

Personalist Metaphysics: The Creative Integration and Retrieval of Fr. Norris Clarke S.J.

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Independent Study: Philosophical Thought of Norris Clarke, S.J.

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22 February 2012

The primary aim of Father Norris Clarke (d. 2008) was to develop a “creative retrieval and completion” of the metaphysics of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In his essay on “The Integration of Personalism and Thomistic Metaphysics in the Twenty-First Century Thomism,” Clarke claims his work is a further development of the Lublin School of Thomism, as represented by Blessed John Paul II. With contemporary Thomists such as Kenneth Schmitz, Clarke has carried the project beyond the vision of Blessed John Paul II by demonstrating “how a personalist dimension is actually implicit within the very structure and meaning of being itself in a fully developed Thomistic metaphysics.”¹ The thought of Father Norris Clarke represents an authentic development of the Thomistic personalism of Blessed John Paul II. Clarke successfully integrates the insights of modern philosophy with the perennial vision of Saint Thomas. First, I will outline the history and the insights of Thomistic personalism according to the thought of Blessed John Paul II. Second, I will develop Clarke’s understanding of being. Third, I will examine the implications of Clarke’s metaphysics of being for the person in his understanding of self-possession, self-communication, and receptivity. Finally, I will assess Clarke’s metaphysical project in light of Thomistic metaphysics and Thomistic personalism.

Thomistic Personalism

Blessed John Paul II (hereafter as Karol Wojtyla) was primarily focused on anthropology and ethics in philosophy. As a professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin (Poland), Wojtyla was one of the co-founders of a unique school of thought known as “Lublin Thomism,” which integrates the perennial metaphysics of Saint Thomas Aquinas with the insights of modern philosophy. In his own studies, Wojtyla was interested in bringing Thomistic

¹ W. Norris Clarke S.J., “The Integration of Personalism and Thomistic Metaphysics in Twenty-First-Century Thomism,” in *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 227.

thought into dialogue with modern thinkers such as Max Scheler (1874-1927) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Karol Wojtyla has referred to this unique synthesis as “Thomistic Personalism.”² In his short lecture on “Thomistic Personalism,” Wojtyla emphasizes that the human person is “a subsistent subject of existence *and* action.”³ There is always an emphasis for Wojtyla on the unity between metaphysics and ethics (*operari sequitur esse*). In Wojtyla’s words, “the good is that which perfects a being in some respect, that which actualizes a being, that which somehow enhances a being’s existence in keeping with its nature.”⁴ Self-actualization or realization is achieved by the person through his or her growth in responsible freedom, which is aimed towards a life of virtue. While Wojtyla has been described as a phenomenologist or a personalist, he is clearly a Thomist interested in the integration of Thomistic metaphysics with insights garnered from modern philosophy.⁵ What Saint Thomas did

² Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 165-175. According Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good The Person and the Common Good*, Translated by John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 13: “Thomistic personalism stresses the metaphysical distinction between individuality and personality”. Thomas D. Williams has outlined the history of personalism and the main ideas that are characteristic of Thomistic Personalism. See his *Who is My Neighbor?: Personalism and the Foundations of Human Rights* (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 2005), especially 105-145.

³ Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” 167. Emphasis added.

⁴ Wojtyla, “In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics,” in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 49.

⁵ Wojtyla’s philosophical work was enriched by the phenomenological method. As he reflected upon the gift of his priestly ministry, Wojtyla (as Blessed Pope John Paul II) wrote: “My previous Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was enriched by the phenomenological method, and this made it possible for me to undertake a number of creative studies. I am thinking above all of my book *The Acting Person*. In this way I took part in the contemporary movement of philosophical personalism, and my studies were able to bear fruit in my pastoral work” (*Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1996), 93-94). At the same time, the phenomenology (as understood by Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler) has its limitations. According to Wojtyla, the “Christian thinker, especially the theologian, who makes use of phenomenological experience in his work, *cannot* be a Phenomenologist” (Wojtyla, *Scheler*, 196), quoted in Michael Maria Waldstein. *Logos of Nature and the Glory of Gift in John Paul II’s Theology of the Body*. (Unpublished Manuscript, 2011), 402. The development of a philosophy of consciousness detached from real being is ultimately what Wojtyla rejects. Philosophers such as Dietrich von Hildebrand, Edith Stein (Saint Theresa Benedicta of the Cross), and Robert Sokolowski have been described as realist phenomenologists. See Waldstein, *Logos of Nature and Glory of Gift in John Paul II’s Theology of the Body*, 401-403.

