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Placing Joseph Ratzinger within the “Synthetic” Tradition of the Theological Anthropology of the Heart

Nauczanie Josepha Ratzingera na tle „syntetycznej”
tradycji teologicznej antropologii serca

ABSTRACT: This article begins with a chronological outline of the two main “traditions” of understanding the heart: the “analytic” tradition which treats the heart as a particular faculty of the human person, and the “synthetic” tradition which treats it as in some way transcending a particular faculty. Then, it looks at the contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart. Following this, it examines Joseph Ratzinger’s theological anthropology of the heart. More specifically, it looks at this understanding as found in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, his assessment of the patristic understanding of the heart, and as revealed in his *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Mary: The Church at the Source*. Then, it investigates his symbolic theology of the Father’s heart, followed by how both the human heart and the Father’s heart are revealed in the heart of Jesus. It concludes with a few thoughts on how a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart might assist us in healing our contemporary anthropological disintegration.

KEYWORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, theological anthropology, heart, symbolic theology, Origen, Augustine, Pascal, John Henry Newman, Romano Guardini

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy artykuł rozpoczyna chronologiczne przedstawienie dwóch głównych tradycji rozumienia serca: tradycji analitycznej, która traktuje serce jako szczególną zdolność osoby ludzkiej, oraz tradycji syntetycznej, która uznaje, że serce tę szczególną zdolność przekracza. W kolejnych częściach artykułu autor dokonuje przeglądu współczesnych badań teologicznej antropologii serca oraz analizuje teologiczną antropologię serca Josepha Ratzingera, zaprezentowaną w jego komentarzu do *Gaudium et spes*, w jego ocenie patrystycznego rozumienia serca oraz w jego książkach *Jezus z Nazaretu* i *Matka Boga. Maryja w wierze Kościoła*. Następnie autor bada Ratzingerowską symboliczną teologię serca Boga Ojca oraz sposób, w jaki zarówno

ludzkie serce, jak i serce Ojca objawiają się w sercu Jezusa. Artykuł kończą refleksje na temat sposobu, w jaki syntetyczna teologiczna antropologia serca może pomóc w uzdrowieniu współczesnej antropologicznej dezintegracji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, antropologia teologiczna, serce, teologia symboliczna, Orygenes, Augustyn, Pascal, John Henry Newman, Romano Guardini

In everyday speech people often use the term “heart.” It can be used to describe someone’s disposition — one can have a soft, hard, warm, or cold heart; to indicate affection — I love you with all my heart; to indicate courage — take heart; to describe a person’s character — he is a man after my own heart; to indicate knowledge — I knew in my heart; to indicate memory — I know it by heart. The term is also used frequently in Sacred Scripture. Therein it is used to indicate knowing, believing, willing, conscience, the passions, imagination, and memory. It is the place of relationships with other persons, the place which God searches and knows, the place of revelation and the refusal of revelation, and the place of God’s indwelling.

In examining this term, one should seek to answer two fundamental questions. First, can the term “heart” be used clearly in theological anthropology, or must it remain forever vague, ambiguous, and indeterminate? Second, can the term be used fruitfully in theological anthropology, can it be used in a way that helps us to understand the mystery of ourselves and the mystery of our relationship with God? To answer these questions, we will begin with a brief chronological outline of the two main “traditions” of understanding the heart. These are the “analytic” tradition which treats the heart as a particular faculty of the human person, and the “synthetic” tradition which treats it as in some way transcending a particular faculty. Then, we will look at the contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart. Following this, we will examine Joseph Ratzinger’s theological anthropology of the heart. More specifically, we will look at this understanding as found in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, in his assessment of the patristic understanding of the heart, and as revealed in his *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Mary: The Church at the Source*. Then, we will investigate his symbolic theology of the Father’s heart, followed by how both the human heart and the Father’s heart are revealed in the heart of Jesus. The article will conclude with a few thoughts on how a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart might assist us in healing our contemporary anthropological disintegration.

A theological anthropology of the heart

When it comes to how the term “heart” has been used theologically, one finds that there have been two main “traditions.” These could be called the analytic and the synthetic traditions. The first is an analysis of the human faculties, one that needs to be synthesized. The second is a synthesis of the human heart, one that needs to be analyzed. The first is based more on how one thinks about being human while the second is based more on how one experiences being human.

