

PART III

ON HUMAN BEING: READING THE MICROCOSM

MARITAIN'S REHABILITATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE

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Theories of human nature abound in our pluralistic world, but whether such theories actually describe human nature accurately is a separate question entirely. A philosophy of human nature must be able to provide cogent answers to the following two questions: (1) What is philosophy? and (2) How is the concept of "nature" to be defined? These two pivotal considerations need to be addressed for a philosophical inquiry into the human essence to be both coherent and robust. It should be clear that how one understands the nature of philosophy will determine one's perspective on the philosophy of nature. It is also true that one's conception of nature, the fundamental basis of all life, will have a direct bearing on how one philosophizes. The two questions cross-fertilize each other.

It is to Jacques Maritain's credit that he recognized the need in modern times to resurrect the philosophy of nature, which had been brushed aside with the wholesale rejection of Aristotelianism. This need is located in the confusion prevalent in the academic world about what precisely a philosophical analysis of nature entails. Philosophy must once again discover its independence from all other sciences and liberate itself from the slavish attachment to the arbitrary predilections of its modern practitioners. In short, there is a need for philosophy to recommit itself to a search for wisdom that can order our intellects towards the knowledge of truth.

Yet this restitution of philosophy's original dignity is not carried out solely with the intention of establishing a useful intellectual technique for scientific exploration, but has the added dimension of ennobling human nature and manifesting the transcendent value of the human person. Indeed, a philosophy of nature has enormous ramifications for human nature itself, both as the quintessential interpretive framework

and as a practice that orients the human spirit towards the intelligible grasp of being as being.

My interest here lies with how Maritain *rehabilitated* the philosophy of human nature by offering a science of wisdom that instills the proper intellectual *habits* in the philosopher who dares to pursue the knowledge of the being of things. Only by inculcating and developing an adequate approach to nature will the philosopher be in a position to penetrate into the essence of things and in so doing discover the truth of what it means to be human. But, before we get to Maritain's philosophy of human nature, we should first turn to an examination of certain current theories of human nature and determine what exactly is problematic about them.

I. TWO CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE

In the contemporary academic world, there are two prominent paradigms for philosophical anthropology. The first is the materialist reductionism account, which interprets nature in strict physicalist or biological terms, and the second is the action-based account, which relies on notions of human agency and ethics as constitutive of human self-identity. In line with the pervasive reach of the empirical sciences, materialist reductionism has become a very popular and widespread hermeneutical viewpoint. Human nature is accordingly assessed in reference to scientific principles culled from a variety of disciplines, such as biology and chemistry, psychology and sociology, in which the mode of inquiry is thoroughly empirical. Observation and measurement are the key methodologies used here.

For instance, scholars who subscribe to a Darwinian evolutionary model, such as Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and Edward Wilson, are inclined to offer genetic, biological and behaviorist accounts of human nature.¹ On the premise of the theory of natural selection, human beings are said to have evolved from lower, primitive forms of

¹ See the following works as illustrations of a materialist anthropology: Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991); *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Touchstone, 1995); Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996); Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978); Michael S. Gazzaniga, *Human* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

life in different stages of adaptation to their environments. Patterns of behavior, such as sympathetic cooperation and mating practices, are explained as the result of an organism's survival tendencies, which are inscribed into its genetic make-up. In fact, Dawkins' concept of the selfish gene stresses the primacy that is given to the material substrate of biological life in the development of human beings in an evolutionary process.² It is the gene that strives to copy itself and to survive, not the organism. Matter, in this scenario, seems to have a mind all of its own.

The social sciences have played an enormous role in constructing a particularly modern understanding of the human being. Ian Hacking has shown in some insightful studies on the rise of probabilistic rationality and inductive reasoning over the last few centuries how the concept of human nature has been transformed under the weight of a measurement calculus.³ Empirical statistical research on human behavior can only offer us probabilities: for instance, in the United Kingdom there were 2.58 divorces for every 1000 citizens in 2000;⁴ 92% of Americans believe in God;⁵ about 6% of babies worldwide are born with genetic disorders;⁶ and so on. Furthermore, it is the anomalies and the exceptions to any rule that stand in the way of dogmatic pronouncements concerning the "nature" of human beings. The reality of moral deviancy and criminality, in particular, which only comprises a minority in a given population, makes it impossible to assert unequivocally, for example, that human beings are by nature good. According to such considerations, Hacking shows that, instead of human nature, we now use the concept of "normal people."⁷ The

² See Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³ See Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/DYB2002/Table25.pdf>.

