

Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'

by Robert Spaeman

Notes by David Alexander

Introduction

"Persons" have a special position in existence as they do not compose a natural kind. Attempts to identify the attributes which enable us to apply the term "person" have taken two routes. On the one hand, there are those who sought precision about what it means to be rational, assuming Boethius's definition of the person as "the individual substance of rational nature." Some went too broad, associating it with subjectivity or consciousness, too broad because even birds share some kind of subjective inwardness. Some have sought to distinguish human, personal inwardness from other inwardness. The other route to understanding persons has focused on the social character of personal existence. The state of personal existence depends on a communicative event.

Up until recently, the concept of person has served as a concept with evaluative connotations. After Kant, it became the central plank in the foundation of human rights. But now its role has been reversed so that it plays a key role in demolishing the idea that human beings as human beings have some kind of rights before other human beings. It is argued that only human beings have rights, and only through being persons, but not all human beings are persons. Incredulity at the moral cretinism, while appropriate enough as a first response, needs to be supplemented in the long run.

To assert that all human beings are persons makes some prior assumptions which some are not willing to make. One such assumption is that, although persons relate to one another *a priori* through mutual recognition, recognition is not an antecedent condition for being a person but a response to a prior claim. Demonstration of attributes is not a prerequisite for recognition as persons, but merely membership of the species. Persons are "individuals" in an unparalleled sense and it is because of this that we do not recognize persons by their individual demonstration of specific features. This book is prompted by a challenge to tradition, but to not a defense of tradition as tradition developed its own destruction. Life is not an attribute but "the being of living things." Persons are living things that are grouped not in species or genus but in community.

Chapter 1: Why We Speak of Persons

The term "person" is often used in a way that is the opposite of emphatic, in contrast to the forceful and solemn "human being." On the other hand, to ascribe "personal existence" is to recognize that someone can claim a certain kind of treatment from anyone who encounters him. There is an old, faded use of person in the term "dramatic personae," but this is not the modern meaning of person. The discussion in this book will mainly have to do with the sense of the word "person" as a predicate, when we say someone is a person.

In order to know if someone is a person, we must first know they are a human being. However, to say someone is a person does not describe some further property as there is no "property" of personal existence. On the basis of some identifiable properties, we are licensed to say of some that they are persons. What does the predication of personal existence add? By paying attention to the usage of the word we may deduce that a person is someone who is what he is in a different way from that in which other things, or animals, are what they are.

"Being a man" uses the term "Man" as a classificatory term that excludes some. It gives primary *a limine* specification to anyone we propose to say anything about. We do not think of a man's relation to manhood in the same way that we think of a dog's to dogginess. We think of only human beings in terms of a mental self-differentiation. "Human" is used in normative terms except when we say "to err is human," but that does not extend to acts of malice, even though these are characteristic of human beings. We call such "inhuman."

Medieval philosophy treated "man" as one among the animal species but for us, "animal" carries the connotation of "non-human," so we prefer "living creature" when we want a category including both man and animals.

"I" is ostensive as it exemplifies the thing or quality being described. Unlike other pronouns, few can doubt "I" refers to something real. (What about "I robot"?) I does not refer to the "ego" but the whole person. The universally attested idea of the metamorphosis points to this recognition that the human being is not what he is in the same way as everything else we encounter is what it is. The stories of metamorphoses are not stories of "substantial change", the coming to be of a new thing out of the material of a prior thing. The distinctive feature of the stories is that the subject himself, not only a material substrate, survives the transformation. Only human beings undergo metamorphoses with their identities intact. Abstract individual identity is a feature of dreams too. These are cases of abstracting individual identity from qualitative similarities. The same conception is at work in ideas of reincarnation.

Any entity in nature displays what it is by what it does, by its manner of expressing itself. Even plants and animals display "deviation from type." The ideas that are present to animals are food, mate, prey, peril. We as observers may see these drives as a system explained by the theory of evolution. Human beings, as living creatures, participate in the inner difference of all higher life-forms, the difference of living and living well. Human beings are apparently unique in being conscious of this difference.

No one is simply and solely what he is. Self-acceptance is a process that presumes non-identity with self, and must be seen as the conscious appropriation of the non-identical, as integration.

