

MARITAIN & RATZINGER: PUZZLES ABOUT THE PERSON

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“The words of the Holy Spirit should enter and flow into our souls like molten lead into the mouth of a parricide...We do not understand that we are members of the Man of Sorrows...”¹

Leon Bloy

I. Puzzles

Some might be puzzled by any supposed puzzlement linking Jacques Maritain and Joseph Ratzinger. Yes, Maritain and Ratzinger individually puzzle people, and for various reasons. But can it be that together they raise puzzles about the person which, if complementarity is honored, they might help us resolve?

Let’s begin with a bold passage from Maritain’s classic *Person and the Common Good*.

Love is not concerned with qualities. They are not the object of our love. We love the deepest most substantial and hidden, the most *existing* reality of the beloved being. This is a metaphysical center deeper than all the qualities and essences which we can find and enumerate in the beloved.²

The vision, the poetry, is immediate. The philosophy is perhaps less so; it depends on a context that we’ll need to take a few moments to recall.

Maritain (remember) sets out to distinguish between the individual and the person, between one’s individuality and one’s personality. (Elsewhere he speaks of the person as “a center of liberty” and personality as “a metaphysical and

¹ Cited by Jacques Maritain, “In Homage to Our Dear Godfather Leon Bloy,” in his *Untrammelled Approaches*, translated by Bernard Doering, preface by Ernst R. Korn, (*Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, Vol. 20) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). First published as *Approaches sans entraves*. (Librairie Arthem Fayard, 1973.)

² Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, translated by John J. Fitzgerald, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 39.

substantial perfection.”³) The best approach, he suspects, to a richer understanding of personality is to explore how our experience of love leads us to the person whom we love.

Our inquiry calls for discernment. It is, for example, a bad mistake to suppose that we love a person’s qualities rather than the person. It’s just this mistake that Pascal makes. Lovers themselves recognize the error. Why, after all, is the language of love inexhaustible? Isn’t it because the beloved *as a person* is “ineffable?”⁴ Juliet might list Romeo’s qualities; but far more telling is her avowal “Thou art *thyself*...and for thy name, which is not part of thee, take all myself.”⁵

There is a metaphysical lesson in her words. I do not, cannot, love the beloved unless both my beloved and I enjoy the self-possession of a person that is able, in turn, to be the ground of self-donation. Even things are *individual* (indeed, everything is what it is and not another thing). But mere individuality can’t transcend its existence in self-bestowal. In sharp contrast, Maritain sees personality as

...the ultimate achievement by which the creative influx seals, within itself, a nature face to face with the whole order of existence so that the existence which it receives is *its own* existence and *its own* perfection.⁶

Absent this personality, love is impossible. Indeed, love is *the* distinguishing act of the person.

There is, moreover, a moral lesson in Maritain’s metaphysics. He affirms the dignity of the person irrespective of qualities, even those which (supposedly) privilege some--and the lack of which (supposedly) “depersonalize” others. Are we to be ranked as persons? Indices of gender and race, of nationality and income, are absurd. To appeal to such qualities is a category mistake. Neither does the absence of biological maturity or of self-consciousness, much less productivity, render a human being--by the dynamism of its nature a person--merely an organism or a thing. Nor is any human licitly objectified by technique or assigned a market price. Yes, because of *moral* qualities we do rank saints before sinners; but the dignity of the person precludes executing either and invites a love for both.

The passage from metaphysics to morals, in this case from a one’s metaphysical center to one’s personal dignity, is no more difficult than any such proposed passage. Intuitively, the bridge that Maritain builds seems sturdy.

³ Jacques Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, translated by Bernard Wall (New York: Charles Scribner’s and Sons, 1938), p. 284.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Maritain, *Person and the Common Good*, p. 41.

On the side of metaphysics: neither a quality nor set of qualities, neither a relation nor set of relations, can be an agent. But without agency, self-possession and self-donation are alike impossible. Without agency, how could qualities or relations personally *give* or *receive* love?