⁵ <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

⁶ http://www.marchofdimes.com/aboutus/15796_18678.asp.

⁷ "Normal" bears the stamp of the nineteenth century and its conception of progress, just as 'human nature' is engraved with the hallmark of the Enlightenment. We no longer ask, in all seriousness, what is human nature? Instead we talk about normal people. We ask, is this behavior normal? Is it

anomalies to universal norms make such theorizing about the existence of something called a human nature that all human beings share highly dubious in the minds of social scientists. It is precisely the exceptions and aberrations which prove the rule wrong.

The second important paradigm in philosophical anthropology that I would like to examine is the action-based model. According to this view, human nature is constructed on the basis of human agency. Such a theory suggests that there is no subsistent human essence independent of and prior to the execution of volitional acts that produce the self. This action-based model has its roots in the early modern period, with Descartes' turn to the subject and radical voluntarism, but became pronounced in the eighteenth century with the advent of German Idealism and Romanticism. Fichte's doctrine of the self-positing ego (*Tathandlung*), the act by which the ego posits itself, was the inspiration behind the Romantic quest for individual authenticity, which is achieved by striving after one's passionate ideals, often in opposition to social conventions.⁸ For thinkers as diverse as Isaiah Berlin, Max Scheler, Jean-Paul Sartre and Charles Taylor, the prevailing view is not that human nature is given to us as something already defined and stable, but rather that it is created from and formed out of our actions and ethical decisions.⁹ We make ourselves, and it is in this complete freedom from any preexisting nature where, so the argument goes, our true dignity lies. Political liberalism, to be

normal for an eight-year-old girl to...? Research foundations are awash with funds for finding out what is normal. Rare is the patron who wants someone to investigate human nature. We have almost forgotten how to take human nature seriously. When a man is corrupt or careless, we say, 'Oh, that's human nature.' 'You can't go against human nature,' we mutter, indifferently" (Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, 161).

⁸ See Dieter Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," translated by David R. Lachterman, *Contemporary German Philosophy* 1 (1982): 15-52.

⁹ See Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *The Proper Study of Mankind* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 191-242; Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, translated by Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 382-86; Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1975), 348-50; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992).

sure, being an offspring of the Enlightenment, depends crucially on this model for its understanding of individual autonomy and rights. Through acts of self-determination, I carve out my own identity, unmolested by the wider world in which I dwell, at ease with the fluidity and malleability of my being.

II. A MARITAINIAN CRITIQUE

One of the main problems with these two schools of thought is that they misconstrue what philosophy is and concomitantly what a philosophical study of human nature should be. When we observe the evolutionary biologists and theorists plying their craft, we could easily be forgiven for thinking that we are not dealing with philosophers at all. By limiting its inquiries to the observational and quantifiable level, the materialistic reductionism account fails to penetrate intellectually to the very essence of things. Such an empiriological or experimental approach is incapable of leading the human intellect to take hold of what things are in their very being. All that is known under these conditions is the phenomena or appearances of things, not their ontological reality. In harmony with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, Maritain consistently emphasizes that philosophy deals with the concept of being.¹⁰ Ontology is first philosophy. Philosophy should not seek to assimilate itself to other foreign sciences, such as mathematics or the natural sciences, but should maintain its independent and unique status as a science of being. This view of the ontological content of philosophical knowledge is reflected in Maritain's theory of the three degrees of abstractive visualization or speculative knowledge.¹¹

The philosophy of nature has as its object sensible or mobile being (*ens sensibile/mobile*), mathematics focuses on quantified being or the concept of quantity (*quantitas*), and metaphysics investigates being as being (*ens inquantum ens*). The degrees of knowledge differ with respect to how matter is related to the being under consideration. So the philosophy of nature deals with beings that exist and are cognized with

¹⁰ See Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962).