not develop was a view of the person that allowed for discussion of the subjective aspects of the human person (i.e. consciousness), whereas modern philosophy allows no room for an objective realist view of the person.⁶ The project of Wojtyla was to develop a synthesis of both the objective view of Saint Thomas and the subjective view of modern philosophy.⁷

Saint Thomas Aquinas clearly articulates that the human person is the highest perfection of all beings in the created order, *perfectissimum ens*. In order to understand the existence of being (*esse*) a human, one must examine the actions (*operari*) of a human person. The human person is revealed in and through his or her actions.⁸ The person would not be capable of acting were it not for his rational nature and free will. For Wojtyla, Saint Thomas can affirm that the human person is objectively the highest perfection among all creatures because of this unity between his rational nature and freedom.⁹ For Wojtyla, action is not only determined by being. Action also reveals the being of the person as a subject of the activity.¹⁰ According to Wojtyla, “Through action, my own *I* is fully manifested for my *I*’s consciousness.”¹¹ Consequently, the

⁶ According to Wojtyla, there is the “very real need for a confrontation of the metaphysical view of the person that we find in St. Thomas and in the traditions of Thomistic philosophy with the comprehensive experience of the human being. Such a confrontation will throw more light on the cognitive sources from which the Angelic Doctor derived his metaphysical view.” Wojtyla, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 195. Wojtyla is clearly calling for a harmony between the objective realist view of Saint Thomas and the subjective view of modern philosophy.

⁷ This type of integration was to be one of the main themes of the Second Vatican Council, has been described by Rocco Buttiglione as the “integration of the philosophy of being [Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics] and the philosophy of consciousness [Personalist ethics] into a complete anthropology of the person,” *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, Translated by Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 182.

⁸ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 224.

⁹ “Thomistic Personalism,” 167.

¹⁰ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 223.

¹¹ “Participation and Alienation,” found in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 198.

person is also formed by his or her actions. Hence, Wojtyla suggests that it is more accurate to adopt the language of *actus personae* over the traditional *actus humanus* as the former emphasizes the formation of person through action.¹² The self-determination of the person presupposes self-consciousness, self-governance, and self-possession according to Wojtyla.

The moral perfection of the person comes from particular actions. Wojtyla explicitly states “moral value determines the fulfillment of actions proper to such actions. In acting, we either fulfill ourselves or do not fulfill ourselves.”¹³ This fulfillment or self-realization for the human person is actualized by reaching the end proper to a human being as a person.¹⁴ In other words, a person does not become good simply through action alone. A person becomes good only when the performed action is morally good.¹⁵ For such an action to be morally good, it is insufficient merely to will such a good, a person “must also will it in a good way.”¹⁶ A good action reflects the fullness of human nature as a thinking and willing being. The person must have knowledge of the good, and he must also freely choose and will the good.

Freedom is one of the main hallmarks of human nature and central to the moral action theory of Karol Wojtyla. Freedom is not an end in itself. According to Wojtyla, freedom is a “means to a greater end” in the estimation of Saint Thomas.¹⁷ Freedom is what differentiates an act of man from a human act or personal act. Freedom presupposes an awareness or consciousness on part of the person who intends the latter type of act. Wojtyla has emphasized

¹² Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 228.

¹³ “The Problem of the Theory of Morality,” in Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*. Trans. Theresa Sandok, OSM. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 149.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 235.

¹⁶ Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” 172.

¹⁷ Ibid.

that the special quality of such free acts are their characteristic self-determination.¹⁸ Freedom is not simply realized by an act of the will on the part of the subject. For Wojtyla to “be free” is “to choose and to decide”.¹⁹ True freedom is fully realized only in willing and choosing a true good, which in turn allows the person to become good.²⁰ Such self-determination also reveals to the person that he must possess and govern himself.²¹ Whereas Saint Thomas provides for an objective description of freedom in relation to the moral act, modern philosophy (particularly personalism) allows for the possibility of explaining the subjectivity of an experience of lived self-consciousness. Thomistic personalism successfully integrates both an objective and realist metaphysics with a subjective understanding of freedom and self-awareness.