On the side of ethics: love is what we all seek, and all who seek it have an intrinsic dignity, if there be such a dignity at all. But to secure such a dignity calls for us to secure, insofar as we are able, the conditions for authentic love. The first of these conditions is community.

Thus far it might seem that Maritain presents us with a sharp challenge: the challenge to live our personhood. But what is this nattering (of mine) about a puzzle? Wherein does it lie? Oughtn't it be obvious, especially if it's so important that we must hunt for its solution?

The chief puzzle, I think, is this. It's one thing to love persons--and to remind ourselves that only persons love. But we don't love persons indiscriminately. Even if we learn to love them universally, we don't love them apart from their particularities. Isn't Juliet's love for Romeo exquisitely discriminating? Exquisitely particular? Isn't his love for her equally so? Yet how, apart from a person's qualities, can Juliet or Romeo--or we ourselves--distinguish one person from another? Absent our qualities, and the relations in which we find ourselves, it seems that we are altogether indistinguishable--even to those who would love us. My apologies for a bad joke, but absent qualities and relations we must now ask Juliet's question, "Wherefore art thou Romeo?," with a new pathos.⁷ Love we must, but how? Once we've slipped free of our qualities and been released from relations, how are any of us to find our beloved? (Maritain himself, in another context, speaks of persons "and the qualities which distinguish them as such..."⁸)

Before hinting at an answer to this question, I offer, as it were, a fresh start. Let me introduce a passage from Joseph Ratzinger, perhaps as bold as our first passage from Maritain.

...The spirit is that being which is able to think about, not only itself and being in general, but the wholly other...If the human person is all the more with itself, and is itself, the more it is able to reach beyond itself, the more it is with the other, then the person is all the more itself the more it is with the wholly other, with God.

In other words, the spirit comes to itself in the other, it becomes completely itself the more it is with the other, with God. And again, formulated the other way around, because this idea seems important to me: relativity toward the other *constitutes* the human person. *The human person is the event or being of*

⁷ Linda Haddad helped me get Juliet's question right.

⁸ Jacques Maritain, "Let Us Make for Him a Helpmate Like to Himself," p. 155, in *Untrammelled Approaches*.

relativity. The more the person's relativity aims...at its final goal...the more the person is itself. (emphasis added)⁹

The poetry, in this passage, is *not* immediate. But Ratzinger's reflections bristle with philosophy. Context, as always, is critical. So let me set the stage, albeit a minimalist one.

Ratzinger assigns himself the task of distinguishing between competing essentialist and relationalist accounts of the person. His task, too, calls for discernment. For example, it is a serious mistake, he thinks, to limit ourselves to the substantialist preoccupations of the Greek mind. The relationalist approach, existential in spirit, promises us the richer understanding--both of God and of ourselves.

As a theologian, Ratzinger begins with an analysis of personhood in our understanding of God, especially with respect to the Trinity and the Incarnation. The persons of the Trinity are relations, not substances. Richard of St. Victor faulted Boethius's substantialist account of personhood as useless for theology. But our theology structures our anthropology--or ought to. Thus, Ratzinger reminds us of the trinitarian, or at least relational, readings of *Genesis's* "Let us make man in our image" and "Adam has become like one of us" (*Gen 3*). Indeed, is not the Second Person of the Trinity, who has become fully human, the new Adam?

But dare we understand our personhood after the pattern of Christ's? For Ratzinger we dare not do less.

If it is true, however, that Christ is not the ontological exception, if from his exceptional position he is, on the contrary, the fulfillment of the entire human being, then the Christological concept of person is an indication for theology of how person is to be understood as such.¹⁰

Again: the person Jesus Christ is not a substance, much less one closed in on itself. Instead, Scripture reveals him as existing purely in relation to the Father and transferring, as it were, this relativity to his disciples--and through them to us. The fulfillment of this relational existence, as Johannine theology stresses, is an undreamed of unity. Thus Christ prays "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11).

