

# Human Essence: Existential Concerns and Zubiri's Theory of Open Essence\*

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## Abstract

Many existentialists have been bothered by the notion of a human essence. Personal freedom for them is of the utmost importance, and should not be limited by a personal essence. In an effort to avoid determinism, some have chosen to deny that a person has an innate essence. This denial is problematic and leads to an incorrect theory of the human person. Zubiri offers a solution to this dilemma through the development of the concept of *open essence*. Open essence captures the uniqueness of the human person and reflects the openness that the person experiences in relation to the world. Zubiri never loses sight of the fact that the human person has limits and imperfections. This paper explores the existential question of the possibility of human essence and offers insights from Zubiri's work.

## Resumen

Muchos filósofos existenciales problematizan la idea de esencia humana. Para ellos la libertad personal es sumamente importante, y no debe ser limitada por una esencia personal. Para evitar el determinismo, algunos han optado por negar que una persona tenga una esencia innata. Esta negativa es muy problemática, y lleva a una teoría errónea de la persona humana. Zubiri ofrece una solución a este dilema por el desarrollo del concepto de *esencia abierta*. La esencia abierta capta la singularidad de la persona humana, y refleja la condición de apertura que una persona encuentra en el mundo. Zubiri nunca pierde de vista que la persona humana tiene límites e imperfecciones. Este trabajo investiga la cuestión existencial de la posibilidad de la esencia humana, y presenta observaciones entresacadas de las obras de Zubiri.

## Introduction

Modern anthropological metaphysicians have focused much of their attention on the essence of man. Some philosophers have denied the coextension of essence and existence, at the onset of existence, by setting forth the principle that existence precedes essence. This theory is often put forth under the belief that it preserves human freedom.

Many existentialists, including Sartre and Ortega, assert that a person's essence

is unlike that of any other being. A human essence is not given with existence, as it is with other beings, and therefore there is the denial of the coextension of these two principles. The person *is*, before there is a determinism of *what* he is. This belief that essence follows existence is present in much of modern existentialism.

The modern era is different than any other in that man is viewed by many philosophers as being fundamentally free. There is a great emphasis on personal freedom. With the zealous attempt to de-

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\* Based on the author's Master's Degree Thesis from the University of Steubenville.

fend human freedom and do away with a deterministic view of a human being, some existentialists believe that there is a conflict between essence and existence. This conflict is due in part to their interpretation of essence in regards to the human person as deterministic and therefore in the same way opposed to human freedom. For if the *what* predetermines a human being, this same *what* would also restrict the human being to live as a free and self-determined person. Thus the famous principle of Sartre's philosophy: 'Existence precedes essence' in a human person. A typical existentialist approach to understanding the human person is strongly opposed to any form of essentialism in regards to the human person. This is to combat any threat of determinism that is believed to be present in an essential view of the human person. Here by essentialism is meant that the human person, has an essence that is at least partly responsible for it being what it is at the moment it begins to exist.

Sartre wishes to emphasize the importance of denying the coextension of essence and existence, by focusing on the real issue of human activity. For if man is free, he will reflect this in his actions above all else. If man is free, his actions, his project of life is not pre-determined. Sartre believes that the denial of a personal essence is crucial to preserving the freedom of the human being, and therefore the autonomy of the human being. For in this understanding of the human person, man is alone responsible for deciding *what he is*, for if essence does not precede existence then man must choose by compulsion at every moment of his life. This is why Sartre rejects an essential view of the human person.

Aristotle will be used to represent the traditional or classical view of essence. Essentialism is meant that the human person has an essence that is at least in part responsible for it (refers to essence here) being what it is at the moment it begins to exist. For Aristotle, man is a rational animal. By forming a concept of the

essence of man along these lines, Aristotle has fixed the essence of the human being by way of a definition. Animal is the genus that is common among many living organisms. What however is different is the ability of man to reason. From this the species rational comes about. Man is always a rational animal and this is what separates him from the other animals that share his same genus. By establishing this type of a concept of essence, Aristotle fixes a distinct nature to man. It is at this point where some existentialists begin to see a problem. Does man have an essence at the onset of existence?

For the existentialist, man is understood as a pragmatic being. He participates *actively* in his own life. Through acting, man moves intentionally towards a project. His eventual success is not important. According to Sartre:

[The] fundamental condition of the act is freedom...Now freedom has no essence...Freedom makes itself an act, and we ordinarily attain it across the act which it organizes with the causes, motives, and ends which the act implies. But precisely because this act has an essence, it appears to us as constituted; if we wish to reach the constitutive power, we must abandon any hope of finding it an essence. That would in fact demand a new constitutive power and so on to infinity...it is freedom which is the foundation of all essences since man reveals intra-mundane essences by surpassing the world toward his own possibilities.<sup>1</sup>

Thus some existentialists say existence precedes essence. The need to preserve human freedom has caused Ortega and Sartre to declare that a human person does not have an innate nature or essence. If man did have an essence, he would not be truly free, and he would exist as predetermined.

Human freedom, for these thinkers, seems to deny the possibility of a human person having an essence at the start of

existence. Essence is seen as deterministic and therefore a danger to human freedom. In the interest of human freedom, some existentialists have chosen to deny that human persons have an essence when they begin to exist. It is a choice motivated by the desire to preserve human freedom at any cost, and an attempt to avoid the determinism that an essential view of the person might cause. Human freedom is crucial to understanding the problem of essence in the human being. And, with this problem, we find the starting point for much of existential thought. This thesis will begin to explore this problem of human essence, as seen in modern anthropological metaphysics with Jean-Paul Sartre and Jose Ortega y Gasset.

After this issue of personal essence has been presented, an alternative approach to understanding the human person will be presented through the work of Xavier Zubiri. Though Zubiri has also been classified as an existential thinker, it is worth noting that he is indeed atypical in his understanding of the human person; for Zubiri recognizes the importance of a deeper investigation into the unique status of being human and his study produces the theory of "open essence". Open essence is the metaphysical concept that allows for human freedom while recognizing a unique personal essence in a human being that is coextensive with existence. Zubiri is sympathetic to the notion that something indeed separates man from that of other creatures. There is a personal essence that is uniquely man's and not shared with other animals. Zubiri however, criticizes Aristotle's final view of the essence of the human person. For Zubiri, the essence of man is far more complicated and dynamic than a simple definition. Zubiri grounds the human person in such a way that he avoids the utter absurdity of life that is so prevalent in existential thought. The personal essence seen in Zubiri offers an in-depth interpretation of human essence which avoids complications seen in classical philosophy of Aristotle and that of later existentialists.