Thomistic Personalism maintains a balance between the good of the individual person in relation to the common good. According to Karol Wojtyla, “the individual good of persons should be by nature subordinate to the common good at which the collectivity, or society, aims – but this subordination may under no circumstances exclude and devalue the person themselves.”²² The two extremes that Wojtyla is seeking to avoid are individualism and totalitarianism. The former seeks to place one’s own “individual good above the common good of the collectivity” whereas the latter “may attempt to subordinate persons to itself in such a way that the true good of persons is excluded and they themselves fall prey to the collectivity.”²³

Participation is the means by which the person avoids either extreme. In his work, *The Acting*

¹⁸ See Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 227-232.

¹⁹ Ibid., 234.

²⁰ Ibid., 234-5.

²¹ Wojtyla, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” 192.

²² Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” 174.

²³ Ibid.

Person, Wojtyla defines participation as a “property by virtue of which human beings tend (also) toward self-fulfillment and fulfill themselves by acting and existing together with others.”²⁴ The true common good orients the individual “I” into an interpersonal relationship with a “thou”. Through the common good, according to Wojtyla, the “human *I* more fully and more profoundly discovers itself precisely in a human *we*.”²⁵ By his very nature, the human person is made for an authentic communion of persons (*communio personarum*).

Karol Wojtyla outlines the anthropology and ethics of a Thomistic personalism, whereas Norris Clarke clearly develops a creative integration and completion of the metaphysics for such a personalism. The Thomistic personalism of Wojtyla is further strengthened by the philosophical underpinning of Clarke’s metaphysics. Both reach similar conclusions concerning the person’s fulfillment in communion. Clarke differs from Wojtyla in that he argues, as already stated above, that a Personalist understanding is already implicit in the metaphysics of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Wojtyla leaves traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics intact while attempting to integrate the insights of modern philosophy into his anthropology and ethics. Clarke’s understanding of the person is consistent with his creative retrieval and completion of Thomistic metaphysics. The objection that some Thomists might raise would question whether or not Clarke’s metaphysics is consistent with the perennial thought of Saint Thomas.

A Dynamic Creative Being

The unique contribution of Norris Clarke is that he wants to strengthen and deepen Thomistic personalism by drawing out the implications present in Thomistic metaphysics. The philosophical project of Clarke complements the Thomistic Personalism of Karol Wojtyla.

²⁴ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 254.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

Wojtyla joined a phenomenology of Christian Personalism with traditional Thomistic metaphysics. On the other hand, Clarke argues that a personalization of being is already present in Thomistic metaphysics. Clarke's metaphysical view draws upon the adage *agere sequitur esse* ("action follows being"). For Saint Thomas Aquinas, the first actuality (or first act) is existence of a real being, whereas the second actuality (or second act) is the actions (the actualization of the potencies) which flow from the first act. Clarke emphasizes that being is not static, but dynamically oriented towards creative action. For Clarke "To be" and "to be active" are inseparable.²⁶

Norris Clarke clearly states that "A non-acting, non-communicating being is for all practical purposes *equivalent* to no being at all. To be *real* is to *make a difference*."²⁷ Clarke cites various texts from Saint Thomas to support the idea that "*to be is to be generous*"²⁸ Being is revealed in and through action. For the human person, freely chosen actions, reveal who he or she is to others. This dynamic conception of being makes communication and community intelligible. Hence "*to be real is to be related*."²⁹ This leads Clarke to his conclusion that the whole order of being itself must be "*dyadic, a giving-receiving whole*."³⁰ Clarke comes to such a proposition because the revelation of the Trinity demonstrates that the inner life of God, as a Trinity of Persons, is a dynamic process of self-communicating or self-giving love.³¹ God's nature as self-communicative love is naturally reflected in the whole hierarchy of being as a

²⁶ W. Norris Clarke S.J., *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 13.

²⁷ W. Norris Clarke S.J., *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 32.

²⁸ Clarke, *The One and the Many*, 33. The various texts cited by Norris Clarke include: SCG I, 43; SCG II, 7.; *De Potentia* q. 2, a. 2; SCG III, 69; *I Sent.* d. 4, q. 4, a. 4; *De Potentia* q. 2, a. 2; and SCG III, 113.

