Reconceiving Personality Theory from a Catholic Christian Perspective

Paul C. Vitz
The Institute for the Psychological Sciences

Major secular theories of personality, e.g. Freudian, Jungian, Rogerian, are briefly identified and their typically unnoticed and undefended philosophical presuppositions made explicit, e.g. atheism, determinism, moral relativism, subjectivism. These presuppositions are contrasted with Christian presuppositions for understanding the person. Major Catholic/Christian characteristics of the person are then identified and briefly defended, namely: embodiment, including male and female differences; interpersonal relationships throughout the life span; a significant amount of free will; reason, that is, human intelligence; the importance of the virtues. The general relevance of such a theory for understanding mental pathology and finally its theological connections to Trinitarian theology are presented.

In order to reconceive personality theory, we must first understand what the existing secular theories of personality are. Next we compare and contrast the characteristics of these theories with a proposed Catholic/Christian theory of the person and personality, and finally we describe distinctive aspects of such a new theory.

First, what are the major personality theories in psychology, and how do they function in the discipline? Examples of such theories are those developed by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, H. S. Sullivan, the neo-Freudians such as Erik Erikson, and others like Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Gordon Allport. Most of these theories were developed inductively from experience with mentally troubled persons in a psychotherapeutic setting. As such these theories took shape over many years in various publications and were seldom systematized and summarized by their originators. A few, such as those proposed by Maslow and Allport, did focus on normal and positively functioning individuals, but these theories left out pathological aspects of personality. Some theorists focused on the first three years of life, others on the ideal mature adult, still others on the self and self realization as providing the answer to mental problems and purpose of life itself. Only Freud and Erikson provided a theory of personality development, and only Erikson included early adulthood, maturity, and old age. And Erikson left out religious life and other important aspects as well. In short, all these theories are useful, but quite limited interpretations of the person. Although some contradictions and conflicts between different theories remain, many of the basic contributions have been accepted and are now part of how most psychologists and psychotherapists view the person.

Taken together these theories represent what is meant by the psychological understanding of the person for our culture at large—a viewpoint that emerged and became common during the 20th century. This is especially true of the United States, but is now found in many countries. These theories underlie the popular psychology that dominates most discussions about the person today. It is hard to remember the older much simpler understanding of the person that existed in the 19th century and earlier that emphasized the conscious mind, reason, and doing what was morally right.

One issue to address concerning these theories is whether they can be considered scientific. Many psychology courses and textbooks implicitly treat these modern, secular theories as part of traditional natural science. This is, however, a serious mistake. Certain limited aspects of these theories have a genuine scientific basis. For example, anxiety and depression when described as part of a personality theory can often be reliably identified. Even then, such symptoms have many possible causes in addition to what might be postulated by the theory. In any case, by the time one gets to personality concepts such as the Oedipus complex, an animus archetype, or self actualization, traditional science has been left behind. No knowledgeable psychologist today understands Freudian or Jungian theory as based on science or even as likely to become so. These psychological theories of personality are really theoretical interpretations with no reliable methodology for scientific verification. They may contain practical and intuitive truths, but these truths are more like the knowledge found in the work of artists or artisans. Practical knowledge of materials, tools, and techniques is important and is genuine knowledge, but it is not the result of repeated public

experiments with independent and dependent variables, nor is it part of an explicit, coherent, usually quantitative system. In short, psychotherapists using personality theories are operating with what can be called "applied philosophies of life." In this context a Catholic/Christian integrative framework is conceptually appropriate.

Any attempt to present an integrative understanding of the person from a Catholic/Christian perspective must, however, take both the personality theories and the therapists applied knowledge into account. For example, much "outcome research" is being done today. This important research systematically evaluates the effectiveness of different therapeutic procedures and identifies those interventions that are associated with patient improvement. The scientific measurement of positive outcomes justifies some psychotherapeutic procedures and provides some indirect evidence for the guiding theoretical framework. Such studies, however needed and useful, are like correlation studies that show a general association between a set of ideas, assumptions, and procedures and a beneficial outcome.

