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PHILOSOPHICAL PERSONALISTIC REFLECTION ON THE BODY AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGY

The article explores how Personalist Philosophy can be helpful for Theology by focusing on the concrete topic of the body. The renewed philosophical interest in the body is important for Christian Theology inasmuch as the latter is centered on the concreteness of the Incarnation. The article follows Gabriel Marcel's approach as a guideline to review the understanding of the body proper to Personalism. In this approach, the body is seen as the person's relational presence in the world and among others and as the openness of the person towards transcendence. The richness of this approach is explored in three important areas of dogmatic theology: Christology, Sacramentology, and the Theology of Creation. The article exemplifies the circularity between Philosophy and Theology in the concrete topic of the body.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr tells us about his way to conversion, which went hand in hand with a search for true philosophy. After doing away with the Pythagorean master (who asked for complicated mathematical studies) and the

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Aristotelian one (who asked just for money), Justin discovered in Plato's ascent to God a first answer to his restlessness, which prepared him for the encounter with Christ. This encounter, however, did not leave his philosophy unchanged, which, after his conversion, moved far away from Platonism. This is evident, for example, if we consider that Justin accounts for the difference between man and the animals not only in terms of soul, but also of the body. It is evident, as well, in the place Justin assigns to the bodily senses as a criterion to ascertain truth[1]. It seems, therefore, that the encounter with Christ, transformed as well his philosophical views, making him one of those "friends of the body," as Celso called the Christians (*philosômaton génos*)[2].

Justin's path is relevant to understanding how the philosophy of our time can help us do theology. This question was difficult to answer while "our time" meant Modernity. For it is a characteristic feature of the Enlightenment that it attempted to absorb Christianity as an intermediary stage within the development of philosophy. This is in a strong contrast with Justin's vision, in which the history of philosophy moves forward as a gradual incarnation of the Logos, so that all of philosophy points towards Christian faith. This relationship has been radically inverted in modern times. For the modern philosophers, faith in Jesus, because of its historical particularity, that is, because of the value it gives to the flesh, could not offer a universal outlook, which was reserved to enlightened reason. It is this scandal of concrete mediation that Rousseau expresses in a text quoted by the encyclical *Lumen fidei*: "Is it so simple and natural that God addressed Moses to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau?"[3]

Today, Modernity has ceased to be the background from which we think. Above all, the universalist claim of reason is looked at with suspicion. From Husserl on, more importance has been given to concrete experience. It is today clear that a quest for an universal account of reality is valid only if it starts from the viewpoint of particular existence. We are all too familiar with an allergy to big narratives.

Paradoxically, this could be an opportunity for Christian theology, which no longer need fear being absorbed by a totalizing philosophy. To the contrary, the Christian interest in the body can be seen now as an asset. Theology finds itself very much attuned with the new philosophical search, inasmuch as Christianity is

1 See J.J. Ayán, *Antropología de San Justino*, Córdoba 1988. Also in the treatise *De resurrectione* – the work of Justin or of a close disciple of his – there arises a similar vision, for the bodily senses are seen as the ultimate criterion that decide on the truth of our knowledge: see A. D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino. Sulla Resurrezione. Discorso cristiano del II secolo*, Brescia 2001.

2 Origen, *Adv. Cel.*, VIII 36 (SCh 150, 94).

3 J.J. Rousseau, *Letter to Christophe de Beaumont*, Lausanne 1993, 110; quoted in *Lumen fidei* 14.

born of concrete historical facts, not deductible a priori, contingent, carnal. For, since the Logos was made flesh, the flesh is the "hinge of salvation"[4]. Thus, philosophy and theology find a joint venture today in the business of the body. Even though cooperation is not easy, it is fortunate that the place where cooperation is expected, which is the arena of corporeality, happens to be the very place where theology claims revelation has happened.

This means, of course, that we can no longer take for granted the theological claim that each true philosophical path leads towards faith in Christ. But this does not detract anything from Christianity's universal claim, since its universality does not obtain independently from incarnate experience, but precisely through it. Christianity is universal through the body, with a kind of universality that comes gradually, drop by drop, encounter by encounter, and only in this way reaches to all people. And that is why its status as universal truth for all people will only appear with unequivocal clarity at the end of history.

This is why, as Robert Spaemann has pointed out, the theological search for a correspondence between revealed truths and universal philosophical visions (as we see in Rahner) is a thing of the past. Much more promising, Spaemann adds, are the attempts to develop a "positive philosophy" (we can also say: a concrete, carnal philosophy) that explores not just absolute necessity, but "the necessity of contingency".

An example of this interest in the contingent and the concrete are the personalist authors of the 20th century. Thus, Emmanuel Mounier affirms that personalism is surely a philosophy, and not only a feeling; but he warns immediately that it is a non-systematic philosophy[5]. And Gabriel Marcel advocates a "philosophy of the concrete", whose starting point (a point never to be abandoned) needs to be our incarnate condition[6]. The very name "personalism" looks, in this light, inappropriate, for every system, every "-ism", has to be rejected. That is why

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4 R. Spaemann, *Christentum und Philosophie der Neuzeit*, en id., *Das unsterbliche Gerücht*, Stuttgart 2007: "Solche Versuche [die Verwandlung von Wahrheiten der Offenbarung in philosophischen Apriorismus] scheinen mir eher der Vergangenheit anzugehören, während die Ansätze, die an so etwas wie eine positive Philosophie anknüpfen, von aktuellem Interesse bleiben, so auch der Entwurf einer theologischen Ästhetik von Hans Urs von Balthasar" (p. 89); "Die Zukunft scheint mir durch ein Nebeneinander bestimmt zu sein, eine Bemühung von Theologie und Philosophie um gemeinsame Themen, ohne dass diese Bemühungen durch eine methodische Vorentscheidung koordiniert werden. Was wir unter Postmoderne verstehen, ist ein solcher nicht vorprogrammiertes Nebeneinander kontingenter Bemühungen" (p. 91).