¹¹ Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite or The Degrees of Knowledge*, translated from the 4th French edition under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 37-41.

matter, terminating in the sensible. Mathematics, on the other hand, studies those objects which cannot exist without sensible matter, but which can be conceived without it, and in this case mathematical knowledge terminates in the imaginable. Finally, metaphysics, representing the highest and most abstract kind of knowledge, aims to know being shorn of all material properties both in existence and in the intellect. The purely intelligible is the peculiar sphere of cognition belonging to metaphysics.

On the plane of sensible reality, the philosophy of nature and the experimental sciences view the same thing differently. They are both concerned with sensible being as their primary focus. Maritain uses Cajetan's idea of an "intelligibility-appeal" to denote the formal perspective of reality or the thing itself (*ratio formalis objecti ut res*) which is operative in a particular science.¹² In this sense, then, both the philosophy of nature and the experimental sciences have sensible or mobile being as their intelligibility-appeal. However, they differ in the manner by which they conceptualize this sensible reality. The objective light or the formal perspective of conceptualization (*ratio formalis objecti ut objectum*) refers to the way the intellect specifies or apprehends the thing.¹³ For the experimental sciences, the objective light is the observable or sensible, whereas for the philosophy of nature it is the intelligible. What is pivotal here is the mode of analysis and conceptualization, which can lead the intellect either towards the sensible or the intelligible regions. In the philosophy of nature, the intellect is not content to rest simply with the observable, nor in the case of the empiriometrical sciences with the measurable data gathered. Rather, the intellect searches to know the substantial essence of the thing and in so doing elevates itself to a higher level of spiritual awareness and dignity. Rapturously attracted by the intelligibility of the thing being scrutinized, the intellect pursues its own perfection in the cognition of the thing's essence.

The experimental sciences of our day are well known for being able to offer a practical kind of knowledge, something which can be put to good use. Whether it be the building of bridges, the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, or the medical healing of the sick, the practical

¹² Jacques Maritain, *Philosophy of Nature*, translated by Imelda C. Byrne (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 126-33.

¹³ *Ibid.*

applicability of empiriological science has undeniably been a great gain for humankind. However, the epochal modern shift from the *vita contemplativa* to the *vita activa* has actually diminished modern man's capability for revering knowledge. This impoverishment of the human spirit is evidenced in the increasingly widespread reluctance or refusal of the human being to seek knowledge for its own sake and in the obsessive penchant in modern societies for practicability and utility in most spheres of life.

The distinctive feature of philosophy, particularly as contrasted with the experimental sciences, is that through the desire to know the intelligible essences of sensible things, it actually enlivens and dignifies human intelligence, demonstrating the veritable spiritual capacities inherent in human nature. The feelings of awe and adoration are palpable in Maritain's descriptions of the nature of knowledge. Maritain tells us that "to know is to advance oneself to an act of existing of supereminent perfection."¹⁴ Nothing whatsoever is produced from knowing, because knowledge does not aim in itself to use or make things. In fact, knowing is a way of being, a superexistence of the knower who becomes, in a manner of speaking, the thing known. The subject's being is perfected in the act of knowing, an act which Maritain does not hesitate to call a mystery.¹⁵ It would be entirely consistent with Maritain's vision of knowledge to assert that the more one comes to know reality, the more ennobled and perfect one becomes. Put in different terms, our essence as human beings is manifested in its brilliant light in the act of knowing adequately the truth of being.

This view is one that St. Thomas addressed directly in ST I, q. 87, a. 1, "Does the intellective soul cognize itself through its essence?"¹⁶ In this article, Thomas asserts that the intellect cannot know itself directly, but gains an understanding of itself through the act of knowing sensible things. The proper object of the human intellect is nothing other than the quiddity of sensible things and it is through the

¹⁴ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 120.

¹⁵ "This text of St. Thomas introduces us into the very mystery of knowledge. It is time we asked in what this mystery consists. What is the inner nature of that which we call knowing?" (Ibid., 118).

