

manner as to diminish freedom. His far more penetrating vision protected him from becoming embroiled in the absurd controversy "*de auxiliis*" which was soon to cast a cloud over his order. Indeed, Ignatius's vision was far removed from the semipelagian worldliness for which Pascal so cruelly castigated his religious descendants. The absolute freedom left to God's grace and the concern not to impose any rules or restrictions on divine action in the spiritually mature places him closer to the more spiritual (and the more moderate) among both the Jansenists and their Quietist adversaries than to the "laxist" caricature of the Jesuit attacked by both. □

Selves and persons: A difference in loves?

Kenneth L. Schmitz

We partake out of our need; we share out of our abundance. In coming to be more in the image of God we move from partaking to sharing, from participation to communication.

It is not unusual to receive in the mail "personal" letters that have been "personalized" to catch the prospective buyer's attention. In bold letters they declare that YOU, *Kenneth L. Schmitz*, or *Alice Moreau*, or whomever, have been selected for this exclusive attention, and that you can merit such interest by a simple purchase of one or several products. Presumably, the initiators of these schemes aim at increasing the *self-esteem*, perhaps even the *self-importance* of the addressees. Now, there is something electric about these words, "person" and "self" which the promoters hope to parlay into profit. It goes without saying, of course, that popular speech often interchanges the words "self" and "person."¹ For a word, after all, is at the mercy of its speaker. It can be substituted for another on the basis of a hazy intuition or a contingent affinity or an arbitrary

¹This is especially true of derivative forms. 'Personality' has taken on the meaning of 'the appearance of the self in its regular behavior.' What is 'personal' is taken to be what is private, or at least what belongs to 'myself.' It is interesting that a note of popular moral disapproval has crept into the adjective 'selfish.' See "The geography of the human person," in: *Communio*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 27-48.

effect. This is the prerogative of living speech, which can be creative and enlightening in showing forth a hitherto unrecognized connection, but it can also sometimes be confusing and deadening, muffling the nuanced differences of earlier meanings. Perhaps the scholar can provide some small service, then, by seeking to be precise and to respect the deeper meanings of the terms used. Clarity of thought and consistency of expression demand such precision; but even more is at stake in the use of words. For the original sense of a word usually remains alive within it, and that original sense may then deflect the mind towards the word's half-remembered associations and away from the new sense intended by the speaker, thereby muddying the linguistic waters without benefit of meaning.

Now, each of the words "self" and "person" has a history, a career in the various languages of our culture and its background. Each has a tangle of associations whose clarification promises to deepen our understanding of the human reality which each means to name and to illuminate. It is well known that the term "person" bears a special weight of meaning and value in Christianity, since the word "person" plays a pre-eminent role in addressing the mystery of the Incarnate Christ and the glory of the intimate life of the Trinitarian Godhead. On the other hand, the term "self" is current in such designations as "self-help," "self-realization," and "self-worth." Let me explore, then, what I take to be the root meanings of *self* and *person*.

The search for identity in Western thought has taken various subtly different directions, which reduce, however, to two. To speak in metaphor, I want to attend to two very different threads that are woven into the cloth of our Western cultures. These threads diverge from one another and retain their distinctive color; and yet, from time to time, they have converged in some great thinker's synthesis to express the pattern of human identity. Both threads are essential for the whole cloth of human identity. They make up the warp and woof of one human reality, in both its individual and collective existence. I will call the one thread *self*, the other *person*.

Consider first the thread of human identity that is measured by *insistence upon self*. Now, by "self" I do not mean only the human self. For I take the meaning of the word back to its native sense, back to the Greek *autos*. We derive such words as *autonomy*, *authority*, and *authenticity* from that root, as well as *autocracy* and *autistic*. At the center of such words there

abides a resilient insistence upon an identity that preserves itself against others. The word "against" is too harsh, for this identity may preserve itself by cooperation with others out of enlightened self-interest.² Still, in order to preserve itself and retain that identity, such a self must at some point exclude others, or even repel them. At such a margin, self-identity is itself at stake. Now, let me insist that I do not speak of this ontological "selfishness" with disapproval. On the contrary, it is an observable phenomenon in nature. Thus, on the very condition of their survival, organisms—including the human organism—both expand and contract, and they expand in order to contract. In so doing, they nourish the vital center. This rhythm of self-preservation may be taken to be a law for all physical beings, and perhaps even for all limited beings.

Of course, some theories take truths to untruthful extremes. Thus, a theory such as ancient atomism converts the core of natural self-preservation into a hard center that resists further analysis, and is simply posited without further ado. The Roman poet Lucretius brings out the *tone* of such a view.³ And Hobbes has sung to the same key with great influence in modern political thought. In the natural sciences, until recently, the sense of impenetrable identity has fueled the search for ultimate particles—corpuscles, minima, atoms. The search for absolutely simple units has dominated physics and chemistry until the turn of this century, and the construct of "building blocks" still retains imaginative force in the popular mind. In modern epistemology, until recently, sense-data theories appealed to "givens" that yielded to no further analysis. Some positivists leaned, like drunkards to a lamp-post,⁴ upon empirical facts that submit to no further questioning, but that instead turn the questioner back upon himself. So, too, Dickens's character, Mr. Gradgrind, in *Hard Times* insisted upon the facts: "Just the facts, sir! the 'ard fax!" In all of these versions, we meet the resistance of an unassailable center.

²For further development of this point, see "Is Liberalism Good Enough?" in: *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. G. Mara et al. (New York/London: Routledge, 1990), 33-54.

³Cf. I. Singer, *The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther*, I (New York: Random House, 1966), 126ff.

⁴I have taken the image from A.E. Housmann's observation that certain editors (predecessors to his own edition) clung to every variant in the manuscripts of the Latin poet he was editing.

Such atomistic theories postulate a multitude of individual units, that jostle one another, and even put out tentacles towards each other. The theorist groups them into bundles, bundles and sets of particles or facts. To such a world, the world is a more or less loose collection of more or less interchangeable particles, externally and contingently related to one another, subject perhaps to a covering law. But, of course, not all versions of self-identity are so extreme, and so I turn to more credible ones.