### **I. Ortega's Denial of Human Essence: A Reflection of Ortega's View of History**

Like other modern metaphysicians, Don Jose Ortega y Gasset denies a personal innate essence. Though Ortega also is concerned with freedom like Sartre, his approach to understanding the human person is very different.

Ortega is one of Spain's most influential philosophers, known for his social and political philosophy. Yet one of the most important areas of philosophy that he has contributed to is the area of anthropological metaphysics. This portion of the thesis will examine his interpretation of the human person through his existential view of human history.

Ortega's philosophy of the human person reflects upon human life; one's ability to project an authentic self throughout the course of a life. If the human person had an essence this would determine that person's life. Instead Ortega believes that man is free, and also compelled to create himself, to live uniquely through a self-determinism.

A person lives constantly immersed in one project or another. This project propels the person towards a goal, a goal that really can never fully be completed. Because a person is not fully actualized, he is forced to create himself, to make his life. The process of life has as its goal self-actualization. Life is pragmatic, it requires a process of "que hacer" or doing. The person undertakes a narrative process, while living in the midst of circumstances. He moves towards a goal, the vital project that guides his life. It is the occupation of man to create itself. This again illustrates the strong convictions that push Ortega to deny that persons have an essence.

Man ultimately remains unfinished until death halts this process of self-actualization. Human life, is a personal project that entails both circumstances and subjectivity (the I and my circumstances).

A project of life necessarily entails the existence of self-consciousness and the

ability of the individual to self-reflect. Ortega's native tongue fosters the development of his philosophy of the human person. The Castillian language provides its speakers with a word unknown to English speaking peoples. *Ensimismarse* is a Spanish verb with a reflexive character. It means to be absorbed in thought. This word expresses the starting point from which Ortega proceeds to a very important distinction between animals and man. Ortega in *Ensimismamiento y alteracion: editacion de la tecnica* status:

The animal is pure change. He isn't able to become absorbed in thought. Therefore, when things stop threatening and caressing it, when they permit it a vacation, in short, when they stop moving and governing it, the poor animal has virtually to stop existing, that is, he sleeps. From here the enormous capacity of drowsiness that reveals to the animal the heavy slumber that continues in part, in primitive man and adversely, the growing insomnia of-the-civilized *man* the nearly permanent watchfulness turns, terrible, untamable, that afflict the men with an intensive internal life.<sup>2</sup>

It is to this internal life that man withdraws, and thus escapes momentarily from the external world. Here in man's inner world, in the midst of the strength of his inferiority, the human person is able to think and to construct a personal plan of action. The *ensimisamiento* that is put forth by Ortega is a very powerful and pragmatic capacity known only to the human being. This pragmatic view of the human person, held by Ortega, helps to explain his sharp denial of a human essence.

Ortega's pragmatic approach to anthropological metaphysics helps to support his theory of the human person and the denial of a personal essence. He says "the destiny of man is, then, primarily action."<sup>3</sup> He is the being whose life is one of praxis. Man lives as an active participant in making himself. Human life permits no

passive onlookers. Man alone is responsible for what he is.

Always pushed towards the completion of a task, the human being is orientated to be a being of action. The individual lives this self-actualizing project. This project, life, is not to be completed in common. Everyone is responsible for himself, his own life. Although human beings are social creatures, each must choose his own "vital program". Ultimately one projects life and in this structures a life completely unique.

I alone am left with my task, the *que hacer*, or the chore of determining what I will be. Through my self-determinism and action I make myself, I choose my own what-ness. This is a very different metaphysical approach to the human person. Without an essence as such, the person is forced to establish his own essence. Again Ortega is an existentialist and similar in his position of human essence to that of Sartre.

What does it mean for one to be human? Ortega answers this difficult question with this response. In reference to the human person "he(man) is the existence of a non-existence."<sup>4</sup> Man exists, he is a real being. Yet he enjoys a distinct ontological status. He exists, with his life not being complete. One could go as far as to say that a person's life can never be examined except after it is finished. Only then, after death, could one look at the completed process that we refer to as life. Prior to this termination of life, one is always immersed in a project, active in the process of life. One continually strives for a completeness but this idea is never fully realized.

Man exists, but something of himself always remains outside himself. The past is his, but it flees every moment into the next. Man is more than the sum total of his comprised experiences. Man, though temporal, is not tied to a determination dictated by his past. Ortega says that "man does not have a nature: nothing in him is invariable. Instead of a nature, he has a history, it is what no other creature

has."<sup>5</sup>

Man's ability to make a history is due in part to this lack of an essential nature. The human person is not tied to an essence. Instead he is allowed to construct his life. Man can at any moment change his project and alter the course of his existence. He is the only creature who possesses this special "favor".

Albert Camus, also known for his existential orientation, states a very similar position in *The Stranger*. Here he states "Every man alive was privileged; there was only one class of men, the privileged class. All alike would be condemned to die one day."<sup>6</sup> Living as one of the privileged, man still must meet his own end. Though he holds the power to make himself, the human person is still finite. The human being is a temporal being, yet he still is able to transcend the ties of his past and freely project himself towards a future not yet seen. Abandoned with this life task, humankind must continue to endure and struggle with it to survive.

Ortega empathizes with the overwhelming feeling that hits the human person who reflects on the awesome task that he is left with, the self-determination that is the vehicle for the person's task of creating himself. He states:

We are not thrown into existence like the bullet of a gun, whose flight is absolutely predetermined. The misfortune is that we fall, fall in *this* world—the world is always this, this of now—it consists in all the unfavorable. Instead of imposing on us a trajectory, it imposes for us various ways and consequently, it forces us....to choose. The surprising condition of our life! To live is to feel oneself fatally compelled to exercise liberty, to decide whom we are going to be in this world. Not a single instant, does it stop to rest, our activity of decision. When exasperated we abandon ourselves to what will come, we have decided not to decide.<sup>7</sup>

This quote echoes the same senti-

ments that were seen earlier with the philosophy of Sartre. Ortega also recognizes the mandate commanding all persons to the continual exercise of personal freedom. This is an obligation that remains with the human being throughout his life. He can not take a vacation from his freedom. At every moment he is a free being. Like it or not there is no conscious escape. It is impossible to avoid the weight that comes from our own liberty. Even indecision or an omission of choice is already seen as an example of the exercise of freedom.