There are "secondary volitions," the phenomenon of taking a position on one's own desires and acts of will. We can desire to have, or not have, certain desires. We evaluate not only the objects of our desires, but the desires themselves. When we succeed in bringing our desires into line with our evaluation, we feel free. When we fail, we feel impotent. In secondary volitions, we treat ourselves as we would another person whose behavior we seek to control. However, we run up against a boundary: it lies beyond our control to alter the fundamental direction in which we influence ourselves.

To speak of ourselves in the third person is to step out of the central position that all living things in nature occupy in relation to their environments, and to see oneself with other people's eyes as something "out there," from a point of view from outside one's organic center. This self-objectification makes both speech and morality possible. Speech anticipates the standpoint of the one who is to hear what is spoken. Rather than merely "expressing ourselves," we must submit to a prescribed system of rules that makes understanding possible. The system of speech itself prompts the emergence of self-difference. Our experience of the "view from nowhere" makes it impossible to view ourselves as mere organic systems, where every encounter has meaning only in relation to the system's requirements. Speech is the communicative event in which we realize ourselves as what we are, as persons.

Chapter 2: Persons

We looked at reasons initially asking why human beings are classified not only biologically but in a different kind of class altogether, the class of 'persons.' But is it correct to that say persons constitute a class? There are two reasons which make it awkward to speak of persons as a class. First, when we speak of persons, we do not mean that they belong to a certain class, or are instances of a generic category. While persons always belong to some natural species, they do not belong to it in the same way that other individual organisms belong to their species. The second reason that makes describing persons as a class is ontologically awkward because when we apply the term "persons" to an individual, we accord them the special status of inviolability. If we do not intend to respect human beings as persons, we either deny that they are persons, or we consider the designation vacuous.

To call someone a person is, for us, to acknowledge definite obligations to those we so designate. The decision as to who is a person depends on certain describable features but personhood is not itself a specifying feature but a status. Since "person" is not a descriptive term, it cannot be defined by reference to simple qualities, nor by telling a story to fix its reference. The use of the term has a normative implication because the designation of someone as a person makes a demand. How does this demand arise?

Without Christian theology, we would have no name for what we now call "persons," and since persons do not simply occur in nature, that means we would have been without them altogether. Plato never once conceived the thought that we have when we use the term. Human autonomy is the concern of Plato and Plato's Socrates. For Plato, the wise man is free and he does what he wills because he himself is the ground of his actions. What does it mean to say "he himself"? This question leads to the person but it is clear that this precise thought was never entertained by Plato. Autonomy is simply reason's dominion. But reason in Plato's conception is a common possession, the organ of truth that all share. The particular individual is of no significance. A regime of philosophers is a regime not of men but of the idea.

II

One thing which never enters Plato's mind is that someone who 'achieves the Universal' by breaking out of particularity attains a higher level of being than the Universal itself. Hegel coined the term "the Individual" for one who, having taken the Universal into himself and realized it, attains a standing beyond the opposition of particular and universal. Individuals are not parts of a larger whole, but totalities who are the Universal. Plato saw reason as the medium of the universal, and where reason rules, man is free. Plato would not accept the answer that the reason so many people are not ruled by reason is that they refuse reason. He held that if people have refused the reasonable, it was only because they did not know it. Why they did not know it reaches the end of Plato's thought where ancient philosophy begins to go around in circles.

The New Testament answers the question as follows: they do not know it because they refuse to know it. They 'loved darkness rather than light.' In the Gospel of John, the meaning of sin is not believing in Christ (See John 15:22;16:9). This is very un-Socratic, and it is the source of the discovery of the person. Following this thought, what determines if the absolute claim of the rational good prevails lies in "the heart." The heart is always in control, but it makes its own decision about who or what it will accept direction from. The heart goes deeper than every specific quality. In the New Testament, evil is the basis of ignorance, whereas with Plato's Socrates, ignorance is the basis of evil. That explains the hard words of Jesus against his opponents (See for example Matthew 15:1-20) and the friendly, ironic

way that Socrates speaks of this. In the New Testament, the decision between good and evil is not a decision about an idea but about a person, who is the ultimate revelation of truth. Knowledge of the truth is thought of as a personal act of belief. Truth itself appears, not as the universal that is greater than any individual, but as the unique countenance of another individual person.