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89*, translated by Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 2002), 186-90.

cognition of such essences that the intellect is actualized. Therefore, only in the act of cognizing material things does the intellect come to know itself.¹⁷

If Maritain is saying the same thing as St. Thomas, namely, that how the human intellect grasps sensible reality will determine how human nature is understood by the knower, then it becomes apparent how the empiriological approach to sensible things deprives the human being of a certain indispensable insight into human nature. By not proceeding to an ontological conceptualization, the human intellect is not fully actualized; it fails to reveal its proper essence. Yet not only are epistemology and anthropology at issue in this regard, the very nature of philosophy is also affected. According to Maritain, the nature of philosophy is determined by its object, that to which human intelligence is ordered on a rational basis.¹⁸ Indeed, the natural and rational character of philosophy enables the intellect to discover the intelligible essences of things. But, when the intellect falls short of this goal and instead restricts itself to the observable and measurable properties of sensible things, that is when philosophy ceases to be. The objective light of intelligible being is responsible for determining the nature of philosophy.

This discussion concerning knowledge and its import for human nature and the nature of philosophy can help to illuminate the problems inherent in the prevailing modern paradigms for philosophical anthropology. The materialist reductionist account is a variant of the empiriological science Maritain speaks about, which resolves its concepts in the sensible, rather than in the intelligible. What is lacking in such an empiriological approach is the intellect's penetration into the very essence of sensible things, that is, a grasp of intelligible being. As regards the action-based account, however, the problem is located in the denial of the existence of a substantial human nature. The action-based account describes human nature, as we have already discussed, as constructed out of human action or volitional activity. Prior to such acts, there is no human or personal substance, a proposition lionized in the existentialist movement's hackneyed

¹⁷ "Therefore our intellect cognizes itself through its act, not through its essence" (ibid., 188).

¹⁸ Jacques Maritain, *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, translated by Edward H. Flannery (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 13-16.

doctrine that existence precedes essence. This fundamental error in denying a real and substantial human nature stems from the modern idealist perspective on reality.

For Maritain, idealism is a grievous offense against human intelligence, because it fails to recognize the existence of things that are independent of our minds.¹⁹ The concept of thing (*res*) is indispensable to both science and wisdom alike.²⁰ In his epistemology, Maritain carefully distinguishes the thing and the object.²¹ The thing is an extramental or metalogical entity on the basis of which the formal object is apprehended by the intellect. Thomist realism rests firmly on the acknowledgement of the reality of things that our minds come to know. Yet the failure to affirm the existence of a mind-independent reality in modernity, beginning in late scholasticism, is due directly to the new habits which the human intelligence acquired, which prevented it from knowing the ontological essence of things. I want to argue that a causal relation exists between the radical transformation that philosophical knowledge underwent in the early modern period and the resulting idealism that ensued, which banished the concept of the thing from the purview of epistemology. Idealism is ultimately responsible for the contention at the core of the action-based theories that human nature has no given reality prior to the actions that human beings execute, a point that Maritain vehemently rejects.

III. THE STATE OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE INTELLECT'S ASCENT

The new habits that philosophy came to adopt in the modern era developed from the state in which philosophy found itself. Maritain's notion of the state of philosophy, as distinct from its nature, connotes the lived context in which philosophizing is done.²² Social and political environments, institutional structures, cultural mores, and the myriad temporal expressions of the human spirit all play an integral role in

¹⁹ "Idealism sets an original sin against the light at the beginning of the whole philosophical edifice" (Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 115).

²⁰ For a philosophical account of the concept of thing (*res*) in the ancient, medieval and modern worlds, see the excellent work by Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Recovery of Wonder: The New Freedom and the Asceticism of Power* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

²¹ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 96-107.

²² Maritain, *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, 11-16.

shaping and influencing the manner in which one engages in philosophy. The conditions in the exercise of philosophy can prove to be extremely conducive, by supporting philosophy's quest to know reality in its innermost being. But they can also obstruct philosophy's proper vocation and lead human intelligence into areas where it does not have its true home. As a temporal human activity, philosophy requires the aid of realities that lie outside of philosophy for it to realize its nature.

The state of philosophy in modernity is deeply influenced by mathematics and the experimental sciences. As I have been arguing, this encroachment upon philosophy by alien sciences has diminished philosophy's capability to be true to itself as a pursuit of wisdom, this being the highest and most noble form of knowledge accessible to the human being. Wisdom comprises the knowledge of the highest causes or principles of being. Maritain recognizes a hierarchy of different kinds of wisdom.²³ On the lowest rung, metaphysical wisdom is derived from the cognition of the first principles of being, ordered with respect to human reason. Then there is theological wisdom, which is the communication of the knowledge that God has of himself, which is presented to us through revelation. Finally, the wisdom of grace or infused wisdom involves the mystical love of God. It is clear that human beings are capable of acquiring metaphysical wisdom on their own strength, but the higher dimensions of wisdom depend upon faith and divine grace, both rooted in the life of the Godhead. This means that, if the philosopher is eager to strive after a superior wisdom, he must be aided in his attempts by a supernatural power. A perfect knowledge of divine being cannot be obtained other than with the participation and support of God himself.