The analytic tradition distinguishes between the individual faculties of the human person. Thus, in *The Republic* Plato divides the soul into three parts; the logical, symbolized by the head, the spirited, symbolized by the heart, and the appetitive, symbolized by the entrails. Here he likens the soul to the three orders of the city: the guardians, the auxiliaries, and the producers.¹ In *Timaeus* he divides the human person into the immortal rational soul, the body, and the two parts of the mortal soul. The immortal rational soul resides in the head, and the two parts of the mortal soul reside in the body, the spirited part in the chest and the appetitive part in the viscera.² These Platonic schemata provide the basis for this tradition. Yet, one finds that these schemata are adapted in various ways to account for the place of the heart. The first adaption is found amongst the Greek Fathers.

The heart lies at the center of Eastern Christian spirituality. As Tomáš Špidlík points out, the spiritual writers of the East “speak of custody of the heart, of attentiveness to the heart, of purity of the heart, of the thoughts, desires, and resolutions of the heart, of prayer of the heart, of the divine presence in the heart, and so on.”³ Faced with the fact that, in Sacred Scripture, “the heart contains the fullness of the spiritual life, which involves the whole person, with all his faculties and all his activities,” the Fathers were faced with the dilemma of how to express this in a way comprehensible to a Greek mind.⁴ Since the mind occupied pride of place for the Greeks, the patristic response was to identify the heart with the mind. As Špidlík continues: “Speculative by nature, the Greeks certainly did not by mere chance substitute *nous* (reason,

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 4, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970, nos. 435–442.

² Plato, *Timaeus*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970, nos. 69b–72d.

³ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 1986, p. 103.

⁴ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104.

mind) for the biblical *lev, levav* (heart). According to Gregory Nazianzus the ‘clean heart’ of Ps. 50:2 was the *dianoētikon* (mind).⁵

With Thomas Aquinas, one finds that his view of the heart seems to combine Platonic and Aristotelian understandings, depending upon the particular sense in which he is using the term. Thus, he sometimes uses it to mean the principle of animal life and movement (Aristotelian).⁶ He also, “thinks of the heart as the organ of the passions, in the sense that the motions and affections of the sensitive part of the soul are joined with a powerful motion (*commotio*) of the body, and in particular of the heart. In this way love produces a *dilatatio cordis* [an enlargement of the heart] [Platonic].”⁷

When speaking of the heart in its biblical sense, he equates *cor* with *spiritus*.⁸ Furthermore, when commenting on the use of the term in the evangelical counsel to love God with all one’s heart (cf. Luke 10:27) he says that it indicates an *actus voluntatis quae hic significatur per cor* (an act of the will, which is indicated here by heart).⁹ He never speaks of the heart as a source of cognition.¹⁰

In Dietrich von Hildebrand’s *The Sacred Heart*, one finds a third account which differs from those of both Plato and Aquinas. He holds that, for the most part, it is “characteristic of the heart in its true and most specific sense that it is chosen as representative of man’s inner life, and that the heart, rather than the intellect or will, is identified with the soul as such.”¹¹

⁵ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104, referring to Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 40:39.

⁶ See L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus in the Theology and Devotion of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, p. 79, where he refers the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 20, 1, ad 1; III, 90, 3, ad 3; and *In IV Sent.*, d. 14, q. 1, ad 2.

⁷ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Q. d. de veritate*, 22, 2; and *Super Io evang.*, c. 13, lectio 4, N. 1796.

⁸ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Super epist. I ad Thess.*, c. 5, lectio I, N. 120; and *Super Io evang.*, c. 14, lectio I, N. 1850: “*cor, id est spiritus.*”

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, transl. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York 1948, II–II, 44, 5.

¹⁰ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to the *Summa Theologica*, III, 90, 3, ad 3.

¹¹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, Baltimore, MD 1965, p. 47. Von Hildebrand sees the intellect, will, and heart as the three fundamental “capacities” of the human person. It is to the heart that the “affective sphere” belongs (*ibid.*, pp. 25–49).