III

The Latin word *persona* was rooted, like the Greek *prosopon*, in the world of theatre. It meant the 'part' as distinct from the 'player.' Later, the word was extended to mean a role in society, the social position one held. The modern usage of person treats it as what lays behind the performance of a role but in contrast, for the ancients, the person was the role itself and what lay behind it was 'nature.' Although a secondary identity, the role that one performs is something they are responsible for. Detectable in the modern conception of an 'official' is the ancient idea of the person, in which one's duties were determined by one's roles. When the philologists of Alexandria distinguished the three possible positions in the speech-act as the 'first', 'second', and 'third person', they based themselves on the concept of the person as a role.

Persona as used in the Roman jurisprudence of the imperial age is the first time we find *persona* as equivalent to the human agent. It distinguished the status of the freeman, or that of a human agent as opposed to all other entities.

All the ancient applications of the word have in common a view of human beings not as instances of a kind or examples of a general concept, but bearers of a social role, or as occupants of a legal status. In Stoicism, the subject of a human nature is acted out like a part, or, rather, there is no subject at all, for it all came down to a matter of destiny whether a performance succeeded or failed.

IV

In order to understand how the term 'person' came to mean a subject relating to its nature like an actor to a role, we must examine the way the term was used in speculative Christian doctrine after the first centuries of Christ. There were two occasions in which the term proved serviceable in broad controversies. The first was in the endeavor to reconcile Jewish monotheism to Jesus's description of himself as 'one' with the Father. John's Gospel speaks of the Logos become flesh in Jesus simply as 'God.' On the other hand, Jesus prays to God as his Father, ruling out that Jesus was simply an earthly appearance of God the Father. The 'Pneuma' or 'Spirit' of God is also acknowledged as a reality that is distinct from the Father and Son. In order to conceive of the unity of God consistently with the distinction of Father, Son, and Pneuma, Christian thinkers such as Origen and the Cappadocians were influenced by Plotinus's theory of the primordial One and its emanations, but they also crucially modified it. According to Plotinus, from the One is derived Intelligence, or *Nous*; from *Nous* is derived the World-soul. With Christian thinkers, the Godhead could no longer be conceived as a Monad without self-mediation. The Other does not proceed immediately and necessarily from the One but is mediated by the Logos within the One, so that the One knows and affirms itself. The One contains its own Other within itself and the creation is consistent with the continuing self-possession of the One.

Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic thought held that the replication of one and the same thing many times over requires a medium distinct from the multiplied form which facilitates the form's multiplication of itself. Leibniz abandoned the concept of indeterminate material and thereby denied the possibility that there could be a plurality of individuals numerically but not qualitatively different. What the Greeks called the three 'hypostases' of the godhead were distinguishable only numerically.

The One does not replicate and there is only inner differentiation, so the unity came to be thought of as self-mediation, an eternal occurrence. Unity was thought of as life. The One is self-expressing. The hypostases are not qualitatively distinct but only numerically and symmetrically.

The term 'hypostasis', which meant something like a self-standing existent, was called upon to answer we can think if purely numerical distinction of emanations and origin without imagining a spatial separation. Following the Johannine discourse of the divine Logos, and Tertullian's use of the grammarians' analysis of the speech-act that is associated with the concept of 'person,' Western theologians applied it to the whole Bible. Tertullian replaced the Greek conception of hypostasis with the less abstract and speculative 'person.' The same individual can be spoke of in first, second, and third person. Christian orthodoxy settled on the formula "One being, three persons."

V

The second time in the history of Christian history that the concept of person served to resolve a paradox had to do with how Jesus could be thought of as the incarnation of the eternal divine Logos and as man in the true and proper sense at the same time. At the Council of Chalcedon the controversies were brought to an end with the formula: Jesus Christ had two 'natures,' divine and human. The name Jesus refers to a person, not a form of being. What is born is not something, but someone. The term person allowed the understanding of the application of the personal pronoun in the statement, "Before Abraham was, I am," without making Jesus appear a theophany, thus allowing the exclusion of all associations with ancient mythology.

Phusis, or nature, is the tem that is opposed to 'person' in Christology. It is the being of finite things which are subject to becoming and passing away. The term nature took on several meanings. Boethius distinguished four: 1) every intelligible thing; 2) things, whether material or immaterial; 3) all non-artificial bodies; and 4) not the concrete thing but the general form or kind of being to which it belongs. Boethius used the last meaning of nature to lay down a benchmark which lasted a thousand years. In this definition, personhood is the specific way that 'rational natures' are concrete and individual: 'the individual substance of a rational nature.' The primary sense of Boethius's definition is ontological: the rational nature exists as a being-in-itself. That is to say, no description can replace naming.

