

*EXTRA COMMUNIONEM
PERSONARUM NULLA
PHILOSOPHIA*

• Stanisław Grygiel •

“By defending the human being, beauty also defends philosophy. It protects the great question which man himself becomes from being broken down into petty problems.”

1. Man lives and creates philosophy when faced with his own death, he challenges heaven with a great question which he himself has become: “Where do I come from and where am I going?”¹ This *magna quaestio* of Saint Augustine is what Plato calls *meditatio mortis* and *preparatio ad mortem*.

The question, “where do I come from and where am I going?” makes evident to man the fact that he is greater than anything he could possibly think himself to be. This is why the answers constructed by the philosophers pass man by without even grazing the truth of his being a person. The answer would have to come from above. In fact, the great question leads man outside of himself and directs his steps towards Heaven. Awaiting the answer, modern philosophers speak of the transcendence of the human person, while the Greeks spoke of *anagogé*, that is, man’s being “led up.”

Posing the philosophical question about man is like lifting the anchor of a ship before putting out to sea, where—according to Plato—one sails more with the help of the oars and by the strength

¹Cf. Stanisław Grygiel, “The Meaning of Suffering in the Secularized World,” *Revue Théologique de Lugano* 1 (1996): 45–59.

of one's own arms than by the natural impulse of the wind.² Yes, it is true, the philosopher makes use of these aids, but the truth of his sailing is not reduced to them; carried by the desire of his heart which opens him to Otherness—an Otherness which he cannot foresee even as he awaits it, though without setting conditions—he ploughs through the sea towards the Socratic isles that elude objectification. In the invisible light of the Otherness he awaits, he catches a glimpse of the truth, not only of his being, but also of the things which surround him.

The philosopher lives in the way in which he thinks, and he thinks in the way in which he questions. He questions, though, in the way in which he looks at himself and the sea upon which he sails. He looks at himself and the sea within the perspective of the horizon born from the loving union of Heaven and Earth. If, therefore, someone should ask him what man lives for, the philosopher would answer along with the Greek sage: “To look at Heaven.” In the embrace by which Heaven comprehends (*comprende*) the Earth, the philosopher glimpses the first principles of being and living, known only by God. With the help of these principles he works at the question about the truth of all that makes up the *kosmos*, that is, of the order which exists in the space defined by this horizon in which Heaven is united with Earth. This work on the question of truth enables man to do justice, not only to himself, but also to the world.³

Those who sail by the natural force of the wind believe the philosopher to be a child who treats Heaven as a toy. The child must amuse himself in this way, explains Callicles to Socrates,

but when you still do it after you've grown older and become a man, the thing gets to be ridiculous, Socrates! My own reaction to men who philosophize is very much like that to men who speak haltingly and play like children. . . . I think such a man by this time needs a flogging. For . . . such a man . . . lives the rest of his life in hiding, whispering in a corner with three or four boys, never uttering anything well-bred, important or apt. . . . As it is, if someone got hold of you or of anyone else like you and took you off to prison on the charge that you're doing something unjust when in fact you aren't, be assured that you wouldn't have

²Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 99, d.

³It is in this light that I read the myth of the cave (Plato, *The Republic*, VII).

any use for yourself. . . . You'd come up for trial and face some no good wretch of an accuser and be put to death.”⁴

2. The philosopher is not a success, because the Heaven upon which he fixes his thought is not to be possessed. Nor does he try to be, because even when his own life is at stake, he is interested not so much in having as in the truth and goodness of his own being. The philosopher—declares Socrates to his judges—must disregard the risk of living and dying.⁵ It is therefore easy to ridicule him and even kill him. It is not possible, however, to defeat him, because the question of truth which he launches as a challenge to Heaven is invincible.

