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## SPIRITUALITY VIA METAPHYSICS: MARITAIN ON INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY

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THE RIDDLE OF THE HUMAN SELF IS IN LARGE PART DUE TO THE ENIGMA OF SELF-contradiction within the human heart, torn between contrary tendencies that prod and compel the appetitive dynamisms of the interior life. In their more vigorous manifestations, sensual drives can display an urgency that seems to elude the full control of the human personality. On the other hand, the human spirit longs for greatness, for communion with others, for the embrace of interior certitudes resting on perduring truths. The existence of such contradictory desires makes any attention to the more intimate regions of the human heart a meeting that can unsettle the fragile security of self-knowledge presumed by a human person. The humbling truism that humanity is a mystery unto itself seems inadequate here.<sup>1</sup> A deeper search may be required for the inherent paradox in all self-knowledge.

The French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) addressed the question of paradoxical self-contradiction in the human heart by means of a metaphysical distinction between individuality and personality. In Maritain's treatment, the interior dynamisms associated with the metaphysical principles of individuality and personality follow laws of inclination consistent with the ontological nature of the human person. At the same time, they also provide in their differences a descriptive source for the polarities of desire experienced within the human heart in the existential order of contingent choices. Maritain's metaphysical structure of presentation becomes, as such, a foundation for more profound spiritual insights. Rooted in the very nature of the human person, the contrary appetitive tendencies that inhere within the principles of individuality and personality can be viewed as a paradigm for the experience of interior conflict at the core of human existence. The fact that these opposed tendencies remain inharmonious throughout the whole course of life, persisting as a tension between base and more sublime human drives, seems to imply a 'paradoxical nature' in the human person.<sup>2</sup> Though such a notion would suggest an inevitable frustration in human living, this demarcation between opposing dynamisms within the human spirit nonetheless identifies a fundamental spiritual challenge and may do much to explain the source of one person's moral disorientation and another's realization of authentic spiritual personality.<sup>3</sup> In Maritain's treatment, the 'burden' of reconciling an ongoing interior conflict within the human spirit is simultaneously the path to the acquisition of true spiritual personality.

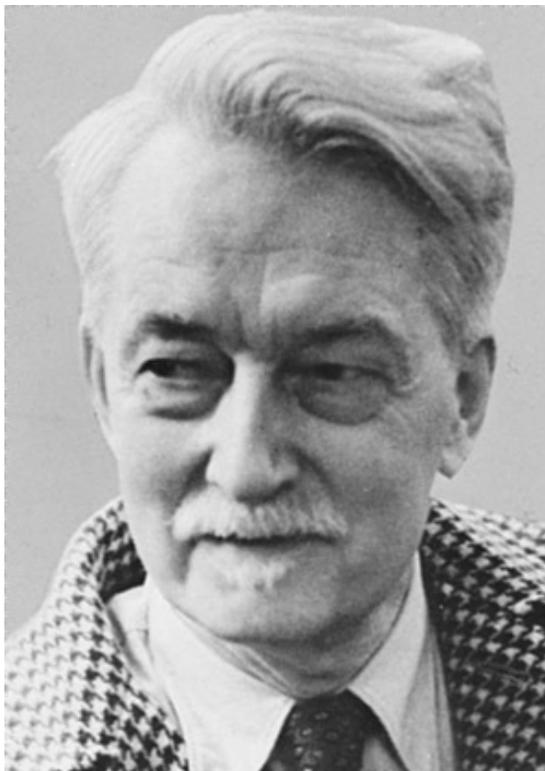
### THE MEANING OF INDIVIDUALITY

Maritain employs the term individuality as a notion flowing from St. Thomas Aquinas' principle of individuation. In Aquinas' metaphysics, the existence of an individual being depends on the unique act of existing which every actually existent thing exercises. For a corporeal being, existence signifies that a species of form invests particular matter with the act of being. Form is 'particularized' in the matter which it 'informs,' thereby manifesting the concrete

presence of a substantial, undivided unit distinct from every other material reality.<sup>4</sup> In any being composed of matter and form, the act of existing thus includes an element of material quantity occupying a position in space”by which that which is here will differ from what is there.”<sup>5</sup> A material creature is individual precisely because of “matter with its quantity designated.”<sup>6</sup> Linked to bodiliness in any material reality, the principle of individuation therefore separates in the physical order a corporeal being from every other existent being. Even more importantly, however, bodiliness expresses a finitude of infinitesimal proportions relative to the infinite reaches of the physical universe, a finitude that implies eventual dissolution as a material reality. “Of itself,” notes Maritain, “matter is inclined to disintegration just as space is inclined to division.”<sup>7</sup>

In the case of the human person, Maritain extends the notion of individuality beyond the principle of individuation to encompass a state of potency, which he terms “an avidity for being [that] bears the impress of a metaphysical energy.”<sup>8</sup> This impress of metaphysical energy is the form, or the soul, which, by ‘informing’ matter, “constitutes with it a substantial unit and determines this unit to be that which it is.”<sup>9</sup> While bodiliness circumscribes the human person’s existence, distinguishing it as a unique entity from all other corporeal beings, it is true as well that in the human person, the soul as it ‘informs’ the body, existing as a substantial unit with matter, constitutes with the body “one substance, which is both carnal and spiritual.”<sup>10</sup> This composite unity of soul and body in the human person, their inseparable metaphysical link as co-principles of a single identity exercising a singular act of existing, means that individuality is not simply confined to bodiliness, though it finds its roots in materiality.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the soul itself, by virtue of its substantial relation to a particular body, participates in the principle of individuality and possesses within its own substance the marks of individuality.<sup>12</sup> Precisely by its relation to a particular body, the soul is differentiated within its very substance from every other soul.<sup>13</sup>

Although the principle of individuality in the human person, as in any corporeal being, does not derive from form but from matter,<sup>14</sup> the human soul is thus individual as well, not solely in itself by exercising its own act of being,<sup>15</sup> but rather because of a substantial union with the body, or, in Maritain’s language, by reason of its “transcendental relation to matter understood as implying position in space.”<sup>16</sup> This transcendental relation of the soul to its body will be an important element in Maritain’s description of spiritual personality.



*Jacques Maritain*

The substantial union of the soul with the body, with the effect that the soul also possesses the character of being individual, has significant repercussions.<sup>17</sup> If we remember that individuality in the human being, derived from bodiliness, is a source of limitation and constraint, recalling to humanity its finitude, it is true that the soul also, to the degree that it encloses itself exclusively within the principles of differentiation constitutive of individuality, can restrict the human person’s true

possibilities for spiritual development. A certain danger thus persists. The principle of individuality, by which what is individual is “subject to the determinism of the physical world,”<sup>18</sup> is capable of thwarting the soul’s own potent dynamisms. Precisely because of the union of soul with body, the material dimension of creatureliness constantly threatens to supercede the self’s movement of transcendence beyond the bounds of individuality.