²⁹ Clarke, "Personalism and Thomistic Metaphysics," 228.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 11.

result of the gift of creation itself. Relationality is consequently a “primordial dimension of every real being, inseparable from its substantiality”.³²

Norris Clarke brings this active sense of being to its logical conclusion: “*To be* fully is to be *substance-in-relation*.”³³ If action truly follows upon being, then it seems natural to suggest as Clarke does that a self-communicative being implies relationality. Clarke emphatically states that the very meaning of relation “implies that it is *between* two terms that it is connection, between two *relateds*. A relation cannot relate nothing.”³⁴ Substance by its very nature is relational in Clarke’s view. To be able to relate presupposes that a substance exists first in-itself.³⁵ Consequently, the fullest expression of being is personal. Only persons are able to fully and consciously give themselves and receive others. Clarke, along with many thinkers that embrace Personalist thought, emphasize that human persons are subsistent relations. This anthropology is arguably embraced by the Second Vatican Council in a statement from *Gaudium et Spes*, which has served as a leitmotiv for Blessed Pope John Paul II, “man can only discover himself through a sincere gift of self” (no. 24).³⁶ Later in this paper, this conciliar statement will be examined following the outline of Thomistic Personalism espoused by Wojtyla and Clarke.

³² Clarke, *Person and Being*, 14.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*,16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*,16-18.

³⁶ According to Pascal Ide, this particular passage from *Gaudium et Spes* no. 24 plays a central role in Pope John Paul II’s comprehensive theology of gift found throughout all of his writings. Pascal Ide, “Une theologie du don: Les occurrences de *Gaudium et spes*, n. 24, § 3 chez Jean-Paul II,” *Anthropotes* 17 (2001), 149-78; 313-44. Cf. Michael Waldstein’s introduction found in John Paul II, trans. Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline books & Media, 2006), 23 and 91.

Person: Subsistent and Relational

In the writings of Saint Thomas, it is clear that the human person is “that which is most perfect in all nature.”³⁷ The “most worthy, most exalted (*dignissimum*)” dignity of the human person is inherent in his very nature.³⁸ Is this perfection present simply in the ontological subsistence of the person or is it to be fully realized only in relation to other persons? The emphasis on the fulfillment of being in action by Norris Clarke leads to emphasis on the latter. All discussions on the human person begin with the fundamental definition of Boethius. Boethius defined “person” as “an individual substance of a rational nature.”³⁹ The metaphysics of Clarke, following Saint Thomas, is rooted in this Boethian foundation. According to Clarke, the person is fully a person in both subsistence and relationality. This is consistent with his dyadic conception of being (mentioned above) itself: “*To be* is to be substance-in-relation.”⁴⁰

In his subsistence, the person is subjectively aware (or self-conscious) of his or her existence. To be aware is not only to be conscious of one’s existence as an object, but specifically self-awareness is the subjective self-conscious of one’s self as “I” which is the unique characteristic of a personal being.⁴¹ Self-awareness serves as one of the primary attributes

³⁷ STh. I, q. 29, a. 1.

³⁸ In the words of Saint Thomas: “*Person* signifies a certain nature (*quaedam natura*) with a certain mode of existing (*quidam modus existendi*). Now, the nature which *person* includes in its signification is the most worthy (*dinissima*) of all natures, namely, the intellectual nature according to its genus; and likewise the mode of existing signified by person is the most worthy (*dignissimum*) in creatures should be attributed to God, the name *person* can fittingly be attributed to God, like other names which are said of God in a proper way” (*De potentia*, q. 9, a. 3, corp.). cf. Gilles Emery, O.P., “The Dignity of Being a Substance: Person, Subsistence, and Nature,” *Nova et Vetera*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2011): 991.

³⁹ Cf. Clarke, *Person and Being*, 29.

⁴⁰ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 42. Emphasis added. According to Clarke, “a personalized being must obey the basic dyadic ontological structure of all being, that is, *presence in itself* [substance] and *presence to others* [relation]” (*Person and Being*, 71).

⁴¹ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 44.

of the person.⁴² Norris Clarke argues that “Being is not just *presence*, but *active* presence, tending by nature to pour over into active self-manifestation and self-communication to others.”⁴³ To be a person is to be subsistent in one’s self, and also oriented towards others in the various levels of relationship (i.e. family, friendship, society, etc.). Clarke emphasizes that the human person has an intrinsic “self-communicating and relational notion of being.”⁴⁴ Clarke opines that “we must first be touched by another before we can wake up to ourselves.”⁴⁵ A person only becomes aware of his or her identity as an “I” fully in relation to a “Thou”. Self-possession implies an orientation towards self-donation or self-gift according to Clarke’s metaphysics, which he consistently argues is implicit in the thought of Saint Thomas. The corresponding act to the dynamic of giving is receptivity, which is present in the person in a unique way.