He goes on to identify the "heart" as the center of human affectivity. Thus, "just as the intellect is the root of all acts of knowledge, the heart is the organ of all affectivity: all wishing, all desiring, all 'being *affected*'."¹²

Von Hildebrand gradually explains his definition of the heart. More precisely, the heart is the center of affectivity. It can be contrasted not just with the will and intellect, but with the less central strata of affectivity. These strata von Hildebrand characterizes as "non-spiritual," that is, the agreeable or disagreeable feelings which attend upon bodily pains and pleasures.¹³ Distinguishing between bodily and psychic feelings, he holds that not all psychic feelings can be classified as "spiritual." There are psychic states such as "jolliness" and depression, and what he calls spiritual affective responses such as joy, sorrow, love, or compassion. He distinguishes between them on the grounds that the psychic states are not "intentional," that is, they do not have "a meaningful conscious relation to an object."¹⁴

Von Hildebrand further refines his definition of the "heart" by distinguishing between what he calls "energized" and "tender" affectivity. The former is "temperamental," for example, the pleasure experienced in sports or in displaying one's talents.¹⁵ For him, the latter is the "affectivity" spoken of in the Song of Songs.¹⁶ If one truly has a "tender affectivity," the more one's experience of the object of this affectivity will be "awakened," and the more one's affectivity is awakened, the greater the joy that one will experience. Thus, "The more conscious a joy is, the more its object is seen and understood in its full meaning; the more awakened and outspoken the response, the more the joy is lived."¹⁷ In other words, the deeper one's joy in the beloved, the deeper one's knowledge of the beloved, and the deeper that knowledge, the deeper the joy. Love, joy, and knowledge mutually reinforce each other. Thus: "It belongs to the very nature of affective experiences that a deep joy or a deep love, though each possesses a theme of its own, is penetrated by the awareness that our joy or our love is objectively justified and objectively valid."¹⁸

To sum up the analytical tradition, for Greek Fathers like Gregory Nazianzen, heart equals mind. For Aquinas, heart equals either the principle of

¹² D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹³ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 49–52.

¹⁴ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 54–55. He goes on to contrast this with the conviviality caused by drinking alcohol.

¹⁵ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁶ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁷ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁸ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 83.

animal life and movement, or the organ of the passions, or the *spiritus*, or the will. For von Hildebrand, heart equals joyful, knowing, and loving affectivity.

While not insisting that one needs to choose definitively between these traditions, an attempt will be made to present a more balanced picture by giving a brief outline and analysis of the synthetic tradition, which is based more on how one experiences being human. It will be maintained that having this picture is valuable, since a theological anthropology of the heart is more in accord with our immediate experience of being and acting humanly, and it may be of some help in countering a contemporary anthropological dualism.

Romano Guardini is one who identifies this focus upon the heart, which he calls the noblest tradition of the Christian Occident, a *philosophia* and *theologia cordis*. According to him, the pedigree of this tradition begins with Plato, and runs through Paul, Ignatius of Antioch, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Gertrude the Great, Elizabeth of Thuringia and Catherine of Siena. Its “system” is created by Bonaventure and its “poetry” by Dante. After a hiatus in the Renaissance, it continues through Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Blaise Pascal, the Oratorians Charles de Condren, Pierre de Bérulle, and Alphonse Gratre, Antonio Rosmini, and culminates in John Henry Newman. In the East it has been cultivated by Vladimir Soloviev, Aleksey Khomyakov, and Pavel Florensky. Guardini also sees it, “in a strange Nordic modification” in Søren Kierkegaard, and in an anti-Christian manifestation in Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁹ To this pedigree Beáta Tóth adds Paul Ricoeur and Karol Wojtyła,²⁰ while Ratzinger could add the Old and New Testaments, the Stoics, Origen, and Guardini himself.²¹ To all of these could be added the Syrian Martyrius Sadhona, the Russian Théophane the Recluse,²² as well as Karl Rahner, Tóth, and Ratzinger.²³ Beginning with Sacred Scripture an attempt will be made

¹⁹ R. Guardini, *Pascal for Our Time*, transl. B. Thompson, New York 1966, pp. 128–129. For Augustine and Pascal, see also J.R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009. For Francis de Sales see W.M. Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition*, Maryknoll, NY 2004.