Consider this insistence upon self, then, in the words of a second metaphor. Let me speak of the recursive *path* of self-identity. By "recursive" I mean that the identity is maintained by means of a constant referral back to a center, the immanence of which is unchallenged by the connections into which it enters. This is the *path* of *self-reference*. Other names, besides "autos" and "self," lie along this path, names that appeal to the same recursive center as the notion of self or *tois*. Such a center may be ontological (as with Aristotle), or epistemological (as with Descartes), or psychological (as with Husserl), or transcendental (as with Kant), or phenomenological (as with Husserl). It will suffice for the present purpose to simplify the complex history of this path of self-reference by selecting three influential versions of this thread of self-identity. These selections serve as exemplary probes along the path of self-reference, three staging-posts on the journey of the external mind toward what has been its most dominant sense of self-identity in modern times.

Aristotle provides an early and influential version of self-reference in the conception of *autós* as *substance*. The philosopher located the fundamental and original sense of identity in what he termed "first substance" (*prôtê ousía*): this man, this horse, this tree; that is, "this thing of a certain kind" (*tóde ti*, in distinction from its less central features, such as its color, shape and relations. In the *Categories* we read that *first substance* is the basic referent to which all meaning is to be directed and which all meaning is justified. Logically, then, first substance is that which can receive predicates but cannot itself be one. This is the function which Aristotle attributes to the self-identity of first substance, however, rests upon the order of real things. Self substance, then, is the primary logical referent just because it is primary in the ontological order.

To be sure, the Aristotelian individual is by no means a hard and simple core which yields to no further anal-

ysis. Quite to the contrary, the Aristotelian individual is intrinsically complex even though it is undivided. Aristotle's great guiding insight was to recognize that the primary realities are original complexes. He spelled out these original realities in terms of the intrinsic structures of *substance*, of *form* and *matter*, and the *accidents* of that substance. No doubt he arrived at his notion of primary substance (*prôtê ousía*) by way of his analysis of change. You will remember that he tells us that there are two ways by which something comes to be. The one plays upon the surface of things, with the multitude of changes brought about by every passing hour. And yet things also enjoy a relative permanence; they retain their identity throughout these changes. Things remain for the most part the same over periods of time—not in any static and absolutely immutable fashion—but enduringly they dwell throughout the series of alterations. *They* change, but not in their entirety. We are in some sense the same individual in the evening that we were in the morning. But, of course, in addition to these more relatively superficial alterations there are more radical changes. These are the momentous, decisive changes in which things themselves come into being and pass away. Such changes are not alterations, however important, but the coming-to-be and passing-away of a *first order identity*. Aristotle calls this identity *substance*: concretely, this something (*tóde ti*), and more generally, first substance (*prôtê ousía*).⁵

Largely through Cicero, and later through Boethius, these Greek concepts were turned into Latin terms. Seneca tells us that Cicero invented the word *essentia* to render the Greek *ousía*.⁶ Like *ousía*, the Latin *essentia* draws its connotations from the language of being (*ens*), and therefore the translation fits rather well. But not in all respects, and later Latin brought *ousía* into a closer relation to the Latin *substantia*.⁷ Now,

⁵In the *Categories* (2all-2b22) Aristotle discusses *ousía* taken in the most powerful, most pre-eminent and primary sense (*Ousia dé estin hē kuriōtātē te kai prôtós kai mēlístā*), in connection with substance in the sense of underlying substrate (*hypokeiménon*). For the individual term, *tóde ti*, see 3b10ff. It designates the individual by reference to its primary identity as concrete substance.

⁶Epistle 58, no. 6, presumably by the medium of the artificial present participle *essens*, derived from the infinitive *esse*, to be.

⁷See Boethius, *Contra Eutychen*, sec. III: "For our equivalents of the Greek terms *ousiōsis* *ousiōsthai* are respectively *subsistentia* and *subsistere*, while their

the etymology of the Latin term—literally, to stand-under or support—scarcely does complete justice to the Greek. And yet the older, non-technical sense of the Latin *substantia* is closer to the Greek *ousía* than the technical term, since—in one of its meanings—*substantia* was used to indicate a family's wealth, their patrimony from which the family could draw in order to sustain itself. In this sense, then, substance is what counts after less fundamental and less vital considerations fall away. Still, the etymology of the Latin term tends to deflect the mind from the inherent richness of the Greek term.

It is not surprising, then, that as we look at the later philosophical career of the term *substance*, we see a drift towards an emphasis upon the supportive or substantive role of the term. This clouds the earlier, richer meaning. By early modern times the emptying out of the term *substance* was more or less complete. Consider John Locke, for instance, for whom *substance* is all but synonymous with *unformed matter* (which had been *proté hylé* not *proté ousía*). Substance was for him the I-know-now-what-supposed-support of sensibly perceived accidents.⁸ Substance is clearly reduced here to *substrate* (which Greek referred to with the term *hypoketimenon* or *hypóstasis*). Locke's meaning, which is rather typically modern, brings forward the *supportive* role of substance to the exclusion of its other more dynamic aspects.⁹

This stress on supporting or substance brings to the fore the factor of *permanence*.¹⁰ For substance is that which

hypóstasis hyphístasíai are represented by our *substantia* and *substare* . . . To begin with, then, man is essence, i.e. *ousía*, and substance [*substantialia*], i.e. *ousíasis*; and *hypóstasis*, i.e. substance [*substantia*]; and *prósōpon*, i.e. person [*personae*].” The whole section bears reading. (Punctuation and translation slightly altered from the Loeb edition, *Boethius. Tractatus. De consolations philosophiae* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962], 84-91.)

⁸See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* I, iii, 19. Locke continued to hold for real essences, though they were in the end unknowable.

⁹Later on, Hegel restored the dynamism of self-reference to substance by situating it within his systematic philosophy of cosmic self-determination. See his *Science of Logic*, the last section of the *Logic of Essence*; cf. my paper, “Substance is Not Enough. Hegel's Slogan: From Substance to Subject,” in: *The Metaphysics of Substance*, Proceedings of the ACPA (1987), vol. LXI (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 52-68.

