

CHARITY, HOSPITALITY, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

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SUMMARY

We believe that in order to properly interpret all aspects of human scientific enquiry in terms of its impact on human beings it is necessary to have an adequate all encompassing model of the human person.

We began this presentation by discussing the differences between the 'Cartesian' Dualistic model of the human Person and that of Aquinas and Augustine (which depend on Aristotle and Plato respectively). While the 'Cartesian' describes a completely separate 'soul' or 'mind' from the physical body, the Thomistic model of the Human Person is that of an Embodied Spirit, in which every aspect of the human spirit is reflected in an aspect or function of the physical body. We argued that the 'Cartesian view', in the modern age of 'Evidence Based Science' is inadequate, because the absence of evidence of a separate Mind allows the existence of this to be challenged by the application of 'Ockham's Razor', whereas the Thomistic or Augustinian view need not be so challenged, since every aspect of the human spirit is reflected in an aspect or function of the physical body.

Thus we argued that the 'embodied spirit' model of the Human Person can be an appropriate model in understanding the relationship of modern neuroscience to the reality of the human person. We were able to observe numerous examples from Neuroscience, at the level of organs, neural systems and also at the molecular level in which a dualistic model was inadequate to explain experimental observations. We then related these ideas to the idea of Empathy, the neural system for which appears to be the same as the system for establishing a sense of self for the person.

We argued that therefore since the Concept of Charity, that is caring for others, related to the concept of Empathy, then the same neural system existed to promote Charity, as a function of the Human Person. We used anthropological data on the confraternities of 'Our Lady of Charity' to describe how humans had, since Roman Times at least given expression to this imperative for Charity, and took this further to show how paintings of the Roman story see Pero, who secretly breastfeeds her father, Cimon, after he is incarcerated and sentenced to death by starvation, expresses the need for Charity as a 'giving of self' to others which can be explained by the embedded of the neural network for empathy in the human brain, closely linked with the sense of self.

Finally, we moved to hospitality, most easily expressed among humans by the sharing of a meal. We showed the Confraternities of 'Our Lady of Charity' used paintings of the feast of the Marriage of Cana to express hospitality and their charitable work. We took the metaphor of sharing a meal further, and suggested that in paintings of the Trinity by Andrei Rublëv and the Supper of Emmeus by Caravaggio expressed that hospitality, as in sharing a meal, can link the human person to the Transendent ... perhaps through the mediation of the Neural system which expresses both sense of self and empathy.

We concluded that 'In the consultation we should treat people as embodied spirits', and that 'Treating people as an embodied spirit - demands charity, in which we give of our own embodied spirit'.

Key words: model of human person – Charity – hospitality – neuroscience - dualism, thomism, anthropology, art interpretation.

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Introduction

We believe that in order to properly interpret all aspects of human scientific enquiry in terms of its impact on human beings it is necessary to have an adequate all encompassing model of the human person. Therefore, in Philosophy of Psychiatry, we see the need to develop such a model of the Human Person which can serve as a guide in understanding how Human Beings think and act, and, indeed, their very purpose and their modes of functioning. This means relating the individual person or, for doctors, patient, to their 'being in the world', their beliefs, their driving forces, the influences which affect them in the real world, their hopes for the future, how they express themselves to others, and how they measure success or failure.

Such a broad canvas requires that many aspects of the observation of human beings must be correlated in order to achieve such an all encompassing model of the human being, and in previous work we have argued that we need to use different disciplines, ranging from

philosophy to anthropology to psychology, to art interpretation and to theology, which all relate to the study of man in different aspects of his relationships and modes of expression, in order that each of these should contribute its observations to the summative whole (Agius 2014). The relatively new contribution we are contributing to this work are the observations of modern neuroscience (Agius 2014), which, we feel, have an important part to play in elucidating the mechanisms by which human beings act and contributing to our understanding of humanity. Thus we are led to require a model of the human person, which, though not necessarily the only possible model (we do not attempt to prove that this model is the only correct one) but is still a model which enables us to understand how Man functions within his Environment and what is the essential nature of his being.