²⁰ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, Eugene, OR 2015, pp. 21–26, 29–60, 93–100, 214–230.

²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 51–69.

²² For Martyrius Sadhona and Théophane the Recluse, see T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., pp. 105–107; and T. Špidlík, *Prayer: The Spirituality of the Christian East*, vol. 2, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 2005, pp. 251–258.

²³ See K. Rahner, *Some Theses on the Theology of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 131–155.

to trace this tradition through some of the most significant of these people, namely, Augustine, Pascal, Newman, and Guardini.

While Scripture does, on occasion, distinguish between such faculties of the human person as “heart,” “soul,” and “mind” (cf. Matt 22:37), it generally uses the term “heart” across the whole spectrum of human faculties. It is the place of knowing, faith, willing, and conscience. It is drawn to what seems good and beautiful. It is the seat of the passions, imagination, and memory. It is the place of virtue and purity. It is the place of relationships with other persons. It is the place which God searches and knows, the place of revelation and the refusal of revelation, and the place of God’s indwelling.²⁴

Summing up the biblical understanding of the heart, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that:

[The] heart is the center of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the forces and functions of the soul and spirit ... [In it] dwell feelings, desires and passions ... [It is] the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection ... the seat of the will, the source of resolves ... supremely the one

²⁴ For example, in the Septuagint, for *kardia* as the locus of knowing, see Isa 6:10; for willing, see 2 Sam 7:3; for conscience, see 2 Sam 24:10; as the seat of desire, see Job 31:9; as the seat of the passions, see Jer 4:19; as being broken, see Isa 61:1. In the New Testament, for *kardia* as the locus of the passions, see John 14:1; for thought, see Matt 9:4; for understanding, see Matt 13:15; for doubt and questioning, see Luke 24:38; for belief, see Luke 24:25; for deception, see Jas 1:26; for intention and decision, see Acts 5:3–4; for imagination, see Luke 1:51; for memory, see Luke 1:66; for virtue, see 2 Thess 3:5; for conscience, see 1 John 3:20; for purity of heart, see Matt 5:8; for relation with other human persons, see 2 Cor 6:11–13; as that which God searches and knows, see Rom 8:27; of revelation, see Eph 1:18; of the refusal of revelation, see Eph 4:18; of God’s indwelling, in Christ, see Eph 3:17. For the biblical language of the heart, see J. Becker, *The Heart in the Language of the Bible*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 24–30. Concerning the heart as the place of pity and mercy, Joachim Becker points out that, “Biblical language prefers to assign to these feelings other terms, meaning approximately ‘bowels’” (ibid., p. 30). Hugo Rahner regards this term *splanchna* as equivalent to “heart.” See H. Rahner, *On the Biblical Basis of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 17–26. He states that: “In the language of Revelation, the hallowed word ‘heart’ and its almost synonymous equivalents (Hebrew: *leb, lebab, beten, me(j)’im, kereb*; Greek: *kardia, koilia, splanchna*; Latin: *cor, venter, viscera*) have the same primal meaning as in all human language” (ibid., p. 17). See also J.G. Bovenmars, *A Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*, New York 1991; and T. Špidlík, *Prayer...*, op. cit., pp. 250–251.

center in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct.²⁵

We have already seen Špidlík point out how the Eastern Fathers tended to identify the heart with the mind. In the face of the difficulty of defining the heart, Špidlík proposes an insightful solution, one that turns the issue on its head.

The psychological method to which people generally resort in discussions on this topic will never be able to clarify the question. There have been attempts above all to place the heart into a schematic presentation of man's psychological structure, and only then to ask which function such a "heart" can have in the spiritual life. This procedure really needs to be reversed. The biblical concept of the heart poses religious questions. Once these have been more or less clarified, we can ask how they are reflected in man's psychological structure.²⁶

According to Špidlík, the Eastern understanding of the heart developed over time. Eventually there was a reaction to the emphasis on the mind in favor of the "feelings." The classic definition of prayer changed from "an ascent of the mind to God" to "an ascent of the mind and heart to God."²⁷ For the Greeks, but especially for the Russians, the heart came to be seen as the principle of human integration.²⁸ For the Russian Théophane the Recluse the heart is "the focus of all the human forces, those of the mind, of the soul, of the animal and corporeal forces."²⁹ As Špidlík explains, this principle has temporal significance.