5 See E. Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, Paris 1950, Introduction.

6 See G. Marcel, *Ébauche d'une philosophie concrète*, in: *Du refus à l'invocation*, Paris 1940, p. 81–110.

Paul Ricoeur was able to say: "personalism dies, the person returns"[7]. But what is the key feature of the concrete person? The answer is "the incarnate condition". Thus Mounier begins his summary of personalism by speaking precisely of the "body". "Thinking the body", analyzing the "*cogito* of the flesh", becomes the first philosophical task, the most urgent of our time[8]. In this case Philosophy links up with the major Christian claim, a claim to which Justin Martyr gave voice when he spoke of the incarnation of the Logos[9].

If the above said is true, then the question of how philosophy helps theology can be formulated in the following way: how does a "philosophy of the body" help theology? To respond, I begin by studying how the return to the body has been a central theme of philosophy since the last century (1). Next (2) I describe some ways in which this philosophical vision of the body can enrich theological thought. I plan to take into account three examples: Christology, sacramentology, and the theology of creation.

Let us note how the 20th Century revival of interest in the body, which corresponds to the core of Christian faith, has first awakened in Philosophy and, from there, it has spread to theology. If Saint Justin had converted at the beginning of the last Century his account of how he developed interest in the body would have been different. The Martyr would have learned about the body through Philosophy, while Theology would have not dealt much with the topic. Joseph Ratzinger, in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, points out the lack of development of a theology of the body in the pastoral constitution, inasmuch as the text limits itself to repeating worn-out formulas. Ratzinger suggests considering the contribution of a philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, who distinguishes the relationship with objects (one of possession) from the relationship with one's own body (one of implication), because the latter invites the person fully to participate in reality[10].

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7 See P. Ricoeur, *Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne*, Esprit 73 (1983), p. 113–119.

8 See M. Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, Paris 2000; for a critical reading of Henry's proposal see J. Granados, *Carne e filiazione: La riflessione di Michel Henry sul corpo in Incarnation*, en *Creazione dell'uomo generazione della vita. In dialogo con il pensiero di M. Henry*, ed. G. Marengo, F. Pesce, Siena 2012, p. 25–40.

9 See E. Mounier, *L'enjeu des valeurs judéo-chrétiennes: Personnalisme catholique (fin): VII La condition humaine*, Esprit et le Voltigeur 8 (1940), p. 57–72.

10 J. Ratzinger, *Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche: Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, vol. 3, p. 322–323: "Auch die hilfreiche Unterscheidung von G. Marcel in 'avoir possession' und 'avoir implication' scheint nicht auf, die es ermöglicht, das 'ich habe einen Leib' von jeder anderen Weise des Habens abzugrenzen, 'das wegen seiner Innerlichkeit auch ein ‚ich bin' sein kann'".

A PHILOSOPHY OF THE FLESH

The contemporary philosophical interest in the body can be seen as a reaction to a trend towards "excarnation" that has been underway since the Protestant Reformation[11]. This excarnation has not only affected religious doctrine and practice, but also the overall development of modern culture. Descartes is, maybe, the best known theorist of this vision of the body as pure matter, *res extensa*, something not specifically human, opposed to the *res cogitans*. It is true that Romanticism reacted against the excessive dominance of reason that ensued, but only by being anchored in another kind of subjectivism, that of sentiment. In this way it was not really a recovery of the body, given that the body integrates us in the common material universe. The decisive change came with phenomenology in the 20th century. Even though Husserl intended to develop the idealistic project, he had great influence in recovering the importance of the living body, which we can call a "proper" body (as when we say a "proper" name). He contributed to look at the body as the presence of an irreducible otherness in the constitution of the subject, thus overcoming these notions of identity rooted in the isolated Cartesian *cogito*[12]. Witness to Husserls' influence is the popularity of his distinction between *Körper* (the body as an object in the world) and *Leib* (the living body that feels and can be felt, that belongs to the cosmos but also to the realm of the subjective).

The philosophical movement known as Personalism cultivated much interest on the body. This was because the body is key to the singularity and concreteness of the human person, as well as to his social dimension. Perhaps it was Gabriel Marcel who best explored the question of bodiliness[13]. He did so, moreover, while cultivating an openness to transcendence, something which makes his approach apt to cooperate with theology. Marcel shows that the relationship with one's own body is the starting point of all authentic philosophical reflection[14]. Why is this so? The answer is that for Marcel the connection with our own body is at the root of the crucial epistemological distinction between mystery and problem.

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11 See Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge–London 2007, p. 613–615, 631, 640, 644.

12 See P. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris 1990, p. 373–374: "Moi comme chair, avant la constitution de l'alter ego, c'est ce que la stratégie de la constitution intersubjetive de la nature commune exige de penser. Que nous devions à une impossible entreprise la formation du concept ontologique de chair, voilà la divine surprise" (p. 374).

13 See G. Marcel, *L'être incarné, repère central de la réflexion métaphysique*, in *Du refus à l'invocation*, Paris 1940, p. 19–54; id. *Le mystère de l'être*, Paris 1951.

14 Cf. G. Marcel, *L'être incarné*…

BODY AND MYSTERY

A "problem" is an external obstacle to knowledge, which can be separated from oneself, and after having being looked at from all sides, be solved. This is the way in which an engineer overcomes the difficulties while building a bridge. If the problem-solving gaze were the only one available, it would be impossible to heal the fracture we experience between us and the world, for this gaze starts always with an objectifying look at reality that separates it from the subject. But Marcel points out that there is a deeper way of exploring the world that is not determined by problems, but by the consideration of reality as *mystery*. A *mystery* cannot be known by separating it from us, because the mystery surrounds us. We can only know it, by accepting (in freedom) our belonging to it. Thus, one can interpret a mystery only inasmuch as he let himself be interpreted by it. Moreover, since it is the mystery that embraces us, it cannot be wholly grasped by us, so that the mystery remains a continuous source of new meaning. Thus, mystery is for Marcel the key of all philosophical experience.