For we are physical creatures subject always to the exigencies of the physical world. As a ‘fragment of matter’ caught in the swirl of time, “a unique point in the immense web of cosmic, ethnical, historical forces and influences,”<sup>19</sup> the human being in his material individuality is localized in a spatial and temporal vortex marked by determining forces independent of personal control—the experience of death being only the last subjection to a universal physical law.<sup>20</sup>

## THE NATURE OF PERSONALITY

What, then, on the other hand, are the metaphysical roots of personality, and in what sense does the notion of personality clarify the precise meaning of the soul's transcendental relation to physical exigency? In other words, how does the principle of personality indicate a positive movement that transcends mere individuality? The defining concept for personality is subsistence, which can be described as an incommunicable possession of existence by which a spiritual being composed of matter and a rational soul exercises its own proper substantial existence apart from other beings.<sup>21</sup> Subsistence thus presupposes a separation from other spiritual entities.<sup>22</sup> The person possesses existence in a singular, substantial nature endowed with subsistence in such manner that "in the very act of existing, it is, so to speak, absolutely enclosed in itself with regard to existence."<sup>23</sup> There is no overflow in the singular possession of existence that distinguishes the uniqueness of each person. "Not only is its nature singular, it owns so completely the existence which actuates it that it desires to keep it to itself alone; it can share this existence with no other."<sup>24</sup> In contrast to individuality, then, which as a principle of differentiation is operative in corporeal beings primarily by virtue of their materiality, subsistence designates the singular possession of an interior spiritual principle sustaining in each human person the composite unity of body and soul. This altogether different perspective from the principle of individuality recognizes in humanity a spiritual dimension, which in turn provides the metaphysical foundation for the human person as incarnate spirit.<sup>25</sup> It is the primacy of the spiritual rooted in, or subsisting in, the reality of the human person's being that elicits the truth of human personality.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, subsistence in the human person implies the notions of self-possession and independence, so much so, Maritain says, that the tradition of Western metaphysics "defines the person in terms of independence, as a reality which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe unto itself"<sup>27</sup> As an ontological seal upon human nature, subsistence is the primary ground for personality, because personality in effect signifies a capacity for self-possession which the human intellect and will are capable of realizing in the spiritual order.<sup>28</sup> To speak of the nature of personality as metaphysically grounded in the subsistence of the soul is to affirm that the human person is before all else a spiritual creature by virtue of a rational soul capable of intelligent choosing. "Our whole being subsists in virtue of the subsistence of the spiritual soul which is in us a principle of creative unity, indepen-

dence and liberty."<sup>29</sup> As such, personality, linked to the spirit, can be viewed as a kind of enduring presence in the ontological structure of the human being that discovers its eminent meaning analogically, i.e., by reference to God who is Pure Spirit.

For Christian realism the person, by the very fact of being an individual substance, was a whole; independence was one of its defining characteristics; and the notion of personality was an analogical notion, which was realized, in essentially different degrees, in God, in pure spirits, and in man. Here below, then, the person—"that which is the most perfect in all of nature"—as the individual human subject (composed of soul and body and subsisting by the subsistence of the soul) which, superexisting spiritually in knowledge and in love, constituted a whole universe in itself.<sup>30</sup>



As the root of personality, this interior spiritual presence, united to a self-aware subject, is by nature open to the possibility of expansive generosity. A paradoxical dynamism is thus impressed within the nature of personality. For movement and stability are equally characteristic of personality. While the spiritual presence subsisting in personality is a stable interior source of the human being's self-possession, in itself signifying "interiority to self,"<sup>31</sup> personality is necessarily ordered to process and growth. Precisely because it "unfolds in the operative order in psychological and moral values,"<sup>32</sup> personality implies an openness toward an expansive gift of self beyond itself. From the interior capacity for self-possession, therefore, arises every desire to perfect self. It is indeed the intensity of self-possession as a unifying power within personality that is the source for every inclination to generous self-giving.

Because, in our substance, it is an imprint or seal which enables it to possess its existence, to perfect and give itself freely, personality testifies to the generosity or expansiveness in being which an incarnate spirit derives from its spiritual nature and which constitutes, within the secret depths of our ontological structure, a source of dynamic unity, of unification from within.<sup>33</sup>

The link between the ontological nature of personality and the personality's capacity for self-bestowal, the very inclination to give oneself to another, leads Maritain to probe the dynamism of desire in the experience of love as a primary means of delineating the nature of personality.<sup>34</sup> Inasmuch as intellect and will are part of the metaphysical structure of the human person, personality is "capable of super-existing by way of knowledge and of love."<sup>35</sup> While personality has inscribed within itself a requirement for receiving and giving knowledge and love,<sup>36</sup> the inclination to communicate its very being confronts necessary limits.<sup>37</sup> Maritain locates here a source of perpetual suffering, since the human person is inevitably frustrated by an inability to fulfill the longing for reciprocal communication. For what happens within the subject who loves when an object of love is sought? By nature, love is incapable of resting content in 'qualities'; it is driven beyond mere qualities to seek "the deepest, most substantial and hidden, the most *existing* reality of the beloved thing."<sup>38</sup> While love can never arrive at this hidden depth in the beloved, it remains also impenetrable to itself, for the beloved is sought from a source of hidden metaphysical depth within the one who loves: *abyssus abyssum invocat*. Indeed it is "the deepest, most substantial and hidden" source of the lover's own personality that provides the inner animating fire by which the lover seeks what is "most substantial and hidden" in the beloved. Inasmuch as love has its source in the concealed interior depths of spiritual personality, there is an inexhaustibility in the human striving for a reciprocal exchange of self-giving with another.

This [personality] is a metaphysical center ... a center inexhaustible, so to speak, of existence, bounty and action; capable of giving and of giving itself; capable of receiving not only this or that gift bestowed by another, but even another self as a gift, another self which bestows itself.<sup>39</sup>

## THE TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY

These separate discussions on individuality and personality will remain incomplete until the two are understood in the context of their dynamic interaction. From the foregoing metaphysical principles, Maritain will draw conclusions that are notable for their discomforting pertinence to concrete human living. The polarity we have exposed will be seen as a dynamic movement within the human person toward either an increasingly more

enclosed individuality or toward a growth in transcendent personality. To the degree that one or the other holds the upper hand, the human person diminishes or expands as a spiritual being. Once again the important foundation of Maritain's thought is the intrinsic unity that constitutes the single composite reality of the human being under the aspects of individuality and personality.<sup>40</sup>

Maritain provides an apt analogy in art for discernment of this tension between opposing interior dynamisms. "A painting," he notes, "is a physico-chemical mixture by reason of the coloring stuff of which it is made, and the whole of it is a work of beauty by reason of the painter's art."<sup>41</sup> The care not to isolate either facet protects against possible distortion of the painting's concrete reality and thereby fosters its appeal to the eyes. Likewise, the distinction between individuality and personality entails more than a strict demarcation between bodily compulsions and spiritual aspirations. A notion of fixed and independent categories would do no justice to the continual interaction between individuality and personality. While a dichotomy of interior tendencies describes an ongoing interior conflict, there is at the same time a subtlety of observable struggle and progress manifest in concrete actions. An acquired spiritual tendency, ingrained over time and reversible only with effort, is fortified with each particular moral action. Moreover, each action tending in the direction of an enclosed egoism or toward an ever expanding generosity is never without an implicit movement to enfeeble the opposing dynamism<sup>42</sup>

When Maritain, then, links the tenacious hold of egoistic tendencies to the ontological structure of individuality, he introduces a profound reflection on the dynamism of spiritual disintegration that can take place in the human being precisely because of a crippling impact unleashed on personality by an egocentric focus of living. In the movement toward individuality, the self centered upon itself, turned in upon itself, is entrapped and thereby incapable of ranging beyond its own immediate self-interest. When the human person allows individuality to dominate in this manner, the process not only saps personality of its energies, but distorts the intrinsic tendency of personality to seek self-transcendence. For individuality, derived from materiality, is ultimately a principle of differentiation by which a human being, because of its bodiliness, stands apart from all other beings. When the same principle of differentiation and exclusion exceeds its limits and overflows into the spiritual dynamism of

the human being, experienced now as a dominant human tendency, there follows a compelling descent into solipsism.<sup>43</sup> The inherent ontological tendency of personality to transcend itself in generous self-donation becomes a distorted caricature whereby to lose self signifies, with each capitulation to transitory satisfactions of the superficial ego, a momentary escape from self rather than any discovery of the deeper truth of self revealed paradoxically in self-sacrifice. Maritain writes trenchantly on the point:

Personality, while metaphysically inalienable, suffers many a check in the psychological and moral register. There it runs the risk of contamination by the miseries of material individuality, by its meannesses, its vanities, its bad habits, its narrownesses, its hereditary predispositions, by its natural regime of rivalry and opposition. For that same man who is a person, and subsists in his entirety with the subsistence of his soul, is also an individual in a species and dust before the wind<sup>44</sup>

Applied analogously, then, to the interior drives of the human being as “that which excludes from oneself all that other men are,”<sup>45</sup> individuality can thus be “described as the narrowness of the ego, forever threatened and forever eager to grasp for itself.”<sup>46</sup> This quality of enclosure within itself, self-protective yet fragmented, tending “to be scattered in a multiplicity”<sup>47</sup> of ego-driven desires, is not to be equated with bodiliness, but a spiritual condition deriving from the principles of material individuality. “Of itself,” as noted, “matter is inclined to disintegration.”<sup>48</sup> The finitude inherent in material creation tends of itself to atomization; it is subject to laws of determinism which are beyond its control. It is precisely for this reason that “the characteristic independence of personality,”<sup>49</sup> which is possessed “in the midst of all the servitudes to which matter and the world, heredity and environment”<sup>50</sup> subject it, must be won through hard struggle,

in rendering the limited, fragile and menaced independence more and more effective and vigorous in itself, and in passing through deaths to self in order to conquer its freedom of autonomy, as far as that is possible for a created being—for a creature of flesh and spirit—and with the restrictions

proceeding from the human condition.<sup>51</sup>

Though the metaphysical principle of material individuality in no sense identifies a kind of metaphysical source of evil, nonetheless it yields, according to Maritain, a comprehensive viewpoint that bears upon the reality of evil as willed action. Every free action of moral significance, for good or for evil, involves the human being simultaneously as an individual and as a person, and has

consequences as such. On the one hand, “evil arises when, in our action, we give preponderance to the individual aspect of our being.”<sup>52</sup>

The essential principle rooted in material individuality, with its built-in tendency to disintegration and “narrowness in flesh,”<sup>53</sup> becomes a reflection, when evil is chosen, of “a movement towards that dispersion in which, if left to itself, material individuality is inclined to fall.”<sup>54</sup> Those who reject a necessary self-denial in human striving invariably confound to some degree

the distinction between individuality and personality. For the sake of a so-called “freedom of expansion”<sup>55</sup> which the human self is to enjoy, they cast off moral inhibition. Yet the end result, all too clear in our own self-indulgent day, is often enough a disastrous destruction of authentic personhood.

Instead of self-fulfillment, the man, thus educated, achieves only dispersion and disintegration. The heart becomes atrophied and the sense exacerbated, or else all that is most human in man recoils into a vacuum veiled in frivolity.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, personality is more and more realized, at least in part, by resistance against this tendency toward dispersion. “A person is a centre of liberiy,”<sup>57</sup> and each willed action that overcomes the inclination toward material individuality expresses “a movement towards the supreme center to which personality tends.”<sup>58</sup> Here we are at the heart of an unceasing contest which the human being must confront “at a sorrowful cost and with formidable risks.”<sup>59</sup> In the moral order, the acquisition of authentic personality comes only after a seemingly endless series of challenges that threaten to reduce human self-hood to an enclosed ego blind to its call to self-transcendence. All along, a movement in the direction of development or dispersion is continually at work.

  
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If the development occurs in the direction of material individuality, it will be oriented towards the detestable ego whose law is to grasp or absorb for itself. At the same time personality, as such, will tend to be adulterated and to dissolve. But if the development occurs in the direction of spiritual personality, man will be oriented towards the generous self of the heroes and saints. Thus, man will be truly a person only in so far as the life of the spirit and of liberty reigns over that of the senses and passions.<sup>60</sup>

## FREEDOM AS THE EXPRESSION OF AUTHENTIC PERSONALITY

As might be expected, Maritain's notion of spiritual personality is never far removed from the question of freedom and its acquisition. Personality being an eminently fluid category, the conquest of freedom can be viewed as an end toward which an active movement of a self-aware subject must tend for the realization of spiritual personality. Freely chosen actions are necessary to enhance the dynamism toward self-transcendence required for the development of spiritual personality; and yet contingent choice is rife with uncertainty. Inasmuch as human freedom daily engages contingent choices and the exigencies of the human heart, the possibility of expansion intrinsic to spiritual personality constantly confronts limits. There should be no surprise that human freedom manifests variations in its intensity of expression and commonly displays checkered patterns during the course of a human life. But as a defining principle for the realization of spiritual personality, the conquest of freedom, if fully realized, describes a spiritual state akin to sanctity.<sup>61</sup>

The path to the conquest of freedom is an elusive one because human nature is inclined to mistake the true nature of freedom. The tension between genuine and more dubious expressions of freedom has its source in what Maritain terms contrary aspirations rooted in the human spirit: connatural aspirations that "come from the human person as human, or as constituted in such a species,"<sup>62</sup> and transnatural aspirations which "come from the human person so far as he is a person, that is, so far as he participates in that transcendental perfection which is personality and which is realized in God infinitely better than in us."<sup>63</sup> The struggle for a genuine freedom of the spirit encompasses this tension between the constraints imposed on the human person by his

creaturely constitution and the metaphysical aspiration to authentic spiritual personality. In the type of freedom they pursue, these two aspirations correspond to the compelling energies that distinguish individuality or personality. The connatural aspirations to achieve freedom from material individuality is set in contrast to the transnatural aspirations to realize a freedom for the progressive self-transcendence of spiritual personality.

The connatural aspirations to freedom tend only to a relative or limited freedom, seeking to overcome "the miseries and fatalities of material nature, the servitudes and needs of the body, heredity, ignorance, selfishness, and the savagery of instincts."<sup>64</sup> When such connatural aspirations isolate themselves from the transnatural aspirations of the human person, they impose an undercurrent of resistance which undermines the expansion of personality. A mistaken notion of freedom as release from the restraints of a material nature is then embraced as the goal of true selfhood. To be unfettered by a bodily constitution is a futile desire, and a 'defeat' inevitably occurs, for the physical materiality of human nature subjects the human creature to "laws he has not made, as measures regulating his actions."<sup>65</sup> A false freedom derived from connatural aspirations alone can take hold, elevating mere self-determination to the highest achievement of selfhood, whereby "one is free only if he obeys himself alone."<sup>66</sup> This state of autonomous exercise of freedom amounts to a kind of "divinization of the individual,"<sup>67</sup> which ignores the actual burden of a wounded nature inclined to misuse its capacity of free choice. The concept of selfhood becomes swollen with illusion, unbalanced by undisciplined drives destructive to true human selfhood. All the while, growth in authentic spiritual personality is inhibited.