I would formulate the invincible question which the philosopher himself becomes using a definition of Aquinas: *perceptio veritatis tendens in ipsam*.⁶ “The perception of the truth, a perception that tends to it,” arises in man’s desire to be conformed, not to the fleeting forms of being, but to the Otherness which shines through the contingency of a reality composed of existence and essence. The *perceptio tendens* to Heaven is dramatic. Stop for a moment along the way, and you are immediately stuck in the static formalism of those who choose the Earth. The philosopher treats his concepts like the artisan treats the tools he uses to work on the design that transcends his thought. He knows he is working for the eternal Future within the confines of the passing present. He works in hope. Thanks to hope, the part of him that aspires to eternity is what governs his life in time. The philosopher always has a home to go to, which is precisely the other person in his otherness; the invincible question, to which he is unable to respond, saves him from the misery of the homeless.

The philosopher, tending to the victory of being and not to the success of having, always arrives “in time.” He is not an epigone. The epigone—as we see from the etymology of the word—is “born too late” to be present at the Sources. Unable to think within being

⁴Plato, *Gorgias*, 485, a, b, d; 486, b.

⁵Cf. Plato, *Apology*, 28, b.

⁶St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, I, 6, sed contra. Cf. also: *In III Sententiarum*, d. 25, q. 1, a. The complete definition of dogma that Aquinas took from Isidore is as follows: *articulus est perceptio divinae veritatis tendens in ipsam* [The article of faith is a perception of divine truth that tends to it]. I would therefore say that, believing in God, man becomes an *articulus fidei*.

and within the so-called transcendentals (*ens, verum, bonum, et pulchrum*), he lives by assembling conclusions that he does not understand, for he does not glimpse their Principle and End, which is a Person. The rules of reasoning, and not the question of the *origo*, the sources of man's "originality," decide the way the epigone thinks and lives.

3. The great question constitutes the structure of man's being a person. To be a person means to be an *intentio* of personal otherness, or, in Greek, to be a *tonos* that sings of it.⁷ The *perceptio tendens* burns with the otherness of another person, as the bush on Mount Horeb burned with God. Man, therefore, cannot be identified with an object of any sort. The person happens in him from moment to moment—as often as he responds to this other calling him in turn—*abyssus invocat abyssum* [deeps calls to deep]. As the event called "person," man abandons himself, indeed, he dies to himself in the hope of rising in the other person with whom he burns and to whom he entrusts himself to a life more adequate to the desire of his heart. The truth of the person's "I am" is fulfilled and manifested "in two" insofar as one says to the other: "I am you and you are me." It penetrates persons, and not only this or that cognitive faculty.⁸ By the same token, it does not simply penetrate me or you, but the two of us. The event of the gift of truth takes place only in the communion of persons, so that only the person "knows the gift" (cf. Jn 4:10). The history of the gift of truth makes up the history of man's spiritual life. One who lives in solitude does not know this gift, because he does not become a great question about it. He will never be a philosopher. In fact, philosophy happens only in two.⁹

4. The true and the good are revealed in the beautiful. Not in the beauty of forms constructed by the *cogito-volo*, which are pleasing because of mood or fashion, but in the beauty which daily calls man

⁷The Greek *tonos* was translated by Seneca with the Latin *intentio* (from *intendere*, to tend, to orient).

⁸I am convinced that Aquinas had exactly this in mind when he wrote: *non enim proprie loquendo sensus aut intellectus cognoscunt sed homo per utrumque* (*De veritate* 2, 6, ad 3). [For, properly speaking, it is neither sense nor intellect which knows, but man by means of both.]

⁹Cf. the saying of Nietzsche: *Die Wahrheit wird in zwei*. [Truth comes in two.]

to go out of himself and to work for the things to come (*res advenientes*). As a lamp cuts a swath of light in the darkness of night, beauty illuminates and opens being, permitting us to catch a momentary glimpse of its Principle and End. It is precisely the light of this Principle and End which, reflecting itself in being and manifesting its truth and goodness, makes it beautiful. Because it is not an object to be possessed, beauty defends both the being in which it is thus present and the man who contemplates it. By defending the human being, beauty also defends philosophy. It protects the great question which man himself becomes from being broken down into petty problems.