Now then, for Marcel, the primary place in which we grasp this dimension of mystery is our relationship with our own body. For to accept our body as ours, means to accept as ours the engagement with the world that surrounds us, that is, it means that we can be ourselves only by participating in something greater than us, which discloses itself to us not as just a given, but as something that continuously gives. Isolation from our body means, to the contrary, the reduction of all mystery to a problem and the loss of any genuine philosophical experience. Paraphrasing Tertullian's well-known phrase, we can say that, for Marcel, the body is the hinge of philosophy, or also: *extra carnem, nulla philosophia.*

With this approach we can think of the body as a space, a terrain, a dwelling place, a home, which precedes the "thinking self" (*cogito*) and where this "thinking self" grows. That is to say that the *cogito* is never the original experience, but that the *cogito* springs, as from a fertile ground, from our incarnated situation in the world. The body is, then, as Paul Ricoeur puts it, the original passivity or receptivity of the person[15]. Because of the body, the identity of the person carries within itself an irreducible reference to otherness. To accept one's own body means, thus, to accept that we are not isolated subjects but relational persons, whose identity is dependent on our way of participating in our surrounding world. What does this otherness consist of, and how is it possible to integrate it in the definition of the person? To answer this question it is crucial to consider that the body always places us in relation to other people.

[15] P. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*…, cap. X.

BODY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Marcel emphasizes that the body establishes a link between us and our family of origin, especially with our parents, who generated us through their own bodies. And he concludes that the relationship with one's own body is analogous to the relationship with one's own family of origin[16]. Not only the body, but also the family, are like the ground where the person germinates, and to which the person belongs. Both (body and family) are the first dwelling-place where the person, like a tree, takes roots. Having a body means that the relationships with our parents and siblings are part of our innermost identity, and that these relationships are placed, not only outside, but also within us. To have a corporeal identity is to have a filial and a fraternal identity, and to be able to assume in oneself other relationships, like the one that unites husband and wife.

An important conclusion from this point of departure is the weakness of representing our identity as a Cartesian subject, or "disembedded I" (Charles Taylor's terminology), a representation that has been predominant in Modernity. To the contrary, because of its bodily condition, the person is constitutively relational. Emanuel Mounier sums up Marcel's proposal in this way: "to exist subjectively and to exist corporally is one and the same thing"[17]. Which can be completed thus: "to exist corporally and to exist *relationally* is one and the same thing". Let us remember a fruitful idea of Karol Wojtyla, when he reflects on the different uses of the word "mine"[18]. We distinguish between saying "my car" and "my wife" (or "my husband", "my son or daughter", etc.), because in the second case we can only say "mine" if we accept to be someone's "you" and to belong to him. Now, then, when I say "my body" I am not in the first category (as "my car", "my watch") but in the second, which means: I can say that the body is "mine" only if I accept to belong to others.

According to Marcel, then, we can see our family relationships as constitutive of what we are as persons, not only from a psychological viewpoint but, thanks to the body, also on ontological grounds. Each person comes from the union of a father and a mother, so that this reference to the marital bond is crucial for the identity of each child. The sexual body is, therefore, from the origin of one's own life, a necessary reference in order to understand who we are.

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[16] See G. Marcel, *Le mystère familial*, in: *Homo viator: prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance*, Paris 1963, p. 89–124, 90–91.

[17] Cf. E. Mounier, *Le personnalisme*…

[18] Cf. K. Wojtyla, *Raggi di paternità*, in: id., *Opere letterarie. Poesie e drammi*, Città del Vaticano 1993, p. 518, 535; John Paul II, *Man and woman He created them: a theology of the body*, Boston 2006, cat. 33, 4.

On the other hand, the same sexual difference that is placed in my origin, becomes part of the orientation of my existence towards the future, inasmuch as it makes me capable of forming a spousal union that, in its turn, is fruitful. The ground or place on which the person is rooted and grows is, in this way, a ground or place of relationships ordered according to the filial, fraternal, nuptial, paternal and maternal axes.

If the family relationships are key to understanding the body and its place in our life, the reverse is also true: the body helps us grasp the crucial place of these relationships in our life. By their rootedness in the body, these relationships, as we already said, are not only external to us, but they belong to our identity. Besides, the fact that these relationships are bodily, opens them up beyond the "I-you" dialogical couple. For the body implies an expansion, not only beyond the isolated subject, but also beyond the couple, since none of them can wholly account for the otherness that the body witnesses. Thus, for example, thanks to the body, the union of two spouses is not closed in on themselves. The fact that they are not the origin of their sexual difference, nor of the fruitfulness it contains, places their relationship within a chain of generations, where they themselves were born, and where they can transmit life for others and contribute to the common good of society.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LOVE

If the above said is true, then the fact that the body can be integrated into our own identity, depends on the kind of relationships to which our body opens up to. The relationships that are constituted in the body appear to us in a certain order, an order built on the link between sexual difference and procreation. Now then, this order belongs to the original passivity or receptivity of our corporeality. Thus, it is possible to accept our corporeality only if we accept this order.

It is the case that precisely this order prevents a total dominion of one person over another, thus guaranteeing personal dignity and freedom. We can accept, for example, our filiation, only if the relationship with our father and mother is open beyond the desires of both of them. Otherwise we would be conditioned in excess by the desires of both. So, the fact that we are born from a sexual difference, not made by our father or mother, assures to us that neither of them nor both together are the main reference of our origin.

This order of relationships contained in the body can be seen as a language (the language of the body), for it structures the way human persons communicate between them, allowing for a conversation in which their own personal identity is at

stake[19]. In this light it is interesting to think of the name the child receives from his parents. This name can be accepted by the child (and not be felt as an imposition) because it goes together with his bodily birth from them, that is, with the fact that his ultimate origin passes through their bodily union. Thus, this name is dependent on the founding bodily language of filiation, through which the child belongs to his family and acknowledges his origin in his parents.