¹⁰This is the feature stressed by Kant in the first analogy of the Schematism: “*die Beharrlichkeit der Substanz*; substance is “*etwas Bleibendes und Beharrliches*.” See *Critique of Pure Reason* A182/B224.

underlies and remains throughout the lesser changes. Generation and corruption signal the beginning of that relative permanence and its end. But between these great moments in the existence of a self-identical individual, the substance possesses the endurance and the resilience to undergo and survive the lesser changes. The permanence of self as substance, then, is by no means static; it endures with a persistent self-identity (*autós*). And by virtue of this relative permanence, substantial self-identity writes its *own* name, so to speak, with *authority* and *authenticity*.

As the concept of substance came into technical Latin it was further supplemented with the interpretation that this substantial self-identity is *ens per se*, literally, being-through-itself. It is being that has the ontological constitution with which to sustain itself, unlike color that rests in the play of a surface, and dimensions that require a body. Now, the Latin term, *ens per se* makes explicit the self-reference that is already implicit in the other terms that are cognate with *autós*; I mean such terms as *ousía* and *substantia*. For as I have already mentioned, self-reference is also part of the ordinary meaning of the Greek term *ousía*, which can mean: “that which is one's own, one's property, one's substance.” The Latin term *per se* makes explicit the *self-referential character of the identity of self (autos) as substance*. And so, in both *ousía* and *substantia* (explicitly when assimilated to *ens per se*), identity is wedded to *relatively permanent self-reference*.

As a consequence of this sense of identity, all relations are viewed as accidental. They “happen” to the self-identical and permanent substance, they are visited upon it. And so, to the extent that the factor of support or substance is stressed, the relations connecting one substance to another will be regarded somehow as external relations. They are non-constitutive in the sense that they lie “outside” the constitution of the self-identical substance. Relations remain peripheral to the identity of the self (*autós*).

Nothing I have said so far should be taken to mean that I do not accept this meaning of identity as self-referential substance. It serves quite well in many contexts. The Greek term pays due respect to permanence. Nor, after all nuances have been made, does the Latin translation and interpretation betray the essentials of *identity by self-reference*. As I have pointed out, the Latin does place the ontological character of that identity at greater risk than do the Greek terms. And the

modern reduction of substance to substrate tends to carry substance off to the underworld of matter, much as Pluto carried Persephone off to Hades. It tends, yet once more, to dig the grave of all but a materialistic metaphysics, such as was not uncommon in the eighteenth century.¹¹

Still, whether in Greek, Latin or vernacular European, the notion of substance as self-referential permanence throws light upon a certain kind of identity. The terms that articulate the Greek *autós* draw their meaning especially from the rhythm of nature, of birth and growth, decay and death. No doubt, the notion of self-identity as substance can be extended to the inorganic or suborganic realm, though only with some difficulty and obscurity. Closer to us, the term substance as self-referential identity plays a role in the account we give of ourselves as human beings. Nor is this surprising, given that man is in part at least a thing of nature, and most certainly an organism.

But self-referential identity (*autós*) is not captured only by *ousía* or *substantia*. Self-reference has had many versions and a long career that is by no means at an end, despite the most recent attempts to discredit it.¹² It did not go unnoticed by the Greeks and Latins that man is not merely a thing of nature; he is also an inquiring mind. More than anyone else up to that time, Descartes in the seventeenth century seized upon this aspect of human existence with exceptional vigor. I have already pointed out the dynamic of self-reference that is, at the very least, implicit in the notion of self (*autós*) as substance. With Descartes, however, this meaning of identity becomes quite explicit: self-reference receives a clear and—for the classical modern period—a fateful definition as mental self-reflection. For the Cartesian mind turns back upon itself alone: to the self as *ego cogitans*.¹³ Descartes himself tells us that he

¹¹Such as the materialism of d'Holbach and de la Mettrie.

¹²Cf., for example, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of "logocentrism," which he claims has been the over-riding conception of identity in the West, at least since Plato. See my "Post-modern or Modern-plus?" in: *Communio*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 152-166. Rodophe Gasché has presented a fine study of the topic in: *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

¹³This movement within is quite different in motive, objective, and manner from the path of interiority trod by religious and spiritual authors, such as St. Augustine in the *Confessions*, or St. Bernard of Clairvaux in *The Love of God*.

undertook his solitary journey back into the recesses of his own mind in search of a certitude that would, in the end, enable him to remedy the poor condition of humankind. That path within was meant to take the mind away from the confused world of scholastic opinion, unjustified sensory perception, and untested experience. Once the mind was newly empowered by means of a radicalized meta-mathematics, it could return to the world and reconstitute its proper order in accordance with the mind's own rational lights.

Like most philosophers, Descartes was a Johnny-come-lately, and quite properly so. For in fact, the world of scholastic causes and principles was already vanishing into a world increasingly interpreted by the concepts and laws of mechanics.¹⁴ Now, classical mechanics rests upon two basic notions: (i) that all things are to be reduced to discrete quanta, and (ii) that these discrete quanta are in continual collision and displacement. In a word, the world is to be understood as a multitude of particles in locomotion. Here, indeed, we meet that notion of identity as a hard core, which I mentioned earlier, and which promoted the search for ultimate particles—a search that was to sustain the natural sciences with such brilliant pragmatic results for more than three centuries.

Now, in fleeing from an external mechanistic world into itself as *ego*, and by means of the methodic doubt, the Cartesian mind disengaged itself from a world that lay under the domination of mechanics. It was a world in which mind had no place, except as presiding over it. The Cartesian withdrawal could be sustained only by means of the sharp dualism of mind and body—a dualism that permitted the Cartesian *ego* to preserve its freedom by rendering everything outside its own field as an object external to it. The paradigm of

The former seeks epistemological certitude in the immediate, yet reflective grasp of the self; the latter seek salvation by asking God to place the creature before him. See my "The Geography of the Person," 37-39. A. C. Pegis has traced the two roads along which St. Augustine's thought has travelled, neither of which are to be confused with the modern journey. The Augustinian *Confessions* travels along the Platonic highway, which, however, in Augustine, always joins with and gives over to the Christian highway. See A. C. Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," *Medieval Studies*, vol. 6 (1944): 1-61.