The heart, the principle of unity within a person, also gives stability to the multiplicity of successive moments of life. We cannot perform one act which continues forever ... For the Eastern Christian, however, the ideal has always been "the state of prayer" ... an habitual disposition which somehow in itself deserves the name prayer, aside from the acts which it produces with greater

²⁵ F. Baumgärtel, J. Behm, *kardia*, [in:] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. G. Kittel, transl. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, MI 1965, pp. 611–612. See also B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁶ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁷ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., pp. 104–105.

²⁸ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105. See also M. Evdokimov, *To Open One's Heart: A Spiritual Path*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, New York 2015.

²⁹ Théophane the Recluse, *Načertanie christianskago nravoučenjia*, Moscow 1895, p. 306. Quoted in T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105.

or lesser frequency. This state of prayer is at the same time the state of the entire spiritual life, a steadfast disposition of the heart.³⁰

Both von Hildebrand and Ratzinger point out that “heart” is a key term in Augustine’s *Confessions*.³¹ For Augustine, the love of the heart is deeper than language, and can convey that which words cannot.³² Indeed, he claims that we do not know our own hearts; they are an “abyss,” a “great deep.”³³ Augustine sometimes seems to speak of the heart as equivalent to the “self.” His famous “you have made *us* for yourself, and our *hearts* are restless until they rest in you” would seem to indicate as much.³⁴ At other times, he seems to equate the heart with the soul. For instance, in his account of the death of a friend, Augustine speaks of the heart as the place of the passions. It was black with grief. As he says: “I became a great enigma to myself and I was forever asking my soul why it was sad and why it disquieted me so sorely.”³⁵ He also sees the heart as the place of encounter with God: “Let us return to the heart, that we may find Him.”³⁶ Ratzinger maintains that Augustine,

is well aware that the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical “ratio naturalis” which just does not exist, but only the *ratio pura*, i.e. *purificata* [purified reason] or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the gospel, the *cor purum* (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”). Augustine also knows that the necessary purification of sight takes place through faith (Acts

³⁰ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105.

³¹ See D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 28–29: “It is true that there is one great tradition in the stream of Christian philosophy in which full justice is done in a concrete way to the affective sphere and to the heart. St. Augustine’s work from the *Confessions* onward is pervaded by deep and admirable insights concerning the heart and the affective attitudes of man.” Von Hildebrand goes so far as to wonder why, when Augustine speaks of the reflection of the Trinity in the human soul, he “fails to give to the affective sphere and to the heart a standing analogous to that granted to the reason and will” (ibid., p. 28). See also J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65.

³² J.M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge 1994, p. 33.

³³ J.M. Rist, *Augustine...*, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions, Books I–IV*, ed. G. Clark, Cambridge 1995, I. 1. 1.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions...*, op. cit., 4. 4. 9. Tóth finds Paul Ricoeur’s understanding of the heart to be akin though not identical to Augustine’s “restless heart.” See B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 40–41, 44.

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions...*, op. cit., 4. 12. 19. Quoted by J. Ratzinger in *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 68.

15:9) and through love, at all events not as a result of reflection alone and not at all by man's own power.³⁷

In other words, we do not think our way or work our way to salvation and deification. Beyond this, Augustine never precisely defines what he means by "heart." He simply describes it in action. For him, ultimately, it is an enigma.