Why should we accept that the language of the body is the language of our personal identity? Are we not able to reject this language, even if that amounts to reject a part of ourselves? Are we neutral before the two options – embracing or abandoning the order of relationships inscribed in our body? If we can reply that we are *not* neutral, but inclined to accept as good the relationships our bodies disclose to us, this is because we experience the connection between corporeality and personal love. The relationships inscribed in our body are the place where personal love can happen in all its radicality, not as a shallow phenomenon, but as something that determines the depth of who we are. And so, for example, it is the love of his father and mother that allows the child to recognize as good and as enriching the relationship with his own body, which places him in relationship with them. Without personal love our incarnate condition would be felt as a prison or, worse, a tomb. In connection whith personal love, it is perceived as the possibility of sharing our life with others and of expanding it before our own limits. We can, then, conclude that the philosophy of the body is necessary connected to a philosophy of language and to a philosophy of love.

THE BODY AND TRANSCENDENCE

Let us add that the incarnate condition of the human person is also the place in which the question of transcendence can be raised. The acceptance of one's own body cannot be accomplished only by looking at those persons our body opens up to, because the otherness of the body is mysterious also for those persons. Thus, no parent can fully answer the question his child poses on the meaning of existence.

Is there a relationship which can totally account for the otherness inscribed in our body? Our ability fully to accept one's own body depends on the answer to this question. Now then, to accept such a relationship is to accept the existence of a Creator, which means that to accept the Creator and fully to accept one's

[19] See J. Kupczak, *The Language of the Body*, in: id., *Gift and Communion*, Catholic University of America Press 2014, p. 170–206.

own body are intimately connected. The way towards God does not happen by denying the flesh, but by radically accepting it. Conversely, the first consequence of rejecting the Creator is the unwillingness of being wholly reconciled with one's own body.

In order to offer a complete picture of the philosophical vision of the body two additional points should be added. First, this vision of the body brings with it a similar vision of time. Time, like the body, prevents us from conceiving of an isolated and self-sufficient subject. While the Cartesian "I" was able to find in the "I think" the first undeniable truth, this "I" could not say with the same certainty "I have thought" or "I will think"[20]. Whoever says "I am my time", as well as whoever says "I am my body", has to understand himself as a relational subject, constituted by otherness. Thus, Marcel could compare the relationship with one's own body with the relationship with one's own past[21]. For the body, in preceding the "I", is a sort of memory, which speaks of what continually precedes us. This shows that, with time, as it was the case with the body, interpersonal relationships are crucial. The otherness with which time tears us apart can be accepted as good only by accepting as good the otherness of these people who mediate our relationship with time. Thus, the relationship with the past is initially mediated by our parents, and is called to acquire the filial form of gratitude. The relationship with the future opens up to the generation of our children, and takes the form of responsibility towards them. And the relationship with the unity of the whole of our narrative takes as its paradigm nuptial fidelity.

Secondly, we should notice the ambivalence that marks all of bodily experiences. As we have shown, the acceptance of our own body implies the acceptance of the relationships the body opens up, and this acceptance is a free act. Before us lies always another possibility: refusing to recognize as part of oneself the otherness of the body. This refusal goes normally together with the attempt to reduce the body to a place of individual self-expression. However, since the body always keeps in itself an otherness unfashionable by our desires, this path ends up identifying the body as a place of alienation. It is from here that we experience the body as tempting and as suffering flesh[22].

We can briefly enumerate the main aspects (or Principles) of a philosophy of the body, principles whose fruitfulness for theology we will see in our second paragraph:

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[20] Cf. R. Spaemann, *Personen: Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen 'etwas' und 'jemand'*, Stuttgart 1996.

[21] G. Marcel, *Journal métaphysique*, Paris 1927, p. 242–243.

[22] Cf. E. Lévinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, Paris 1991.

(1) The *original receptivity of the body* or the body as the terrain that situates the person in the world, or as the background against which personal identity develops.

(2) The *constitutive relationality of the body*, or the nexus between the body and personal bonds, especially the family ones: filiation, fraternity, nuptiality, paternity... The following points (3) and (4) are derived from this relationality:

(3) The existence of a *body language*, or the mutual reference of body and word, which contains the order of relationships our body opens up to.

(4) The *co-implication between the experience of the body and the experience of love*: by the connection between love and the body, love can constitute our inmost identity; by the connection between our body and the experience of love, we can acknowledge the body as "good".

(5) The *transcendent reference of the body*, or the body as a privileged space of openness towards the Creator.

(6) The *intrinsic temporality of the body*, or the link between "I am my body" and "I am my time".

(7) The *ambivalence of the body*, which is either a place of participation of the person in the world or of lonely self-affirmation; the ambivalence depends on how our freedom places itself before the body: as a place of openness to a call that precedes us; or as a confirmation of the subject's isolation.

Let us now explore the theological potentiality of this presentation. As we will see, the starting point of the body allows us to give place of pride precisely to those aspects that are specific to the Christian faith and central to it, such as the Incarnation and resurrection of Christ, or the meaning of the sacramental economy and of the Church as Christ's body. Let us delve into this point with more detail.

THEOLOGICAL HORIZONS FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BODY

How can this quest to explore the meanings of the body enrich theology? Let us remark that this is not just a search that precedes theology, but rather a circular relationship. For the Christian faith itself has illumined in a new way what the body is all about. One can speak of a "Christian invention of the body"[23]. Thus, when it contributes to theological thought, the philosophy of the body is, so to speak,

[23] A. Gesché, *L'invention chrétienne du corps*, Revue théologique de Louvain 35 (2004), p. 166–202.

repaying an old debt[24]. Taking into account this circularity, theology enriches itself with the philosophy of the body and, in turn, it enriches the philosophical consideration of the body[25]. In addition, Christianity has inaugurated a new way of living out the body, which allows us to speak of "the invention of the Christian body"[26]. I am going to explore three concrete areas in which the phenomenology of the body helps develop a theological outlook, not from the outside, but from the internal presuppositions of Christian faith.