¹⁴I have treated this transition in more detail in "Analysis by Principles and Analysis by Elements," in: *Graveful Reason* (Essays in Honor of Joseph Owens, CSSR), ed. by L. Gerson (Toronto: P.I.M.S., 1983), 315-330.

either *inside* or *outside* ruled with uncompromising exclusivity. The modern sense of *subject* was that which had only an inside and no outside, while the modern sense of *object* was that which had only an outside and no inside. Mechanics had no truck with experienced qualities such as color, and these somewhat embarrassing oddities were placed within the mental sphere where they were accorded only subjective status. More important yet, the properly immaterial aspects of mind, such as conceptualization and freedom, were also assigned to the internal sphere of the subject, whereas what is extended and material was assigned to the external order of objects.

On the face of it, the order of objects seemed to set the measure of this new knowledge, but the reverse was nearer the actual state of affairs. For the meaning of Cartesian objects was now set initially and definitively by the demands made by the mental subject—demands for clarity and distinctness that fell within the mind's range and that met the subject's purposes. The great search of the sciences now possessed all the marks of objectivity, and indeed, it is objective in this modern sense.¹⁵ Thus, for example, the search for ultimate particles in physics and chemistry meets the canons of reason insofar as they are derived from within the mind itself. For the admissibility and the status of objects are pre-determined by the rules and interest of the inquiring *ego*. The effect of the Cartesian doubt and the Cartesian method, therefore, has been to raise the standard of epistemology (theory of knowledge) before the gates of ontology (theory of being). And so, Cartesian philosophy set knowledge off in search of its own foundations. What is more, it finds them—not in nature, nor in being—but in the *self as ego*. Here, then, is a second version of self-identity, of *autós as self-reference* in the form of *self-reflection*.

We call this inversion of thought and reality *idealism*. In the classical modern version of idealism, the terms *subject* and *object* have undergone a reciprocal change of meaning and reference, compared with the earlier medieval meaning. Earlier, among the Schoolmen, the term *object* had meant "that which terminates and qualifies a knowing power," as color fills

the eye and sound the ear.¹⁶ *Object* now comes to acquire its modern sense: an object is "that which stands over against a knower," i.e., over against a *subject*. And conversely, earlier, among the Schoolmen, the term *subject* had served to designate a *supposit*, i.e., "any subject of existence," such as a rock, tree, animal, or human. In modern parlance, however, the term *subject* now shifts from its ancient and medieval ontological sense of "possessor of being" to its modern epistemological sense of "possessor of thought." The term *subject* now comes to be restricted to the *ego* as the foundation of all knowledge and action, and the determinant of all objectivity. And the external order of objects is now given its fundamental contours and warranty by the knowing subject: *subjectum fundamentum inconcussum*.

In this inversion of subject and object lies one of the roots of the modern conception of *foundations*. It arises through the inversion of orders, whereby the demands of the knower take precedence over the demands of being; and where the openness of first-order knowledge (what I have elsewhere call *noetic*) is more or less completely subordinated to the demands of second-order knowledge (what I have elsewhere called *epistemic*).¹⁷ Descartes even went so far as to advise us that if we cannot find an order among the items of our reflection, we are to impose upon them an order consistent with the demands of thought—demands for conceptual clarity and analytical discreteness.¹⁸

In this advice, we glimpse the implicit—and perhaps at that time still innocent—demand for control over the objects of inquiry. To secure that control it is necessary to systematize them, to place them in a system that is consonant with the needs of the knower. Moreover, the membership of an object in the system must conform to the demands of the system. The notion of autonomous reason finds its roots here. For the enquiring subject is now theoretically justified in exercising a subtle control within a system whose limits are set by its

¹⁶See my "Towards a Metaphysical Restoration of Natural Things," in: *An Etienne Gilson Tribute* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959), 245-262.

¹⁷I have treated this issue in "Neither With nor Without Foundations," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. XLII, no. 1 (Sept. 1988): 3-25.

¹⁸Discourse, part II, commenting upon the third rule: *et supponant même de l'ordre entre ceux qui ne se précèdent point naturellement les uns les autres*.

¹⁵See my "Another Look at Objectivity," in: *Thomas and Bonaventure: A Septicentenary Commemoration*, Proceedings of the ACPA, vol. XLVIII, 1974, pp. 86-98.

self-understanding, i.e., by its self-reference grasped as self-reflection. Once the primacy of reason gives way to the primacy of feelings, the notion of instrumental reason as the calculating power that serves non-rational purposes has also appeared on the horizon.¹⁹

We might think that as long as we control only the questions that we put to things, we let the objects go free to answer in their own name. But, in fact, the questions may contain the criteria for their own answers. In this way, they pre-set the general lines of what will count as an acceptable answer. Kant complained that the Schoolmen were not enough in control of their inquiry into nature and that they therefore were condemned to listen to nature as a naïve pupil. And Kant counselled that reason must appoint itself a judge in order to determine what questions nature must answer—questions not of nature's prompting but of reason's own devising.²⁰

The elements of the modern conception of system had already been anticipated by Leibniz's monadic philosophy and realized by Newton's natural philosophy. But the modern concept of system was brought to conceptual elegance by Kant's architectonic system.²¹ At its center is the notion of self as *subjectivity*—no longer simply as Cartesian mind—but of self as subjectivity under the ideal of rational autonomy. In a word,

¹⁹Thus, for example, David Hume in the *Treatise* finds reason to be merely a retainer in the service of the passions, while John Stuart Mill in *Utilitarianism* denies to reason any power to determine ends and assigns to it the task of selecting the means by which to satisfy ends chosen on other grounds.

²⁰*Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the second edition (B XIII): "Die Vernunft muss mit ihren Prinzipien, nach denen allein übereinkommende Erscheinungen für Gesetze gelten können, in einer Hand, und mit dem Experiment, das sie nach jenen ausdachte, in der anderen, an die Natur gehen, zwar um von ihr belehrt zu werden, aber nicht in der Qualität eines Schülers, der sich alles vorsagen lässt, was der Lehrer will, sondern eines bestellten Richters, der die Zeugen nötigt, auf die Fragen zu antworten, die er ihnen vorlegt."