Different Presuppositions

All theories of personality make a number of different major assumptions about the person. These are needed as foundations to the theoretical system which is then built on them. In most cases, these assumptions are never made explicit, much less defended. The assumptions need to be identified and contrasted with those which underlie a Catholic/Christian representation of the person. As examples, here are some of the underlying concepts most relevant to our topic. (See also Vitz, 1997.)

Atheism vs. Theism

All the major modern theories of personality and counseling are secular and either explicitly or implicitly assume that God does not exist. The major theories, regardless of the personal positions of their founders, are atheistic in the sense that God is omitted from the theory, and religious motivation when it does come up, is usually ignored or sometimes treated as pathological. Gordon Allport's moderately important trait and self theory was open to religious aspects of personality, and he was a believer, but religious concepts were not central to his approach and are not the major ideas for which he is known. The reaction of the typical psychologist to the important paper of Allen Bergin (1980), in which he addressed the absence of religion, is a test case of the neglect of religion, much less God, in mainstream psychology and especially psychological theory.

I claim that the rejection or omission of God, and the omission of religious life, is a central error of any personality theory. Since the Gallup Poll began asking the question in the 1940's, over 90% of Americans have consistently said they believe in God. Many have a religious life that is important to them. Even adult unbelievers were often reared religiously, and this has often affected their personalities (e.g., just ask so-called "recovering Catholics"). The revival of traditional religions and New Age spirituality in the last few decades continues to demonstrate the power and persuasiveness of religious life for Americans. Of course, throughout the world from Russia to India to the Islamic societies, religion is alive and expanding.

In contrast, a Christian interpretation of personality begins by assuming that God exists and that He is a person with whom one is in a relationship. This relationship has psychological consequences, to which we shall return. The assumption of theism is no less rational than the assumption of atheism. After all, atheists cannot prove that God does not exist. One psychological advantage of accepting the existence of God and the validity of most religious life is that one can then treat a religious client both more honestly and with a greater respect. If the therapist is an atheist or a skeptic, the religious life is taken to be an illusion, although most secular psychologists do treat the person with respect. If a therapist decides to steer clear of the client's religious life this ignores much that is psychologically important for the client.

Subjectivity v. Realism

Much secular theory, especially humanistic psychology, is based on the assumption that all we can really know are the states of our own minds. Sometimes these theories also accept the kind of knowledge found in the physical sciences, although that kind of knowledge is normally irrelevant to humanistic psychology, which has ignored even the relevance of human biology for understanding personality. With the exception of Freud's much criticized oedipal theory, even sex differences in personality have been almost completely ignored along with such hereditary factors as temperament.

Closely related to the subjective assumption is the notion that the important thing is to express, understand, and communicate one's own thoughts and feelings, whatever they are; to affirm them, whatever they are; and to be open to the same thing in others. "Truth" is therefore fundamentally psychological, and there are as many "truths" as there are individual psychologies. Our subjective world is the only significant one, and the final court of appeal for something's validity is what we think

— or rather, how we feel — about it. The view that feelings can be transitory, that they can be illusory or even false, is not found in such personality theories. In this psychology, our feelings are always authentic even if they change constantly as the self changes. Any unchanging moral basis for genuine flourishing is ignored. (Some recent psychologies have begun to address this problem directly in their study of the virtues, e.g. positive psychology.)

The objective nature of God as external to us, and of the external world created by Him, is assumed by a Christian personality theory. Although our own particular thoughts and feelings are of legitimate importance, they do not define reality and cannot be given highest priority. Moreover, we must submit not only to God, but to the lawful world that God has created. As noted above, this realism is at odds with the dominant modern philosophies. It is, however, in profound sympathy with the general assumption of realism found throughout science since its origin. Obviously I am not defending logical positivism, which was never very strong among scientists and is no longer much of a force even in philosophy. From a Catholic perspective Aristotelian/Thomist realism is often assumed, as is the case here.

Determinism vs. Freedom

Many modern secular theories of personality — e.g., Freud— explicitly reject human free will; others do so implicitly. Determinism is usually part of a materialist philosophy; but it need not be, since some believe that the mind, though different from body, is nevertheless strictly determined. Although such theories interpret, and consider important, such cognitive and emotional mental states as perceptions, thoughts, memories, and feelings, they generally ignore the will.