This manner of autonomous selfhood is in stark contrast to the dynamism of the transnatural aspirations to a spiritual freedom. Maritain's key insight here is to affirm, as a kind of paradox at the core of the conquest of freedom, a 'transcendental element' within the natural desires of the human person. "We cannot rightfully claim their fulfillment, because they are not specific (connatural) aspirations of human nature, but only metaphysical (transnatural) aspirations of a transcendental element within us."<sup>68</sup> The paradox can be grasped only through an appeal to the metaphysical truth of personality as summoned to self-transcendence. The dynamism of a transnatural source of aspiration within the human person seeks to pass beyond the merely human condition

and embrace a freedom characterized by a transcendental movement that ultimately strives toward fulfillment in God.<sup>69</sup> This interior impetus propelling the human person to an ongoing self-transcendence can be blunted and dulled if the human person embraces the inferior aspiration to a purely natural state of freedom from physical constraint. Yet the human person as a spiritual creature, limited and constrained by nature, and even degraded by personal corruption, remains always a being of unbounded depths, open to unrestricted vistas. These apparent oppositions conceal an inviolable truth—the independence of a spiritual being able to choose its own destiny.

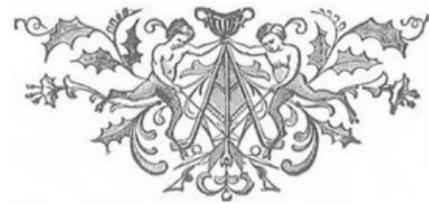
To say that a man is a person is to say that in the depths of his being he is more a whole than a part and more independent than servile. It is to say that he is a minute fragment of matter that is at the same time a universe, a beggar who communicates with absolute being, a mortal flesh whose value is eternal, a bit of straw into which heaven enters. It is this metaphysical mystery that religious thought points to when it says that the person is the image of God.<sup>70</sup>

The attainment of an ever increasing freedom of independence necessarily assumes that personality is expanding through a dynamism of continually passing beyond itself. Transnatural aspirations tend, as such, to “a superhuman freedom, to freedom pure and simple,”<sup>71</sup> but they do so in a necessarily “inefficacious manner and without knowing in what it consists,”<sup>72</sup> because the very freedom aspired to remains proper to the personality of God alone. The divine transcendence assures the ultimate frustration of this metaphysical aspiration, since “freedom as well as personality are perfect only when they are in pure act.”<sup>73</sup> God alone can be identified as the end term toward which transnatural aspirations tend: “He is Freedom of Autonomy in self-subsistence; He is Personality in an absolutely pure state.”<sup>74</sup> Yet human personality aspires precisely to a self-possession of freedom in the image of God. This dynamic drive toward the source of personal freedom becomes the essential expression of authentic selfhood.

‘Let all my activity spring from myself as from its source, and be regulated by me; let me be sufficient unto myself in order to live;’-this is what the person demands, according to an inefficacious metaphysical aspiration. ‘Let the supreme condition of the operation of intelligence and of love in its living flame be the condition of my entire existence!’<sup>75</sup>

The conquest of freedom for the human person can be understood, then, only by applying the analogy of being to the reality of the divine transcendence. While God subsists in freedom in an absolute manner, the human spirit realizes freedom in a relative manner to the degree that it pursues a path of voluntary conformity to laws and directives known to originate in God. In this way, the human spirit, “no matter what may be the state of dependency it is subjected to by the nature of things, makes itself independent by its own operation.... It interiorizes within itself, by knowledge and love, the law which it obeys.”<sup>76</sup> Maritain views the interiorization of a law of freedom whose origin resides in the freedom of God as the primary catalyst to the self-transcendence of authentic spiritual personality.

God is free, from all eternity; more exactly, He is subsisting Freedom. Man is not born free, except in the basic potencies of his being: he becomes free, by warring upon himself and enduring many hardships. Through the work of the spirit and virtue, by exercising his freedom he wins his freedom so that, at long last, a freedom better than he expected is given him. From the beginning to the end, it is truth which liberates him.<sup>77</sup>



Despite the dynamism of a metaphysical aspiration to self-transcendence, it is possible to distort this natural interior movement toward authentic freedom. Maritain speaks here of “the fundamental and absolutely primary problem posed by the natural instinct which urges man to the conquest of freedom.”<sup>78</sup> For Maritain argues that these transnatural aspirations, because they tend to a superhuman freedom found absolutely in God, “torment us without satisfying us,”<sup>79</sup> and can also oppose the personality’s movement to self-transcendence. Without reference to God, without a conscious movement “towards the Transcendent Cause of being,”<sup>80</sup> the natural quality of the transnatural aspirations may lead the soul to seek exclusively in itself an illusory freedom of subtle undertones. In that event, the natural desire for an absolute freedom which subsists in God alone concludes in a false deification of the human person.<sup>81</sup>

Without reference to the divine transcendence,

transnatural aspirations collapse into a “false individualistic conquest of freedom and personality.”<sup>82</sup> They simply pursue a pseudo-independence that regards freedom primarily as liberation from all outside influence. The grave consequence of this over-valuation of subjective freedom is that the autonomous freedom of a creature presumes a godlike quality in its capacity for arbitrary self-determination.<sup>83</sup> A false deification of the human person arises in consequence, due to two primary movements of the human spirit: what Maritain terms “the immanentist conception of conscience,”<sup>84</sup> which exalts the primacy of interior freedom in moral reasoning, and “the idealist conception of knowledge,”<sup>85</sup> which locates the source of truth in subjective selfhood.

These two conceptions, which make knowledge independent of being and conscience independent of law, and which claim for what is in man the kind of independence proper to God, in reality materialize the human soul and plunge it into action *ad extra*, where, seeking its own unique mode of realization, it becomes the slave of time, matter, and the world. In the end, knowledge will be subjugated by a kind of demiurgic imperialism applied to enslave material nature to the lusts of the human being, and conscience will be subjugated by a kind of demonic imperialism directed to its opposing others in order to assert itself, and to its realizing itself by dominating others.<sup>86</sup> Man become the god of this world, will believe that he will find a divine freedom for himself by being independent of God, and finally by completely denying God.<sup>87</sup>

Maritain insists that the authentic notion of deification resides in a paradoxical truth: “the supreme freedom and independence of man are won by the supreme spiritual realization of his dependence.”<sup>88</sup> It is only in a relation of dependency upon divine absolute freedom that the transnatural aspirations of the human person are vivified and begin to participate in the mode of freedom appropriate to God Himself. Spiritual liberation begins with the recognition that the true conquest of freedom takes place only after the human person has been conquered by the freedom of God. The realization of personality becomes a triumph of selfhood consenting to a condition of dependency on a Being distinct from the self. Personality itself undergoes a mysterious transformation into a divinized subject precisely through a progressive surrender to the divine initiative acting from within the human personality.

Men who have become something of God participate in the freedom of Him who cannot be contained by anything. In losing themselves they have won a mysterious and disappropriated personality, which makes them act in virtue of that which they are eternally in the Uncreated Essence. Born of the spirit, they are free like it. To tell the truth, they have won nothing, they have received everything. While they worked and suffered to win freedom, it gave itself to them. The true conquest of supreme and absolute freedom is to be made free, consenting freely to it, by Subsisting Freedom. The true deification of man consists in his opening himself to the gift which the Absolute makes of Himself, and to the descent of divine plenitude into the intelligent creature.... All this is the work of love.<sup>89</sup>

## SANCTITY AND THE ACQUISITION OF AUTHENTIC PERSONALITY

The conquest of freedom is thus a path of transformation which progresses by active response to a dynamic natural inclination in the human person. The premise here is of a higher ordination integral to the natural movement of spiritual personality. Yet the absolute freedom toward which the ‘transcendental element in us’ naturally aspires can be the terminus of a dynamic growth in authentic freedom only if a natural inclination ordinarily submerged beneath conscious awareness is deliberately cultivated. This process demands a strong taste for an ascetical dying to self - “a vitally active and efficacious death, savored, free, which strikes to the heart of our most immanent activity, is accomplished in and by it, grows with it, adheres to it in deepest intimacy.”<sup>90</sup> The leitmotif of personal struggle and toil, active and unabating, carried out over a lifetime, invests the movement of spiritual personality toward self-transcendence with a highly spiritualized quality.<sup>91</sup> In effect, Maritain is proposing, on the basis of metaphysical principles, a training in self-denial as the pathway to the sublime generosity of spiritual personality.<sup>92</sup> “What reveals subjectivity to itself is not . . . the anguish of forced choice. It is self-mastery for the sake of self-giving.”<sup>93</sup>