²¹See *The Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Methodenlehre*, Part II, in which Kant brings together the questions that must be put in the rational search for the highest good: What can I know? what ought I to do? and what may I hope?; and Part III, in which Kant distinguishes the haphazard and partial scholastic systems from the universal and total *architectonic system* organized under the *Vernunftbegriff*, and which he identifies with *Philosophie*.

we have advanced from self-referential mind to self-referential consciousness. Kant thus provides a kind of transition from the narrower focus of the Cartesian *ego* and its external world of mechanism to the wider focus of a subjectivity open to the world of experience, both perceived theoretical and lived practical experience (*Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*).

Post-Cartesian philosophers have overcome the Cartesian doubt concerning the existence of the world in the way that most unanswerable and unaskable questions are disposed of—not by proof, but by coming to see that in the interest of rational inquiry the question itself must be abandoned. In a certain sense, too, post-Kantian philosophers have overcome the Kantian limitation of knowledge to appearances by ignoring the thing-in-itself. Thus, most post-Kantian philosophers have become neo-Kantians in a broad sense and by default, even though Kantian and Cartesian shadows remain on the plain of contemporary philosophy.

In this post-Kantian development, the self as *subjectivity*, i.e., the self as consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) has expanded beyond the Cartesian *ego* with its methodic doubt and beyond the Kantian *transcendental ego* with its restriction to appearances. With newfound confidence, and armed with the notion of *intentionality*, post-Kantian subjectivity has enlarged the scope of consciousness to the very horizon of the world of experience. Building upon the reflexivity of self as *aitós*, the self as *subjectivity* has set out to describe and order the world. For, if the mark of self as substance is ontological permanence, and if the criterion of self as mind is epistemological certitude, the emblem of contemporary subjectivity is the *phenomenology and hermeneutics of consciousness*. The ontological causes of ancient and medieval thought, and the epistemological criteria of modern thought, are passed over in favor of description and interpretation. In a word, post-Kantian subjectivity considers itself robust enough and free enough to meet the experienced world in its various colors.

For all that, subjectivity continues to meet that world in terms of its own self and on *that self's own terms*. Husserl acknowledged this recursive self when he named his first principle: *transcendental subjectivity*. And before him, Hegel had augmented the Kantian self with a cosmic *aitós* which realizes itself through a speculation that joins self and other, subject and object, in a great circle of dialectical self-determination, thus confirming what the poet said:

For speculation turns not to itself./Till it hath travelled and is married there/Where it may see itself.

More generally still, it is not too much to say that a kind of human self has become absolutized.²² Indeed, ever since the eighteenth century Enlightenment there has been pressure to restrict—some would say, liberate—thought, love, and hope to the horizon of human selfhood.

Let us turn now to the other path, along which lies the developing sense of *person*. My argument will be that, whereas the notion of self and the dynamic of self-reference follow the thread of *aitós*, the notion of person constitutes another thread and follows a different path. What we meet initially along this second path is fragile, elusive, and quicksilverish. The beginnings of this latter path belong to religion, and the path never wanders very far from an explicit sense of the trans-human. It is appropriate to its beginnings that the term *person* never quite abandons the flavor of its religious origins and development. Even in our own day, those thinkers called *personalists* think within a climate that is friendly to religious concerns and that is often even inspired by some sense of the sacred. Even some secular humanists show respect for religion and try to accommodate the notion of *person* within their own thought although, it seems to me, they cannot take full account of it in the strong sense in which it has developed. Militant atheistic humanism, on the other hand, can do quite well without the notion of person.

The origins of the term are obscure, uncertain, and various.²³ It is likely that one of the sources of the term is found in the cultic practices of the Etruscan goddess *Persephone*, who gave her name to the mask used in her cult. This name fused easily with the Latin term *personare*, which meant "to speak through," as one does through a mask. It is worthwhile to notice that both visual and auditory features attach to the term, as do gesture and speech. But the term did not stop there. It developed new meanings as it entered into Latin culture. Thus, the Latin grammarians used the term to classify the different

²²See Karol Wojtyła, "The Subject as Community," in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 33, no. 2 (Dec. 1979): 273-308.

²³For a more expanded version of this brief sketch of the history of the term *person*, see "The Geography of the Human Person," 27-48.

speakers' voices: as first person, second person, and so on. In both the cultic and the grammatical usages the term is situated within the context of language and communication.

The original context is, then, both dramatic and mysterious. The mask is at once both presence and absence, since it both manifests the goddess and yet leaves her hidden. This dialectic of appearance and reality played between the face and what remains faceless, because it remains hidden. Then, too, there is the dialectic between what is said and unsaid in the saying. As Etruscan influence grew in Roman theater, the term *persona* came to designate the characters on stage, their parts and roles in the drama. These are the *dramatis personae*, the characters held in tension with the actors who played them.

Undoubtedly, the delineation of dramatic character suggested the further philosophical or metaphysical meaning, prominent with Cicero, for whom the *persona* is "that which is distinctive about an individual," "that which is unique in each of us," in contrast with what we have in common. Eventually this distinctiveness came to be expressed in the Middle Ages as the *incommunicability* of the personal existence of each human individual. It is paradoxical that, born in the very medium of communication, the person retains a quality that proclaims the non-substitutional reality of the person, his or her irreplaceability. This uniqueness holds for the whole order of spiritual reality. St. Thomas tells us that whereas dimensioned matter is the principle of individuation among material and physical things, *incommunicability* is the distinguishing feature of spiritual beings, i.e., of persons.²⁴ He further reminds us that in the order of spirits there is no being that is not personal.

But during the ancient classical Latin period there were other developments as well. The term *persona* also came to stand in legal thought for a complete human individual, i.e., for a citizen with full legal rights, one who—unlike a child or a slave—could bring forward a case in law and have it heard. This feature of having acknowledged rights remains in the fully developed meaning of person. St. Thomas tells us that "person means completeness. . . . It signifies what is noblest in the whole of nature."²⁵ The dignity of the person lies in its ontological fullness.

²⁴*Summa Theologiae* I, 29, 3, ad4.

²⁵*In I Sent.*, 23, i, 2, ad4; *ST* I, 29, 2.