A CHRISTOLOGY OF THE FLESH

"The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14). St. John did not say, "He became man," although this is also true. Why did he prefer "flesh"? The Old Testament background contains a concept of flesh that adapts well to the one we arrived at with our previous philosophical description. When the Bible says "flesh" (*basar*) it does not indicate only a part or element of the human being, but the whole person as a relational being. More specifically, "flesh" refers to the person as belonging to his earthly environment, and as dependent on a network of human relationships, especially those connected with the family. Thus, man becomes "one flesh" with his wife (Gen 2:24), from where the flesh of the child is born, who will share the same flesh of his siblings (Gen 37:27). This unity of flesh can then be expanded to the whole People of Israel, as if it were a big family (2Sam 5:1: "your bone and we are your flesh").

The flesh is thus the common environment that associates the human beings among themselves and with the rest of the cosmos. In fact, this idea of the flesh as the first dwelling place of man is present in the context of the sentence "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). "Becoming flesh" is equal to "to dwell among us" (ibid.), and this dwelling is identified by John as a Temple, where we can see God's glory (ibid.). Jesus himself identified his body with a Temple that was to be destroyed and rebuilt (cf. John 2:21).

From this point of view, the Logos does not assume an individual human life. Rather what he takes up, in becoming man, is also the common environment of our humanity, which he shares with us (Principle 1 of the list above). This common environment or dwelling place is the relational background of his presence in the world, which he inherits from his ancestors and shares with all men (Principle 2).

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[24] Cf. A. Fitzpatrick, *Thomas Aquinas on bodily identity*, Oxford 2017.

[25] F. Hadjadj, *La Profondeur des sexes: Pour une mystique de la chair*, Seuil 2008.

[26] A. Gesché, *L'invention chrétienne du corps*…

This is what saint Hilary of Poitiers had in mind when he spoke, not only of "in-carnation", but of "con-carnation"[27]. In a similar vein, St. Augustine replies to the objection that Adam's sins are foreign to us: they are alien, he says, but they are our father's and, therefore, they not just alien, but also ours: *aliena sunt, sed paterna sunt*[28]. Something analogous can be said of the work of Christ. Being the work of our brother, it is not really alien to each human being, and it can be communicated to us inasmuch as Christ is also our father, as the last Adam.

This is also why Saint Hilary goes so far as to say that Jesus has assumed all of humanity, without thus denying the difference between Jesus' humanity and ours. Does not saint Leo the Great invites us to contemplate "our own flesh" in the crucified flesh of Jesus?[29] By sharing our flesh, Christ becomes part of our same network of relationships. He takes up the very background against which our identity is formed, in order to transform this background according to his own way of living out his relationship with the Father and with men.

By putting the emphasis on the flesh we are able to shed light on some important aspects of Christology:

i) First of all, the importance of the body helps us understand the union of the divine and the human in Christ. The Son of God assumes a human body. Here we don't have just a paradoxical union of opposite features, like eternity and time, heaven and earth. For what is proper to the body, let us recall, is to be a space of relationships that is filially oriented (principle 2). Moreover, the body points, through the chain of generations, towards the hands of the Creator that formed us in the womb (Principle 5). Now, when the Son of God, whose identity consists of receiving everything from the Father, assumes a body, what we have is an encounter of two filial ways of openness to the Father: that of the body, that of the Son.

The Incarnation is, then, the fulfillment of the body as filially oriented. Christ's body is not less corporeal than ours but, so to speak, more corporeal, because it preserves better the memory of the Father's hands and, thus, is more open to the whole of the human family. Let us remember that the formula "God became man" is more precise in his filial enunciation: "The Son of God became the son of man"[30].

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[27] Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matth.*, VI 1 (SCh 254, 170); *De Trin.*, 43.6 (CCL 62, lín. 1); cf. L.F. Ladaria, *Caro salutis est cardo*, Anthropotes 28 (2012), p. 327–338.

[28] Cf. St. Augustine, *Contra Jul. opus imperf.*, I, 48 (CSEL 85/1, p. 40, line 108).

[29] Cf. St. Leo the Great, *Tractatus*, 66 (CCL 138, lín. 74): "ut illius carnem suam esse cognoscat".

[30] Cf. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adv. Haer.*, III, 16, 3 (SCh 211, lín. 74); IV, 33, 11 (SCh 100, lín. 223); Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trin*, X, 15 (CCL 62A, lín. 9).

The implication is that, by sharing in his flesh, we also become children of God[31], "getting used to" receive God, as Saint Ireneaus has it[32].

ii) This fullness that the Incarnation brings to humanity can be grasped, as well, from the viewpoint of the pair Logos – flesh. Let us consider, on the one hand, that the body possesses in itself a logos or language; and, on the other hand, that human language needs the concrete encounters established in the body (Principle 3). The language of the body consists, as we said earlier, in the order of relationships that fosters communion between human beings and of human beings with God. Since Adam's sin, however, the flesh bears within itself a language of self-sufficiency and mutual exploitation, which prevents us from hearing the more original language of participation with the others and openness to God (Principle 7). Jesus, as the Logos made flesh, recovered throughout his life the creatural language of the body in order to establish a new measure in this very language, that is to say, in order to inaugurate a renewed bodily capacity to relate to God and to our brothers and sisters (principles 2 and 5).

iii) The emphasis on the flesh helps us consider also the role of the Spirit in the work of Jesus. It is essential at this point to remember the link, pointed out by the philosophical description we attempted above, between the experience of the flesh and the experience of love, so that love vivifies and dynamizes the relationships established in the flesh (Principle 4). As we said earlier, our situation in the body as openness towards the world and towards others, can only be acknowledged as good if the relationships to which the body opens up, are infused by love. Thus, for example, the filial language of the body will be experienced as slavish dependence unless it is accompanied by paternal or maternal love. Now, this means that Jesus' corporeality was opened to love, in fact, to this fullness of love which is the Holy Spirit, who fully vivified all of his relationships. Thanks to the Spirit, Jesus was able to live his corporeality according to its fullest measure of goodness, in order to leave this very measure as an inheritance to the faithful. This outlook allows us to give its proper weight to the whole of Jesus' time (principle 6), as the time it took to inscribe in his body, under the action of the Spirit of love, his new way of relating to the Fathers and to us. It is thus possible to propose a Christology of the mysteries of Jesus' life, without having to concentrate Christology in the two poles of birth and Paschal mystery[33].