Metaphysics is joined here to an authentic spirituality of ascetical living, and this is perhaps the fundamental insight of Maritain’s understanding of personality. For the art of asceticism is to prune and to trim,” and it involves the interaction of the appetitive tendencies rooted in individuality and personality in such manner

that “within the intimacy of the human being, the gravity of individuality diminishes and that of true personality and its generosity increases.”<sup>94</sup> If the self-transcendence of spiritual personality can be realized only through a radical dispossession of self, it demands an ascetical dying to all ego-centered aspirations of the human spirit. “This death is called *self-surrender*”<sup>95</sup> and concerns above all “our *ownership of ourselves* in the free use and moral exercise of our activity.”<sup>96</sup> The conclusive realization of authentic spiritual personality becomes the act of self-sacrifice freely chosen out of love.

As owners of ourselves we shall have eclipsed ourselves. Love desires nothing so much as this, for it is the seal of our union with the God we love and of our transformation in Him. Nothing is more desired by our spiritual nature, since in this perfect poverty the soul becomes perfectly free, the more deeply “self-causing” (*causa sui*) because it has for-gone being principal cause. But nothing more completely strips humanity and empties it of self, nothing exacts more radical purification and suffering.<sup>97</sup>

The perfection of freedom toward which the soul is urged thus reflects some degree of union with divine love because the very freedom of God acts in a soul that has lost itself in God.<sup>98</sup> As sanctity accomplishes a true dispossession of self, it divests the will of an inclination to choose without recourse to the divine will. Inasmuch as it is unconstrained by external causes soliciting its capacity for freedom of choice, no longer independent in itself as a natural prerogative, the soul exchanges the narrow autonomy of self-reflexive discernment in the face of concrete choices for the sovereign freedom of a deified submission. “Having renounced his human personality for God, he has in some manner put on the personality of God.”<sup>99</sup> The soul acts now only as God persuades and moves it, and indeed to the degree it is transformed in love, God is first principle of its willed acts.

It is the freedom of God Himself that the perfect spiritual man enjoys, being independent of all external constraint in so far as he depends only on the divine causality, which is extraneous to nothing. He is sufficient unto himself because he has lost himself, and his life is the life of the subsistent Love, living in Him.<sup>100</sup>

One might question whether such an exalted state of freedom implies a dismissal of law and its guidance upon human action. In Maritain’s view, if this path of interior liberty is pursued, the human person discov-

ers a newfound relation to the obligation of law precisely because the law no longer meets resistance in the human spirit. The law itself has become a secondary point of reference, since the impetus of love now directs the will toward union with a Person. In the attractions that move the will, a transformation of response takes place due to a heightened delicacy of moral perception. Every sense of obligation to the strictures of exterior law fades, not because the law no longer obtains, but because obedience to it is not problematic. An inward receptivity to the movement of divine freedom replaces mere external conformity to the commands of moral law. The exquisite sensitivity of a lover seeking to please generously alters the interior ambiance out of which flow concrete choices.<sup>101</sup>

In being dispossessed of himself he has entered into the freedom of autonomy to which we all aspire, from however far it may be. He is no longer under the regime of the law; the law no longer curbs his will. He does what the law prescribes, and incomparably better than those who have not crossed the threshold of the inspired life, but he does it by following the attraction of his love and the very instinct of his will, which has ceased to belong to him, and belongs only to the one he loves. He henceforth does only what he wishes, wishing only what the loved one wishes.<sup>102</sup>

Such descriptions capture well the actual personal dimension of attraction too often overlooked in the theology of grace. The Catholic doctrine of grace infusing human nature with supernatural life is in part an attempt to explain how sanctity perfects the exercise of freedom in the human person. But grace does more than aid human freedom. It permeates the dynamism toward spiritual personality with its own unique mode of self-transcendence, elevating the tenor of personal interior response, for God Himself acts within a human spirit progressively emptied of self-seeking. There is indeed a profound simplicity in this law of spiritual advancement. When the human will offers no obstacle to the action of divine love, a divine possession of the will gradually takes place, even in the most insignificant of actions. Impelled by grace, the human person surrenders the prerogative of autonomous choosing so that a more sublime freedom may animate the soul from within—such that “the initial principle of all our acts, the principal agent, the head of our internal government, must no longer be ourselves but the Spirit of Christ in us.”<sup>103</sup> In its concrete choices, the soul is sensitized to a higher realm, “where

life with the Ultimate End Itself has begun here and now.”<sup>104</sup> The human person is thereby swept up into the dynamism of love toward Another, so that the submission of the human will reflects less a mode of passive compliance than the receptive interiorization of an active, desirous relationship with a Person. Personality can thus achieve its perfection only by relinquishing its natural capacity for self-autonomy in order to incorporate a mode of choosing in response to the directives of Another.<sup>105</sup> The supreme transformation of human personality in this ongoing dynamic process is seen in the figure of the saint, who surrenders his life to a greatness that comes to him as a gift and so reflects the mysterious presence of God in an utterly unrepeatable manner.

He magnifies God because God has become, in him and by him, what God alone can be, and what He wants to be in us: Supreme Liberty moving without obstacle another liberty and taking complete possession of it, making a man will what He wills (for the man no longer wills anything but the good), what they both will, for the two wills are no longer practically distinguishable; God and the Saint have exchanged hearts.<sup>106</sup>

Maritain’s thought on the realization of authentic personality certainly contains a provocative analysis of the nature of freedom when intellect and will have been seized by the experience of divine intimacy proper to the life of sanctity. The infusion of divine life into the soul reshapes the natural orientation of human freedom into a self-renouncing dynamism to the degree that the will surrenders primacy of cause in all its particular choices to the influence of divine grace.<sup>107</sup> Grace animating nature provides the principle of integration for the eventual triumph of spiritual personality over material individuality only in light of an absolutely free self-renunciation as the requisite for advancement in the generosity of true selfhood. “Thus we understand that freedom of choice is not an end in itself, but that one chooses in order, finally, not to have to choose.”<sup>108</sup> Inasmuch as the transformation of human personality into an expression of divine love poses a challenge above all to the exercise of personal freedom, Maritain’s reflection on the cost of achieving the freedom of the saints combines, in an unusual manner, philosophical and spiritual doctrine. “Liberty and spirituality are two strictly correlative terms,”<sup>109</sup> and this observation is at the heart of Maritain’s defense of a radical gift of self to the divine Other.

The summons to sanctity can resolve itself only in a purifying nakedness of the self in its own nothingness before its Creator.