It is not surprising, then, that Maritain understands philosophy as a noble discipline in its own right, but one that is basically imperfect and deficient. Philosophy relies on the inspiration and guidance of superior sciences to lead the human being to Truth itself, which is supernatural. Natural reason, which is proper to philosophy, characteristically seeks to know the truth of reality and pursues wisdom where it can be found. In the very constitution of human reason lies an indelible orientation or aspiration towards the Being of beings, God. Since reason cannot acquire this knowledge on its own powers, it depends on sciences that

²³ Jacques Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, translated by Bernard Wall (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), 22-24.

are above it and that help the human being to arrive at this higher wisdom. Therefore, according to this portrayal, philosophy carries within itself a self-understanding of its own limitations and lack. If this theory is true, then it becomes even clearer why the encroachment upon philosophy by the experimental sciences should not occur. Instead of philosophy rising upwards to metaphysical and theological wisdom, the modern intellectual climate has trained the human intellect to travel downwards to the empirical and the sensible. For Maritain, the intellect has a naturally ascendant movement inscribed into its essence. To reach for the highest, noblest, and most joyful forms of knowledge is what the human intellect does of its own accord.

IV. HABIT AND HUMAN NATURE

What does this understanding of the naturally ascendant disposition of the intellect do for the philosophy of human nature? To answer this question, we first need to consider how human nature is conceptualized in the philosophy of nature. The human being is composed of both an immaterial soul and a material body, with the soul being the substantial form of the body. By virtue of his corporeal state, the human being belongs to the realm of sensible things, and, in this way, the study of human nature is included in the philosophy of nature. The soul and body, which are essential determinations of human nature, partake in the processes of generation and decay and are therefore elements of sensible or mutable being. The philosophy of human nature is a species of the philosophy of nature precisely because the human being is conceptualized as mutable, changeable, and in flux. The weak and vulnerable infant grows into a strong and able adolescent and adult and normally ends its life in the frailties of old age. There is unmistakable change that occurs in the different stages of human development and growth, but we nonetheless recognize that, despite these transformations, the identity of the person remains intact throughout. There is something permanent and enduring within human nature in addition to what is mutable. Not only does a human being remain distinctively human throughout the diverse periods of one's life, but one's spiritual personhood continues to abide as an inalienable and incommunicable substance. From a purely rational point of view—that is, a philosophical perspective—human nature, although belonging to the domain of sensible and mutable being, contains within it an essence, which preserves the identity and unity of the human being and person through time.

If the philosophy of nature tends solely towards sensible or mutable being, then it would appear to be ill-equipped to explain the stable, unchanging aspects of human nature. How does Maritain respond to this dilemma? The key here is Maritain's doctrine of the naturally ascendant movement of the human intellect. Like his mentor St. Thomas Aquinas, Maritain entertains a conception of the hierarchy of knowledge. We begin on the lowest level, with the investigation of the being of sensible things. The cognition that is acquired in the philosophy of nature whets and attracts the intellect to know more. The intellect is enticed and lured to rise up to an investigation of being itself independent of any material determinations. From the philosophy of nature, the intellect naturally proceeds to metaphysics, whose proper objects do not exist with matter and hence are timeless. A metaphysical comprehension of human nature will identify those features that are truly incorruptible and unchanging, such as the notion of the subsistent intellectual soul. We can see here how Maritain's idea of the intellect's ascendant movement can explain how human nature can be conceptualized simultaneously as mutable and immutable, corruptible and incorruptible, temporal and atemporal.