Man is condemned to live free. Sartre finds no solution to the feeling of condemnation and abandonment that plagues the human person as a result of his liberty. Man alone is left with the task to actively establish his unique self, at every moment of his life. Ortega, however, holds onto the strong desire of man to find order in life and escape the feeling of being lost:

This is the pure truth--to know, that to live is to feel oneself lost--, he that accepts it already has begun to encounter himself, already has started to discover his authentic reality, already is on firm (ground). Instinctively, the same as the castaway, he will seek something to hold on to and this tragic glance, urgent, absolutely truthful because one tries to save oneself, he will have order in the case of his life. These are the only true ideas: the ideas of the shipwrecked.<sup>8</sup>

Where the philosophy of Sartre leaves the human person in a bleak sentence, Ortega expresses the hope of the human spirit. Here the human person also feels left alone, but instead of focusing on this abandonment, Ortega describes man as looking for help. This is an avenue by which man might be able to escape his plight. By far this depiction of the human person and his life is empowering. Man, left with a tremendous task, feels as though he has been abandoned. Instead of pining over his plight, he seeks help. Something must provide man with the

help he needs to give order to his life. Ortega states "Lord of all things, but he isn't lord of himself. He feels abandoned by his own abundance."<sup>9</sup>

Man is able to provide order and rule over the things which surround him. He finds little comfort in his vast abilities, life perhaps is the most difficult task that confronts man. A task, a burden, and but it is his.

Though man is the inventor of many technological advances, he still remains a mystery to himself. He experiences a wealth of freedom, but this freedom is a source of discomfort to him. One must create himself, the human person finds no comfort in this. There is a task that he is thrown into, it is not complete and as he lives it will never be complete. This sounds familiar to anyone who knows the myth of Sisyphus: Condemned to roll the rock up the hill, only then to see it return to the bottom. This is a sentence in which Sisyphus is tormented by never seeing his task fully completed. Man too lives daily immersed in his task, never to see it completed. His process of self-actualization is always continued. His what-ness is never complete, it is always being made.

Why is it that the human person exists differently than the animals? Ortega states that "the animal has not enough imagination to draw up a project of life other than the mere monotonous repetition of its previous actions."<sup>10</sup>

In part, the animal does not have the same capacities as does the human person. The animal's abilities do not allow it to design a vital project. Its existence is determined by its nature, it can not transcend the instincts that guide its life.

Man, however, is identified by his own activity. It is this activity that determines the self. He is his own subjectivity (the I) and the circumstances that he encounters are his own. Unlike the animal, the human person is able to withdraw from the world. In retreating to his own interiority he immerses himself in thought. This process then leads to the development of a plan of action. He then works towards the

goal, projecting himself forward into the uncertainty of the future. It is through this process, moments in the history of the human person, that man chooses himself. He alone makes what he is. Ortega states "Hence man's existence is no passive being in the world, it is an unending struggle to accommodate himself in it."<sup>11</sup>

This pragmatic view of man illustrates the dignity that he possesses as a free being. He is intimately involved in the establishment of himself as a unique being. He alone holds the ultimate responsibility for what he has become. Life allows no one simply to observe, to sit on the sidelines. Life is a call to action. Life is an active existence that enables man to be an autobiographer.

We are all familiar with the notion of natural selection. This biological theory asserts that the beings which have evolved have done so because of their ability to adapt to the environment in which they live. Ortega refuses to accept the notion that man is adaptable. He states; "The animal is adaptable, but man is essentially inadaptable. Man is, everywhere a stranger."<sup>12</sup>

Animals can neither say 'yes' nor 'no' to life. They differ from man in that they already have an essence. This essence is what determines their life. Life for the animal is not an experience or an expression of freedom. Life here is not a process as it is for mankind. An animal is not burdened with the chore of inventing itself. Instead the life of the animal is already decided along with its instincts. It is unable to act freely, it must always act in accordance with its essence. A human person, however, is alone responsible for himself, for what he is and will become.

Man can not claim amnesty because of his instincts, for man is not tied to his instincts as is the animal. Our responsibility for personal acts cannot be diminished by the excuse of our instincts. Humanity is free, it is not determined by its instincts. Man is required to live as a pragmatic being and is placed in a situa-

tion where each one must act to continue living.

Jose Ortega y Gasset provides insight into the existential understanding of man. Man is free and self-determining. Essence is not seen as innate because of a desire to preserve human freedom. Man is an animal with a history which he alone chooses and lives. Though the writings of Ortega are interesting and eloquent, some problems arise from his concept of personal essence.

One problem with Ortega's metaphysical anthropology is that man's history cannot be confused with a concept of essence or the process that leads to the making of his essence. Man lives and in doing so does author his own story. By the decisions he makes and the actions he chooses he can never create what he is. No matter how you try to deny this, man is still that, man. He has a human-ness that is unique to the human person. He is free but that freedom is always that of a human person.

Julian Marias describes the human person as having the ability to choose *who* he will become. This is a more accurate description of the process of life that a person goes through. By acting in such a way or choosing a certain path, man makes a decision on what type of person he will become, who he will become. Man, no matter what his decisions are, or actions will always remain a human being. The *type* of person he is or will be are all self determined. I believe that Ortega, and some of his fellow existentialist thinker confuse the two concepts, and thereby misunderstand a traditional sense of human essence.

If man exists, then how can he create himself? As a free being he can choose the particular essence that he will have. For example he can be of noble character or he can be a wretched man. Either way he still remains a man. His universal essence is already in place and no action, omission, etc. can change this fact.

With the thought of Ortega, one sees the longing for an escape from the absurd-

ity presented though life. He describes man as a castaway looking for something or someone. With this longing, Ortega takes a more hopeful approach to the plight of the human person than some, but it is still without a grounding. Where does the meaning in human life come from? This is an important question given the fact that Ortega points out the capacity of man to at any time say "yes" or "no" to life. Why then do we continue to live as castaways? Where is our meaning?

## **II. Sartre's Denial of Human Essence: A Sincere Defense of Human Freedom**

Perhaps one of the most radical thinkers associated with the existential movement is Jean-Paul Sartre. For Sartre, existentialism is a celebration of personal freedom and an exploration into the real physical condition of man. Man's situation; this is the focus and the starting point for Sartre's anthropological metaphysics. Existentialism is seen as the truest anthropological examination of man. At one point in his work Sartre refers to existentialism by saying that "this theory alone is compatible with the dignity of man, it is the only one which does not make man into an object."<sup>13</sup>

In order to understand Sartre's statement and his philosophy, one must understand this statement to be a defense of human freedom. A genuine concern for the preservation of human freedom is the starting point of his existentialism. This is also the root of the problem of essence in the human person. By attributing an essence to a human being at the start of his existence, Sartre believes there to be a grave consequence; a limiting of personal freedom and an objectification of man. In attributing to a human being a fixed nature or essence when he begins to exist, the person's freedom is limited by what he is and will be. Man is then reduced to an object, no longer does he exist as a free subject who holds the power of choice. Man lives determined by his essence. In a theory pushed by the belief that man is

self-determined, one does away with anything perceived as impairing this freedom. Sartre sees the attributing of an essence to the human person along with existence as endangering man's ability to act freely. In this light, the ability of the person to establish himself freely as an authentic and unique being is forever crippled by the attribution coextensively of a human essence, with existence.