So far, then, the term *person* has acquired cultic, dramatic, grammatical, legal and metaphysical aspects. Its rich meaning was further fed by other sources as well. No doubt, the developing notion of individual character among the post-Aristotelian schools and the breakdown of the traditional *polis* may well have contributed to the sharpening of the notion of individuality. The Greek term *prosopon* also caught the dynamics of appearance and reality, of presence and absence, of the manifest and the hidden. Even more, the Greek term insinuated a directness and intimacy that comes only through face-to-face encounter and dialogue. In Aristotle's words: Only humans have faces; oxen do not; for we see the play of meaning upon the human face.²⁶ (Cf. the Latin *vultus, facies*.)

A third source that fed into the development of the term *person* is the remarkable conversation among the Rabbis about the meaning of that elusive presence called in the Old Testament variously: *Spirit, Shekhina, Wisdom, Logos*. Here again, we see a close association of the term *person* with the sacred.²⁷

The term *person* came into its own, and received the heavy weight it was to bear, however, with the early struggle of Christians to understand the God-man Jesus Christ. In the light of the revelation that followed upon the encounter with Christ, Christians of the second and third centuries began using the term *persona* to designate the Triune Godhead. Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 240) voiced the formula: "*Una substantia, tres personae*: one substance, three persons." The formula eventually settled upon in the West was: "*Una essentia, tres personae*," variously rendered as: "One in substance, essence or being, three in persons."

In the sixth century, Boethius gave a classical, but not entirely unproblematic, definition of person as *naturae rationalis individualis substantia*, "an individual substance of a ratio-

²⁶*Historia animalium* 491b9-11. Some will object that their own pets do indeed have faces. Perhaps, but then pets are partly "humanized" animals, into whose mysterious faces we can too easily read our own reflection.

²⁷It is worth noticing the contemporary development of the Jewish tradition in the work of Martin Buber, and especially the articulation of the I-Thou relation.

nal nature."²⁸ This return to substance was not, however, the cutting edge of the new development, even though the definition was handed down as all but definitive. In the twelfth century, Richard of St. Victor pointed to new developments when he defined *person* as *spiritualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia*, "incommunicable existence of a spiritual nature."²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger remarks:³⁰

This definition correctly sees that in its theological meaning "person" does not lie on the level of essence, but of existence. Richard thereby gave the impetus for a philosophy of existence which had, as such, not been made the subject of philosophy at all in Antiquity.

It is characteristic of St. Thomas that he takes both definitions in stride. With his usual equanimity he accepts Boethius's definition of person as substance of a distinctive sort and uses it as the general basis of his discussion of the characteristics of person. But it is important to notice that he does this only after discussing the *processions* and the *real relations* of the divine persons in the Godhead, i.e., in the Trinity. In the discussion of the Trinity, it is not Boethius's *substance* that is primary but the notion of relation.

Drawing upon St. Augustine and other Church Fathers, Thomas sketches out the interior life of the Godhead. Within the undivided and indivisible unity of the being, essence, and substance of the Godhead, the persons are distinguished from one another as *dynamic processions*: precisely, and distinctly as *relations* of paternity, filiation, and spiration: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all are relational. From the mutual love of the Father and Son the Holy Spirit proceeds. But these are not ordinary relations, to be sure, for each posesses the full being of the Godhead; so that the Divine Persons

²⁸*Contra Eutychen*, sec. III (Loeb edition, 84): "*naturae rationalis individualis substantia*." His contemporary, Cassiodorus, has something similar.

²⁹*De Trinitate* IV, 21, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 196, 945. St. Thomas (ST I, 29, 3 ad4) remarks that "there are some, however, who say that the definition of Boethius, quoted above, is not a definition of person in the sense we use when speaking of persons in God. Therefore Richard of St. Victor amends this definition by adding that *person* in God is the *incommunicable existence of the divine nature*."

³⁰Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 439-454.

are *subsisting relations*. The distinguishing feature of personhood, then, is not substance (which corresponds to the Divine essence) but *relatedness*, or rather "*relativity*." Nor is this relatedness to be understood as *self-relation* or *self-reference*, but as relation to an other, and not just to an other but—if I may be permitted an almost total understatement—to the eternally significant other.

St. Bonaventure, Thomas's contemporary, has left a striking account of the absolute generosity with which the Father pours out his own *being* in the Son in such an unrestricted way that the very giving and receiving not only passes *between* them, but *is* the very being of Begetter and Begotten. From such communication there proceeds that third subsistent relation, the Divine Love who is the Holy Spirit.³¹ The Divine being, Essence, and Substance is not something set apart from their personal intercourse, but is rather the very being of their communion.³² In the Trinity, then, we have neither the recursive movement of self, nor self-reflection, nor self-determination. What we have is *total and undiminished self-donation; absolute orientation to the other*. The *autós* within the Trinity is not the dynamic of self-reference but rather that unitary Essence that constitutes the divine nature of the Godhead—and constitutes it not as a community produced by their interpersonal relations but as the very *Substance (ousía) and Being (esse)* of their communication and communion. This eternal jubilee is the interior life of God, the on-going conversation of love between the Divine Persons.

This heteronomy of love that loses nothing is not subservient to the attainment of autonomous selfhood; that is the ideal of the Enlightenment. And that, too, was Hegel's strategy after all is said and done: to take the *self-donation* of Trinitarian love and convert it into a means by which a *self-determining* cosmos serves its own rational interests. The self-donation of love in the Trinity of persons does not serve self; it is their very being. It is what *identifies them*. For the Godhead is nothing but the divine persons, who give their *essentia* to each other unstintingly in the intimacy of their shared and common

³¹The *Journey of the Mind to God (Itinerarium)*, c. VI.