Although it is maintained that this ascendant movement of the intellect is natural and spontaneous, it is nonetheless true that it is influenced by its surrounding conditions in the world. In other words, the *nature* of the intellect to ascend to truth itself is profoundly marked by the *state* in which it finds itself. To repeat, the intellect can be either helped or hindered, depending on the kinds of temporal conditions that obtain in one's life-world. This is why the naturally ascendant movement of the intellect must be aided by virtuous habits of mind and body in order to allow it to persevere in its proper activity. A habit is a disposition of the soul lying midway between the soul's capacities and its operations. A habit readies the soul for certain kinds of actions, by directing its movement towards specific objects. As Aristotle sagaciously taught, human beings are not born with habits, for they must be acquired through learning and practice. If training or education is necessary for the development of good habits, then it follows that human beings are dependent on their teachers and environments for the requisite guidance towards the inculcation of positive, reinforcing habits. In philosophy, the mind must be trained to pursue and recognize truth. But this kind of education of the mind does not happen in and through philosophy itself, which is the goal of this training activity, but in the context and environment in which philosophy finds

itself in the world. It is the state of philosophy, the temporal condition in which philosophy is exercised, that will either permit philosophy to flourish or stifle its growth. These considerations about the role of habit in philosophical thinking and how habit is developed should remind us of the point raised above regarding philosophy's dependence on sources of wisdom that lie outside of philosophy's purview.

Maritain has argued repeatedly in his writings that only within a culture inspired and governed by overtly Christian values can human beings arrive at their true dignity as persons created in the image of God.²⁴ Christianity is responsible for the distinctive Western civilization, which has given us the successes in natural science, the breathtaking beauty of various forms of art, and the promotion of democracy and human rights on the political front. It is a mistake to think that truth can be pursued and known without impediment in any given social and political context. It matters a great deal what the temporal conditions are within which philosophy seeks to conceptualize and defend a vision of the uniqueness of human nature that is true to the wholeness of the human person in both his material and spiritual essence. The challenge that we face today in our pluralistic world is how such an ideal could ever effectively come to pass.

V. CONCLUSION

For philosophy to serve the human being in his quest to know truth itself, philosophy needs to be strengthened and invigorated by a higher science, one that is not the product of reason alone. Maritain calls this irradiation of philosophy's objective light its "subjective reinforcement," which occurs by means of "the vivification and illumination of one *habitus* by another."²⁵ Maritain describes this process of philosophy's subjective reinforcement in the following way:

However it may be with the operative movements which belong to *efficient* causality (and which are possible from one *habitus* to another, but not from one angel to another), in the order of *formal* causality the subjective reinforcement deriving from superior planes of knowledge passes through the object and

²⁴ See Jacques Maritain, *Redeeming the Time* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946); *Integral Humanism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973); and, *Christianity and Democracy* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946).

²⁵ Maritain, *Science and Wisdom*, 86.

is explained in this order by the simple and luminous objective light which thus passes from one *habitus* to another: the light which irradiates, for instance at the level of the wisdom of grace or of theological wisdom the object which on an inferior plane belongs to the specific field of philosophy. So that henceforward the proper act of philosophizing is the better accomplished on that object. And by this the vitality of the philosophical *habitus* is fortified, while at the same time a real motion or impression deriving from the *habitus* of faith passes also into it.²⁶

When we speak about Maritain's rehabilitation of the philosophy of human nature, we are referring to this conscious attempt by Maritain to build up the proper habits within the human being with the help of Christian faith and divine grace. The Enlightenment paradigm, which eschews all religious faith in favor of a concept of pure reason, is misguided and ultimately fruitless in its researches because it ignores at its peril the necessary conditions of the intellect's activities. At the root of this rehabilitation of the human intellect and spirit is the act of love which needs to animate all the Christian philosopher does. The inclination towards higher reaches of wisdom is motivated fundamentally by an act of love, a love that guides one's aspirations and delivers one to the natural end of all of one's strivings as a creature devoted to truth. It goes without saying that love is behind the development of the proper *habitus*, which belongs to philosophy as a desire for wisdom and truth. Yet it is also the case that love animates the human person in the very heart of his or her being. Love is not merely at the service of knowledge, enticing the intellect along the path of truth, but also energizes the human spirit with the life-force that is proper to human nature. No doubt, without love human nature is not adequately known as the most precious creation in the whole world, for the entire universe culminates in the person, the most perfect thing in all of nature.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.