But psychologists, and especially psychotherapists, beginning with Freud, have not been consistent determinists. After all, psychotherapy assumes that the client will freely choose psychotherapy and as a consequence of it become less controlled or less bound by unconscious or other psychological forces. Freud inconsistently said that a purpose of psychoanalysis was that "where id was, ego will be." Psychotherapy that does not assume common sense understandings of free will can hardly function.

A Christian perspective does not deny a proper role to causal factors; witness its emphasis on making decisions, such as marriage, free of coercion. However, Christianity does accentuate both human freedom and the will expressing it. The emphasis on voluntary agency entails a strong focus on positive character traits — virtues — that support the will as it chooses a response. Some important secular theories, such as those of Carl Rogers and the existential theorists, affirm human freedom. In doing this, they made an important early anti-modernist statement. But they largely ignored the traditional virtues as traits that support the will.

Relative Morality vs. Moral Standards

Modern secular psychology assumes that values are relative to the individual. Wallach and Wallach (1983) have shown that every prominent modern psychology, from Freud and Jung to cognitive dissonance theory, assumes that the only good is what is good for the individual self. This view can take a variety of forms, ranging from the moral philosophy of ethical egoism to individual relativism of a radical kind. The nature and consequences of these views are rarely acknowledged or defended. Taken together, these moral views have helped greatly to undermine traditional religious teachings. They have also helped to bring about the "individualistic morality" so prevalent today and so frequently bemoaned by social critics (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985). It is worth noting that most relativistic systems of morality are absolutist about something — typically about moral relativity itself, and about those psychological processes that support moral relativism.

The existence of enduring moral principles, revealed by God, is fundamental to Christianity and to Christian personality theory. The two great commandments summarize this: Love God and love others. Love as understood here, i.e. as self giving, is a high value, and is clearly superior to hate. It is taken for granted that there are certain actions we should do, and others we should not do. Christianity also assumes the moral truth and psychological validity of the Ten Commandments.

Within a Catholic framework much morally is clearly spelled out, and it is assumed that this morality is for the benefit and flourishing of the person. Finally, it is understood that some of a person's mental pathology can arise from violating the moral law, which comes from God, and that psychological well-being develops from keeping the moral law.

Here again, some deeply relativistic systems have (paradoxically) "absolute" implications. For example, Rogers assumes that psychological pathologies can rise from disobeying the absolute principle that individuals should create their own values and rules. There is, then, a similarity between a Rogerian and a Christian theory. The difference — and it is major — is that the latter presumes that the law comes from God, not from the self.

Reductionism vs. Constructivism

Modern secular personality theory commonly as-

sumes that so-called "higher" things, especially religious experience and moral ideals, are to be understood as caused by underlying lower phenomena. For example, love is reduced to sexual desire; sexual desire to physiology; spiritual life or artistic ideals are reduced to sublimated sexual impulses (as in Freud); and much of consciousness is assumed to be caused by unconscious forces (again as in Freud or in Jung).

A Christian theory is constructionist. It emphasizes the higher aspects of personality as containing, and often causing or transforming, the lower aspects, and sometimes as being in conflict with them. Thus, my conscious thought causes me to seek what is good or true or beautiful. Searching for and experiencing the self-giving love of God and others is a transcending motive. Constructionist thinking is synthetic, bringing things together in an integrated pattern of coherence, while reductionist thought is analytic — breaking whatever is being studied into parts. Of course, good analysis is an important requirement for any successful integration or construction. However, much modern psychology has only provided the analysis with its reductionist consequences. Integration often results in a hierarchical understanding, whereas the modern mentality is generally anti-hierarchical. One of the few modern constructionist personality theorists is Viktor Frankl (1960, 1963), with his emphasis on the search for higher meaning. Recently however, the work of Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and many others in the positive psychology movement have brought back a higher emphasis with their focus on the virtues and character strengths.

In short, these five pairs of contrasting principles clarify two things: many fundamental assumptions of modern personality theories are not grounded in empirical or scientific evidence, and these assumptions are often inconsistent with a Catholic/Christian interpretation of person and personality.