VI

Boethius's definition lies behind all medieval discussion of the person. Richard of St Victor deepened Boethius's intention that was based on a misreading. He observed that a person cannot be a substance, but only the bearer of a substance. A 'substance' denotes a something of which there could be other instances but a 'person' stands for 'a property of a unique subject.' Personhood is the sustaining of existence as a particular individual, a mode of existence, and not essence. Things like cars exist in a purely logical sense but natural beings exist in other than a purely logical sense. For them there is something 'it is like' to be themselves. The 'what' of a subject's existence is a 'way of being.' In the case of the bat, it would seem that its being is wholly swallowed up in its way of being. Human beings in contrast exist by distinguishing their being from their specific way of being.

"Life is the being of living things.' A lion does not exist on the one hand and live on the other. But there is no analogous word for the being of persons. It is peculiar to personhood as the mode of the existence of a rational nature that it is defined singularly, not as a kind of thing that could in principle appear in multiple copies. St. Thomas Aquinas, like Boethius, designated a person as a 'substance' but stipulated it is a *substantia prima*, meaning it is a concrete individual.

Person does not denote the kind but the member of the kind, and not as a member of the kind, but as an individual.

[The subversion of justice and the paving of the way to atrocities is reflected in discarding attending to the individual person and treating them as a member of a class. Much of the perniciousness of the sexual revolution is in the politicizing of family and intimate life, the subverting of the treatment of the person to lesser grades, to treating them as members of classes and groups. See examples in the addendum at the end below]. Person is not a concept but a name for an indeterminate individual. 'Person' is not used to refer to an individual in the aspect of its nature, but to a thing which subsists in that nature.

A nature is a principle of specific reaction. With the concept of person, however, we come to think of the particular individual as being more basic than its nature. Such individuals are not without a nature but they assume a new relation to it in their nature. They freely endorse the laws of their being, or they rebel against them and they 'deviate.' They cannot be categorized exhaustively as members of their species, only as individuals, who 'exist in their nature,' that is, as persons.

Addendum

Note how Bolshevik and feminists subvert to perdition the concept of the person as Robert Spaemann describes it when he writes, "*Person does not denote the kind but the member of the kind, and not as a member of the kind, but as an individual.*" --->

"Compare the similar instructions of Bolsheviks and feminists describing their own criminology. First, Martin Latsis, a Cheka leader and 'true Bolshevik,' explains how to exterminate a category of people: 'We are not waging war on individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. During the investigation, we do not look for evidence that the accused acted in deed or word against the Soviet power. The first questions you ought to put are: To what class does he belong? What is his origin? What is his education and profession? And it is these questions that ought to determine the fate of the accused.'

Next are the instructions of influential feminist Catherine McKinnon, who advises legislatures throughout the world on how to punish men who fit a certain profile: "Instead of asking did this individual commit a crime of battery against that individual, the court would ask did this member of a group sexually trained to woman-hating aggression commit this particular act of woman-hating sexual aggression?.. The testimony of other women...would be central: How does this man treat women sexually?... We might have learned whether pornography...was part of the defendant's training.' This shifts the prosecution from the legal culpability of an individual for a specific deed to the component in a political campaign against a targeted group."

-Stephen Baskerville, *The New Politics of Sex: The Sexual Revolution, Civil Liberties, & the Growth of Governmental Power*, (2017), Angelico Press, p. 119. Citations in order from Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Devil in History*, (2013), p.5, and Weiss and Young, *Feminist Jurisprudence*.

Chapter 3: Persons

Words referring to classes of things are used either 1) to indicate a particular entity belonging to the kind in question, or 2) to indicate the kind. Recent trends in logic dispense with the second by explaining the first in terms of the second. But in a sentence like 'this is an apple, and this is red', how do we determine what 'this' stands for? We are confronted with what Quine called 'indefiniteness of reference' which is closely connected with the fact that, in original acts of naming, we cannot identify without ambiguity *this thing here* that has to be named. To say anything about the thing, you must know what it is already.