[31] Cf. St. Irenaus, *Adv. Haer.*, III 19, 1 (SCh 211, lín. 18): "Propter hoc enim Verbum Dei homo, et qui Filius Dei est Filius hominis factus est, «ut homo», commixtus Verbo Dei et adoptionem percipiens, fiat filius Dei".

[32] Cf. St. Irenaus, *Adv. Haer.*, III 20, 2 (SCh 211, lín. 67): "Verbum Dei quod habitauit in homine et Filius hominis factus est, ut adsuesceret hominem percipere Deum et adsuesceret Deum habitare in homine secundum placitum Patris".

[33] See J. Granados, *Teología de los misterios de la vida de Jesús: ensayo sobre la cristología soteriológica*, Salamanca 2009.

THE SACRAMENTS, THE NEW PLACE OF CHRIST'S FLESH

This outlook towards Christology from the viewpoint of the flesh, can now be projected towards the future, that is, towards the theology of the sacraments. In fact, the Johannine language of the "Word made flesh" can be show to depend directly on Jesus' words in the institution of the Eucharist. Recall that Jesus did not say: "take this, my strength", nor "take this, my love", nor even "take this, my life", but "take this, my body".

The Eucharistic mention of a body "given up for you" receives light when we consider it from what we know about the philosophy of the body. For the body, as the first background of our presence to the world, contains in itself that original order of relationships integral to our identity (principles 1 and 2). And precisely this order is contained in the words of Jesus, who orientates his body towards the Father ("giving thanks") and towards his brothers to whom he gives life ("my body for you"). The sacrament contains, then, a new body, structured according to a new language (principle 3), so that in this body we can live a new love (principle 4). That is why the Eucharist generates the Church as family or fraternity (1 Pt 2:17: *adelphotes*), that is, as a gathering of men born of the same womb (*delphús*), in order to live in a new common body, thus sharing in the same origin and destiny (principle 6). The body we receive in the Eucharist brings with it an original passivity or a constitutive alterity (Ricoeur), that is, it contains the original coordinates of our participation in the world according to Jesus' measure. Thus it dies the body of the old Adam, a body slave to injustice and wickedness (cf. Rom 6:19), while a new body for justice is born (ibid.), "a flesh from which sin has been cast out"[34]. God's grace is, then, communicated to us through the body (Principle 5).

Thus, when Jesus said "take this, my body", he was giving his disciples access to the very background of relationships he had lived out, in his path from the Incarnation to Easter. St. Augustine saw it clearly, when he highlighted the connection between the real presence of the risen body of Christ and the real presence of our new Christian body. This is why, when we say "Amen" to the body of Christ presented to us by the priest, we are in fact saying "Amen" to our life as members of that body: "Receive what you are and become what you receive"[35]. "In the same way as Jesus became our flesh by being born, so we become his body by being reborn (in Baptism)"[36].

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[34] Cf. St. Irenaus, *Adv. Haer.*, III 20, 2 (SCh 211, lín. 67): "in similitudinem carnis peccati factum est, [...] *ut peccatum proieceret extra carnem*".

[35] St. Augustine, *Sermo*, 272,1 (PL 38, 1247).

[36] St. Leo Magnus, *Tractatus*, 23 (CCL 138, lín. 117): "sicut factus est dominus Iesus caro nostra nascendo, ita et nos facti sumus corpus ipsius renascendo".

Several horizons for sacramental theology open up from here:

i) What does it mean to say that the Lord instituted all of the sacraments of the new Law? The institution of the sacraments can be explained in the light of the new meanings of the language of the body lived out by Christ. These new meanings can be transmitted to the faithful, inasmuch as they were engraved by Jesus in the body, that is, in the common relational background proper to all men. Christ instituted new sacraments inasmuch as he inscribed in the assumed body a new way of relating to God and men.

It is important in this regard to differentiate the institution of the sacrament (as establishment of a new meaning of Jesus' body), on the one hand, and the institution of the sacramental rite, on the other, as St. Thomas does[37]. The former takes precedence. For the rite is at the service of the meaning of the body of Christ, in order to recall it and to make it effectively present in the life of the faithful. By paying attention to the meaning of Christ's body, one can then find that each sacrament has a concrete basis in the very life of Christ, even if there is a lack of specific gestures and words for some of the sacraments.

This outlook has an advantage over the one proposed by Karl Rahner, who addressed the problem of the lack of explicit biblical texts for the institution of some sacraments by turning to the institution of the Church as a radical sacrament (*Wurzelsakrament*). But in our way of explaining the institution, the sacraments are rooted directly in the life of Christ, as witnessed by the Gospels. On the other hand, the radical sacrament (*Wurzelsakrament*) is the Eucharist, inasmuch as it contains the new corporeality of Jesus, from which the Church is born.

ii) In this outlook, the doctrine of the sacramental character acquires a special weight. For character can be understood as the new configuration of the Christian's body, a configuration received from Christ's personal body by participating in its meanings through the sacraments. Thus character is a sign "in the soul" (Council of Trent), only because it is first a sign in the body, that is, because it constitutes the new relational framework of man's presence in the world, analogous to the one we received when we are born in our family.