Existentialism by and large is a philosophy directed against determinism. In the interest of maintaining human freedom, any elements of determinism are rejected. Sartre clearly identifies traditional anthropological metaphysics as deterministic. Traditional metaphysics, as represented by the philosophy of Aristotle and later Aquinas, is dualistic in nature; that is to say any given real substance has both an essence and existence.

In reading the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, one immediately is struck by the vigor in which he defends human freedom. As stated earlier, his existentialism is a radical but sincere concern for the preservation of human freedom. Sartre does more than just attribute freedom to the human person. For him freedom is not just an attribute or feature of the human being. In *Existentialism and Human Emotions* Sartre states that "there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom."<sup>14</sup>

This is perhaps one of the most forceful statements that one will encounter in modern anthropological metaphysics. Man is freedom. The copula "is" has many uses in the English language. In this specific case it appears that Sartre uses "is" to express an equality of terms. This usage goes beyond a mere attribute that the human being possesses. Man is, that is to say equals, freedom. Therefore human freedom, for Sartre, is more than an essential feature of the human person. Freedom **is** the human person and can not be separated from the human being.

Justus Streller provides us with a guide to the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Throughout his book *To Freedom Condemned*, Streller focuses on the impor-

tance of human freedom in Sartre's philosophy:

Human freedom is not a part of human existence; it precedes human existence and makes it possible. The freedom of man can not be separated from the being of man. It is the being of man's consciousness. It is not a human attribute but it is the raw material of my being. I owe my being to freedom.<sup>15</sup>

As a free being, I choose, and in choosing I decide what I am and what I will be. It is in choosing that I establish myself. My freedom serves as a platform from which I actively come to be. In choosing, I authentically make myself. I act, and in acting create myself as a unique being. Sartre states "Acting is not a consequence of anything at all in the world or in man; it is rather the expression of freedom."<sup>16</sup>

If the basic tenet of Sartre is correct and 'man has no essence only a past', then the importance of freedom is crucial to understanding his form of existentialism. If man indeed has no essence, but only a past, one must be careful not to fall into a determinism. To avoid this determinism one must recognize man as a free being, one which acts out of this freedom. Then, though man has a past, he is not tied to this past as psychological determinism would have us believe. Man can negate his past, and choose at any moment to move in an entirely different direction. For man to act authentically necessarily presupposes that the man, as agent, is free. My ability to act, to choose what I am through the process of self-determination, illustrates that I am a free being. For only a free being would have the option to act authentically, the opportunity to determine himself.

Sartre recognizes the necessity of human freedom in a metaphysical anthropology. The French philosopher states:

As well look for emptiness in a container which one has filled beforehand



up to the brim! Man can not be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly free or he is not free at all.<sup>17</sup>

Yet in the midst of this profound and complete freedom that Sartre has found in the human person, even he admits a limit. The human person is free in all instances, except one. The human being is not free from this personal freedom. One is "condemned", if you will, to live as a free being.

This condition of freedom, which seems to be a source for human dignity in such a philosophy, is also a source of a distinct limitation on the human person. Free in all cases except for the case of choosing one's own condition or situation of freedom. This is mandatory for every human being. All persons are obliged to live freely. They are free by compulsion. To live as a human person is to live as a free being. This is what Sartre calls "the facticity of freedom."<sup>18</sup>

Such an existential view of the human person leaves the person with sole responsibility for himself. Sartre states in *Existentialism and Human Emotions*:

If we have defined man's situation as a free choice, with no excuses and no recourse, every man who takes refuge behind the excuse of his passions, every man who accepts a determinism, is a dishonest man.<sup>19</sup>

In order to escape the charge of being dishonest one must indeed reject all deterministic views of the human person. Sartre has included in this notion of determinism all essential views of the human being. To attribute an essence to the human person is for him, a determinism, a dishonest self-reflection. This is the rational behind his philosophy, and his denial of a personal essence. This is also a mark of some existential thinkers and will be shown later as a point of difference between Sartre and Zubiri.

A possible moral consequence of an essential view of the human person may follow from the determinism that Sartre so

readily rejects. The consequence is that personal responsibility is minimized. A person can always resort to the argument that he was tied to a nature and was without the sufficient freedom to act differently. This seems to be a position that is often identified with that of the Behaviorists. Free, but tied to a nature seems to be a contradiction.

Throughout Sartre's work he focuses on the responsibility of each individual person. In asserting an inescapable freedom of the human person, he also secures the responsibility that each man experiences for himself. This further establishes setting in which Sartre feels compelled to deny an essence of man.

Sartre rejects an essential view of the human person, that the human person has any essence. This is the position that Sartre brings to modern anthropological metaphysics. With this position he rejects both the duality of traditional metaphysics and the notion that the human person has an essence.

Thus human existence serves as a starting point from which the person freely chooses himself. This is the reality that the human person experiences according to Sartre. He states:

If existence really does precede essence, there is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom.<sup>20</sup>

From this statement, one understands Sartre to be asserting the total freedom of the human person. Actions are a result of the freedom and not the nature of the human person. One is held completely accountable for one's choices and actions. This is a defense of human freedom, and of man's ability to establish himself.

The anthropological metaphysics of both Jose Ortega y Gasset, and Jean-Paul Sartre are without a doubt, typical expressions of existential thought. With the denial of a human essence, the focus is

placed upon the existence of the human being and the making of an essence by free choice.

With this emphasis on human existence, man is left with his freedom of self-determination. As the person lives, he make vital projects the goal of his actions. He acts continuously throughout his life. His own identity, what he is, results from the choices that he has made. He is an author writing his own drama. Life is the creation of the human person. Life also remains an expression of the freedom that the human being both enjoys and dreads.

The recurring theme throughout this paper has been the issue of essence in the human person and human freedom. Up to this point the authors that have been chosen to illustrate this problem have agreed on one common point. Man, the human person, does not have an essence when he begins to exist. The personal essence of traditional anthropological metaphysics has been sacrificed for the preservation of human freedom.

