. Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 25.

⁹⁶ Cf. Halík, *Zacheuszu!*, 11, 226.

⁹⁷ Cf. Halík, *Od „podziemnego Kościoła”*, 14.

⁹⁸ Cf. Guardini, *Bóg daleki*, 135–139.

⁹⁹ Cf. Novak, *Boga nikt nie widzi*, 201, 285–286.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 108, 110, 140.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Bailey, *Implicit Religion*, 50; Bruce, *God is Dead*, 83.

of the individual, which could be remedied by genuine religious faith as a form of prevention or spiritual therapy.

Halík sees the third way of recognising the presence of God as the foundation of existence in the relationship with the “other,” another human in the main. One of the special forms of experiencing the presence of God in another is the experience of the face, which in itself constitutes a manifestation of the Absolute.¹⁰² Here, the Czech intellectual draws on the epiphany of visage, a concept developed by the Jewish religious thinker Emmanuel Levinas, to whom the face of another was a “trace” left by God and a form of His revelation.

Halík underlines that God comes to the human as an alien, a stranger, a wanderer¹⁰³, noting simultaneously that God, encountered not only in the visage of another person but also in every other being, is an absolute and unconditional “You.” Even so, he observes that it is not accurate to speak of God as a “You” since, in relation to a human, He is not an external reality but always an internal one. The divine “You,” moreover, cannot be manipulated and controlled at one’s own discretion but only respected and accepted for its otherness. If a human begins to do with God as they please, they turn Him into an idol.¹⁰⁴ This conviction on Halík’s part echoes the views of another Jewish thinker, Martin Buber, according to whom the human enters into a dialogical relationship (“I – You”) – enabling an encounter with the “eternal You” – not only with other people but also with things, nature, events, ideas, spiritual beings and even imaginary notions. The dialogical relationship cannot be controlled because it is a gift of grace, by virtue of which the singularity and uniqueness of a given being may be grasped. If, on the other hand, a person wished to steer and manipulate it, then the dialogical relationship would be transformed into a monological one, precluding the experience of the presence of God as the “eternal You.”

In this context, Halík draws attention to two phenomena experienced by humans, namely freedom and love. At the same time,

¹⁰² Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abyś był*, 129; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 176–177.

¹⁰³ Cf. Halík, *Noc spowiednika*, 226.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Halík, *Hurra, nie jestem Bogiem*, 95–96.

he emphasises that they are closely interrelated in any relationship with another human being.

Freedom, the Czech intellectual asserts, is an essential aspect of the image of God in the human. However, it must not be confused with licence, since true freedom entails responsibility. Halík sees an expression of freedom in the transcendence of the human and the radical opening of their life to other people. Thus, only that person who does not live for themselves but opens themselves to others in love is indeed free.¹⁰⁵ The vehicle of this human transcendence and natural orientation towards the “other” is none other but love. God’s immanence is discovered in human love because God is not only present in humans but also in the relationship that takes place between people.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, it has been stressed by other authors that the image of God in people, as described by Halík, is not so much freedom itself but a turn towards another human being in love because a human is a relational entity.¹⁰⁷ It is precisely that relationality which reveals another dimension of the image of God in the human, whose vocation is to live their life dialogically.

According to Halík, the encounter with the wounded and the suffering is a particular way of experiencing the presence of God, as wounds are a locus of encounter with God.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, wounds are a form of theophany that leads to orthopraxis, i.e. compassionate openness to those who suffer deriving and the realisation of one’s own humanity by coming to their aid.¹⁰⁹ Halík believes that God shows Himself first and foremost as a wounded God. He is not the apathetic God of the Stoics or a symbol of the human aspiration to dominion, but a “sym-pathetic” God, one who feels and suffers together with the wounded human.¹¹⁰ A similar intuition is also articulated by

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Grün – Halík, *Bóg zagubiony*, 179–180; Halík, *Drzewo ma jeszcze nadzieję*, 162.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Halík, *Chcę, abys był*, 9, 57–63, 121–122.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Manikowski, “Dialogiczność wiary,” 200.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Halík, *Co nie jest chwytne*, 37, 40; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 18, 21; Halík, *Hurra, nie jestem Bogiem*, 104–105, 141; Halík, *Zacheusz!*, 158–159.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 193–195.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Halík, “Church for the Seekers,” 132; Halík, *Dotknij ran*, 25; Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 120.

Życiński, for whom the co-suffering God participates in human affliction.¹¹¹ Moreover, the capacity for sympathy and co-suffering is a measure of God's perfection rather than a token of its absence.