Thus, it is possible to recover an important aspect of the patristic outlook, that is, the priority of the sacramental character over the sacramental rite. Let us remember that St. Augustine called *sacramentum* not so much the baptismal rite, but its permanent effect on the baptized, that is, what we would today call "character"[38]. And that something similar happens with priestly orders and even

[37] See B.M. Perrin, *L'institution des sacrements in Le commentaire des sentences de saint Thomas*, Paris 2008.

[38] Cf. N.M. Haring, *St. Augustine's Use of the Word 'Character'*, Mediaeval Studies 14 (1952), p. 79–97.

with marriage, where the *sacramentum* is the indissoluble conjugal bond between the spouses.

In this light, baptism can be seen in direct analogy with our birth in our family, and we can describe it as the reception of a new body. Let us remember in this regard that the Fathers saw in the baptismal waters the maternal womb of the Church. This new body, like every other body, marks the indelible coordinates of those relationships which define our identity. It is true that we can live against these relationships, like a son who rejects his parents, but we cannot live apart from them, for they constitute us interiorly: the prodigal son will always bear the name the father bestowed upon him, as well as the memory of the goodness of the father's house. Well then, character confers on our life the very background of Christ's relationships, as if we were born in his family. This background is expressed in the words of the baptismal formula, in which we receive a new name, just as the child receives one from his parents at birth. Moreover, once our radical belonging to the world has been configured according to Christ's, then we become fit to receive Christ's Spirit, if we open ourselves to Him freely, just as filiation makes a child fit to receive his parents' love and to mature a filial response.

The fact that the sacrament bestows on us a new corporeality is especially clear in marriage, because now the bond (which the theological tradition calls quasi-character) is identified with the "one flesh" between the spouses. The creatural marriage brings with it a new configuration of the partners' body, orienting that of the husband towards the wife, and vice versa, as well as orienting both towards the generation of children. The wedding transforms the couple because they both receive a new permanent relationship, first as a spouse, and then as a father or mother, forging a covenant that will accompany them throughout their whole life. Now then, when both spouses are Christians, their bodies belong already through baptism to the corporeal background of Jesus' body (cf. Ef 5,30), so that their union in one flesh will necessarily happen according to the measure of Christ and of his relationship with the Church. This is what it means for marriage to be one of the seven sacraments.

This approach helps also understand the "character" which is given in priestly orders. In much the same way as a father who has a child acquires a new and permanent configuration of the relationships that constitute is identity (that is, a new and permanent configuration of what we have called "body"), which from now on refer to his child by taking up responsibility upon the child's future; so the priest configures his own relational body according to the fatherhood of Christ, who generates a new People for God. It is the masculinity of the priest that is transformed, taking on the form of the generative body of Jesus, in order to represent him as the father of the Christians and as spouse of the Church.

The sacramental character is the new body of the ordained person (his new way of having a world and of living in relationship with God and the others) inasmuch as it is associated with the body of Christ as new and definitive Adam, that is, as new and definitive father. Notice that the sacrament of marriage, where the meanings of the body are lived out in the first place, provides the experiential basis for understanding the character imprinted by the other sacraments.

iii) Our last question regards the signification of the sacrament. What does it mean to say that the sacrament is an effective sign? We know that the sacramental sign is not just something that points beyond, to a distant reality, for the sacrament is an effective sign inasmuch as it makes present the signified reality.

Well then, precisely the body is the paradigm of this type of sign, because in the body the person expresses himself, not as a reality distant from the body and hidden behind it, but as someone who inhabits and *is* his own body, from where he opens himself up to the world and to others. It is in this way that the spouses' embrace is not a sign of a mutual union that happens beyond the body, but the embrace itself creates the union and *is* the union, a union which can contain in itself the fruitfulness of a new child.

The *sign* is not, then, an *arrow* that takes us to a further invisible point, but a *place* of mutual participation that opens up our life beyond ourselves. The sacrament can be defined, then, as the opening up, through the rite, of this bodily place of relationships. It is a *symbolic place*, not because it refers us to other places, but because, with the patience of time, it allows us to deepen the relationships it already contains, regenerating them and helping them mature and be fruitful.

It is interesting, in this regard, that Maurice Merleau Ponty used the Eucharist as an example to understand our corporeal perception of the world. Just as in the Eucharist, he says, there is not only a sign of a distant reality, but a real communion of grace, so in visual perception we are not only given a sign that points towards an invisible and distant reality, but, thanks to the body, through perception we enter into communion with the perceived thing[39].

CREATION AND THE SPACE OF THE BODY

The body of Christ, inasmuch as it branches out into the future, refers us to the sacraments. In addition, this very body opens up a way into the past, so as to illuminate the theology of creation. Faith in creation received new light, indeed, from Jesus' risen body. The Christians knew that, if the human body of Christ had been seated by the Father at his right hand, this implied that the human body must

[39] See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris 1967, p. 245–246.

have come from God from the very beginning. Otherwise something alien to God would have ended up being assumed into him, thus denying God's lordship over the world and over history.

In this way the Christian faith confirmed and deepened the understanding of the Genesis account. In fact, the origin of the flesh from the power and love of God is at the root of the concept of *creatio ex nihilo.* For to create *ex nihilo* means that the Creator is not just someone who gives form to pre-existing matter, a matter ultimately alien to Him like with Plato's Demiurge. For God to create *ex nihilo* means that he is the origin of matter itself, i.e., the origin of what seems to be totally other from God. It is the creation of matter which assures us of the novelty of the world and thus of God's power and freedom in creating the universe.