If it is a matter of -transforming the human being into love, bringing him to have the manners of God, one cannot be astonished at the destructions which are entailed.... Everything is surrendered, everything is lost. The creature, made from nothing ... must be reabsorbed into nothingness, know and live it. It dies that it may begin to live in God’s way-it dies again to act in God’s way, to enter into the work of the Saviour.<sup>110</sup>

For Maritain, authentic spiritual personality arrives always to a degree unexpectedly; it is impossible to foresee or plan in any predetermined manner. The only certain beacons of its approach may be the discovery of a more ready promptness to sacrifice one’s immediate desires out of love for another. As Maritain wrote in his commentary on St. John of the Cross: “When I did not seek Him with self-love, He came to me without being sought.”<sup>111</sup> A profound aphorism is contained here to guide the life of prayer and instill the inclination to hidden self-forgetfulness. Despite that desire for self-concealment, however, the human person whose interior appetitive life has become selfless in its seeking is bound to exhibit a remarkable constancy and radiant grace to any outsider probing such a life. Suffused with new impetus when sanctity takes hold of the human personality, freedom under the sway of grace crystallizes like a diamond concentrated at the core of personality, reflecting the naked brilliance of the divine dominion over a human mind and will. “Truly perfect personality is only found in saints,” said Maritain early in his career, “[who] found it without seeking it, because they did not seek it, but God alone.”<sup>112</sup> A sublime detachment from self is thus both the reward and the symptom of this supreme liberty. “Since I have rooted myself in nothing, I find that nothing is lacking to me.”<sup>113</sup> It is finally this phrase that perhaps captures the essential mark of spiritual personality’s mode of self-transcendence. In the last analysis, a self-denying conquest of freedom and the realization of authentic personality are mutually reinforcing processes of spiritual growth. Linked together, they provide testimony that the triumph of the human spirit is most sublimely discovered in the selfless disinterest of saintly personalities.

## NOTES

1A brief phrase of St. Augustine is worth frequent recall in any discussion of the human person: “There is something of man that the very spirit of man that is in him does not know.” *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Bk. X, ch. v, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943), 214.

2 One must see the human being “burdened,” as Hans von Balthasar said, “with an ineradicably paradoxical nature, but not identical with it, not simply an instance of it.” *The von Balthasar Reader*, ed. Medard Kehl and Werner Loser, trans. Robert Daly and Fred Lawrence (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 64.

3 In the words of the Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev, who participated in Jacques and Raissa Maritain’s study circles in the 1930s, one must acknowledge human life as “divided and of double meaning ... at once free and in chains, powerful and weak, uniting in one being glory and worthlessness, the eternal with the corruptible.” *The Meaning of Creative Act*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 60.

4See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 84, a. 7, for the link between a corporeal nature and individuation in matter as the basis for human knowledge of material things: “It belongs to such a nature to exist in an individual, and this cannot be apart from corporeal matter: for instance, it belongs to the nature of a stone to be in an individual stone, and to the nature of a horse to be in an individual horse, and so forth. Wherefore the nature of a stone or any material thing cannot be known completely and truly, except in as much as it is known as existing in the particular.”

5Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers*, trans. unspecified (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), 20. See also George Klubertanz, *The Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), 327: “Matter is in itself exclusive-what is here, cannot be there; if one thing is here, another cannot be simultaneously here; if I completely possess a material thing, you cannot have it. Matter limits, restrains, restricts perfection.”

6Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 37.

7Ibid., 38.

8 Ibid., 35.

9Ibid., 35-36. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Anima*, art. 1, ad 1: “The very same act of being that belongs to the soul is communicated by it to the body, so that the whole composite has one act of being.”

10 *The Person and the Common Good* 36.

11See St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 2: “We must say that the soul has a subsistent act of being in so far as its act of being does not depend upon the body since it is raised above corporeal matter. Nevertheless, the soul receives the body into communion in this act of being, so that there is one act of being for soul and body, which is the act of being of man.”

12 “Because each soul is intended to animate a particular body ... and because, further, each soul has or is a substantial relation to a particular body, it has within its very substance the individual characteristics which differentiate it from every other human soul.” *The Person and the Common Good*, 36.

13Jacques and Raissa Maritain’s godfather Leon Bloy said much the same in more poetic style: “Human personality and individuality written and signed by God on each human countenance.... Every human face is a very special door to Paradise, which cannot possibly be confused with any other, and through which there will never enter but one soul.” Leon Bloy, *The Pilgrim of the Absolute*, ed. Raissa Maritain, trans. John Coleman and Harry Lorin Binsse (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947) 347.

14On the other hand, the angels possess individuality by their essence, which is constituted as unique and individual by the form in which angelic beings exercise their act of existing. “The angels are individual essences.... Pure spirits are, of themselves or by reason of that which constitutes their substantial intelligibility, in the state of individuality.” This is eminently true of God, the *Divine Essence*, who “in Its sovereign unity and simplicity, is supremely individual.” *The Person and the Common Good*, 35.

15 The link between the soul’s individuation, proper to its own act of existing, and the soul’s immortality is noted by Aquinas in *De Anima*, art. 1, ad 2: “The act of existing and individuation of a thing are always found together.... Therefore, although the soul receives its act of existing from God as from an active principle, and exists in the body as in matter, nevertheless, the soul’s act of existing does not cease when the body corrupts, nor does the soul’s individuation cease when the body corrupts, even though it has a relationship to the body.”

16*The Person and the Common Good*, 37. It was Descartes' crucial error, says Maritain, to miss the fact of a single identity that bridges and unites these distinctions. "The soul is not, as Descartes believed, a thing-thought-existing on its own as a complete being, and the body another thing-extension-existing on its own as a complete being. Soul and matter are the two substantial co-principles of the same being, of one and the same reality, called man." *Ibid.*, 36.

17And one should add it has significant spiritual implications for the truth of human personality. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei*, q. 5, a. 10 ad 5. "The soul is more like God when united to the body than when separated from it, because its nature is then more perfect. For a thing is like God forasmuch as it is perfect."

18*The Person and the Common Good* 38.

19 *Ibid.*

20 "In so far as we are individuals we are only a fragment of matter, a part of this universe, distinct, no doubt, but a part, a point of that immense network of forces and influences, physical and cosmic, vegetative and animal, ethnic, atavistic, hereditary, economic and historic, to whose laws we are subject." *Three Reformers*, 20-21.

21The classical definition of person first employed by Boethius, and later accepted by Aquinas and the theological tradition, is the foundation for this link between personhood and a rational nature: "Persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia." *Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis*, c. III; PL, LXIV, 1343c. Note also Klubertanz' definition in *The Philosophy of Human Nature*, 35: "Personality, philosophically considered, is the act of existing exercised by (and proportioned to) an individual possessing a rational or intellectual nature."

22See Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 151-52: "The notion originally conveyed by the Latin verb *subsistere* was 'to halt.' But as a technical term it was used, according to Boethius (*Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis*, c. III; PL, LXIV, 1344B), to translate the Greek *ousiosthai* 'to be endowed with being.' The corresponding Greek noun was *ousiosis*, rendered in Latin by *subsistentia*. Substantial being was meant - 'existing by itself and not in another' (St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, IX, I c)."

23Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 4th ed., trans. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 23. L. Joseph Owens, in *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 153, notes that "St. Thomas understands 'individual substance' to mean an existent or subsistent individual substance: '... not any individual whatsoever in the genus of substance, even in rational nature, has the aspect of person, but only that which exists by itself.'" The internal quotes are from the *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 2, a. 2 ad 3.

24*The Degrees of Knowledge*, 231. Nicholas Berdyaev makes essentially the same point in *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R. M. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), 23: "The secret of the existence of personality lies in its absolute irreplaceability, its happening but once, its uniqueness, its incomparableness."

25Walter Kaspar in *Theology and Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 27, referring to Boethius' notion of person, offers a variation on the discussion in this manner: "What this definition intends to say, therefore, is that what is meant by spirit is present in the person in a completely unique and non-communicable way.... So two things belong to the person. The first is individuality, in the sense of uniqueness; every person is 'an original,' something that exists only once.... But on the other hand the person is also characterized by spirituality, and that means infinity. For it belongs to the nature of the spirit to reach out beyond everything finite to the infinite, to break down its limitations, and to be free."