There is, no doubt, a metaphysical lesson Ratzinger would teach us. But we'll not learn it without a working account of what a relation is. Ratzinger sees it "as a third specific fundamental category between substance and accident," the great categories of Greek thought.¹¹ Christian faith, moreover, affirms a belief in God as pure act-being, that is, pure relationship. Here, if anywhere, is a conceptual revolution. In particular, a Trinitarian revelation of the divine persons

⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the notion of person in theology," *Communio* 17 (Fall, 1990), pp. 439-451.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 450.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 444-445.

as “nothing but the act of relativity toward each other” shows us the pivotal role of this third category in a Christian anthropology.¹²

There is also a moral lesson in Ratzinger’s metaphysics. By the nature of our personhood, we are called to an ethics of self-donation. In equal measure, we are called to a communitarian ethics of solidarity. God, in whose image we are fashioned, is a *communio personarum*. Hence, by the nature of our personhood, we approach the fullness of life, for now, in authentic human communities. Beyond this there is a unity into which our finite multiplicity will finally be drawn.

What are we to say of this second passage from metaphysics to morals? For Ratzinger and Maritain alike, the passage is much the same. How we become more fully who we are sets the course for how we are to live. “And *why* ought we to become fully the persons we are?,” the skeptic might ask. In reply, we can answer that to act against self-realization is to depersonalize oneself. In the end, a Christian will speak, with Ratzinger, of the beauty of the Trinity of Persons in whose life we can share.

Thus far it may seem that Ratzinger, too, presents us with a daunting problem. With Maritain, he challenges us to love our personhood. But what is this nattering (of mine) about a puzzle? Wherein does it lie? Oughtn’t it be obvious, especially if we are being urged to hunt for its solution?

The chief puzzle, I think, is one that Maritain underscores. Yes, Ratzinger’s self-donation might be *the* dynamism of love. But remember: Maritain tells us that love does not look to a person’s qualities. Nor, it seems, does it look to a person’s relations. Rather, he says, love looks to a person’s “most substantial” and “most *existing* reality” which is, indeed, a “metaphysical center.” Does it not seem, then, that Ratzinger’s self-donation, that is, love, misses altogether the person to whom Maritain would have us direct it? A person’s “metaphysical center” is doubtless “in relation,” but it is most implausible to understand it as itself a pure (or otherwise) relationality. Yet Ratzinger thinks that we best understand ourselves in terms of relationality.

We must be fair in explicating our perplexity. Maritain’s understanding of love only *underscores* the multi-faceted puzzle that Ratzinger generates. For how are we to make sense of the person *as* relation without “that” which is *in* relation? But a personal relation points to a someone, not something. Isn’t it, despite the rhetoric, the person who is in relation? But, if this commonsense intuition is true, then the person is not a relation or set of relations. To be sure, some relations reach deeper than some qualities. For example, apart from the biological relation which I have with my parents, I would not exist at all. But I am not identical with that relation.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 444.

Ratzinger's language also exacerbates our puzzlement. It does so by flirting with an iterative disaster. How so? Recall his definition of the person: "relativity toward the other constitutes the human person." But recall, too, his implicit ethical trajectory. "The more the person's relativity aims...at its final goal...the more the person is itself." Wait! Isn't, then, the "person's relativity" equivalent to the "relativity of a relativity?" How could *this* be? And how could "relativity squared" *do* anything at all?

We might now pause a moment to collect our puzzles about the person. First, there's Maritain's conundrum. We are to love the person, not the person's qualities--but how? For once we put aside qualities, how are we to distinguish one person from another? Second, there are Ratzinger's riddles. How can we love any person once we learn that a person is not a "metaphysical center" but rather some sort of relationality? And, more puzzling, how could a person, if only relationality, be "in relation?" Much less "in love?"

II. Promise(s)

Can we solve these puzzles? Perhaps, if only in part. The first step is to suggest how we might put together the promise, or promises, of a solution.