The autonomy that man enjoys is due to this status of a free being. Man alone holds the power to make himself, by having the freedom to establish his unique essence. Man, having no essential nature is left with the chore of establishing himself.

This tenet, denying an innate nature of the human being, leaves much of existentialism and modern anthropological metaphysics relying on an absurd position. Man is free, but his freedom is limited.

Human freedom is a finite expression of freedom. Any other interpretation of human freedom remains an error on the part of the thinker. Man neither has the ability to create himself, nor would any sane man wish to torture himself with illusions of such an impossible task. Man is free, but nothing he does can ground his freedom, from which he is able to act. For, as is seen in Thomistic thought, 'every action is also an expression of existence'. This means that if the action of man is an expression of his freedom, as

many existentialists think, action too is the expression of existence. I have found no grounding for human freedom in man with either the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre or Jose Ortega y Gasset. The closest thing to such a foundation for personal existence as seen in the following quote. According to Sartre's theory of human freedom "it is not a human attribute but it is the raw-material of my being. I owe my being to freedom."<sup>21</sup>

This is indeed a radical statement even for the French philosopher. Here the grounding of my existence, of my being is found in my freedom. This seems fatally flawed. If I am to give credit for my existence to something, how can I try to give it to *my freedom*. 'My' seems to set this freedom apart from that of any other.

What Sartre seems to be saying is that my freedom grounds me. This is at least a logical error. For if Sartre is truly trying to answer a question of why the human person exists, he can hardly refer back to the same person that is the source of the perplexity. Sartre clearly has failed to provide the human person, the I, with the grounding or the foundation of man's existence. Ontologically speaking, to the reader of Sartre, man and his existence are but a mystery. Perhaps Sartre is right to focus on the tremendous freedom that is given to man. The human person is an active being, but he lacks the absolute freedom that he would need in order to ground his own existence. Man is free to choose, and thus make who he is. Man, however, is unable to provide himself with an essence. Human freedom is precisely that, freedom in human form. If one maintains the position that a human person is indeed able to produce his own essence or nature through his autonomous acts, one must therefore concede man is the creator of himself and not his existence. For the what-ness of the human person would not be a given, but would be something decided at every moment by the person who is choosing. The acting person is the one credited with realizing the authentic self.

His nature would be what was decided on by himself alone as a result of his choices.

William Barrett, in his book entitled *Irrational Man*, describes the freedom of Sartre as "a rootless freedom."<sup>22</sup> This seems to be a problem not only with Sartre, but also with Ortega. Since much of existential anthropological metaphysics is dependent upon his interpretation of human freedom, it is important to investigate further this criticism of Sartre's theory of the human being. Sartre attributes a radical freedom to the human person. He, however, lacks the justification for such a freedom. From where does this freedom come?

Why does the human person have this important ontological status while the other animals enjoy a much lesser position? It is clear that Sartre believes firmly in the reality of human freedom. His understanding of the human person can also be interpreted as the zealous fight for the preservation of personal freedom. How is it then that this learned man proceeds with a philosophy of the human person, motivated by the strong desire to retain human freedom, but clumsily leaves this principle of human freedom without its proper grounding? What accounts for why man has freedom? Rootless and without a rational basis, this freedom, so vigorously defended, is but a presupposition in the midst of the work of the Jean-Paul Sartre. For if he wishes to deny a personal essence in the hopes of continuing to allow for a philosophy sympathetic to personal freedom, Sartre must first build the foundation for the reality of such a freedom. Without such a background, his theory of the human person loses its credibility as a genuine philosophical discourse.

Another interesting point with respect to the position of Sartre is that he continually speaks of human freedom. This indicates that Sartre understands that freedom can be discussed in reference to different types of being; otherwise this distinction would prove a mere utterance, a useless word. Sartre then also concedes to a basic understanding of *what the hu-*

*man person is*. This is why there is some sort of nature with respect to the human person that even Sartre would have to accept. Apparently this "nature" would also include freedom, since the human person is free (he is freedom).

### III. Zubiri's Open Essence: His Preservation of Human Essence

Though Zubiri would not agree with the denial of a personal innate essence, he would also criticize Aristotle's interpretation of human essence. Zubiri instead continues from classical views that essences do exist and can be known and goes on to develop his own interpretation of the essence of man.

Zubiri agrees with Aristotle that there is something about a man that makes him a man and not another thing. He however sees the human person as a much more complicated and dynamic creature. He believes that the human person's essence is not definable with a simple statement of genus and species. The traditional statement of *man is a rational animal* is perhaps true but fails to encapsulate the complexity of the human person. Zubiri then sets off to establish a fuller concept of the human person than was seen with his predecessors.

According to the philosophy of Xavier Zubiri, the human person *does* have an essence. This human essence is, however, tied to his interpretation of the human intellect. This theory of the human person allows for the retention of a human essence. The human person is like the other animals in some ways but still he remains unique and set apart from the other natural beings. The human person, according to Zubiri, is a being with the power of understanding "in the sentient intellect."<sup>23</sup>

Zubiri in his examination of the human person recognizes the value of human freedom. In this way he is similar to Sartre and Ortega. He, however, does not inflate the status of human freedom to that of some of his contemporaries:

There is not the least doubt, there are both intellectual and volitional essences. If the will is grounded (whatsoever may be the mode of understanding this grounding) in the note of the intelligence, we can limit ourselves to this last (note) and talk only of the intelligence or intellectual essence. Every intellectual essence is transcendently open, and reciprocally, every transcendental essence is *eo ipso* intellectual, because intelligence is formally apprehension of the real as real and reciprocally. The intellectual essence is "by nature" open to all that is real as real.<sup>24</sup>

From this statement it appears that Zubiri wishes to "ground" volitional essences in the intellect. Freedom, or freedom of the will, (free will) is thereby grounded in some way in the intellect. Human freedom is therefore intimately tied to the intellect.

This is clearly an approach to understanding the human person far different than the existentialism of Sartre. Here in the theory of personal freedom presented by Zubiri, human freedom has a root, it is grounded in that of the intellect. This is not a new idea, it was also the position of St. Thomas Aquinas:

The intellect is related to the will as its source of movement, so there is no need to distinguish an active and a passive power in the will.<sup>25</sup>

Freedom, understood in this light would also be limited. This is an understanding of human freedom that is a true reflection of the human person as a finite creature. Though man is a free being, he does not truly possess the power to provide himself with his own essence. Man, being what he is, is a human person. This is a status that is not of man's choosing. He is what he is, a human person. His personhood is not a result of a decision or a culmination of actions of his free choice. From the beginning of his existence, his

quiddity is that of person, a being in human form.