26 In a succinct definition Maritain directly links the act of subsistence to the presence of the soul in the human being: "Personality is the subsistence of the spiritual soul communicated to the human composite." *The Person and the Common Good*, 41. For more in-depth discussion of Maritain's notions of subsistence and its relation to the person, see Maritain's "On the Notion of Subsistence: Further Elucidations (1954)," Appendix IV, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 430-444. Two articles by Raymond Dennehy are also of interest, "Maritain's Theory of Subsistence: The Basis of His 'Existentialism,'" *The Thomist* 39 (1975), 542-574, and "Understanding Maritain: His Epistemological Doctrine of Judgment and His Metaphysical Doctrine of the Subject," *Notes et Documents* 7(1984), 123-41.

27*The Person and the Common Good*, 40.

28 "Subsistence is for the nature an ontological seal, as it were, of its unity. When this nature is complete (a separated soul is not a person) and above all when it is capable of possessing itself, of taking itself in hand by the intellect and the will, in short, when it belongs to the spiritual order, then the subsistence of such a nature is called personality." *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 232.

29*The Person and the Common Good*, 38.

30 Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems*, trans. Marshall Suther et al. (New York: Scribner's, 1964), 149.

31 *The Person and the Common Good*, 41.

32 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 231.

33 *The Person and the Common Good*, 41. See a similar description of personality's dynamism to expansion in Henri de Lubac's *Catholicism*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1950), 181: "Fundamentally, personality can be imagined a network of concentric shafts; in full development, if a paradox may be used as an expression of its interior paradox, it can be called a centrifugal centre. Thus it can also be said, to exalt its inner richness and to make clear its character as an end, which others must acknowledge, that 'a person is a whole world,' but it must also be added at once that this 'world' presupposes others with which it makes up one world only."

34 "Perhaps the most apposite approach to the philosophical discovery of personality is the study of the relation between personality and love." *The Person and the Common Good*, 38.

35 *Ibid.*, 40.

36 "By the very fact that each of us is a person and expresses himself to himself, each of us requires communications with other and the others in the order of knowledge and love. Personality, of its essence, requires a dialogue in which souls really communicate." *Ibid.*, 41-42.

37 This is particularly true when one considers that personality, though independent and constituted by the act of subsistence, is only relatively independent, in that it stands always before the 'sovereign Personality' of God. "The person is directly related to the absolute. For only in the absolute is it able to enjoy its full sufficiency. Its spiritual homeland is the whole universe of the absolute and of those indefectible goods which are as the pathways to the absolute Whole which transcends the world." *Ibid.*, 42.

38 *Ibid.*, 39.

39 *Ibid.*, 39. See *Gaudium et Spes*, 24: "This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."

40 "We must emphasize that they are not two separate things. There is not in me one reality, called my individual, and another reality, called my person. One and the same reality is, in a certain sense an individual, and, in another sense, a person. Our whole being is an individual by reason of that in us which derives from matter, and a person by reason of that in us which derives from spirit." *The Person and the Common Good*, 43.

41 *Ibid.*, 43.

42 Hans von Balthasar in "On the concept of person," *Communio* 13 (1986), 18-26, at 19, offers a pertinent remark in this regard: "The human being himself stands in the tension between the individual and the person—a tension, as one sees very easily, that cannot be resolved, for no one can be a person except on the basis of individuality. Yet the word individuality, which means the quality of not being broken into parts, always includes an element of singularity that, at least potentially, contains something of personality."

43 "It is in man who is animal and also spirit that the characteristic law of individuation enters most deeply into composition with that of personality and tends to thwart it. For the metaphysical root of personality is the subsistence of Spirit and, in all corporeal beings, the root of individuality lies in Matter. This is the reason why personality in the case of man is precarious and always in peril and must be achieved by a kind of progress." Jacques Maritain, *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. Richard O'Sullivan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 48.

44 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 232.

45 *The Person and the Common Good*, 37.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, 38.

48 *Ibid.*, 38.

49 *Moral Philosophy*, 149.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.* See Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 2nd ed., trans. Edith M. Riley (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1971), 228: "I have in me my nature, my temperament, my character, containing elements some of which I proscribe, some of which I ratify, and some of which I endure. There are the characteristics which I have inherited and those which I have made for myself. There are the things I hide from myself, and the things for

which I yearn without possessing them, but which are a moulding influence because they attract me.... But does fidelity to my being mean that I should give way to all my tendencies and exercise no discrimination in my inward chaos?"

52 *The Person and the Common Good*, 43.

53 *Ibid.*, 37.

54 *Ibid.*, 44.

55 *Ibid.*, 45. Nicholas Berdyaev, in *The Meaning of the Creative Act* 153, calls this "the tragedy of empty freedom."

56 *The Person and the Common Good*, 45.

57 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 231.

58 *The Person and the Common Good*, 44.

59 *Ibid.*, 44.

60 *Ibid.*, 44-45

61 See Jean Moroux, *The Meaning of Man* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 143-44: "The person is subsistent and open: and liberty likewise is a power of autonomy and a power of gift. The person is a reality given and a reality still to be achieved: and liberty likewise is a power of choice, inherent and indestructible, and a power of self-fulfillment, which is something that has to be conquered.... In this sense, the history of the person is the history of his liberty; the problem of personalization is the problem of liberation."

62 Jacques Maritain, "The Conquest of Freedom," in *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, ed. Joseph Evans and Leo Ward (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 16.

63 *Ibid.*

64 Jacques Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, trans. edited by Mortimer Adler (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 135. Berdyaev, in *Slavery and Freedom*, 94, argues that "nature is above all the contradiction of freedom.... Nature, in this sense, is the world ... of alienation, determinability, impersonality."

65 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 134.

66 "The Conquest of Freedom", 19.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 134.

69 Henri de Lubac in *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 196, comments on St. Thomas Aquinas' understanding of this dynamic process whereby personality is authentically realized: "Without failing to acknowledge its nature, [Aquinas] could recognize in the human spirit something else than a totality closed in upon itself or upon this world; something else than a special kind of seeking the way of perfection in accordance with its degree, its order, its natural dignity in the scheme of things; something else than a determined and determinate essence pursuing its stability, development and propagation: an impulse, a desire, by which man is led at least to understand that 'it is no longer a question of fulfilling nature, but of transcending it.'" The enclosed quotation comes from Joseph de Finance, *Etre et agir dans la philosophie de saint Thomas* (Rome: Preses de l'Universite Gregorienne, 1965). De Finance, in *Etre et agir*, 339-40, likewise affirms that "the highest glory of man is to be predisposed to an end which exceeds his own power."

70 "The Conquest of Freedom", 14. H. von Balthasar, in "On the concept of person", 19, emphasizes the need for theological insight to withstand the tension between the opposing tendencies of personality and individuality: "The word person in the sense of a human being, and in contradistinction to mere individuality, receives its special dignity in history when it is illuminated by the unique theological meaning. When this is not the case, however, the human person sinks back into the sphere of mere individuality, in illustration of Maritain's principle."

71 "The Conquest of Freedom", 16.

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 134.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*, 133

76 "The Conquest of Freedom", 17.

77 *Ibid.*, 17-18. The contrast between Maritain's conception of a relative human freedom in relation to God's absolute freedom and freedom as evoked by atheist existentialism is worth noting. See, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre

*Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Haskell, 1948), 28: “There is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing-as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.”