Consider the following strategy. From the start, we enlist Maritain and Ratzinger as contributors to a promised solution. Maritain's chief contribution is his charge that we focus neither nor, by extension, on relations but rather on the on qualities *person* who expresses and transcends both.

Ratzinger chiefly contributes by his focus on self-giving as the person's core vocation. Remember that "only the one who loses himself can find himself" (Mt. 10:36). This paradox, he says, highlights a "law of human existence."¹³ Maritain offers no dissent. The person our love seeks, he observes, is uniquely "capable of giving and of *giving itself*..."¹⁴

The exemplar of personal self-donation, both Maritain and Ratzinger affirm, is Jesus Christ. Taking on our nature, He gives Himself to us; in death, He gives Himself for us.

Believing that we are created in God's image and likeness, Ratzinger and Maritain equally affirm that our origin points to our destiny. Telos, in turn, inspires our *praxis*. Scripture teaches that we are 'to take up our cross' (Luke 9:23) and that 'dying with Christ we will live in Christ' (Galatians 2:19-20). But why should this be so? Is it because of another basic law of our existence? Perhaps only through affliction can we become most like God; perhaps only then are we fully receptive to Him--and His triumph.

These *are* extraordinary suppositions. But having made them, the question remains. How, if at all, do they begin to promise a solution to our puzzles?

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 451.

¹⁴ Maritain, *Person and the Common Good*, p. 39.

First, there is the matter of how we can know the beloved. Mightn't it be that we come to know the beloved as part of a dynamic process? We begin with a cognitive, ordinarily empirical, apprehension of the beloved. But in an act of self-donation, we come to love and, hence, to know more intimately the "metaphysical center" of the beloved.¹⁵ If this process becomes dialogical, it leads to mutual acts of self-donation. Notice: what is given in self-donation, and received, is more than a set of qualities or relations. Since neither qualities nor relations act, neither can give themselves. Indeed, they have no self. Only a person has a self, and thus the self-possession that allows the giving of one's self.

But consider the ground of self-possession and self-donation. It is our being made in God's image. And in the lover's self-donation to the beloved, and the beloved's gift of self in return, there is an imaging of God. Yet there is more. Insofar as the self-giving is in the context of affliction, there is a unique imaging of the Person of Jesus Christ in whose humanity, suffering and yet victorious, we come to know our own.

For the record: the solution at which I hint is by no means incompatible with a standard expository point. Qualities are not, as it were, taped to substances, much less human persons. Nor are relations like, say, nets which enmesh us from without. Substances--and, more pointedly, persons--dynamically exhibit their qualities and ground their relations. And for all of Maritain's poetry, one never sees one's beloved *sans* qualities.

But this familiar point doesn't take us to the heart of Maritain's phenomenology of love. Much less does it collapse his conundrum. Qualities acquaint us with a person. Love requires more: an avenue to the incommunicable. This incommunicability can be bestowed, but neither inventoried nor alienated.

Let's turn now to our second riddle, itself the first of Ratzinger's pair. How can we love a person, if to be a person is to be a kind of relationality? Mightn't we find a part of the solution in recognizing that "being in love" is itself a relation? Mightn't we find still another part of the solution in recognizing that to love a person is to come into a relation with another *as person*? And mightn't still another part of the solution be to keep in mind that we cannot become fully the person we might be apart from coming into this very relation with another person?

Together, these points suggest a dialogical dynamism. We can love only insofar as we embrace a *praxis* which leads to a richer self-realization, a deepening of our personhood. In a sense, then, we become the persons we are in the relationality of love. So, too, we become, in loving, a kind of relationality. Recall Emmanuel Mounier's avowal. "One might almost say that I have no existence, save in so far as I exist for others, that to be is, in the final analysis, to

¹⁵ David Arias called my attention to the first stage of this process.

love.”¹⁶ Here a key thesis emerges. In its structuring of our personal love, self-donation structures our very personhood, and always within a relational matrix.