After the Protestant Reformation, the rise of skepticism in religious matters led Pascal to pen his *Pensées*. There one finds the famous, frequently quoted, and frequently misunderstood statement: "The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing," a statement that can be understood as a reply to Michel de Montaigne's skeptical question: "Que sais-je?" (What do I know?)³⁸ In his answer, Pascal is being neither sentimental nor irrational. By "reason" he means Cartesian "reasoning" by scientific analysis and calculation, what Aristotelian-Scholastic logic called the third act of the mind, the discursive reasoning by which one proves a truth, the conclusion, from premises.³⁹ Pascal says that the heart has its own reasons. These are first principles, self-evident truths. "Principles are felt, propositions proved, and both with certainty by different means."⁴⁰

For Pascal, the first act of the mind, understanding the meaning of an essence, is carried out by the "heart." Furthermore, for him it is the heart that "feels" God (*sent Dieu*). This is Pascal's definition of faith: "It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason."⁴¹ The heart "sees" God. It knows God. God gives faith to people by moving their hearts.⁴² It is also the heart which chooses, which wills,

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. H. Vorgrimler, transl. J.W. O'Hara, London 1969, p. 155. For more on this, see J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, [in:] *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2, eds. P. Granfield, J.A. Jungmann, Münster 1970, pp. 553–564.

³⁸ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, transl. A.J. Krailsheimer, London 1966, p. 423 (277). There are two common ways of numbering Pascal's "thoughts." Here the Alban J. Krailsheimer number is given first, followed by the Léon Brunschvicg number in brackets.

³⁹ See R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences*, transl. S. Haldane, G.R.T. Ross, [in:] *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 28: *Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza*, eds. M.J. Adler et al., Chicago, IL 1990, pp. 265–272. For Pascal's understanding of "reason" and "heart," see P. Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées Outlined, Edited and Explained*, San Francisco, CA 1993, pp. 228–234.

⁴⁰ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282).

⁴¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 424 (278).

⁴² B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282).

to love God or self. “I say that it is natural for the heart to love the universal being or itself, according to its allegiance, and it hardens itself against either as it chooses.”⁴³ Finally, for Pascal, the heart is “the unified center of inner life.”⁴⁴

Like Augustine, Newman frequently uses the term “heart” but does not give an explicit definition of what he means by it. One must infer the definition from the way he uses the term. For Newman, “reason,” in the sense of that faculty which is used in logic, mathematics, the scientific method and historical investigations, cannot establish faith in God. Even though Newman holds that conscience can establish the “reasonableness,” though not the rationality, of faith, it too is not capable of establishing faith.⁴⁵ Reacting against an eighteenth century reduction of faith to nothing more than an acceptance of evidence, Newman argues from what might be called “existential” evidence that: “The Word of Life is offered to a man; and, on its being offered, he has Faith in it ... Faith is the reasoning of a religious mind, or of what Scripture calls a right or renewed heart.”⁴⁶

In a sermon entitled *Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition*, Newman states: “Right faith is the faith of a right mind. Faith is an intellectual act; right faith is an intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition. Faith is an act of Reason, viz. a reasoning upon presumptions; right Faith is a reasoning upon holy, devout, and enlightened presumptions.”⁴⁷

Again, in the same sermon, he says: “[This faith does not need] what is popularly called Reason for its protection,—I mean processes of investigation, discrimination, discussion, argument, and inference. It itself is an intellectual act, and takes its character from the moral state of the agent. It is perfected, not by intellectual cultivation, but by obedience.”⁴⁸

Like Pascal, Newman held that there were two modes of reasoning, logical reasoning and a “logic of the heart.” The latter is an insight or intuition.⁴⁹

⁴³ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 423 (277).

⁴⁴ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282). For more on Pascal’s understanding of the heart, see B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 5–12. Tóth finds the Ricoeurian heart to be akin though not identical to Pascal’s sensitive *coeur*. See *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ G.J. Shute, *Newman’s Logic of the Heart*, “Expository Times” 78 (May 1967), pp. 233–235.

⁴⁶ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons: Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford 1826–43*, London 1970, pp. 202–203.

⁴⁷ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 239. See also P.F. Sands, *The Justification of Religious Faith in Soren Kierkegaard, John Henry Newman, and William James*, Piscatway, NJ 2004, p. 121.

⁴⁸ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., pp. 249–250.

⁴⁹ B.W. Hughes, *Une Source Cachée: Blaise Pascal’s Influence upon John Henry Newman*, “Newman Studies Journal” 7/1 (2010), pp. 29–44.