When someone follows a person, whose beauty calls him, he changes. He changes his love; he converts.¹⁰ When someone converts to the person, he no longer relies on the doubt which gives birth to a reasoning far removed from existential knowledge. Existential knowledge begins in the act of freedom. By this act man is united to reality and so becomes able to generate and create new realities; existential knowledge is always a *fiat mihi!* by which man decides to receive the gift of truth and goodness; knowledge is the act of love which responds to Love.

Beauty is not definable; it has no limits. When it calls man, then, it always calls him in absolute terms, it calls him, in other words, to heroism. Relativism of any sort is foreign to beauty. Beauty is not to be possessed; man can only become it. Becoming beautiful means approaching the Principle of the true and the good, which precisely in the beautiful show that they have come from just that far away. The transcendentals of metaphysics, that is, being, as it is known existentially, set the itinerary of man's dialogue with the Freedom which is Truth and with the Love which is Knowledge. It is precisely towards this beautiful Unity that the philosopher casts the great question which he becomes. He casts it as a challenge, but he always does so bowed down. His challenge and bow com-prehend (*com-prendono*) the beauty of every being and, above all, of man, because it is not possible to separate

¹⁰“This rock . . . looks at you
With innumerable eyes. It compels
The one who contemplates it to change himself.”
(R. M. Rilke, “The archaic torso of Apollo”)

the beautiful Unity of Freedom and Truth, of Love and Knowledge, from its reflections.

In this dialogue, which is the heart of man's spiritual life, his personal subjectivity is fulfilled and the existential object of metaphysics, called *ens*, is constituted. Being, *ens*, radiates the *pulchrum verum* [beautiful true] and *pulchrum bonum* [beautiful good] which lead to their Source, who is a Person;¹¹ *verum dicit relationem ad Intellectum, bonum autem ad Voluntatem Alterius* [truth bespeaks relation to an Intellect, but good to the will of Another]. The object of metaphysics, *ens*, and the transcendentals are constituted in the dialogue between man and "Heaven." It makes no sense to speak of the *verum, bonum, pulchrum* outside of this dialogue. The question of the origin of the transcendentals opens up the metaphysical way to the *magna quaestio* "where do I come from and where am I going?" To the question: *Quid sit veritas?* [what is truth?], St. Augustine responds: *Vir qui ad-est* [a man who is present]. The philosopher, who asks about the truth, tends to the Person whose name is Freedom and Love. The philosopher thinks by entrusting himself to the Truth-Person in whom he unconditionally places his hope. The philosopher accepts His Presence, *ad-esse*, as it shines through the contingency of beings, above all in the contingency of the human person. In philosophy then, the truth is an *adaequatio personae cum Persona* [adequation of a person with a person] more than an *adaequatio intellectus cum re* [adequation of the intellect with the thing]. Truth is

¹¹The anthropologically metaphysical aesthetic, present in C. K. Norwid's "Promethidion" is a most illuminating contribution to a better understanding of the fundamental problems of classical metaphysics: the constitution of the object of metaphysical contemplation (*ens*), the transcendentals (*pulchrum, verum, bonum*), and the principles which constitute every being called to exist in time and space. The following words of Norwid should be kept in mind:

"Beauty is the form of love.
 What man has seen this love in the world,
 In the immensity of God or in his own fragmentary being . . .
 Is what he knows about beauty itself and he proclaims it . . .
 Because beauty is to awaken enthusiasm
 For work—but work is so that man might resurrect. . . .
 Work is the greatest practicality in the world . . .
 I will say this about work: it is that seeking what is lost,
 To which song incessantly recalls us."

(C. K. Norwid, "Pisma wszystkie," *Opera omnia*, vol. 3 [Warsaw, 1971], 437–40)

not an object to be possessed, it is an event of the light that occurs in the person-to-Person dialogue. Thanks to this event man can walk safely and, when the night sets in, he can continue to walk with the aid of the memory of what he has seen before.¹²

Truth in this sense happens in the dialogical passage from the contingent and finite to the necessary and infinite. This passage, called existential analysis, consists in man's becoming aware of the so-called ontological difference and in his conversion. A philosophy in which there is no room for the passage to Otherness flattens man and condemns him to the production of equally flat truths, goods, and beauty. In other words, philosophical thought, coming to fulfillment within the object of metaphysics (*ens-verum-bonum-pulchrum*), which is constituted in person-to-Person dialogue, can only be an analogical thinking, unlike the calculations of reason.