But notice, further, the ground of this self-structuring self-donation in the relational matrix of love. Again, it is our being made in God’s image. The Triune God Whom we image is, moreover, a *communio personarum*. Only paradox begins to appreciate this revelation. Thus Ratzinger returns us to Augustine. “*Quid tam tuum quam tu, quid tam non tuum quam tu?*--what belongs to you as much as your ‘I,’ and what belongs to you as little as your ‘I?’”¹⁷

So how is it with us? The more the lover comes to love the beloved, the more the lover grasps himself in giving himself to the beloved. Indeed, when the relation is reciprocal and generative, “the two become one flesh” (Genesis 2.24). Yet there is a limit in this relational dynamic. It is one thing to say that in our love our substantial identity is transformed; it is another to say that it is lost. It is one thing to speak of a person’s self-donation; it is another to speak of one person’s absorption into another person. If a person is incommunicable, such absorption is metaphysically impossible.¹⁸

This strict limit brings us to the second of Ratzinger’s riddles. Persons cannot be absorbed by persons. Nor, it seems, by relations. How is it, then, that we can even think of a person as *only* a relationality? And how can a person, supposedly understood as relationality, somehow be “in relation?” How can a person understood only as relationality somehow be “in love?” A like befuddlement besets us if we ask *who* is in such a relationality. Or, more pointedly, *who* is in love?

It is a common criticism of a substantialist view of the person that it must face a basic complaint about Aristotle’s category of substance. Such a category, some say, is static. Thus, an account of the person that appeals to substantiality is equally static; so such an account obscures the relational dimension of human, much less divine, personhood.

With an ear to such a complaint, I’ve underscored the dynamism of the human person. But a tart reminder points to the peculiarity of this complaint. As Mary O’Hara observes, “Logically, to speak of relations depends on the notion of substance. And, for something to be related, it must be.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, translated by Philip Mairet, with a foreword by Rufus William Rauch, Jr. (Notre Dame and London, 1952), p. 20.

¹⁷ Ratzinger, “Person in theology,” p. 447.

¹⁸ John F. Crosby instructively develops this point in his *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997). See Chapter Two, “Incommunicability,” pp. 41-81.

¹⁹ Mary L. O’Hara, *The Logic of Human Personality: An Onto-Logical Account*, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), p. 82.

Well, then, have we prepared Ratzinger's grave? Will O'Hara close his coffin? By no means. But we have set ourselves to think about personhood with a keener sense of its analogical character.

Let's shift to the linguistic mode. "Person" is widely used, but neither univocally nor equivocally. Although, for example, we are scarcely angels, we use "person" to speak of angels and ourselves. We speak, too, of legal and grammatical persons. Jenny Teichman aptly describes our linguistic usage.

In spite of category differences it is all right to say that 'person' is *in a way* the name of a very broad kind, though not the name of a broad natural kind. But it might be better and clearer to say that the word 'person' has several interconnected senses.²⁰

Still, we'd best be tentative. David Braine counts "person" as "range-concept" that demarcates how we apply certain predicates to various forms of being.²¹ Either way, linguistic analogy suggests a metaphysical counterpart.

We need to compare the analogous character of trinitarian personhood and our human personhood. Maritain, though *not* Ratzinger, would refer us to St. Thomas's treatment of this analogous personhood. Thomas's starting point is Boethian. "'Person' in general signifies an individual substance with rational nature..."²² But 'person' has a narrower *and* broader reference. When it refers to the human person, it refers to the body and soul which individuate the human person.

"Person" works differently with reference to God. The distinction of persons within God is relational in origin. Yet there is more. Given Divine Simplicity, God's relationality is something subsisting and in no way other than God's nature. Thus Thomas observes "And in this sense it is true that 'person' signifies relation directly and nature indirectly, yet relation is signified, not as relation, but as hypostasis."²³

Perhaps, then, we've made some headway in collecting elements of a solution. We are to understand "person" analogously. In our case, given what individuates us, its denotation includes our body and soul, that is our distinctive substantiality. In God's case, given the origin of the Divine Persons, "person" directly denotes relation. Yet this relationality *is* God's nature as hypostasis or, we might say, essence.