Different Psychological Characteristics of Personality are Emphasized

Embodiment

Almost no personality theory identifies our body as important in understanding personality. The closest any theory comes to representing embodiment in its theoretical concepts is Freud's distinctive male and female differences expressed in the Oedipus and the Electra complexes. These representations have been seriously critiqued, but at least Freud was willing to address the issue of sex differences in personality. Jung did propose opposite sex archetypes as present in each sex, but the consequence of this was to emphasize the unisex psychology of both men and women. After Freud, no personality theorist seems to have even addressed differences in male and female personality!

The recent findings about the powerful effects of bodily processes on everything from early mother child attachment, to language development, to mirror neurons, to the effects of the body on the content of even abstract and mathematical thinking make the neglect of the body a glaring oversight in all the modern personality theories. No doubt ignoring the body and how through maturation and experience it develops such important but limited capacities as walking, seeing, and hearing, much less language, allowed certain theories of the person to consider the self as autonomous and self created, that is, without regard to bodily limits and the contributions of others to our formation. Given this "oversight," it even seemed possible for some existentialists to conceive that a self could create its own essence after its existence.

As is well developed in other articles in this collection, a Catholic/Christian understanding of the person and personality gives a heavy but appropriate emphasis on both common embodiment and on the complementary nature and equal dignity of male and female.

Relationships

Much secular personality theory has tended to assume that the personality, at least when it is mature and healthy, is an isolated autonomous self. These psychologies, for example those of Rogers, Maslow and many existential psychologists, focus on how the individual becomes independent — how the individual separates from its mother, father, community, religion, and everything else upon which it was previously dependent. Individuation leading to autonomous self fulfillment is seen as the basic goal or purpose of all human life

Since Christianity does not assume that the goal of life is independence, and even sees a dark side to independence in the common pathologies of alienation and loneliness, a Christian personality theory gives a central role to the place of relationship in the formation of personality. The Christian view also sees the positive and often inevitable nature of dependence. For example, babies, children, the disabled, the elderly. The seriously infirmed, even most adults when sick or injured, are all dependent in crucial ways on others for their well being. And all are dependent on God. However, Christianity postulates *interdependence*, and mutual but freely chosen caring for the other as the primary type of adult relationship. Personality is fulfilled in self- giving love and

not in isolation: in ultimate union with God, and in love of other humans.

Interdependence is neither dependency nor independence. It is not dependency, which can be an inappropriate need for the other when it is not freely chosen. Nor is it independence, since in an interdependent relationship, persons choose to relate to another, and to give themselves to each other. As conceived by most modern psychologies, the notion of independence ignores the importance of relationships in bringing the truly mature person into existence.

Will

The will, or human agency, in the past has been given only modest emphasis in psychological theories of the person. Freud at the theoretical level denied the free acting will in personality formation. As noted above, many psychologists have ignored or downplayed the importance of human agency. This is not true of the humanistic and existential psychologists. Nor is it true of relatively recent models of the person proposed by cognitive and behavioral psychologists such as Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck or by the prominent social learning theorist Albert Bandura (1989). The emergence of positive psychology with its rediscovery of the virtues and character strengths as major contributors to personality also bodes well for the importance of free will and agency in secular psychology's new understanding of the person.

The traditional Christian emphasis on the person's freedom to choose the good is well known and as already noted is a central part of any Catholic/Christian model of person and personality.

Reason

From Freud and Jung to Rogers, reason or intellectual cognition, especially in the sense of the search for truth, has been given little emphasis. Of course, Freud did postulate an ego, but it was not master in its own house since it was primarily controlled by unconscious Id and Superego forces. Rogers put the emphasis on getting in touch with feelings. (What are the functions of id, ego, and superego if not a form of reasoning?) The big exceptions are the more recent cognitive and behavioral theories noted above.

However, reason has also long been an important aspect of the person in the Catholic tradition; indeed the Catholic Church borrowed much of its philosophical understanding of reason from the Greek philosophers. The Christian importance given to truth (e.g., as expressed in the words of Christ "I am the way and the truth and the light") is why reason was understood as central to personality from the beginning of the Faith. The gospel writers and St. Paul also spoke frequently of speaking and knowing the truth.