The call that reaches man from the beauty of beings does not allow him to stop with their functioning. Thinking in the wonder provoked by beauty transcends predicative judgments, in which the function expressed by the concept defines the subject and for all intents and purposes takes its place. Moreover, to the extent that it succeeds in doing so, this function is acknowledged as truth. Predicates help the philosopher to enter into the subjectivity of beings, but then they must remain outside. Only a subject can be united with another subject without trampling on his dignity.

In existential analysis, the philosopher glimpses the truth and goodness of being with his whole self and actually becomes this truth and goodness. With the help of existential judgments which open the way to being (*méthodos*), persons communicate to one another every grain of the truth and goodness which provoke wonder in them. Philosophy, then, is not something to be learned by rote. The philosopher can do without a good memory for conceptualized objects, but not without the Memory of the Past and Future which are greater than time, and at which the *magna quaestio* aims: "Where do I come from and where am I going?"

Philosophical thinking is not easy, because it is not based on erudition. Taking place in the time which separates the Past from the Future, and oriented to both, philosophical thinking paradoxically travels in one, and not two, directions. There shines through it the

¹²Ethics arises in the memory of the truth of beings that man has seen and lived in the daylight in which God reveals His creative Thought and Will.

mystery of eternity, in which the Beginning is the End and the End is the Beginning. Thanks to this trans-lucence, philosophical thought resists the power of passing time; Plato is thus a contemporary of Aquinas, and Augustine of Dostoyevsky.

5. Reason (*ratio*) does not grasp the identity of being and, above all, the identity of human being. Identities do reveal themselves in existential analysis, but they are always found a little farther away than rationalistic calculations can reach.¹³ The identity of every being has a sacred character; it is a *templum*. When persons say to one another: “I am you and you are me,” they unite themselves in their sacred identity, *in templo*—they *con-templantur*. In a world made up of abstract predicates, a world in which subjects fall into oblivion, there is no room for con-templation, and therefore, the communion of persons. The *communio personarum* does not result from arranging predicates into logical wholes—that is how masses are formed. By contrast, the communion of persons is born only when one subject cries out to another: “You are!” and when both proclaim to everyone: “We are!”

Contrary to the noncontemplative *ratio* which lightly constructs virtual worlds, contemplatively metaphysical *intellectus*¹⁴ unites itself to, and grows together (*con-crescere*) with, the beings which are present to it and to which it itself is present. It “reads” the truth that unveils itself in beautiful beings and seeks to comprehend it. As it grows together with the other (*con-crescere*), as it joins itself to the truth, a new con-crete¹⁵ world arises in man. In this world, the freedom entrusted to man’s work is based on the truth which calls man to convert to it. This is the heartbeat of metaphysics.

Dialogically contemplative philosophy is lit up by the mystery that is the sanctity of freedom and the moral conscience, which form an organic whole. *Intellectus*, participating in the sanctity

¹³Bear in mind that the word *ratio* is derived from *reor, reri, ratum*, to calculate.

¹⁴The term *intellectus* comes from *inter-legere*, to read between two things, bringing them together in a whole. The intellect reads what takes place between beings or between the principles which constitute being. According to Aquinas, the word *intellectus* derives from *intus-legere*, to read within.