78 “The Conquest of Freedom”, 22.

79 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 134.

80 “The Conquest of Freedom”, 24.

81 In “The Conquest of Freedom”, 24, Maritain views the magnitude of this distortion of the transnatural aspirations in the light of societal repercussions attendant in his own day. “From the moment that absolute freedom, emancipation pure simple, divine independence, were sought in the human itself, or, in other words, from the moment that the transnatural aspirations of the person were lowered into the sphere of connatural aspirations (which thus became perverted and were made infinite), the social was to become divinized, the freedom of persons in society was to be banished, the things of Caesar were to absorb monstrously the things of God, and the pagan empire was to make itself adored.”

82Ibid., 23. On this point Mortimer Adler, in *Freedom* (Albany: Magi, 1968), 22, notes a ‘Prometheanism’ in Rousseau, Hegel, and Kant which espouses self-perfection through one’s own efforts. “Divine grace is therefore not required. ‘Obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty,’ said Rousseau (*Social Contract*, Book I, Ch. VI); and Hegel echoes Rousseau when he says, ‘Only that will which obeys law is free, for it obeys itself alone (*Philosophy of History* [New York, 1944] 39).’ ‘What else can freedom of the will be,’ Kant asks, ‘but autonomy, that is, the property of the will to be a law unto itself?’ Legislating for itself, the rational will obeys itself alone, ‘so that a free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same (*Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* [London, 1948], 65 and 60).”

83 Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Existentialism and Humanism*, 51, proposes such a notion of absolute human freedom: “I declare that freedom, in respect of concrete circumstances, can have no other end and aim but itself; and when once a man has seen that values depend upon himself, in that state of forsakenness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values. That does not mean that he wills it in the abstract: it simply means that the actions of men of good faith have, as their ultimate significance, the quest of freedom itself as such.”

84 “The Conquest of Freedom”, 23.

85 Ibid.

86Writing in 1939, Maritain notes that it is endemic to secular humanistic culture to disdain a dynamism to self-transcendence as an intrinsic exigency of human life. The repercussion is not simply to narrow the horizons of human spirit to purely temporal achievements. A radical incomprehension of the natural aspirations of the human soul can take hold, laying the ground for a destructive plunge into an irrational animal vitality rooted in material individuality. For Maritain the urge toward violent domination that can brand entire nations is symptomatic of a perverse spiritual frustration inflicting a society trapped by a generalized bent toward the enclosed egoism of material individuality. “The irrationalist tidal wave is in reality the tragic catastrophe of rationalist humanism. It reacts against the type of humanism characterized by a reason closed upon itself, but in so doing it subjects man to the influence of forces from below, it shuts off still further communications from above and alienates man from the spirit which liberates; it walls the creature up in the abyss of animal vitality.” *The Twilight of Civilization*, trans. Lionel Landry (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), 9-10.

87Ibid. “After having put aside God in order to become self-sufficient, man loses his soul; he seeks himself in vain, turning the universe upside down in his effort to find himself again. He finds only masks, and, behind those masks, death.” *The Twilight of Civilization*, 6.

88 “The Conquest of Freedom”, 25.

89 Ibid. See Leon Bloy, *The Pilgrim of the Absolute*, 86-87: “Every man who begets a free act projects his personality into the infinite.... The whole of Christian philosophy lies in the unutterable importance of the free act and in the notion of an enveloping and indestructible mutual dependence.”

90 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 332.

91 One might add here an eminently rational quality. Maritain, in *The Twilight of Civilization*, 6, notes the tendency of a purely rationalistic understanding of the human person to reject asceticism as antihuman. “What rational-

ism claims to impose upon us today is an entirely different morality, anti-ascetic, exclusively technological. An appropriate technique should permit us to rationalize human life, i.e., to satisfy our desires with the least possible inconvenience, without any interior reform of ourselves. What such a morality subjects to reason are material forces and agents exterior to man, instruments of human life; it is not man, nor human life as such. It does not free man, it weakens him, it disarms him, it renders him a slave to all the atoms of the universe, and especially to his own misery and egoism.”

92Berdyayev proposes essentially the same link between personality and active struggle in *Slavery and Freedom*, 24: “Personality is activity, opposition, victory over the dragging burden of the world, the triumph of freedom over the world’s slavery. The fear of exertion is harmful to the realization of personality. Personality is effort and conflict, the conquest of self and of the world, victory over slavery, it is emancipation.”

93Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantiere and Gerald Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1947), 82.

94*The Person and the Common Good*, 46. See H. de Lubac in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 228-29: “Some people argue as if every choice were a mutilation, as if every refusal were hypocrisy, and as if every thought with which a certain substratum of nature is not consonant were, in the worst sense of the word, idealism. As if it were always a lie to form wishes, or even thoughts, which go against oneself! As if the darkest substratum of our nature were necessarily its most profound element! As if the dualism of the flesh and the spirit were not the first real datum in us!”

95 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 332.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 333. There is a danger, of course. When asceticism is not linked to the personality’s expression of self-giving, it can be little more than a variation on athletic striving in which the competition is simply one’s own standards of self-denial. Maritain, in *The Person and the Common Good*, 45-46, provides a telling criticism: “The despotic conception of the progress of the human being is no whit better than the anarchistic conception. Its ideal seems to be first, remove the heartpainlessly if possible-then replace it with the heart of an angel. The second is by far the more difficult operation, and succeeds more rarely. Instead of the authentic person, exhibiting Me mysterious visage or me Creator, a mask appears, the austere mask of the Pharisee.”

98See William Rossner, “Love in the Thought of Jacques Maritain,” in *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Achievement*, ed. Joseph Evans (New York: Sliced & Ward, 1963), 239: “Within that invaluable thing which is the person, love works both a death and a resurrection: a death, particularly to one’s own egotistical self, which brings freedom from evil and from the tyranny of creatures; and a resurrection which is freedom for the expansion of the human person, a liberty for the integration and realization of his infinite potentialities.”

99 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 363.

100 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 141.

101 “Moral law is observed better than ever, but it is no longer a yoke which constrains the will, it is a message which informs the intelligence how to please Him Whom one loves. It is in riveting his eyes on the hands of the beloved that the friend does what he wants-what they want.” *Moral Philosophy*, 441.

102 Ibid., 439. See Thomas R. Ulshafer, “Jacques Maritain as a ‘Mixed Deontological Ethicist of Agency,’” *The Modern Schoolman*, 57 (March 1980) 199-207, at 207: “[Maritain] was deeply impressed by the weight of moral obligation and by the fact that duty and self-interest do not always coincide. Accordingly, he placed heroism and self-sacrifice at the center of his ethics: God’s ways are ‘a rebours du sens commun.’”

103 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 332.

104 *Moral Philosophy*, 441.

105 “Freedom of choice tends, as to its end ... to the freedom purely and simply terminal which, in the order of spiritual life, remedies by sanctity the defeat inflicted on the transnatural aspirations of the person by the transcendence of God.” *Scholasticism and Politics*, 141.

106 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 363.

107See John McDermott, “Moral Systems: Maritain and Schuller Compared,” *Divus Thomas* 88 (1985), 3-23, at 7: “These references to the supernatural are not fortuitous. For supernatural grace plays a central role in Maritain’s ethics.”

108 *Scholasticism and Politics*, 141. “Existentially considered, one can therefore say that man is at once a natural

and a supernatural being.” Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 2nd ed., trans. Joseph Evans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1973), 10.

109 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 363. 110 *Ibid.*, 357.

111 *Ibid.*, 364.

112 *Three Reformers*, 25.

113 *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 364.