In grounding the human person's freedom in the intellect, Zubiri further illustrates man's finitude. Since human understanding is a finite, something that is grounded in it would also have to be finite. From this one can deduce that human freedom is also finite. The human intellect enjoys a wealth of capacities, yet it is bound to a physical existence. The intellect of the human person is by its very nature intimately tied to a corporeal body. It relies upon the world and through the bodily senses it receives information that is needed in the process of understanding.

Unlike a pure intellect, the human intellect is not complete. It lacks the ability to understand all things from within itself. This imperfection is seen clearly in the necessary connection that the human intellect has with the body. Through the senses, the human person is able to gather information that leads to understanding. Still the nature of the intellect of the human person is rather sophisticated. The animal possesses only the senses. The animal is restricted because of what it is by its nature.

The human intellect requires a real world from which it senses real things and gathers input. This is an intellect that is not whole or perfected in and of itself. It must gather external information through the senses. The intellect remains imperfect in that it requires an external real world to provide sense data. This may not seem like an important feature of a philosophy of the human person but it will help us in understanding the difference between an animal and a human person. Zubiri says "The animal, with his mere sensibility, reacts always and only in the presence of stimuli."<sup>26</sup>

As physical beings both animals and man are sentient. Both have the ability to feel and react to the environment that they find themselves in. The animal, being a real being, finds himself in the world. The animal however exists and lives in a very different way than does man. Zubiri

speaks of the animals as being guided merely by *stimuli*. For the animal there is only a reactive response. The action of the animal is reduced to an environmental *response*. The environment is something that spurs the animal into activity.

Man, though sentient, is also an *active* being. He is able to react to stimuli as all physical beings do, but he is also able to see the world as something more. Man sees the world as a world of realities. This is a fundamental principle that is crucial to understanding Zubiri's interpretation of the human person; for it is the human being that has an open essence.

Following Zubiri's theory of the human person, a human being is redefined as an intelligent animal, the "animal of realities."<sup>27</sup> Man is the animal of realities. This statement is important in understanding the anthropological metaphysics of Zubiri. Man interprets the world as a world of realities. For the human person, there is not the animal limitation of seeing the world solely as stimuli. Man possesses a unique essence, a different ontological status as a result of this higher capacity; the intellectual ability towards openness to the world of realities. This openness is illustrated in the novel interpretation of the human person as possessing an open essence. Zubiri asserts the existence of a personal essence, while not discounting the value of human freedom. While other philosophers have left human freedom rootless, Zubiri provides a grounding of human freedom. Zubiri, grounds human freedom in the intellect, and clearly is required to maintain the notion of a personal essence in the metaphysics of the human person.

How is it that Zubiri retains the essence of the human person in the midst of modern criticisms? Zubiri builds a philosophy of the person around this concept of open essence:

Man not only is real, but he is "his" reality. Therefore, he is real 'in front of' all other reality that isn't his. In this sense every person, it is said, is

free from all other reality: he is absolute.<sup>28</sup>

Zubiri has stated that "In a word, while the animal does not make but resolves his life, man 'projects' his life."<sup>29</sup> Here Zubiri mirrors the philosophy of his professor, Ortega y Gasset. Man does not experience a position of comfort in life. He must live actively and thus experience life much differently than his animal counterpart. Man is forced to project himself towards a future that is unknown. His life is undetermined until he begins to freely choose his project. The animal lacks such a freedom and therefore it merely settles into its life. The animal remains closed to the possibilities that are available to the human person:

The world thus understood is where man must move himself; and for that reason the world is always something formally open. Human control, is therefore, a good part, 'creation'.<sup>30</sup>

The human person is privileged in that he holds a mobility that is non-existent in the case of other animals. The world of man is a world opened with a plurality of possibilities. For this reason Zubiri recognizes the partial responsibility that is given to man for control over himself, his world of realities. Man is unique in the status of self-determination. He partakes in the realization of some of the possibilities that are presented to his world.

Man holds an essence, but unlike that of any other natural creature. His essence is an essence open to a world of realities full of possibilities. Therefore, man is referred to throughout the work of Zubiri as the animal of realities.

In focusing upon the human intellect, Zubiri allows for a sharp distinction between human beings and other animals. While retaining the concept of a human essence, Zubiri re-interprets this essence in a unique manner. Perhaps this interpretation is an illustration of his sympathy towards modern philosophic inquiry into

the metaphysics of the human person, advances in science as well as an understanding of classical thought. Though he clearly wishes to preserve a human essence, he does not wish to adopt a determinism. The formulation of his theory of open essence, the essence of human being, he believes, avoids a deterministic view of the human person.

Open essence is a theory of the human person that does not inflate the ontological status of man. The human intellect is not a pure intellect. The requirement of a sentient body, shows beyond a shadow of a doubt the fact that man is limited. The requirement of the senses to provide information to the intellect demonstrates that the human intellect can not stand alone. It not only is embodied, but it must possess a body in order to understand, for the intellect to function.

The human person in being the animal of realities is open to the possibilities presented to him. His world is not something that moves him alone. He freely moves in it. The world is but a plethora of the possible. Man in his liberty is able to choose, to determine himself, thus sharing, in part, in creation. Man, the animal of realities, possesses an essence open to a world of possibility. Zubiri is unique in this approach to modern metaphysics of the human person. His philosophy adds invaluable insight into the metaphysics of the human person. Through his reinterpretation of human essence, he successfully depicts the reality of man. The human person retains his personal essence in the form of a unique essence called "open essence".

Zubiri is able to preserve human freedom, while maintaining the traditional metaphysical principle of human essence.

### Conclusion

Many problems have faced philosophy, yet none remains as important and as close to home as the one found in modern anthropological metaphysics. Does the human person have an essence when

he begins to exist? This is a serious question that must be addressed by contemporary metaphysicians. Perhaps that which is closest to us, is most elusive. Even after tremendous technological advances, man himself, in many ways remains but a mystery. If we listen to some existentialists, we are introduced to an interpretation of man that denies the coextension of personal essence and existence. In the interest of human freedom, Sartre and Ortega have chosen to reject the traditional duality of essence and existence in man.

Is man condemned and left alone to construct his own what-ness? This feeling of "abandonment" is common to all human experience. This feeling is also a recognition of the awesome responsibility that is bestowed upon us from birth. Is this responsibility and the recognition thereof, really sufficient ground for the eventual dismissal of the traditional metaphysical duality of essence and existence?