Virtues

Secular theories of personality seldom mentioned the traditional virtues. Instead they focused on what might be called the modern "virtues" of suspicion and doubt, of independence and autonomy, of breaking away from inhibitions and getting in touch with and expressing feelings and behaviors like sexuality. An important exception was Erik Erikson who introduced virtues (or ego strengths) into his eight psychosocial stages of development. Along with some of the concepts of Maslow, Erikson anticipated the present positive psychology movement which has brought virtues back into contemporary psychology (e.g., Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000.)

A Catholic/Christian representation of the person has always given the traditional virtues importance in understanding personality. In a Christian model of personality, the natural virtues such as justice, courage, wisdom, temperance are understood as needed for a naturally flourishing life, but also as the ground for the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. This importance is maintained and given some emphasis in the present framework developed in these chapters.

The Origin of Mental Pathologies

A major theoretical proposition of a Catholic/Christian model of the person is that mental disorders and pathologies can be usefully interpreted as distortions or weaknesses in the above listed five domains of the person. Specifically, understanding a mental disorder can begin by first observing its effect or expression in the *body***.** This obviously allows medical treatments aimed at intervention in the body, including the use of medication and special diets. Being embodied means that all mental activity has a biological base, and thus a first thing to investigate with a patient is their bodily state.

The next important domain to evaluate is the condition of a client's *interpersonal relationships* both past and present. Here, theory and research on early attachment becomes especially relevant. In addition, a person's adult attachments or interpersonal relations need to be evaluated to gain an adequate grasp of the person's mental disorder.

The person's *will* also becomes a focus for evaluating mental state. The self-determining quality of free choice is so central to personality that the strength, the freedom, and the patient's understanding of the will are to be evaluated. In particular, any restriction of will as found in addictive behavior is to

be noted. Weakness of will caused by fear and anxiety is an additional aspect to be identified. In short, how much freedom of will, how much capacity for agency does the person have?

A further dimension to evaluate is the state of the person's *reason***.** The work of cognitive and behavioral therapists (CBT) is quite relevant to this aspect of the person. Does the patient show examples of the types of irrational thinking identified so well by the CBT psychologists? The point is to get a measure of the amount and type of irrational thinking the person exhibits. However, an integrated Catholic approach can also bring into therapy the development of reason, knowledge of truth and goodness not only with respect to the self and others, but also with respect to a general knowledge of God and self-giving love.

An additional characteristic to evaluate is the presence and strength of the major *virtues* in the patient's personality. What virtues seem to be almost absent? What virtues could be strengthened to help overcome the disorder? Disorders can at times be understood as the absence of certain virtues.

A final aspect of the person when evaluating the nature of the disorder is implied by the Catholic assumption of the existence of objective *morality*. Here the Catholic position is that some mental disorders are a consequence of breaking the moral law. These often may be sexual in character, e.g. promiscuity. However, a failure of committed love to a spouse or child, an absence of good works done for others are also moral failures which can have negative mental consequences. The Catholic position is that the relevant morality is spelled out by the Church with respect to issues that might come up with most patients.

Catholic/Christian Contributions to an Integrative and Synthetic Understanding of Person

Relationship and Theology

As many know, the word "person" comes from the Latin word *persona*, which means "mask," as worn in the Roman Theater, and also from the theatrical role that went with the mask. The Latin term translated the Greek word *prosopon*, which had the same meaning and was first used in this sense.

But this etymology of the word "person" is not very important or revealing. It is more important that the concept of a person rose to prominence, as a major philosophical and theological issue, in early Christian thought. Muller and Halder (1969) have gone so far as to claim that the concept of a person was "unknown to ancient pagan philosophy, and first appears as a technical term in early Christian theology" (p. 404). We do not need to agree with this extreme assertion to recognize that Christianity had a seminal place in the development of the concept of the person, and the Christian origins help us understand what a Christian model of the person and personality will entail.

The concept of a person was developed to help formulate the doctrine of the Trinity — God as three persons. This early theological use placed a strong emphasis on dialogue; it was largely through a dialogue of mutual love within the Trinity, that the plurality of persons in God was recognized. Dialog as explicit interpersonal communication was central to God's relationship to Israel and the prophets, and, of course, with Christ Himself. (From the very beginning, the theatrical mask also implied dialog between actor and audience.) Because we are made in the image of a Trinitarian — and thus interpersonal — God, we ourselves are interpersonal by nature and intention. Human beings are called to loving, committed relationships with God and with others, and we find our full personhood in these relationships.