³²Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary Greek Theologians, no. 4 (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 1985.

life. The very being of God, then, is this traffic in self-giving love.³³

This, to be sure, is theology; but philosophers are permitted to take their hints from many different sources. And so, we are entitled to ask what this self-donative love might signify for creatures. I suggest that Trinitarian love provides a cipher with which to read the world afresh.³⁴ Suppose that the Trinitarian life marks the world with its own character as *gift*. St. Thomas speaks of the *processions* of the Divine Persons within the Trinitarian life, but he speaks of their *missions* in the created world. Creation, viewed under the light of that love which is self-donative, is read as the uncalled-for gratuity, the absolutely free and unconditional generosity that flows without compunction from within that divine communal Life. Such generosity points the human person in a different direction from self-reference.³⁵

It is not that self-reference is false or wrong. On the contrary, it catches at the very need of creatures to constantly secure the minimum of their own existence; it is their dynamic yet fragile purchase of their own finite existence. But the human creature is not simply finite, nor is he or she simply a natural organism. And so creation gives the human creature neither warrant nor satisfaction in and through recursive selfhood. The human reality is called to be both *substance and person*, both *self-reference and self-donation*.

What, then, are we to draw from this tension between self and person, between substance and relation, between self-referential love and self-donative love? As one looks

³³See Hans Urs von Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person," in *Communio*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 18-26.

³⁴See "The Given and the Gift: Two Ways of Reading the World," in *The Human Person and Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, ed. by J. M. Zycinski, (Krakow: Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Philosophy Section, 1980), 260-276; also Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation*, 46th Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982).

³⁵By *self-donation*, I do not here mean *altruism*, in its usually accepted sense; for altruistic love is still caught within that love in which self-reference is paramount and definitive. Altruism is the negation of self-love, and I do not think that this is precisely what Christian asceticism means by self-denial. I have located the nature of altruism in its modern context in "Is Liberalism Good Enough?" in *Liberalism and the Good*, 85-104.

back over the long tradition of metaphysical thought in the so-called West, it seems to me that we discern a certain ambivalence at play. Among the ancients, the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Stoics manifest a liberality of thought that softens the primacy of self-reference. Thus, for example, Aristotle's *philia* breathes with the spirit of magnanimity; but, in the end, self-referential identity expresses the highest principle of his thought in the form of the divine substance or substances: self-thinking Thought (*noûsis noûseôs*).³⁶ Modernity has emphasized this self-referential sense of identity, taking it out of the earlier, gentler, and more generous context of ancient and medieval thought. And this emphasis does not only occur among Cartesianians and Kantians, for Hegel completes his own system of cosmic self-determination by placing Aristotle's text at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*, though giving it his own modern sense.

St. Thomas himself shows a certain ambivalence in the face of these two paths. And yet there are the seeds of an adequate personalism in his principles. Speaking of how we are to consider God, who is above all things, Thomas provides a strategy for dealing with our own personal existence:

As God is above all things, we should understand what is said of God, not according to the mode of the lowest creatures, namely bodies [we might say: self as substance, ego or subjectivity], but from the likeness of the highest creatures, the intellectual substances [we might say: person]; although even the likenesses derived from these fall short in the representation of the divine things.³⁷

This suggestive principle goes far back into Christian tradition,³⁸ and charts a course for further talk about the human self and the human person.

First of all, we need to bear in mind the *whole human individual reality* which from its inception is *both self-referential substance and self-donative person*, whose reality is sealed in its very act of existing (*esse*). And so, the definition of the human reality as an individual substance of a rational nature reads humanity and human love from below. May we not take it as defining an initial deposit given to each of us in our

³⁶ *Meta.* XII, 1074b35: καὶ ἐστὶν ἡ νοῦσις νοῦσεὸς νόσις.

³⁷ *ST.*, I, 27, 1c.

³⁸ See, for example, St. Athanasius (4th century), *Contra Arianos*, Discourse III, c. 25, nos. 18-19; cf. c. 23, no. 1.

very origination? As such it is an enabling potential for something more than substantial being, for something more than *ens per se*, for something more than self-reference. *Perséité* (brought to high pitch with the Enlightenment definition of maturity as autonomy)³⁹ is satisfied by the recursive movement of and to self. But *quia* rational, i.e., insofar as our nature is intellectual and spiritual, we are called upon to transform the individuality of substance into the *communicative incommunicability* of personal existence without loss of substance.⁴⁰ We are called, so to speak, to transmute the metal of self by a kind of spiritual alchemy into the gold of personhood, into precious metal. Moreover, we are called upon to do this through communicative acts of understanding, choice, and love. In interpreting Boethius's definition of person as substance, St. Thomas lays stress upon action; as persons we are called to activity in the full sense of *human* activity, originating out of intelligent liberty, as finite spiritual beings.

I have just written: "communication without loss of substance." And this can be understood only if we recognize in human reality a *realism of the spirit*. For I do not mean by realism what is often meant nowadays by the term "naturalism." I mean, rather, an order of reality that has its own laws, its own possibilities, and its own risks, different from the laws of material being. A mark of the spirit, as I take it, consists in the ability to *communicate without loss*.⁴¹

This is not to say that there can be no loss in the order of spirit. On the contrary, *spiritual loss* is much more devastating than anything that can be suffered in the physical realm, where gain and loss belongs to the order of the day. Spiritual loss takes on its privative existence as a loss that, in

³⁹ I have in mind such classical Enlightenment texts as Kant's *What is Enlightenment?*, Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*, and Condorcet's *Sketch*.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, 29, 1, ad2. St. Thomas uses the term *assumpta* to indicate this "taking up" of the substance into personal existence. The emphasis upon *actus humanus*, mentioned in what follows, is also found in St. Thomas' use of Boethius's formula.

⁴¹ We have a glimpse of this law of the spirit on those occasions when we love another, even if our love is not returned; it is somewhat in this sense that we can say that God truly "suffers" from our lack of love, without attributing to his "pain" any loss of divinity. Another indication is that when we teach we do not lose the knowledge that we communicate; indeed, it is more likely that we gain in understanding.

some original and ultimate sense, need not have occurred. It takes form as a loss of meaning, or as a loss of freedom; in a word: as a loss of what is truly good. Spiritual loss is brought about by some free agent, but its effects reach out to others . . . even to generations. And just because spiritual loss does not possess the inevitability that belongs to what is physical, poets call spiritual loss *tragedy*, and priests recognize it as *sin*.