Well then, the contemporary philosophy of the flesh, by identifying the body as the relational background that precedes the person and against which our identity develops, allows us deeper to understand the act of creation. The modern deist way of accessing to God has set out from the duality of the world, divided in matter and mind, and has attempted to find the Creator as the ultimate healing of this radical division, as is the case with Descartes and Kant. The problem, however, of starting from a dualism between the internal and the external world, is that the God we arrive at confers his unity to the world from outside this very world, which in itself is radically divided. This means that the world cannot be seen as participating of God's image. Thinking of God from the viewpoint of dualism necessarily leads to a God has no connection with the world and, therefore, cannot be its Creator.

The alternative path is to think of the Creator from the viewpoint of the unity of man and of his world, through corporeality. Indeed, the original balance between man and the world that is given in his body, does not have its foundation in itself, but refers to a transcendent source. In this way it is possible to reach God, not from his absence among things, but from the incipient way in which he makes of the universe a dwelling place. The unity that God lends to the world is not foreign to the world, but can be perceived in the world thanks to our incarnate way of inhabiting the world. If we add to this that the background of the body is a relational background, endowed with language and inhabited by love, then the path of the body allows us to reach a personal God whose act of creation is a fatherly act of love.

More specifically, we can compare the creation of the world "out of nothing" and "by the word" with the inauguration of our bodily space, as the basic space of our belonging to the world that precedes all of our understanding and action in the world. In the Genesis account, creation is represented in fact as a gradual

separation of spaces, in order to constitute a dwelling place for all living beings. The novelty of the Genesis account, if we compare it with the other narratives of creation, is that God does not separate the spaces of the world with violence, cutting off the head of the sea dragon, but he separates with the word, which is an internal principle of order in heaven and earth.

Now, this type of separation of spaces by the word finds its best analogy within our experience in the order of relationships that we find in our body and that we have called its language. The human body is constituted, from the beginning, as a dwelling place with a specific order which allows for communication, and thus can be called an order of language. It is this comparison that allows us to compare the creation *ex nihilo* with the generation of a child, that is, with the inauguration of the child's constitutive space of relationships. Let us remember that maternal fruitfulness is the exact context in which the mention of *creatio ex nihilo* appears in the Bible (2 Mac 7:27–28; Rom 4:17). And that the Genesis account culminates in the space of the body of husband and wife, blessed with God's fruitfulness. In fact, only at this point is the word of God addressed to someone, thus awaiting a free response and becoming fully correspondent to our experience of language as communication ("God told them": Gen 1:28).

What all this means is that the affirmation of the Creator goes hand in hand with the full affirmation of own bodiliness as a primordial space of language and love.

We see, then, how a philosophy of the body helps us think about creation. In creating the world, God establishes the foundational dwelling place of life, as if it were the relational background of all of human existence (principles 1 and 2). Moreover, he orders this space by his word or language (principle 3); and he animates it in the love of his Spirit that was hovering over the waters at the beginning as the force that moves forward creation towards its destiny in God's Sabbath (principles 4 and 6). In this way, the bodily space of living beings, which God continually inaugurates, inasmuch as he sustains it in being, is the way to access God (principle 5).

We can conclude by relating the three corporal spaces we have dealt with in this second part: creatural body, body of Christ, sacramental-ecclesial body. By linking them together we face a crucial question for theology, that is: what is the link between creation and redemption? The viewpoint of the body allows us to explain both the connection and the difference between the two. On the one hand, the created body, as a generative body, is already open towards Christ, son of Adam, and towards his ecclesial body. On the other hand, the person of Christ cannot be deduced from Adam's body, just as the name of the child yet to be conceived cannot be deduced from the union of the parents. The fullness of Christ and of the sacramental space He generates can be seen as a new creation, which in turn

preserves in itself the memory of the old creation. In the same way, the sacramental body points to an eschatological novelty that overflows it, and that will only appear at the second coming of the Lord.

Let us remember how St. Thomas Aquinas ends the first part of his *Summa Theologica*. The last question (q. 119) of the section on creation deals precisely with the body in its two fundamental openings to the world and to others which are food and procreation. After affirming that both features of the body introduce us really into the world and in relationship with others, Thomas ends by highlighting our common relationship with Adam, in whom every man was already present in advance. But his last words introduce a new issue, which is surprising in the context of the first part of the Summa. Aquinas speaks of Christ who, on the one hand, is one with Adam for being born from Mary, but, on the other hand, cannot be deduced from Adam inasmuch as he was born without the intervention of a father's seed. "Such was the birth worthy of Him"[40], concludes Aquinas, thus addressing Christ's continuity with our own body and his capacity to inaugurate a new meaning of the body. Thus, Thomas' theology of creation ends by pointing out towards the novelty of a maternal body, that of Mary, where the body of Christ was born. Is it not this maternal body, in its fruitfulness towards the future, the best point of contact for philosophy and theology to meet, in order mutually to enrich each other?

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ZNACZENIE FILOZOFICZNO-PERSONALISTYCZNEJ REFLEKSJI NA TEMAT CIAŁA DLA TEOLOGII

Streszczenie

Artykuł ukazuje, w jaki sposób filozofia personalistyczna może być pomocna dla teologii poprzez swoją koncentrację na temacie ludzkiego ciała. Zainteresowanie współczesnej filozofii ciałem jest dla teologii chrześcijańskiej ważne o tyle, że ta ostatnia koncentruje się przecież na misterium wcielenia. Artykuł podąża za myślą Gabriela Marcela, by ukazać charakterystyczną dla personalizmu interpretację ludzkiej cielesności. W tym podejściu ciało jest widziane jako relacyjna obecność w świecie i pośród innych ludzi oraz jako otwarcie osoby na transcendencję. Bogactwo tej perspektywy zostaje ukazane w artykule na trzech płaszczyznach teologii dogmatycznej: chrystologicznej, sakramentologicznej i protologicznej. Tym samym dowiedziona zostaje korelacja pomiędzy myślą filozoficzną a teologiczną w podejściu do tematu ciała.

Słowa kluczowe: filozofia i teologia, ciało, teologia fundamentalna, sakrament, chrystologia, stworzenie, Gabriel Marcel, personalizm