I believe that it is not. It seems that instead there is a rather basic confusion. It is the misunderstanding of the freedom that is possessed by the human being. First there must be a distinction between the *who* and *what* with respect to the human person. Through our freedom we are able to pick who it is that we will be. It is a choice to be noble, or ignoble. We do not choose *what* we are but *who* we are. From this freedom, that we all have as human beings, we are able to determine for ourselves what type of human being we will be. As a contemporary philosopher once said 'there are two types of human beings. Decent and indecent.' From this it appears that freedom is the tool from which we are empowered to be authentically ourselves. It is the "who-ness" that is rightfully determined by human freedom and not the "what-ness"

Further distinctions can be made between a unique personal essence that is reflected in one's "who-ness" versus the universal essence that is the basis for a human essence, the "what-ness" of the human person.

To state that it is human essence or

“what-ness” that would restrict human freedom is an error, it is a misunderstanding of the real function of human freedom. No matter what one's decision may be, one will always remain a human being. Freedom, in this case is always human freedom. This freedom, however, always will allow a person to determine who one will be. Freedom is what allows a person to be who he is.

Perhaps it is the traditional view of essence that lends itself to this “conflict” presented by much of existential thought. Zubiri is aware of a need for further clarification in regard to the essence of the human person. In redefining the essence of the human person as an open essence, he produces the modern-day theory of personal essence. This is an essence that allows for the autonomy of man, while recognizing his limitation as creature. The limitation is that he has no choice over what is he. He is human. He can however determine who he is and will be either choosing to be a decent or indecent person.

The human person's openness to the world, a world of possibilities, preserves the freedom of man. This openness allows man to move in the midst of his world of realities. Through this openness, man is freed from a life that is fixed, as is seen with other natural creatures.

Man is by his nature, a being with an open essence. I would perhaps continue here by saying that only in the case of the human person, can one choose the *character* of that being. Julian Marias expands upon this further. Only a man is a *who*. All other creatures have only a *what*. Through this openness, man can experience the world as uniquely his own:

The reality of that ‘who’ is never given, and simultaneously includes a certain infinitude and an essential opacity. That infinitude does not affect the finite character of human reality. The image of infinity is *lack of definition*, and only in this form is the human person infinite: not to be ‘given,’ al-

ways able to be something more, to be arriving.<sup>31</sup>

Unfixed, he is at liberty to realize the possibilities that are available to him in his reality.

Zubiri grounds human freedom in the human intellect. This is clear from his idea that the volitional essence is rooted in that of the intellectual essence. He could have gone more in depth in order strengthen his theory. This is important since it is human freedom that compels many existentialists to their eventual denial of a human essence in man.

Zubiri recognizes the importance of human freedom. If human freedom is to be rooted in something incomplete, imperfect, it too must be imperfect and restricted. Human freedom is seen as rooted in the human intellect. This suggests an imperfection in human freedom. For the liberty of the human being is rooted in something that is already seen as imperfect. Nothing coming from something limited can experience an absolute, complete freedom or liberty.

While some other modern philosophers wish to elevate the ontological status of man, Zubiri sees man from the start as an imperfect being. This allows him to proceed with an investigation of anthropological metaphysics without leading to false conclusions that man is something of a demi-god.

Man, though a beautiful and dynamic creature, still experiences limitations because of what it is. The human person, however lives uniquely. As the being holding a special essence, he lives in a world of realities. Open essence, recognizes human freedom, while preserving a human essence. It is open essence that counterattacks the destruction done to metaphysical anthropology by philosophers like Sartre and Ortega.

Perhaps to some people the interpretation of man as having an open essence sounds strange. Is Zubiri just renaming the problem that was presented by other existentialists? I would say “no”. Open

essence is a concept that captures the richness of the human being. It denotes freedom and an ability to exist in a much different relation with the world than other creatures. Man is an intra-mundane being that enjoys a different status than other animals. It is through the human intellect that man is able to stand in this unique relation with his world. With a sentient intellect, man is able to see the world as a world of realities. Through this ability he stands open to the vastness that surrounds him. His freedom allows the human person to choose and pursue the project that is his own. This is the proper understanding of the human person. Unlike the animal, a human being is a pragmatic creature, rational and free. Man through his openness is able to create a project, a world seen as uniquely his own.

In re-interpreting human essence, Zubiri successfully establishes a philosophy of the human person that is able to retain traditional metaphysical concepts. In setting forth the essence of the human person as an open essence, he illustrates the true status of the human person. Zubiri also explains the distinctions between the human being and other natural beings. This philosophy of the human person, allows for the continuation of human freedom and the preservation of a human essence in modern philosophic inquiry.

In presenting the problem of essence in modern anthropology, it is my hope to express the variety of orientations that can be seen within existential thought. Though historically existentialism has been seen as a denial of human essence, Zubiri illustrates the ability to maintain a

concept of human essence within the framework of existentialism.

Zubiri, in constructing the concept of an open essence has also laid the foundation for a theory of knowledge. In understanding man as a sentient intellect, he shows the importance of man as a physical being, possessing a body.

With philosophers such as Sartre and Ortega, the focus of their anthropological examination of the human person is human freedom. It is never a concern for the freedom of a rabbit or a dog. It is always *human* freedom. It seems they have already recognized and accepted an essence that allows the human being to be distinguished from other beings. This is the what-ness, the essence that they have tried hard to deny. If they deny an essence, they must also deny themselves the ability to denote human and non-human creatures. This would also make it absurd for them to go on to fight for the preservation of human freedom. Human freedom would be absurd. For the ability to group human beings as human would also be rather strange. No essence would mean no what-ness. It seems a result of such a philosophy would disallow a human species. Since this is unacceptable, it shows a severe problem that is present within the philosophy of both Sartre and Ortega.