Can such a call to spiritual personhood be made today in such a way that it might be heard? The present is always confusing to those who live through it. We hear much talk today of personal rights and personality development. But these terms often catch only one aspect of personhood, namely, the distinctiveness and perhaps the uniqueness of the individual. What is more, rights language can be easily assimilated to the language of self-reference, especially if talk of personality development situates itself in a kind of sublimated behaviorism which directs attention back towards self as subjectivity or ego. And so, such talk often runs counter to the fuller and deeper sense of person as it has developed over its long career.

Insofar as talk hits upon self-consciousness and self-reflection, it takes up the language of nature into the sphere of consciousness. In this way it still reads the human reality from below. It is idle to deny that such talk yields benefits for understanding the human reality. The critical issue, however, is whether it ought to set the paradigm for all talk about the human reality, or whether it should complement, and even be subordinate to, a reading from above.

Now, Aristotle and Hegel have already shown that reflection and the turn to *autos*, to self, is not exclusive to the human sphere. It is what we share with all creatures, most closely with all organisms. Self-reference begins well below the human reality—at least with organic life—so that self-reference provides a legitimate, but non-distinctive, account of the human reality from below.

The language of person, on the other hand, is neither that of nature nor of psyche, neither of substance nor of subjectivity, neither of things nor of consciousness, neither of body nor of mind. It is the language of *spirit*. I do not mean the spirit of ancient and modern dualisms, of Platonists and Cartesianes, but that spirit which takes up bodily existence into itself, while respecting the integrity of the material realm. I have already mentioned the long and intimate association of the term person with religion and the sacred. In this association

it has shown the capacity for embodiment. And it is in this sense that personalist philosophers, such as Maritain, Marcel, and Mounier, use it. It seems to me that the times favor a rebirth and reformulation of personalist thought.

On the surface we can point to trends that de-personalize, but there are other more hopeful signs as well. The recovery of the *intentional and other-directed character* of knowing—underway at least since Kant—is open to the path of personhood, once it is placed within its proper context, i.e., within the realism of spirit. This is complemented by the development of the modern notion of *totality*—whether as world or as linguistic system, because these notions can open us to possibilities that lie beyond the circle of self-reference. The recent elevation of the notion of relation above that of substance and entity—while it stands in need of qualification—favors a *relational understanding of person*. So, too, does the recent concentration upon the *concrete*,⁴² the *existential*, and the *actual*. Even Deconstruction has its promise, for the Deconstructionists have mounted a telling attack upon self-reference and subjectivity. It is my opinion, however, that, having torn up the path of modern self-reference, they have no paving stones to lay in its place. We are called, then, to a rethinking of the idea, the reality, and the dignity of person. To be sure, we are not divine, and so we are not able to be *absolutely* self-donative. In that sense, self-donative love remains an idealization to which we are asymptotically related. But we are *more than* self-referential. We are called upon to shape ourselves and our loves—not in the confines of self-reference, but rather as the *integration* of substantial self-reference and spiritual self-donation. Both comprise the human reality from its inception.

The personal "I," then, and the communal "we" should not be reduced simply to self-reference. They name the whole human reality: self-and-person. Here again, theology provides a helpful nuance. In Christ the "I" names both the Divine Word, eternal Son of the Father, second person of the Trinity *and*—in his incarnate identity—also the dynamic unifying principle, the salvific bridge, which takes up into the personal existence of the Word its own appropriated humanity in

⁴²As distinct from the merely practical; for the concrete includes the theoretical as well as the practical. Thus, for example, Marcel wanted his philosophy to be known as a philosophy of the concrete.

all of its affections, saving sin. The I, then, names the eternal Word and the uniquely intimate hypostatic union that is the incarnate Christ. It is not quite so with the human reality, of course. Nevertheless, the "I" also plays a double rôle in the human reality, though in a creaturely mode. The "I" names the individual existence, that physical incommunicability that secures the actual unity of the whole human reality in its physical identity. But the "I" as specifically human also names the call to transcendence—a call which addresses the *whole* human reality, physical and spiritual. The "I," then, and inseparably, the "we," encompass both substance and person. Substantial individuality and personal existence are modal to the whole creature, existential human reality. And yet, person names that reality in its highest dignity, by virtue of the capacity of spirit alone to recognize the integrity, both of its own order and of the order of physical nature.⁴³

Human love, then, is indeed a rich composite of *érôs* and *philia*, *nómos*, and *agápê*, in which these four loves⁴⁴ can be transmuted into a single, complex and fully human love, and in which self-reference is destined to continue to play its rôle in the dynamic interplay with self-donative love. We partake out of need; we share out of abundance. In coming to be more in the image of God we move from partaking to sharing, from participation to communication. □

⁴³I do not mean either an existential humanism such as Sartre's, which is marked by self-reference, nor the sense of *actualité* that stands for the immediately present. Rather, in the spirit of St. Thomas's philosophy of act, see the work of Josef Pieper.

⁴⁴I take the four loves from I. Singer's *The Nature of Love*. One can appreciate a good deal of his analysis without taking over his naturalism and implicit idealism, nor his tendency to read the Augustinian *caritas*-synthesis through Luther's eyes. Cf., C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (Glasgow: Collins, 1990).

Nature and grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar

Angelo Scola

"He is before all things and all things subsist in him."

I. The issue

Already in 1948,¹ in a text which became a classic of his theology, Balthasar proposed a profound and unitary christological vision to throw light on the troubled question of the relation between nature and grace.

It is in Christ that human nature and its mental faculties are located in their true center; it is in him that they attain their final truth in the manner in which God, the creator of nature, wanted nature to exist from eternity. In order to investigate the relation *between* supernature and nature, man does not need to step outside of faith; he does not need to make himself the mediator between God and the world, between revelation and reason; he does not need to cast himself in the excessive role of judge *over* the relation between the natural and the supernatural world. All that he needs is to understand and believe in "the single mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) "in whom all things in heaven and on earth were created . . . all through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). Just as Christ did not leave the Father when he became man to bring creation in all its spheres to fulfillment, so also the Christian does not need to step outside the center, Christ, to mediate Christ to the world, to understand his

¹Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Bibliographie 1925-1990, Neu bearbeitet und ergänzt von Cornelia Capol*, (Einsiedeln-Freiburg, 1990), 41, no. 62.