We must also know who is talking about 'this thing here.' A relation is implied to the position of the one pointing to the thing. A singular object is identified only in relation to someone who identifies it, and only by being classified. But this rule does not apply to the one who points, who can refer to himself without classifying himself in relation to a kind and without clarifying his position in relation to the position of anything else. Yet self-identification cannot occur solipsistically, for it necessarily implies the existence of others and the possibility of being available to their knowledge. Others, however, have only an external criterion for my identity, my body as a continuing existent in space and time.

If the observer's view were irrelevant to identity, we would have no right to say that a split-personality patient was psychotic and suffered from delusions.

There is no observer's view that can tell what it is like to be an animal, but we humans can talk with one another about ourselves. For the view from the inside the outside view is important while the outside view needs what information it can get about the inside view. This interaction of perspectives is what makes the very possibility of psychiatry.

II

When personal identity is treated as no more than a consciousness of personal identity, one fact is generally overlooked: we identify with ourselves over time without being conscious of all our previous states. From Descartes's philosophy of subjectivity to the contemporary philosophy of mind, our moment-by-moment states of conscious self-presentation are treated as an irreducible last frontier, to which the past and future relate as (eidolons, as feeble as Epicurus's gods). Thoroughgoing solipsism always involves isolating the present instant, something Descartes was aware of when he had to support the continuous unity of consciousness by appealing to the truthfulness of a God who would never allow our memories systematically to play us false.

A person's solitude is tied up with its incommunicability. It is defined by a 'place' in the universe which it alone occupies. The person is defined by a relation to everything else that can never be that person. Though this involves external observation, the person knows the uniqueness of his or her place and his or her essential uniqueness. Since it is a relational uniqueness, it cannot be conceived apart from the external aspect of the person, mediated through the body.

III

In a split personality, the two 'I's are different qualitatively. All qualitative differences may be thought of as complementary. Each person stands in relation to each other person *a priori*. That relation does not result from qualitative differences that repel or attract, but on a fundamental relation, 'recognition' or its refusal, a relation more basic than sympathy or antipathy, 'elective affinity' [*Elective Affinities* is the title of a novel by Goethe] or repulsion. Qualitative peculiarities are the basis for more superficial repulsions and attractions than the aforementioned more basic relation. They allow persons to engage in unifying structures, societies, and institutions, but as persons they are never 'integrated' in a real sense into these. Human beings relate themselves to their part-function freely in a greater whole, or they refuse it. But even when they devote themselves to the larger whole and give up their lives for it,

they are no longer mere parts, but a whole, which cannot be accounted for as a means to an end. [Much of scientific materialist determinist thought rejects this irreducibility of the person].

Antagonism and the complementarity of persons is always built on qualitative differences. The myth of the androgyne [which Plato's Socrates attributes to Aristophanes] interpreted male/female difference as springing from an original identity, split into complementary parts that yearn to be reunited. But different persons cannot be thought of as originally identical. Empirical observation can only establish unlikeness. It is a great mistake to think we must suppress observations of human differences if we are to do justice to human dignity. The dignity of a person is not touched by such observations, for the dignity of human beings as persons is not an object of observation but of recognition. If we say that someone is a person, we are saying that he or she is someone, a unique Individual. The what we can observe and comprehend; the who is accessible to us only as we recognize something ultimately inaccessible.

Inwardly we see ourselves as phenomena, and as phenomena we disclose no more than that our properties and states are sustained by some subject. There is no categorical reason why we should know ourselves better than others know us 'from within.' The person is neither within nor without, but transcends the inner-outer difference that is the boundary of the mental sphere.

To re-identify persons as persons we already know, perception from outside is decisive, which means physicality is decisive.

Solipsism is incompatible with the concept of the person. Personhood arises only in a plurality. Philosophical monotheism is invariably ambiguous, either advancing to become trinitarianism, or slipping back into pantheism. We began to speak of God as a person only when we began to speak of three persons in one God.

Chapter 5: The Negative

I

Persons think and feel but, not only that, they think behind their thinking. They, like all animate beings, are defined by a difference from what they are, a "negative moment", but persons are defined by this to the greatest extent. Persons think the thought of 'being' only by a double step of negation: being is not the thought, and the thought is not the thing thought about.

Thought itself is defined by a difference from what simply is. The negative cannot be elicited from the positive even though the negative presupposes the positive. This is why machines cannot think. Simulation cannot achieve the difference from what simply is. Only human beings can read positive facts of the world as signs, and so transform them into something thought. If there is nothing that symbols symbolize, there are no symbols either, only things in the world. That is how the computer processes them.