For Norris Clarke, another aspect of being a person is receptivity, which is a natural consequence of man’s giving nature. For Clarke, “If there is to be effective self-communication of any being, there must be a corresponding receptivity for it somewhere in being, otherwise the process would be aborted from the start.”⁴⁶ The manifestation of receptivity is expressed in the mutual love shared by persons (i.e. friendship).⁴⁷ Receptivity is the natural partner of giving. In giving the love of pure friendship to another, only in the mutual reception of such a gift does the

⁴² Clarke, “Person, Being, and St. Thomas,” *Communio* 19 (Winter 1992): 609.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 609.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 611.

⁴⁵ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

formation of friendship take place.⁴⁸ The logical conclusion for Clarke is that the highest realization of being is actualized in communion.⁴⁹ Communion consists of the unity of the two poles of self-communication or self-gift and receptivity. Clarke attributes this insight to the work of the Swiss theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Balthasar argued that the supreme paradigm for being itself is found in the Christian revelation of God as a Trinity of Persons.⁵⁰ The Divine Persons of the Trinity are equally God in nature. Following the insight of Balthasar, according to Gerald O’Hanlon, Clarke affirms that the “Father is subsistent Self-Communication, while the Son is subsistent Receptivity.”⁵¹ A full expression of what it means to be a person is found only in communion in a way analogous to the dynamic of self-communication or self-giving and receptivity present within the expression of mutual Love, which is the Trinity. This insight is similar to a point argued by Blessed John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body*:

[M]an became the image of God not only through his humanity, but also through the communion of persons (*communio personarum*), which man and woman form from the very beginning. The function of the image is that of mirroring the one who is the model [God as Trinity], of reproducing its own prototype [the unity of man and woman as a *communio personarum*]. Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.⁵²

For Clarke, “self-possession must keep pace with self-expression.”⁵³ Because the human person is created in the image of God, by his very nature, self-giving is a natural part and expression of

⁴⁸ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 85.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gerard O’Hanlon, “Does God change? Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Immutability of God,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53 (1987): 161-83. O’Hanlon, *the Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Baltasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Cf. Clarke, *Person and Being*, 86.

⁵¹ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 87.

⁵² Blessed Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 9:3.

⁵³ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 93.

his very being. Both Clarke and Wojtla conclude that the individual person finds his or her fulfillment in communion as the ultimate fruit of self-giving love.

Conclusion: A creative retrieval or an innovation?

Karol Wojtyla was interested in integrating the insights of Personalism and the phenomenological method with the realist view of Thomistic anthropology and ethics. In 1983, Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II gave an address to the International Theological Commission in which he identified, “the *need for theological renewal based on the personalistic nature of man*: that is, a real defense of the fundamental rights which are the consequence of that dignity.”⁵⁴

Personalism was an integral part of the theological and philosophical reform that was advocated by thinkers such as Wojtyla. Norris Clarke was also interested in this reform by arguing that the seeds of Personalistic thought were already implicit in the thought of Saint Thomas. As one considers their respective works together, it should be natural to ask whether Clarke’s work in Thomistic metaphysics can serve as an adequate underpinning for Thomistic Personalism.

One of the major reservations that a person might have towards the work of Norris Clarke concerns the question of the ontology of the person. Clarke’s emphasis on the relational nature of being and the human person seems to imply that subsistence is inadequate. A further distinction should be made to clarify the subsistent nature of the person in relation to the notion of the person’s self-communicative or self-giving nature. The human person has his or her dignity as a subsistent being of a rational nature. In the metaphysical order per the thought of

⁵⁴ Blessed John Paul II, “Address to the International Theological Commission,” December 5, 1983, in *Human rights in the Teaching of the Church: From John XXIII to John Paul II*, ed. George Filibeck (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), 40. Cf. Williams, *Who is My Neighbor?: Personalism and the Foundations of Human Rights*, 117.

