

位格与人：从《圣经》观照 西方人文精神之人观

[加拿大]许志伟

[英文提要]

The recent debate in the West as to whether all human beings are human persons is not merely of theoretical interest, but pertains to serious and deeply divisive social issues such as abortion, artificial reproductive technologies, euthanasia and so on. Discoursing on the basis of a general consensus to define personhood normatively as a human entity with the right to life, liberals hold that not all human beings are human persons while conservatives hold the opposite to be true, while those in the “middle-of-the-road” take their place somewhere in between. Conservatives defend their position primarily on physicalism which grounds human personhood on the basis of membership in the species *Homo sapiens*, i. e., entities which possess the human genome. Understandably, adherents of this position take the decisive moment of humanization at conception. Liberals on the other hand believe that it is not the membership of the species *Homo sapiens*, but the ability to demonstrate characteristics of the species related to higher-brain functions such as rationality, self-consciousness, communicative skills, etc. that qualifies one to be

a person. To be a *Homo sapiens*, one has to be sapient. Hence, liberals think that human beings seldom attain the status of personhood under age two. Those who opt to take a middle position between these two extremes appeal to the principle of potentiality and argue that human persons do not need to actually possess higher-brain functions; they only need to demonstrate that they possess the potential for those functions. On this view, fetuses, infants and the mildly retarded are persons. but those who lack the potential to develop rational capacities and those who have permanently lost the rational capacities they once had are not persons. Many fear that to predicate human personhood on higher-brain functions, whether actualized or as potentiality, is to fall back on a Cartesian framework which threatens to entrap the notion of personhood in undesirable forms of individualism and rationalism. Attempts have been made to reverse this trend by humanists with an existentialist/phenomenologist bent who see the importance of recovering the relational basis of personhood. Macmurray believes that Descartes' "I think therefore I am" should be replaced by "I do therefore I am ", and what is most important to do in order to be a person is, according to Marcel, to make oneself available to the other in relations. True personhood emerges only in such a Buberian "I-Thou" relationship. A relational understanding of personhood provides a needed critique of the functional approach to personhood which reflects the predominant ethos of the modern culture.

The Christian tradition which holds that all human beings are created to be the image of God encompasses all the above sec-

ular humanistic perspectives and provides the proper balance between them. Created with the dust of the earth and the living breath of God, the biblical tradition affirms that the human being is a holistic psychosomatic unity. As an ensouled body or embodied soul, the body and the soul/mind work in complementarity with and not in confrontation to each other; both are equally important and indispensable dimensions of the image of God. Since the Christian God is Himself a community of three Persons—Father, Son and Spirit—a “being-in-communion”, human persons likewise only fulfill their personhood by living a relational life: in worship of God, in harmony with fellow human beings and in taking care of nature. Jesus Christ the God-man is the only perfect image of God, the only full human person. Empowered by the Spirit, human persons are created to live a life in imitation of Christ, to be more perfect images of God, and to be more fully persons. Human beings are always “human becomings”, constantly actualizing the potentials they have already been endowed with. In that regard, human persons are teleologically and eschatologically oriented; yet protologically, a human being’s personhood is once and for all established by the God-human relationship expressed in the very act of creation. The human being, as the image of God, uniquely created in all its physical, mental and relational dimensions, with some in full actuality and others in unfolding potentiality, is a human person, striving to become a fuller person in his lifelong journey towards his Creator.