

**Kenneth L. Schmitz**

*Person and Psyche.*

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The motivation behind Schmitz's search for parallels between philosophy and psychology is his conviction that they share the same subject: the human person. In his view, the difference between the two fields is that whereas philosophy reflects upon the unity of body and soul, psychology zeroes in on consciousness. The two mutually reinforce one another insofar as philosophy reminds psychology that the soul is the immaterial, substantial form of the body, while psychology reminds philosophy of the complexity of the mind and its effect on the body. What makes Schmitz's approach to these two disciplines unique is his reliance on the transcendental properties of being—i.e., the good, the true, the 'something', and the beautiful—to enlighten our path in the quest for human understanding and fulfillment. These properties are 'infallible guides to our progress' and 'great luminaries in the texture of being' (8). They force us to look beyond 'factuality' in order to perceive being as 'actuality'. The principle of 'actuating presence' within each thing (*ens*) has been a continual thread running through all Schmitz's writing, especially since he holds actuating presence to be the key to opening a horizon of community and relationality encompassing all things.

Schmitz recognizes that although the concept 'nature' has lost much of its valence in public discourse, it remains indispensable for delineating the basic underlying factor of human formation. Science analyzes parts of being and metaphysics investigates being as being. Both can fall short of recognizing the *unum*—i.e., the nature—that places humans within the community of beings. Human nature is that principle which 'mediates between the ontological unity of our being and the systematic organization of our material parts' (19). Hence nature is more than a cause of stability and abiding typology; it is a 'real principle of identity and action' (21). Schmitz draws out the dynamic aspect of human nature by considering the inclinations that direct us toward human fulfillment. These inclinations function as 'final cause'—an originating, anticipatory moment—that is inextricably tied to the formal and essential structure of human beings. Schmitz contrasts this with science's emphasis on 'drives', a term that fails to capture the finality and directedness of human inclinations.

Rather than entering into clinical case studies, Schmitz describes the aim of therapy in philosophical terms as helping the patient to seek the path to health and maturity through the maze of his or her own personal, individual history. To navigate successfully, both therapist and patient must take stock of both the limitations of human beings as finite creatures and their call to infinity as spiritual beings. The modern

tendency is to take the human *ego* or will as the basic defining principle. Successful integration, however, requires recognition of our participation precisely within the texture of being and its transcendental properties. Whenever human beings fall short of their potential, it is because they fail to live up to one of the transcendental properties of being: a disruption of unity violates *unum*, a failure to act relationally violates *aliquid*, perpetuating falsity is an affront to *verum*, the pursuit of evil is a deviation from *bonum*, and the cultivation of the ugly detracts from *pulchrum*. However violent these assaults, ‘the texture of being survives...and provides the ground for a reasonable hope’ (34). The inclinations rooted in our human nature constantly renew the promise that our essential humanity may be brought to realization. These inclinations guarantee our individuality, our oneness of being (*unum*), and the hope of genuine community through relationality (*aliquid*). The honesty (*verum*) with which we probe the meaning of things and the courage with which we face the trials of adversity predetermine our capacity to rejoice in understanding one another and the world, and thus finding it good (*bonum*).

This book reveals the extent to which Schmitz continues to be influenced by the personalist phenomenology of Karol Wojtyła and the philosopher-turned-pope’s rereading of traditional metaphysics through the lens of human consciousness. Wojtyła unabashedly, and sometimes controversially, located the ultimate source of human action and the distinctive character of the human person in freedom. Schmitz succinctly restates Wojtyła’s core insight: ‘in possessing the freedom to act, the human person (as agent) is called to act upon the knowledge available to him or her, and so the self is always ingredient in conscious human action (as distinct from mere reaction), for in acting upon the knowledge available to the self, the conscious person is self-possessed, self-governed, and self-determining’ (53-54). This unique and synthetic anthropology leads Schmitz to identify five areas where philosophy and psychology can be of mutual assistance: 1) the *physiology* and the non-conscious processes constantly at work in the life of the person; 2) the *emotional-affective* dynamisms that provide much of the conscious basis for evaluative human moods and emotions; 3) the *sensory-perceptive* outreach of the human organism in its immediate and particular contact with its surrounding world; 4) the *intellectual* and *cognitive* openness of the human person to being and to the beings beyond itself; and 5) the attainment of voluntary action in freedom.

In the end, Schmitz presents a cogent case for the contribution philosophy can make to a holistic understanding of the human person and how that understanding might bear on the psychological sciences. Philosophy grounds psychology, keeping it from caving into a mechanistic worldview. Readers unfamiliar with the classical and medieval philosophical tradition may find Schmitz’s arguments a little vague, but patient consideration of his metaphysics should yield fruit for both philosophy and psychology, demonstrating that the former can and should be just as therapeutic as the latter.

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