It appears that Halík would also affirm another conviction of Życiński's, who sees the aforementioned panentheism as an antidote to the error of the so-called "misplaced Divinity." From the panentheistic standpoint, the domain of God's presence and action encompasses not only the experience of rapture and fascination but also human pain and suffering. This is because God may indeed be discovered by way of rational reflection, contemplation of nature, deliberation on the axiological aspects of our being, the experience of inner peace, the sensation of love, yet the discovery can also take place through borderline situations of suffering, death, moral struggle and inner conflict.¹¹² Through these phenomena, it is possible to discover the depth of existence, which is the divine being that sustains everything in existence and lends meaning to everything.

Conclusions

The purpose of these reflections has been to critically analyse Tomáš Halík's concept of God. The thinker distances himself from the idea of the Absolute as a construct of human reason and turns towards God, construed as the "depth" of reality. He rejects the idea of the Absolute as being alienated and separated from the world and adopts a vision of God who is hidden in the depths of reality and reveals Himself in the various ways in which it may be experienced. The reflections consisted of three main parts. The first was concerned with a critique of the philosophical concept which equated God with the Prime Mover and the Supreme Being. The second outlined the idea of God as the "depth" of being and the related concept of panentheism. In the third part, attention was drawn to the essential forms of experiencing His nearness, such as the experience of nature

¹¹¹ Cf. Życiński, *Transcendencja i naturalizm*, 118.

¹¹² Cf. Życiński, *Bóg i ewolucja*, 142; Życiński, *Głębia bytu*, 92–94; Życiński, *Trzy kultury*, 192.

and history, the experience of human interiority and the encounter with the other, especially with the wounded and suffering person.

Halík opposes any concept of God which leads to His objectification and radical transcendence with respect to reality. Having no intention to question God's transcendence – understood as His otherness and depth of reality – he stresses the divine immanence in the world, which is conceived as its ontic foundation. It is possible for a person to discover it in contact with nature or historical events and, above all, in the relationship with their own interiority and another human being. To use Heidegger's language, the sphere of being opens up before them as a result. At that point, a human transcends all content and concentrates on the foundation of all being. At the same time, they come close to the mystery of being, the experience of which is identified with the experience of divinity. God would thus be inherent in the world as the ontic basis of each being and would intervene from within in the process of its development. Reality would then reveal the presence of God, though the latter would by no means be reduced to its level. Consequently, both the immanence and transcendence of God would be preserved.

This could pose the problem of the personal nature of God, to whom Halík does not wish to deny the attribute of personhood in any case. He insists, however, that He is more than a person. In doing so, the Czech intellectual adopts a relational rather than a substantial concept of person. Accordingly, the personhood of God is understood as a dialogical form of life, which consists in initiating and sustaining a relationship with a person through individual beings; the latter makes it possible to “accost” a person and provide them answers.

It may be noted that Halík reflects on God in the domain of human existence rather than metaphysics because he does not seek to formulate yet another concept of the Absolute but to suggest a way of experiencing God in the reality of human life. Therefore, his deliberations do not pursue a theoretical goal but prioritise practice. Occasionally, they assume the form of a testimony, as Halík shares his experience of the nearness of God, in whom “we live, move and are.” After all, He is not envisaged as a distant existential foundation of all reality but as its hidden depth. God is hidden because of His nearness, which manifests in His readiness to engage in an existential dialogue

with a person through the beings of nature, the events of history, human interiority, and encounters with fellow humans.

Tomáša Halíka koncepcja Boga jako głębi rzeczywistości

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu, którego punktem odniesienia są wybrane dzieła czeskiego filozofa i teologa Tomáša Halíka, jest krytyczna analiza jego koncepcji Boga. Dystansuje się on od idei Absolutu jako konstruktów rozumu ludzkiego, a zwraca się w kierunku pojęcia Boga jako bytowej podstawy świata. Odrzuca koncepcję Absolutu wyobcowanego i odseparowanego od świata, a przyjmuje wizję Boga ukrytego w głębi rzeczywistości i pozwalającego doświadczyć swej bliskości na różne sposoby. Artykuł składa się z trzech zasadniczych części. W pierwszej zostaje poddana krytyce koncepcja Boga filozofów, utożsamianego z Pierwszym Poruszyicielem świata i Bytem Najwyższym. W drugiej zarysowano wizję Boga jako fundamentu i głębi bytu oraz związane z nią zagadnienia panteizmu, panenteizmu i osobowości Boga. W trzeciej natomiast zostaje zwrócona uwaga na zasadnicze sposoby przeżycia boskiej obecności i bliskości, do których należą doświadczenie przyrody i wydarzeń historycznych, przeżycie ludzkiego wnętrza („ja głębszego”) i spotkanie z drugim człowiekiem, zwłaszcza z osobą zranioną i cierpiącą.

Słowa kluczowe: Bóg, podstawa i głębia bytu, panenteizm, osoba, rzeczywistość

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