Zubiri allows for a species of human beings, and still preserves the freedom seen with all human persons. His interpretation of human essence as an open essence allows for the unique ability of human person to establish himself as his own. This is the importance of open essence as an alternative existential approach to understanding the metaphysics of man.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. by Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, p. 438.
- <sup>2</sup> The author of this paper does this and all future translations of Spanish texts. Original Spanish text follows work cited. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Ensimismamiento y alteración edición de la técnica*, Argentina, Es pasa, 1945, p. 25. "El animal es pura alteración. No puede ensimismarse. Por eso, cuando las cosas dejan de amenazarle o acariciarle, cuando le permiten una vacación, en suma, cuando deja de moverle y manejarle lo otro que el, el pobre animal tiene que dejar virtualmente de existir, esto es: se duerme. De aquí la enorme capacidad de somnolencia que manifiesta el animal, la modorra infrahumana, que continua en parte en el hombre primitivo y opuestamente, el insomnio creciente del hombre civilizado, la casi permanente vigilia veces, terrible, indomable-que aqueja a los hombres de intensa vida interior."
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 31. "el destino del hombre es, pues, primariamente acción."
- <sup>4</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Sobre la Razon Historica*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1979, p. 95. "Es la existencia de una inexistencia."
- <sup>5</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Pasado y Porvenir Para el Hombre Actual*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1962, p. 61. "...el hombre no tiene naturaleza: nada en el invariable. En vez de naturaleza tiene historia, es lo que no tiene ninguna otra criatura...El hombre es insustancial."
- <sup>6</sup> Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, Trans. by Stuart Gilbert, New York: Vintage Books, 1946, p. 152.
- <sup>7</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, *La Rebelión de las Masas*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1979, p. 77. "No somos disparados sobre la existencia como la bala de un fusil, cuya trayectoria esta absolutamente predeterminada. La fatalidad en que caemos al caer en este mun-

- do—el mundo es siempre *este*, este de ahora—consiste en todo lo contrario. En vez de imponernos una trayectoria, no impone varias y, consecuentemente, nos fuerza...a elegir. ¡Sorprendente condición la de nuestra vida! Vivir es sentirse fatalmente forzado a ejercita la libertad, a decidir lo que vamos a ser en este mundo. Ni un solo instante se deja descansar a nuestra actividad de decisión. Inclusive cando desesperados nos abandonamos a lo que quiera venir, hemos decidido no decidir.”
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 172. “Como esto es la pura verdad— a saber, que vivir es sentirse perdido—, el que lo acepta ya ha empezado a encontrarse, ya ha comenzado a descubrir su autentica realidad, ya esta en lo firme. Instintivamente, lo mismo que el naufrago, buscara algo a que agarrarse y esa mirada trágica, perentoria, absolutamente veraz porque se trata de salvarse, le hará ordenar el caos de su vida. Esas son las únicas ideas verdaderas: las ideas de los náufragos.”
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 74. “Domina todas las cosas, pero no es dueño de si mismo. Se siente perdido en su propia abundancia.”
- <sup>10</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, “Man the Technician” in *Towards a Philosophy of History*, New York: Norton, 1941, p. 89.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 111.
- <sup>12</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Sobre La Razón Histórica*, op. cit., p. 99. “El animal es adaptado, pero el hombre es inadaptación esencial. El hombre es, donde quiera, un extranjero.”
- <sup>13</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism” in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. by W. Kaufmann, New York: New American Library, 1975, p. 203.
- <sup>14</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, Trans. by Bernard Frenchman, New York: Philosophical Library, 1957, p. 23.
- <sup>15</sup> Justus Streller, *Jean-Paul Sartre: To Freedom Condemned*, Trans. by Wade Baskin, New York: Wisdom Library, 1960, p. 29.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 29.
- <sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. by Hazel E. Barnes New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, p. 441.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.485.
- <sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotion*, Trans. by Bernard Frenchman, New York: Philosophical Library, 1957, p. 44-45.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 22-23.
- <sup>21</sup> Justus Streller, *Jean-Paul Sartre: To Freedom Condemned*, op.cit., p. 29.
- <sup>22</sup> Refer to previous footnote #13.
- <sup>23</sup> Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre la esencia*, op.cit., p.415. “en la intelección sentiente.”
- <sup>24</sup> Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre La Esencia*, Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1963, p. 500-1. “Son no hay la menor duda, las esencias inteligentes y volentes. Como lo volente esta fundado (sea cualquiera el modo come se entienda esta fundamentación) en la nota de inteligencia, podemos limitarnos a esta ultima y hablar sin mas de la esencia intelectiva o inteligente. Toda esencia intelectiva es transcendentamente abierta, y reciprocamente toda esencia transcendentamente abierta es *eo ipso* intelectiva, porque inteligencia es formalmente aprehensión de lo real qua real y reciprocamente. La esencia intelectiva es “de suyo” abierta a toda lo real qua real.”
- <sup>25</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. by Timothy Suttor, New York: Blackfriars/McGraw-Hill, 1970, p. 249.
- <sup>26</sup> Xavier Zubiri, “El Origin del Hombre” in *Revista de Occidente*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Number 17, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1954, p. 147. “El animal, con su mera sensibilidad, reacciona siempre y solo ante estímulos... A diferencia de esto, el hombre, con su inteligencia, responde a realidades.”
- <sup>27</sup> Xavier Zubiri, “El Problema del Hombre”, in *Indice*, Number 120, (Madrid: Indice, 1959), p.3. “animal de realidades.”
- <sup>28</sup> Xavier Zubiri, “El Problema Teological del Hombre” in *Teologia y Mundo Contemporaneo: Homenaje a Karl Rahner*, Madrid, 1975, p. 57. “El hombre no solo es real, sino que es ‘su’ realidad. Por tanto, es real ‘frente a’ toda otra realidad que no sea la suya. En este sentido, cada persona, por asi decirlo, esta ‘suelta’ de toda otra realidad: es ‘absoluta’.”
- <sup>29</sup> Xavier Zubiri, “El Origin del Hombre”, op. cit., p. 148. “En un palabra, mientras el

animal no hace sino 'resolver' su vida, el hombre 'proyecta' su vida."

- <sup>30</sup> Xavier Zubiri, "El Hombre, Realidad y Personal", in *Revista de Occidente*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1963, p. 20. "El mundo así entendido es en el que el hombre se tiene que mover; y por eso el mundo es siempre algo formalmente abierto. Su control humano es por esto, buena parte, 'creacion'."
- <sup>31</sup> Julian Marias, *Metaphysical Anthropology: The Empirical Structure of Human Life*. Trans. Frances M. Lopez-Morillas. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971, p. 35.

### Biography of the Author

Celeste-Marie Weber Moore graduated from LeMoyne College with a degree in Philosophy and a minor in Spanish. She then studied philosophy at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, writing her Master's thesis on the work of Xavier Zubiri. She also studied in the area of Library and Information Science. She is currently house librarian and treasurer for the St. Andrew Hall joint novitiate for the New York, Maryland and New England Society of Jesus, and also serves as an Adjunct Philosophy Instructor at LeMoyne College. She is married to Albert-David Moore, and has a daughter, Mary-Elizabeth.

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