According to the Protestant theologian T. F. Torrance (1983, 1985), the essential feature of the Christian conception of the world, in contrast to the Hellenic, is that it regards the person, and the relations of persons to one another, as the essence of reality, whereas ancient Greek thought conceived of personality, however spiritual, as an accident of the finite — a transitory product of a life which as a whole is impersonal (Torrance, 1985, p. 172). Torrance identifies two basic understandings of God as a person. The first view, which has dominated Western philosophy, comes from Boethius, who defines a person as "an individual substance of a rational nature," thus emphasizing what differentiates one such substance from another. The second understanding derives primarily from the patristic, primarily Greek, period of the church, and also from the twelfth-century French philosopher and theologian, Richard of St. Victor. The Fathers of the church and Richard of St. Victor derive their concept of the person from the idea of the Trinity. Richard defines a person "not in terms of its own independence as self-subsistence, but in terms of its ontic relations to other persons, i.e. by a transcendental relation to what is other than it, and in terms of its own unique incommunicable existence" (1985, p.176). So "a person is what he is only through relations with other persons" (1985, p.176). The Latin West's use of Boethius is an influential continuation of pre-Christian Hellenic tradition, which apparently failed to accept personal relations as part of the structure of reality itself. The early Fathers' view that makes relationship essential to personality is found also in Augustine, but it was largely displaced in the Latin West by the Boethian

stress on the individual.

The Catholic theologian Joseph Ratzinger (1970, 1990; now Pope Benedict XVI) took a position strikingly similar to Torrance. Ratzinger (1970, p. 132) wrote,

> Christian thought discovered the kernel of the concept of person, which describes something other and infinitely more than the mere idea of the "individual." Let us listen once more to St. Augustine: "In God there are no accidents, only substance and relation." Therein lies concealed a revolution in man's view of the world: the relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality. It becomes possible to surmount what we call today "objectifying thought"; a new plane of being comes into view.

According to Ratzinger (1970, 1990) substance and relationship are each jointly necessary, but not individually sufficient, determinants of personality. In today's historical context, however, special emphasis needs to be laid on the place of relationship in personality. Like Torrance, Ratzinger pointed out that Boethius's definition of "person" as an "individual substance of a rational nature" had unfortunate consequences for Western thought. If substance dominates our thinking about persons, we may lose the earlier Christian insight that personality essentially involves relationship.

Finally, in a way similar to both Torrance and Ratzinger, the Eastern Orthodox theologian J. D. Zizioulas (1985) in his book, *Being as Communion,* reiterates the Eastern Church's understanding of the importance of relationship which had never gone into eclipse.

There is an enormous amount of psychological evidence for the importance of relationship in the formation of the person. Relationships are essential for basic human existence and development (e.g., Siegel, 1999). A newborn child who lacks a mothering relationship with another human will die, even if its physical needs are met. A person learns to speak through relationships that begin in the first weeks of life, when the infant first listens to its mother's voice. Language-learning requires relationships, and without language we are hardly human. Developmental psychology has provided evidence that the individual's sense of "I think" and of his own individual thought processes derives developmentally from a more primitive "we think." As Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) said, "An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal process."

Additional Psychological and Theological Characteristics

In light of these considerations, it is clear that from the Christian perspective Carl Rogers's well known book *On Becoming a Person* (1961) is mistitled. His book is about becoming, not a person, but an individual, and in particular, an autonomous, self-actualizing, independent individual. An individual is created by separating from others, by concentrating psychological thought, energy, and emotion on the self, not on God and other people.

Becoming an individual — that is, separating and distancing your self from others — has a logical progression. First, you break the "chains" that linked you to your parents, and then to others, and then to society and culture. Finally, you reject the self itself: that is, you separate consciousness from the illusion of the self. You reject the self and all its desires — and thus the process of separation culminates in an experience of a state of nothingness. Radical autonomy ultimately means separation from everything; it means total or ultra-autonomy, where even the self is gone.

To Summarize:

A Person is created by God in the image of God.

An Individual is created by the self in the image of self.

A Person loves and trusts God, and loves others as self; persons forgive those who have hurt them.