¹⁵The word “concrete” derives from the Latin *con-cretum* which is a past participle of the verb *con-crescere*. What is concrete is what has grown together (*con-cretum*).

which is freedom, and moral conscience, becomes holy and free itself. “True philosophy is the holiness of reason,” Blondel writes.¹⁶ The sanctity of freedom makes the intellect fit to think logically, while its absence diverts freedom from the right path. The *ratio cogitans* [thinking reason] wins the philosopher “many riches” of erudition, but it is precisely these riches that hinder his maturation to contemplation of the truth of being and in following this truth (cf. Mt 19:22). The “rich young man” will never be a philosopher. Abandoning reality, he will always go away sad. Philosophical thought occurs, not in the sadness of the rich, but in the beatitude of those who can free themselves from the possession of things, including erudition, and follow the truth which is revealed to them in the other person. “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gn 2:18), because alone he absolutizes his own representations of freedom and prostrates himself before them. The judgments made in this idolatrous prostration are not dialogically sym-bolic judgments of gratitude, life-source of persons who say to the infinite Truth present in its finite reflections: *Fiat mihi!* They are nothing but monologically dia-bolical¹⁷ judgments. They flow from the arrogant claims by which solitary men reduce their spiritual life to a conspiracy with Earth against Heaven, and so destroy themselves and the world.

6. Bent to the Earth, human beings do not think philosophically. Only those who walk upright think philosophically, because only they see everything and everyone against the background of the horizon which forms where Heaven generously descends to Earth and is united to it. The philosopher lives by gratitude and not by laying claims. Such claims transform the faith, hope, and love by which man generously embraces persons and things into techniques for producing the right objects currently in demand on the market. Unfortunately, they realize all too late that the industry of truths, goods, and beautiful things, governed by the law of supply and demand, ends in the industry of life and death.

¹⁶“La véritable philosophie est la sainteté de la raison”(M. Blondel, *L'Action* [1893], [Paris: PUF, 1973], 442).

¹⁷The Greek word *sym-ballein* means to fit together, to meet, to be united, while *dia-ballein* means to divide, to isolate. Hence the opposition: *symbolon-diabolon*.

When gratitude gives way to claim-staking, man is afraid of man. He hides from him, from his gaze, lest he become an object of his making. Consequently, he also hides from that Gaze which the Greeks called *theós*.¹⁸ Detached from the “difficult”¹⁹ beauty radiating from this Gaze, man ceases to be *theós*, that is, divine, in his own eyes. He is no longer seen in love. Therefore—as Plato says—*dêmos*, the mass, becomes his divinity and he himself becomes a weather vane, turning this way and that with the majority at the moment.²⁰ He replaces philo-sophy with philo-demy and ethics with demagoguery. In the struggle between philo-sophy and philo-demy, what is at stake is the truth of freedom, that is to say, the person of man and, in him, the Person of God.

7. We must, I believe, rethink metaphysics and ethics in the light of the dramatic event of truth and freedom in the communion of persons, that is to say, in the light of the person’s pilgrimage toward the *templum* which awaits him—the other person. Not only will the tone and the accents of our thinking change as a result. We will see things differently, for example, the so-called natural inclinations which concretize the formal law of synderesis (*bonum est faciendum et malum est vitandum* [good is to be done and evil avoided]) in another way. According to Aquinas, who considered synderesis to be the foundation of the natural law,²¹ man shares with all the other beings a first inclination which he calls the instinctual propensity to self-defense.²² A second inclination, common to man and all the

¹⁸The term *theós* derives from *theaomai*, which means “to look at.” *Theós* signifies the mysterious Gaze which we live in the experience of beauty and of moral conscience. Greek mythology displays an awareness of this in the tale of beauty (Aphrodite) and remorse (Erinyes). According to the story, these two are born from the drops of blood that fall into the sea and upon the earth from the wound which Kronos (Time) inflicts upon his father Uranos (Heaven), conspiring against him with his mother Gaia (Earth).

¹⁹Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 384 b.

²⁰Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, 480–522.

²¹Cf. Stanisław Grygiel, “Intelektualne oraz antyintelektualne postawy w etyce” [Intellectual and anti-intellectual attitudes in ethics], and “Ludzka twarz prawa natury” [The human face of the natural law] in “Kimże jest człowiek?” [Who, then, is man?] (Kielce: Jedność, 1995), 165–222.