Despite the illimitable 'intellectual feats' a computer may perform which exceed what humans perform, it is not pointless to say that 'the computer does not think.' It means it does not know that it is thinking.

Knowledge is a subjective experience, but all subjective experience is experience of something. Drive utilizes the twofold difference of the inside and the outside. The difference is at the root of our space-time perception. The difference between the inner and the outer in us is projected onto what we deem as systems. The inner-outer difference within ourselves is the source of our personality.

'Selfhood' means emancipation from the conditions of one's coming-to-be, which can only be conceived as a momentary happening, as distinct from "alteration." We commonly speak of "emergent

properties," meaning properties whose coming-to-be regularly arises out of certain material combinations.

II

What does it mean to say that there is something 'it is like' to be a person or an animal? It is only through being attuned that we are ever in the world and that there is ever a 'world' for us. Consciousness, effort, will and knowledge are all part of attunement, or embedded within it. A computer in contrast has no consciousness, it does not think, it makes no efforts for anything and it knows nothing because there is nothing 'it is like' to be a computer.

For non-personal animals on the other hand, there is a difference between the inside and the outside. There is something that is not identical with the animal that is to be experienced. Its significance is anticipated through the drive-structure of the individual animal and through the difference between striving and satisfaction. A living creature is on the look out for 'input.' Since satisfaction is not the climax of an inner paroxysm but demands the input, the living creature is essentially incomplete. It can never be certain of input and so pursue it.

Pain is the form in which the negative intrudes upon straightforward being-in-the-world. Pain cannot be defined by its function. It can outlast its usefulness as a warning sign, and be 'unproductive.' Pain is in every case what it is, but its specific quality is irrelevant to its function. It is essentially negativity.

Pain, which nature abhors, can actually be sought out as such - not for its usefulness but in spite of its usefulness, which is to make us avoid it. It is as pain that we seek it. It does not become enjoyment when we seek it. Rather, we enclose negativity itself within square brackets and introduce it with a plus sign. Only persons do this. They do not simply exist as they are but step back from whatever it is they are and enclose it all within square brackets, placing a sign, negative or positive, before it.

III

Biological species are themselves modes of normality. They have attained an ecological niche that enables the satisfaction of certain expectations and the survival of the species. For each species, there are specific expectations of the arrival of expected things the arrival of which is the norm, the non-arrival of which is an anomaly. Every form of life, including human life, has its own form of normality to give structure to its expectations.

Surplus poses a threat to the extent that it may undermine survival under normal conditions as the normal amount of effort and exertion may quickly fall away for the sweepstakes winner.

Pain is the irreducible negative, the essential anomaly. Even if it were the statistical norm, it would be so. It is the essence of pain to be abnormal, irrespective of statistics.

The consideration of pain falsifies Hume's assertion that Is and Ought belong to two incommensurable realms, unless we deploy a strictly 'positive' sense of 'Is,' in which case pain and negativity no longer count as things that are. Pain is essentially and immediately what we do not want. The negative, as distinct from what simply is, arises only where there is life, where interests are already in play.

There are two things presupposed by a conscious act of will. Besides life as a going-out-after things, as a drive, there is also the disclosure, which we can never get behind, of a dimension of rational universality, with which the acts of rational beings are implicated from the beginning. Neither of these is set in place by a free decision of our own. Persons can extricate themselves from formal requirements to an extent, perhaps pleading a pseudo justification for deeds that do no more than disguise a particular interest (eg. feminism does not change the general rules of action between a man and a woman but politicizes them), but they cannot in principle renounce the formal condition of general rules of action. To do so would be to make themselves invisible as persons and their acts as

acts; they would thus exclude themselves from the community of mutual recognition among human persons. (Benjamin DeMott rued "tough-guy feminism" dominated by "kick-butt extremists" enthralled by a "women-becoming-men fantasy" resulting in a new brand of feminists embracing "stereotypical male standards of self-expression", with men not stepping in to fill the cultural void by themselves becoming merciful, tender caregivers. He discerned a gender disorientation that can only be 'catastrophic for the human essence.')

Rationality is a form of life.