Can we make more headway? Let me suggest the following remedy for Ratzinger's second riddle. Insofar as we come more and more to realize our personhood, we share, albeit obscurely, the pattern of divine personhood. Our self-presence finds expression in loving and being loved. But while this relational

²⁰ Jenny Teichman, "The Definition of *Person*," *Philosophy* 60 (1985), p. 184.

²¹ David Braine, *The Human Person: Animal & Spirit*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 490.

²² ST 1a. 29,4.

²³ *ibid.*

dynamic is, indeed, the *praxis* of our integral fulfillment, it is our integrity that demands that love be transformational without any forfeit of our personhood.²⁴

For the Christian thinker, our coming to realize our personhood, is the work of grace. Through grace, we already share, in a preliminary way, in God's own life. In some way, too, we share in the distinct relationality of God's life. Herein lies the promise of a solution to Ratzinger's riddle. We can, by analogy, see our personhood as relational insofar as we share in God's life. In God's life, as Thomas teaches, relationality is itself subsisting.

Again, there is more. Insofar as we love, Ratzinger and Maritain would agree, we come more fully to share in God's life. Hence, we can analogically speak of ourselves as moving toward a kind of relationality, and of being "in love" in this same trajectory. How, then, do we answer the question "who is it in love?" It is *we* who are in love. Yet "we" have become-- relationally--transformed. Ratzinger's riddle echoes Paul's words: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2: 20).

III. An Objection

Doubtless there are many objections to this promise of a solution to the riddle we face. Among them is Ratzinger's own likely dissatisfaction. For he's decidedly dissatisfied with Thomas's account of personhood. Richard of St. Victor, Ratzinger observes, saw that "in its theological meaning 'person' does not lie on the level of essence, but of existence."²⁵ Yet Thomas fails to extend this insight to the human person. Instead he distorts the distinction between the divine and the human. Ratzinger writes

This seems to me also the limit of St. Thomas ...within theology he operates ...on the level of existence, but treats the whole thing as a theological exception...In philosophy, however, he remains faithful to the different approach of pre-Christian philosophy²⁶

And must this verdict extend to my proposal? It seems so, since on my view the metaphysical center of the human person is an incommunicable substance. Yes, we are transformed, by grace, in and through relationality. But the human person remains, always *this* person, with *this* soul and *this* body.

Indeed, I suspect that it's the body that becomes the decisive point in the debate, philosophical or theological, about the human person. Let me introduce my hunch with some preliminaries. For a start, we experience our bodies *in* relation but never *as* relation. Nor do we, unless in the grip of a theory, experience ourselves as bodies. We distinguish between loving the beloved and

²⁴ For a rich development of the theme of integral human fulfillment, see Germain Grisez's multi-volume *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1983--1997.)

²⁵ Ratzinger, "Person in theology," p. 449.

²⁶ *ibid.*

loving the body of the beloved. Nor do we experience ourselves out of our bodies. “Descriptions” of such experiences neglect the bodily preconditions of perspectival experience. As Christians, moreover, we believe we will experience the resurrection of our bodies.

And now we advance from preliminaries to a philosophical and theological litmus test. What are we to say of these resurrected bodies? Ratzinger and Maritain offer sharply different analyses. Here I will look only to Ratzinger’s *Introduction to Christianity* and Maritain’s conference on the question which he gave, late in life, to the Little Brothers of Jesus.