²²*Inest enim primoinclinatio homini ad bonum secundum naturam, in qua communicat cum omnibus substantiis, prout scilicet quaelibet substantia appetit conservationem sui esse*

animals, induces the male and female to generate children and educate them.²³ Only a third inclination, orienting man to knowledge of the truth about God, so that he may avoid ignorance and not injure those with whom he should live in dialogue (*cum quibus debet conversari*),²⁴ ensures that man does not belong to the world in which he exists.

If truth is understood, then, as a drama of one person's presence to another person (*vir qui ad-est*), man's orientation to man (second inclination) and to himself (first inclination) should be seen within the perspective of man's orientation to the truth (third inclination). Truth occurs in the drama of the person's growing together with (*con-crescere*) beings as gifts given to him. In a particular way it happens in the drama of one person's growing together with another. Therefore truth and freedom are not even conceivable outside of the sponsality of man's personal being. Truth and freedom happen where persons generate and educate one another, that is to say, where each one helps the other to be himself. One person's growing together with (*con-crescere*) another in the space of the sexual difference has nothing in common (beyond outward appearances) with the mating of animals. An animal does not die to himself and

secundum suam naturam; et secundum hanc inclinationem pertinent ad legem naturalem ea per quae vita hominis conservatur, et contrarium impeditur [For there is first an inclination in man to the good according to nature. He shares this inclination with all substances, inasmuch as every substance seeks to conserve its being in accord with its nature. And in accord with this inclination, things by which man's life is conserved and the contrary hindered belong to the natural law] (*Summa theologiae* I-II, 94, 2, c).

²³*Secundo inest homini inclinatio ad aliqua magis specialia secundum naturam, in qua communicat cum caeteris animalibus; . . . ut est commixtio maris et feminae, et educatio liberorum* [Second, there is an inclination in man towards some more special things according to nature. This he shares with the other animals...for example the commingling of male and female and the rearing of children] (*ibid.*).

²⁴*Tertio modo inest homini inclinatio ad bonum secundum naturam rationis . . . sicut homo habet naturalem inclinationem ad hoc quod veritatem cognoscat de Deo, et ad hoc, quod in societate vivat; et secundum hoc ad legem naturalem pertinent ea quae ad huiusmodi inclinationem spectant, utpote quod homo ignorantiam vitet, quod alios non offendat, cum quibus debet conversari* [In the third mode there is an inclination in man towards the good of rational nature...as man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society. And, in this respect, things pertaining to this type of inclination belong to the natural law, for example that man should avoid ignorance and that he should not injure others with whom he must be in society] (*ibid.*).

does not hope to rise in another animal. “Anagogical” elevation above the world of things is foreign to it, as is the *magna quaestio*: “Where do I come from and where am I going?” The sponsality of personal being, which makes man a poet and philosopher, is foreign to the animal.

To be sure, man possesses the instinct of self-defense like the other “substances” (*cum omnibus substantiis*).²⁵ Yet, the orientation to the truth of the person transfigures this instinct; man defends his own being by giving himself to others and for others. In the end, he entrusts himself to the Person, whose life knows neither birth nor death. Consequently, when man confines himself to the time that stretches between birth and death, he acts against the nature of his personal being; he is no longer a pilgrim.²⁶ Perhaps this is what M. Blondel had in mind when he wrote: “Sacrifice is the solution to the metaphysical problem by the experimental method.”²⁷ In other words, philosophical thought takes place in the spiritual space between the *fiat mihi* and the *con-summatum est*. In these two judgments of gratitude and fulfillment the divine content of the drama of truth and freedom is revealed, a drama that is unfolded precisely where two or three build a communion of persons. The great question “where do I come from and where am I going?” becomes itself in the supplicant, praying confession: “I am you and you are me!” And this means that the essence of philosophy is not only philosophical.—*Translated by Linda Cicone.* □

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²⁵Cf. fn. 22.

²⁶It is in this sense that I understand Aquinas’ statement that man must defend his own being *secundum suam naturam* (cf. fn. 22).

²⁷“Le sacrifice est la solution du problème métaphysique par la méthode expérimentale” (Blondel, *L’Action*, 442).