In this paper we have been asked to discuss the nature of the attributes of Charity and Hospitality within the Human Person, and how they contribute to our being human.

The Cartesian Dualistic Model of the Human Person versus The Thomistic One

We begin this presentation by discussing the differences between the 'Cartesian' Dualistic model of the human Person and that of Aquinas and Augustine (which depend on Aristotle and Plato respectively). While the 'Cartesian' describes a completely separate 'soul' or 'mind' from the physical body (Descartes 1648, 1649), the Thomistic model of the Human Person is that of an Embodied Spirit, in which every aspect of the human spirit is reflected in an aspect or function of the physical body. This Thomistic view is the view of the Human Person put forward by Thomas Aquinas, and previously by Augustine. It depends on the view of Aristotle, and previously of Plato. Although it was the prevalent view of the scholastic philosophers, it continues to be the view of the Human Person espoused presently by, among others, Roman Catholic Bioethicists. We argue that the 'Cartesian view', in the modern age of 'Evidence Based Science' is inadequate, because the absence of evidence of a separate Mind allows the existence if this to be challenged by the application of 'Ockham's Razor', whereas the Thomistic or Augustinian view need not be so challenged, since every aspect of the human spirit is reflected in an aspect or function of the physical body.

Thus we argued that the 'embodied spirit' model of the Human Person can be an appropriate model in understanding the relationship of modern neuroscience to the reality of the human person.

One of Us (AM) suggested Two arguments against the "immaterial" mind as proposed by Decartes:

- Anatomical and functional neural correlates of animal and human behaviour suggest that there is a physical basis for the generation of outputs of the human "mind"
- Physical processes, including pathology, disturb the individual functionality of the human "mind". Therefore, the "mind" appears to be embodied in functional neuronal networks, and disrupted by physical agents.

There are many examples from Neuroscience, from molecular to whole brain levels, that support a parsimonious model of mind and body. The most direct evidence of the mind as a neural network comes from animal models, where neural correlates of working memory in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex may reflect animals 'holding things in the mind,' (Baddeley 1974, Baddeley 2000) and firing sequences in hippocampal place cells reflect spatial choices (Redich 2016). At the molecular level, long term potentiation (Lomo 2003) and reconsolidation align with the long lasting but flexible nature of human memory. Furthermore, the efficacy of psychoactive drugs also points towards a molecular foundation for the human mind. This does not mean that we need to compare the mind of a human being with that of another sentient creature, but obser-

vations of these functional networks provide evidence that internal thought has a measurable correlate. Indeed, much of neuroscience and its clinical applications in psychiatry and psychopharmacology assumes the existence of a "mind" that is receptive to physical intervention. Hence, at all levels of neuroscience, the Thomistic unified idea of being human remained more appropriate than a dualistic model.

Empathy

We then related these ideas to the idea of Empathy, the neural system for which appears to be the same as the system for establishing a sense of self for the person. George Northoff elegantly demonstrated that there is a neural network for Empathy, which also appears to be the neural network which establishes the concept of 'Self' (Northoff 2009). Empathy is the sharing of emotional (and cognitive) states with others, and he could demonstrate a neural network for empathy by this definition (Northoff 2009). He showed that Cortical and subcortical midline structures help define the self. These Cortical and subcortical midline structures are related to Intersubjective attunement: "Basic relation" with "fungierende/operative intentionality" to other selves (Northoff 2009). This Neural network for empathy appears to be the same as the Neural network for interoception. Hence there appears to be an Interaction between interoception and empathy (Northoff 2009). The Empathy network is Similar with strong overlap to the interoceptive network for body perception (Agius 2014, Northoff 2009) Activity in the identified "empathy network" was more likely to override Non-Empathy in healthy subjects. Empathy is the Relationship between the self and the other. It appears that Empathy is the Embeddedness of the self in the world, and hence measures the Intrinsic relation of the self to the world (Agius 2014, Northoff 2009). There appears to be an Intersubjective attunement or "Basic relation" to the world, which is operative Intentionality. This then affects Intersubjective relatedness: The higher the degree of self-relatedness, the higher the degree of empathy with the other, which leads to consciousness of the Self- Other relationship, which leads to consciousness of Embeddedness of the self in the world, and hence to a Constitution of Subjectivity (Agius 2014, Northoff 2009).