"I am a man; nothing human is alien to me" wrote Terence, but what happens when we embrace an ideology that is anti-person, that militates against the core structure of our beings, affecting to, like the serpent with Eve, advocate for our freedom? As under Communism, under feminism and sexual radicalism, or democratic sexual pluralism, we become divided into distrustful cells in new flowerings of seeds of enmity. "When a partner isolates their spouse from friends, associates, and public spaces, it is called domestic abuse. When it is done to an entire gender, it is called feminism," writes Helen Smith. "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female...?" (Matthew 19:4) God provided the dimension of rational universality and shaped us in His image. Our bodies themselves are shaped for the other, for sexual complementarity with the other sex. This can be attacked and subverted linguistically and surgically and in the captivity of one's thoughts, but this does not subvert the dimension of rational universality but only our correspondence with it.

Chapter 6: Intentionality

I

In this section Spaemann critiques Dualism and Materialist Monism in relation to the unity of the external and the mental state in an act.

Persons are among those beings with an 'inward' side who have subjective experience and possess 'mental states.' Just what the ontological status of these mental states has been a preoccupying question of the philosophy of the modern era since Descartes. There is an incommensurability of inward experience and outward perception. Pain, for example, is experienced by the sufferer only but inferred by the observer externally.

Mental states and brain states always occur together. How is this correspondence to be understood? Idealists took the external representations as epiphenomena of mental processes while Materialists took the mental processes as epiphenomena of the external.

The starting point, in modern modernism as well as in dualism, is the problem that was originally determined by dualism, the existence of two different spheres of existence, conceptually distinct. To look at a brain is not to look at anxiety but there is a persistent persuasion that it is. Both dualism and monism are faced with the task of thinking the unity of incommensurables. Dualism has to give up incommensurability to accommodate interaction of mental awareness and physical events, "for a causal relation needs homogeneous entities." Monism downgrades subjective experience to an epiphenomenon of matter.

We observe people's motions and discern anxiety from them but physical motions only count as actions when they express an intention, or a psychological state. Despite not having the subjective experience of another person, their experienced is disclosed in a way we comprehend. Dualism dissolves the perception of an action into two parts: 1) the perception of physical motion and 2) its interpretation as the expression of mental processes. But the two are neither of them the act in and of itself. The mental

state cannot be defined apart from the act it initiates. Materialist monism fails to emphasize the unity of the inner and the outer as a teleological unity belonging to the act as a whole. It assumes that the two spheres are independently definable, that possibly it was led to this error by Dualism, and then it interprets the mental sphere as a function of the physical. The act could only be a function of the physical if it were not already defined by its intentional relation to physical events.

II

Whether it is possible or rational for dualism to be overcome by monism is a matter for experience in the broadest sense to decide. A dualist description usually is in place when describing non-intentional and non-propositional mental states such as pain or a mood. These states are described without reference to physical data. Spinoza described them as the subjective side of objective physical processes. The ontological status of these states cannot be settled definitively at this level but this stalemate does not mean that materialism carries the day. Materialist monism is counter-intuitive in all its variations since it must explain the self-understanding of experience as self-misunderstanding, and so it must carry the whole burden of proof. Airy assurances that physical explanations, while not currently available, have not been proved impossible can never substitute for proof that would meet this burden. The result is a "promissory materialism."

The simple impossibility of bringing subjective and objective language under the same roof does not suffice to defeat reductionism. The claim of reductionism is that subjective experience is ontologically irrelevant. Epiphenomenalism sees subjective experience as standing in a strict one-to-one relation with objectively observable neuronal processes, in an asymmetric relation where the neuronal processes effect the experience but the experience does not affect the neuronal processes.

There are questions to be pursued about the interest driving the reductionist endeavor. It is an interest in a tight physical nexus of cause and effect to explain everything that is. The interest that drives the postulate is the continuing expansion of our mastery of nature and the possibilities of control. The discovery of the dependence of mental states on physical processes opens up the possibility of manipulating those states. The closed system of cause and effect enhances the possibilities for interventionist action, while at the same time destroying the very idea of action. If action is included in the closed physical system of causality, it is unintelligible why we postulate this system, or make any postulate at all.

III

We must make a distinction between psychological states and intentional acts. Reductionism cannot translate non-intentional states of mind conceptually so as to include them in a discourse of physical events, but it can be argued that they are a residuum resisting translation that do not really exist. However, when we turn to acts of "thinking that...", materialist reductionism comes to grief. Without acts of "thinking that...", even the objective physical world is inaccessible to us. If these are dismissed as contentless epiphenomena, the objective world disappears with them, a world that is only there for us in the first place, thanks to such acts. Wherever theoretical or practical intention enters the scene, materialist reductionism in all its forms becomes self-contradictory.