Aristotle, the person is fulfilled by the first act of existence. For the human person, relationality is the actualization of the potential of the second act. Teleological fulfillment of the human person is realized in second acts, such as relations with others.⁵⁵ What is not made clear in the work of Clarke is the concept that relationality is rooted in the rational nature of human persons. The human person subsists as a substantial unity composed of a rational soul and a body. Gilles Emery states the “substantial unity of *this* body and *this* soul constitutes one human person.”⁵⁶ Clarke explicitly tries to argue that relations constitute the human person. In Clarke’s words: “Relationality is, therefore, in principle for St. Thomas himself, an equally primordial dimension of being as substantiality.”⁵⁷ What is true of the Divine Persons of the Trinity is not necessarily true of human persons. In this respect, Clarke’s work needs further clarity to work out this analogy of relationality between the processions of the Divine Persons within the Trinity and the communion shared by human persons.

Norris Clarke rightfully states that relations of procession (filiation and spiration) are “constitutive of the very nature of the divine substance.”⁵⁸ Therefore, Clarke concludes that all beings reflect relationality in addition to substantiality. Clarke is trying to strike a balance between the extreme views of isolated, static, or separate substance of Descartes, Locke, and Hume on the one hand and the reduction of the person to a relation or set of relations.⁵⁹ The end result for Clarke has been stated already: “to be is to be *substance-in-relation*.” The quality of

⁵⁵ Joseph White O.P., *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Natural Theology*, (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009), 149.

⁵⁶ Emery, “The Dignity of Being a Substance: Person, Subsistence, and Nature, 998. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁷ Clarke, *Person and Being*, 15.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 18-19.

subsistent relations can only be fully affirmed of the Divine Persons of the Trinity. In addressing the mystery of the Trinity, Joseph then-Cardinal Ratzinger has firmly stated: “[Divine] Person is the pure relation of being related, nothing else. Relationship is not something extra added to the person, as it is with us [in our nature as human persons]; it only exists at all as relatedness.”⁶⁰ Consequently, relationality is an accidental quality of human persons. In anticipation of such an objection, Clarke affirms: “The relations to this or that particular substance are indeed accidental. But the property of being related to others in the community of real existents is a necessary property following necessarily from the intrinsic natural dynamism of every real being to actively communicate itself to others.”⁶¹ For Clarke, *esse* is a dynamic act from which self-giving communication follows. At the same time, Clarke is careful to outline that this quality of relationality is accidental. “If these real relations were identical with the substance, they would have to be always, immutably, and necessarily present wherever the substance itself were. But this cannot be true in a contingent, changing world.”⁶² Only with God, can actions be identical with His essence.

For Norris Clarke, the highest mode of real being is to be found in the person who is called to enter into communion with other people. This emphasis on persons-in-communion is found in the text of the Second Vatican Council quoted above (*Gaudium et Spes* no. 24) and the notion of the *communio personarum* present throughout the writings of Wojtyla. The conclusions reached by Norris Clarke are not accessible through mere natural theology or philosophy. In other words, Clarke has to rely upon divine revelation to reach his ultimate

⁶⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, Translated by J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 183.

⁶¹ Clarke, “Personalism and Thomistic Metaphysics,” 228.

⁶² Clarke, “Response to David Schindler’s Comments,” *Communio* 20 (Fall 1993): 593.

conclusions concerning being and the person.⁶³ Arguably, the key metaphysical insight which Clarke makes explicit in his creative completion is his emphasis on the subsistent person finding fulfillment in relating to others. The individual subsistent rational substance, the human person, has an intellect and will. What Clarke emphasizes is that the two powers are directed to another person. In other words, the person must be called to know and love *someone else*. The *I*, in accordance with his very nature, is made for a *we* relationship.

Thomistic Personalism finds complementary thinkers in Karol Wojtyla and Norris Clarke. Both Wojtyla and Clarke reach the same conclusions regarding the orientation of the person towards communion. The arguments presented by Clarke for an implicit personalization of being are simply not present in a purely Aristotelian approach to St. Thomas. While the texts from St. Thomas cited by Clarke certainly point towards a dynamic conception of being, only the fullness of revelation in Trinitarian theology can make explicit what Clarke has argued is implicit in Thomistic metaphysics. Nevertheless, both thinkers approach traditional questions raised by St. Thomas that engage modern thought without completely abandoning the perennial vision of the common doctor. The work of Father Norris Clarke is a “creative completion” of both St. Thomas Aquinas and Karol Wojtyla. While the person is made in the image of God through his subsistent rational nature, he achieves likeness to God through a self-giving union of love with another person. Hence it is not good for man to be alone (cf. Genesis 2:18).

⁶³ See Clarke, “Personalism and Thomistic Metaphysics, 230-231.

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