An Individual loves and trusts the self, trusts others, and rejects or ignores God;

Individuals forget hurts, and those who have hurt them.

A Person has the goal of committed relationships with others and union with God.

An Individual has the goal of separating from others, and, in the extreme of separating even from the self.

For a Person, true freedom is choosing complete dependence on God who is free.

For an Individual, true autonomy is choosing complete dependence on the self.

A Person accepts the reality of God, other people, and the physical world.

An Individual rejects everything outside of the self as subjective and a non-reality.

Putting the Individual in Perspective

These contrasts overstate the case in the sense that no individual is apt to take these modern principles to such an extreme. Reality does not let us; and most of us have enough common sense to protect us from taking our theories too seriously. The image

of a person is also idealized. We are all aware how poorly most Christians live up to such ideals. In the everyday world, it can be hard to distinguish who is operating from which of these two theoretically very different models.

The secular emphasis on independence and individuation can be good and historically has brought about major benefits such as the notion of individual rights. Independence from the unexamined views of others is also an important virtue, not just for the secular world but in the Christian world as well. Christian theology emphasizes free will or free choice. God gives us freedom to choose Him or not. Throughout Scripture, this is a central theme. The emphasis on freedom found in the world of the last few centuries can be understood as a basic Christian principle translated into the social and political world where often due to the secular enlightenment it has accomplished much good.

The Actual Process of Becoming a Person: "Personagenesis"

What is the process of becoming a person within such a Catholic/Christian theory of personality? What is "personagenesis," as Connor calls it (1992, p. 47)? Although the following describes a process of becoming a person it is really a process of how *the person who is already present at conception* expresses itself in increasingly complex ways through out a normal life span.

First, a Christian theory does not reject the claim that a person is a substance as represented by embodiment, but gives equal or greater emphasis to the person as relation. In the language of Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II), a person is constructed on the "metaphysical site" of substance, but the process of construction involves the dynamics of relationships (Connor, 1992).

For Wojtyla, the first step in personagenesis "seems to be passivity, receptivity of love from another" (Connor, 1992, p. 45). In the natural world, this is usually the love a newborn receives from its mother and father. In the spiritual realm, which is at the core of personality, it is listening to the call and love of God. Once initiated, the process of becoming a person continues as a "vertical transcendence" in which the person gives "the self to another" (Connor, 1992, p. 47). The process of lovingly giving the self to another both transcends and determines the self in its act of performing service. The giving of the self to another is how the individual self is transcended; it is also how one comes to know both the other and, from the perspective of the other, to know oneself much more "objectively" than one ever can from inside an autonomous self. Thus, one becomes a person or more accurately one fulfills in actuality the person who was there from the beginning.

Wojtyla (1979) noted that free will is at the center of a person's self-gift to another, for while man freely determines his actions, he is "at the same time fully aware" that his actions "in turn determine him; moreover they continue to determine him even when they have passed" (Connor, 1992, p. 48).

When the other person receives one's gift of love and gives him or herself in return, the highest form of intimacy results. Intimacy with God and others thus becomes a major characteristic of a person.

Relationship and Philosophy

Some have interpreted Aquinas as failing to appreciate and recognize the importance of relationships as central to the concept of person (See Clarke, 1993, "Introduction"). Recently, a significant Thomist response to this problem has come from Norris Clarke (1993), who argued that relationship was always implicit to the Thomist understanding of the person as a rational substance. Clarke draws out the Thomist appreciation of relationship and concludes: "All being, therefore, is by its very nature as being, dyadic, with an 'introverted', or *in-itself* dimension, as substance and an 'extroverted', or *towards-others* dimension, as related through actions . . . to be is to be *substance-in-relation*" (Clarke, pp. 15-17).

In conclusion, the preceding Catholic/Christian theory of personality presents in short form a distinctive model which includes some of the assumptions and emphases of existing theories but minus many secular presuppositions, combined with new assumptions and basic aspects of personality. In addition, unlike existing secular theories the present approach has an explicit listing and defense of the assumptions underling the theory.

Paul C. Vitz is a Professor of Psychology at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, VA, and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at New York University. He can be contacted at 1vitz@ipsciences.edu

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