Intention can never be described satisfactorily as a psychological state. Intention is not a psychological reality, but a spiritual or intellectual one. It is a feature neither of the inward nor of the outer world. Like psychological states, it can be manipulated by physical intervention, but it can be manipulated only negatively. It can be removed but it cannot be positively induced. (This seems to a point where we

overlook a chasm between reality and those who think we will eventually be able to download consciousness. But what about "brainwashing"? Is it characterizable as induced positive intention?) Practical intention differs from theoretical intention chiefly in that the non-identity of its object with a state of the subject is not simply implied, but it is expressed as the defining content of the act. Intentional acts and intentional attitudes are still 'in the mind' to the extent that it is an event of subjective experience when we form them. We know psychological states only by being aware of them as psychological states. Our knowledge of psychological states is part of the states themselves. Awareness of life is the irreducible paradigm for life and experience of every kind. Intentionality is simply the most intense mode of experiencing.

The reductionist attempt to treat the ontological status of psychological states as mere phantoms, seen without being believed, comes to grief if there is actually no clear dividing line between states of mind and awareness of states of mind. We have no idea what states of mind of which no one was aware would be like. Awareness of states of mind, whose irreducible ontological status is beyond question, is an aspect of those states. Intentionality is not itself a psychological state; but a psychological state is something with intellectual potential, and we cannot say what it is in itself without alluding to this potential.

We can only bring our will to a resolution in the first place as we experience within ourselves an interest that is already there. Without such interest, the world would be a matter of indifference and there would be nothing to guide us to will one thing rather than another. To describe this interest, we resort to vocabulary borrowed from conscious acts of will which we then apply erroneously in a way that excludes the actual moment of intentionality. The conscious act of will finds in itself a tendency to be anterior to consciousness and to 'come to itself' in the moment of dawning consciousness. The dualism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* implies that life can be given definition from the point of view of consciousness only by way of negation. Early modern philosophy tried to eliminate not only the concept of finality but of potentiality also. But we can speak sensibly of life only if we mean potentially conscious life, life with the experience of potential intentionality.

IV

It is true of all psychological acts that they are potentially intentional. We lack the categories to specify the soul and subjective life but we cannot dispense with talking about them as the sphere of personal centeredness which stands between us and the myth of the ghost in the machine, a myth inconsistent with our experience of the world.

Persons *qua* persons are encountered only in the context of a world that is common to them and to us. They are encountered in such a way that we understand them only when we 'look in the same direction,' entering into their carrying out of their intentions.

It is a feature of persons that they are subjects of different and clearly distinct kinds of acts from other animals. In particular, acts of thinking, preferring, and willing in any human being are independent variables. What distinguishes other animals from human beings is that willing and thinking are not independent variables. It is always a package, in which what the animal 'thinks' is related to how it is to reach its goal, or to avoid whatever it wants to avoid. Its ambition, however, is confined within the limits of what its natural conditioning prescribes for it, and it cannot transcend the given *conditio animalis*. Its thoughts about the world are strictly functional and have to do with the conditions for fulfilling its wishes.

Intentional acts are directed at objects independently of the condition of the subject. Human beings form wishes that go beyond the *conditio humana* and hence have a history. Because human beings can form a view of how the world is made quite independent from any practical ambitions, human beings can make unanticipated breakthroughs in discovering how the world is made. (Activist tendencies in this context seem more animalistic, or more bound by the *conditio animalis*, less detached in contemplation of reality from a pressing agenda).

This independence is the reason we speak of persons as continuous acting-centers. To be a free beginning, a subject has to pursue things and exercise its will. But on the other hand, the subject must not only but have a power of theoretical reflection and theoretical intention. Otherwise it is a blind 'drive'. (Those seeking conquest of the world are always looking for blind drives to control, it would seem).

In the Middle Ages and in modern philosophy, there is a debate about the priority of the will over knowledge or vice versa. Spaemann posits Scheler's argument for the priority of a basic intentionality of love, lying behind and providing the ground for theoretical acts as well as purpose and will, as the bridge between Heidegger's "attunement" and the "intentional acts" of Husserl's phenomenology.