Charity

We argued that therefore since the Concept of Charity, that is caring for others, related to the concept of Empathy, then the same neural system as that for Empathy existed to promote Charity, as a function of the Human Person.

Charity involves making choices, which may benefit other persons or whole groups, and there are some studies in primates which identify Neurons in the anterior cingulate gyrus and the anterior cingulate sulcus as encoding rewards to other members of a group

of primates (Chang 2013), while other studies (Chang 2015) suggest the importance of the basolateral amygdala in making prosocial decisions. Beyond these studies in Primates, Hare in 2010 has shown that the ventral medial prefrontal cortex is involved in decision making regarding choices of Charitable donations (Hare 2010).

Thus it is suggested that there are neuronal systems which cause us to make choices to benefit others, but that these must be linked with the neuronal systems which enable us to be empathic with others.

We must not forget our prime assumption, based on the Thomistic model that mechanisms (neuronal systems) exist in the body to account for all of our actions, since we are 'embodied spirits'.

Anthropology Of Charity

In order to show how such concepts as 'charity' appear embedded within our functioning as persons, we used anthropological data on the confraternities of 'Our Lady of Charity' to describe how humans had, since Roman Times at least, given expression to this imperative for Charity, and took this further to show how paintings of the Roman story of Pero, who secretly breastfeeds her father, Cimon, after he is incarcerated and sentenced to death by starvation, expresses the need for Charity as a 'giving of self' to others which can be explained by the embeddedness of the neural network for empathy in the human brain, closely linked with the sense of self. The imagery of Pero breastfeeding a grown man (rather than a child, as is normal), suggests the need in Charity to 'give of self' beyond the accepted norm. The imagery of Pero and Cimon became a symbol of the numerous Confraternities of Our Lady of Charity, affiliated with that in Rome, which spread as a means of doing Charity all over the south of Italy, Sicily and Malta. Thus this anthropology of Charity suggests the imperative for doing such work as part of the fact of being human. The Confraternities we mention have, from their inception, up to the present day been doing works of charity in an organised way, within the society of which they form a part, and continue to do so thus expressing an impetus towards charity within human society. The need to express this impetus to Charity is demonstrated by the way that in art many great painters painted the image of Pero and Cimon, as a symbol of Charity, often linked with the confraternities. These artists included Caravaggio, Reubens, Murillo, Rembrandt Peale, and Jean Baptiste Greuze.

Hospitality

Finally, we moved to hospitality, showing kindness, caring, and union to others, most easily expressed among humans by the sharing of a meal. We showed that the Confraternities of 'Our Lady of Charity' used paintings of the feast of the Marriage of Cana to express hospitality and their charitable work. This is exempli-

fied by the paintings of The Marriage of Cana in the Oratories of the Our Lady of Charity of the Confraternities of Birgu and Valletta in Malta. In the confraternity of Valletta, a 'Meal of Cana' is celebrated annually, with the food being distributed to the poor. However, we took the metaphor of sharing a meal further, and suggested that the paintings of the Trinity by Andrei Rublëv and the Supper of Emmaus by Caravaggio, both expressed that hospitality, as in sharing a meal, but also expressed that sharing hospitality can provide a link of the human person to ideas of the Transcendent ... perhaps through the mediation of the Neural system which expresses both the sense of self and empathy. Thus we can suggest a link eventually between Human Beings, who have this neural system, and the sense of the transcendent when being hospitable.

These thoughts suggest a very optimistic view of man, geared by his very neurons to the possibility of interacting positively with others through choosing to carry out acts of charity and hospitality, acts which we as doctors can carry out with our patients during consultations (Agius 2014).

We concluded that 'In the consultation we should treat people as embodied spirits', and that 'Treating people as an embodied spirit – demands charity, in which we give of our own embodied spirit'.

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Contribution of individual authors:

Both authors contributed equally to the conception, development and drafting of the project and should be seen as joint first authors.

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