Ratzinger, to be sure, admits the validity of a body-soul schema if seen in the context of Scripture’s holistic anthropology. This very holism denies any neat split between the “natural” and the “supernatural” in understanding the human person. “How,” he asks, “could it be otherwise if Christ actually is the ‘second Adam’?”²⁷

We must, then, think of the resurrection of persons rather than of physical bodies. A focus on our physical bodies forgets that “matter represents a moment in the history of spirit...”²⁸ What, then, is the hope of resurrection? For Ratzinger it’s “a final connection between matter and spirit in which the destiny of man and of the world is consummated, even if it is impossible for us today to define the nature of this connection.”²⁹ Well, then, it’s a fine thing, murmurs one’s commonsense, whatever it is.

Maritain, however, would want to say far more. Yes, let the matter of our bodies rendezvous with spirit. But it’s one’s own body, with the matter proper to it, that comes into the destiny prepared for the person one is. In the resurrection, he affirms that “for each of us it will be the same body that is living and breathing here right now...”³⁰ The transformation will be staggering, more than we can imagine. But mightn’t it be that our imagination, for all that, is needlessly limited? We fail to appreciate our bodies, here and now, as the work of a Creator who wants always “to squander being and beauty in the most lavish fashion.”³¹ Yet the resurrection body, he notes, manifests “the splendor of a soul that sees God.”³²

Nonetheless, *we* can’t be transformed unless we continue as the persons we are. And we cannot be the persons we now are, nor human persons at all, apart

²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), p. 275. (First published as *Einführung in das Christentum*, 1969.)

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Introduction*, p. 277.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Jacques Maritain, “Along Unbeaten Pathways,” in *Untrammelled Approaches*, p. 404.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 406.

³² *ibid.*, p. 407.

from our bodies. Indeed, Maritain argues that “everything in our bodies that was *humanly true* will be present in the bodies of those who have risen from the dead...”³³ A description of the resurrection body, of course, must be speculative. But recall Scripture’s witness. The disciple who doubted came to believe by putting his hand in the wounds of Calvary.

IV. Envoi

But let me turn from the resurrected body, as a key for our self-understanding, to some proposals about the person. They, too, underscore the role of the body. Maritain’s claim that love best leads us to understand our personhood is right. Ratzinger’s account of relationality, though overstated, is also helpful. It can, moreover, complement a substantialist account, especially if we appreciate the bodily dimension of being a human person. Conjugal love is a key model. It is relational, distinctively so in being bodily. It is ordered, moreover, to generativity--both of a new human person and a unique conjugal community.

But there is a still deeper model of the substantial and relational complementarity of the human person. Without faith it’s invisible, but Maritain and Ratzinger share this faith. I speak of affliction. Already in the experience of solidarity, we can find a deep relationality with others and therein a rich affirmation of our selves.³⁴ The defining model of affliction, and forge of solidarity, is Jesus’ taking on our human nature. Redemptively suffering in our nature, he brings us into the Divine Life. In response, we can embrace--in order to transcend--our own afflictions. Always they are of the spirit and of the body, that is, of the human person. We are embodied beings with an intelligent nature and characterized by a self-transcendence in love.

Indeed, God’s initiative requires our receptivity. Nowhere is there more space for this receptivity, and the life it can generate, than in affliction. Flannery O’Connor employs the metaphor of “burning away our virtues.”³⁵ Why so? Note: she speaks of “our” virtues, not the infused virtues. The former distinguish us; the latter bond us in the Divine Life. There we find the source of our “metaphysical center” and love’s final end. Remember, too, that Maritain’s godfather, Leon Bloy, author of *She Who Weeps (Celle qui pleure)*, taught that suffering “is the auxiliary of creation.”³⁶

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³³ *ibid.*, p. 405.

³⁴ On solidarity, see John F. Crosby *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, especially pp. 54-58.

³⁵ Flannery O’Connor, “Revelation,” in *Revelation and Other Fiction from the Sewanee Review*, edited by George Core (Louisville: Harmony House, 1992), p. 188.

³⁶ Cited in Maritain’s “Homage to Leon Bloy,” *Untrammelled Approaches*, p. 37.