Conversion comes, not by overcoming the reason, but by touching the heart.⁵⁰ Furthermore: “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us.”⁵¹

Rather than “reasoning,” Newman sees that:

The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart. This it is that gives it birth; it also disciplines it. This is what protects it from bigotry, credulity, and fanaticism. It is holiness, or dutifulness, or the new creation, or the spiritual mind, however we word it, which is the quickening and illuminating principle of true faith, giving it eyes, hands, and feet. It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ.⁵²

Like Augustine and Pascal, Newman is convinced that it is only the “heart” which can “see” God. It is only love-purified reason that can perceive him. Thus, in a sermon entitled “Faith and Reason contrasted as Habits of Mind,” he states:

For is not this the error, the common and fatal error, of the world, to think itself a judge of Religious Truth without preparation of heart? “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine.” “He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” “The pure in heart shall see God:” “to the meek mysteries are revealed;” “he that is spiritual judgeth all things.” “The darkness comprehendeth it not.” Gross eyes see not; heavy ears hear not. But in the schools of the world the ways towards Truth are considered high roads open to all men, however disposed, at all times. Truth is to be approached without homage.⁵³

Turning to Guardini, the two main sources for his anthropology of the heart are his book on Pascal and another on the conversion of Augustine, both published in 1935. The more thorough-going exposition of Guardini’s understanding of

⁵⁰ J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Westminster, MD 1973, p. 425.

⁵¹ J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, op. cit., p. 92. See also M.J. Ferreira, *The Grammar of the Heart: Newman on Faith and Imagination*, [in:] *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman*, ed. G. Magill, Carbondale, IL 1993, p. 129.

⁵² J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 234. See also G.J. Shute, *Newman’s Logic of the Heart*, op. cit., p. 235.

⁵³ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 198.

the human heart is to be found in that on Augustine. Guardini seeks to give a basis for understanding the whole of Augustine’s development as described in *The Confessions*. As he puts it:

The long slow process of experience, of growth, unfolding, seizure and struggle, action and suffering by which the young man with his unfree sensuality on the one hand, his abstract, idealistic-aesthetic intellectuality on the other, pries open the realm of the heart; the manner in which that realm, strengthened, purified, and instructed, gains power and knowledge and certainty—all this forms the central skein of Augustine’s rich and complicated development.⁵⁴

In his reading of Pascal, Guardini identifies *le coeur* as the central reality of Pascal’s anthropology. He also identifies what his understanding is not. It is not the emotional in opposition to the logical, feeling to intellect, or “soul” to “mind.” Rather, “heart” *is* mind, that is to say, the heart is a manifestation of the mind. For Guardini’s Pascal, “The act of the heart is an act productive of knowledge. Certain objects only become given in the act of the heart. But they do not remain there in a-rational intuition, but are accessible to intellectual and rational penetration.”⁵⁵

Guardini’s books on Augustine and Pascal reveal that, for him, the heart is the place of reconciliation between the two halves of the human person, the sensual and the intellectual. It is the “heart” that makes us specifically human since angels have spiritual intellects and animals have embodied senses. The heart is the place where spiritual mind becomes human soul, and animal corporeity becomes human body. The heart is also the place of reconciliation of the moral and the spiritual. The heart is evaluating mind, mind as eros-bearer. It can grasp not just truth, but also the transcendentals of goodness and beauty. It is the place of union of knowing and loving. The heart is the whole person participating in knowing, and the whole person participating in loving. Only when we love can we truly know. This is purity of heart. The heart is this organ of love. This love is both passive and active. Not only is it drawn to the good, true, and beautiful, but it actively seeks them out. Love is freedom. It is only through participation in the life of God that heart truly becomes heart, truly integrated, truly human, truly knowing, truly loving, truly pure, and truly free.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ R. Guardini, *The Conversion of Augustine*, transl. E. Briefs, London 1960, p. 45.

⁵⁵ R. Guardini, *Pascal for Our Time*, op. cit., p. 129.

⁵⁶ For a more detailed exposition of Guardini’s understanding of the heart, see P.J. McGregor, *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Eugene, OR 2016, pp. 289–303.

The contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart

As we shall see, since at least 1968 Ratzinger, too, has developed a theological anthropology of the heart. However, he has not been alone. As Tracey Rowland points out: “A theological anthropology which pays due regard to the intellectual and affective dimensions of human action is now in the course of development.”⁵⁷ She states that:

[T]he contemporary work of Robert Sokolowski has also drawn attention to this neglected element in presentations of the natural law. With reference to the notion of the law being written on the hearts of the gentiles, Sokolowski has argued that the word *kardia* in the passage from St. Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* does not connote the separation of heart and head that we take for granted in a world shaped by Descartes. He concurs with Robert Spaemann’s claim that in the New Testament the heart is taken to be a deeper recipient of truth than even the mind or intellect in Greek philosophy since it deals with the person’s willingness to accept the truth.⁵⁸

One can see that both Sokolowski and Spaemann ground their understanding of the heart in the New Testament. However, such work has been uncommon. As von Hildebrand points out in his *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*:

The affective sphere, and the heart as its center, have been more or less under a cloud throughout the entire course of the history of philosophy. It has had a role in poetry, in literature, in the private prayers of great souls, and above all in the Old Testament, in the Gospel, and in the Liturgy, but not the area of philosophy proper.⁵⁹

He goes on to claim that not only has the nature of the heart generally been ignored, but that when a question of its nature has arisen, that nature has been misunderstood. Moreover, he states that: “The affective sphere, and with it the

⁵⁷ T. Rowland, *The Role of Natural Law and Natural Right in the Search for a Universal Ethics*, [in:] *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition*, eds. J. Berkman, W.C. Mattison III, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, pp. 164–165.

⁵⁸ T. Rowland, *The Role of Natural Law...*, op. cit., pp. 164–165.

⁵⁹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

heart, has been excluded from the spiritual realm” also.⁶⁰ According to von Hildebrand, for Plato, the affective sphere did not possess a rank comparable to that of the intellect.⁶¹ For Aristotle, this sphere is consigned to the irrational, animalistic part of the human being.⁶² This attitude has remained as, “a more or less noncontroversial part of our philosophical heritage. The entire affective sphere was for the most part subsumed under the heading of passions, and as long as one dealt with it expressly under this title, its irrational and nonspiritual character was emphasized.”⁶³

However, there is one contemporary theologian who has systematically engaged in the search for a theological anthropology of the heart, the Hungarian Beáta Tóth. It is to her work that we now turn.

Like von Hildebrand, Tóth addresses the philosophical neglect of the heart, but points out that this neglect is, even more so, theological in nature. Thus:

For too long, theology has abandoned the project of exploring the human heart and has left the problematic job of mapping the domain of human emotionality to secular philosophy. Even philosophy has been oblivious of the issue of the emotions for a long time and has only recently regained a lively interest in the subject.⁶⁴

Tóth recognizes the need for a contemporary theological anthropology of the heart. According to her,

the rich notion of the biblical heart—the unifying centre of human knowing and feeling—has gradually waned into the thin concept of the seat of mystical emotionality, pietist religious feeling, or unearthly biblical sentiment. It is as if the biblical heart, which originally comprised reason together with volition and sensibility, forming an indivisible unity, broke up and gave way to independent self-supporting modern reason and the juxtaposed modern and emancipated, purely emotional heart.⁶⁵

Tóth maintains that one of the consequences of the Enlightenment is that current theology, in its struggle to deal with the consequences of rationalism,

⁶⁰ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶¹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶² D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 25–26.

⁶³ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁴ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶⁵ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 11.

is much more ignorant of its own tradition regarding human emotionality and is therefore practically unequipped against the dangers of irrational sentimentalism, on the one hand, and an emotionally deficient rationalism, on the other. Such neglect affects the entire shape of the Christian stance towards faith, revelation, and the theology of love.⁶⁶

According to Tóth, in the wake of “the regrettable disappearance of the theme of the biblical heart after the Enlightenment,” we are now in a situation where even theology based on the heart is “incapable of developing a ‘Christian logic of affectivity.’”⁶⁷ Tóth accepts the diagnosis:

That reason and sensibility suffer from an unwholesome disassociation in our world, hence intellect and affectivity are in disharmony. The head and the heart are set in opposition and one usually opts for one at the expense of the other; the two are hardly ever considered as a unified whole and the interaction between them is not conceptualized.⁶⁸

Tóth admits that there are currently “numerous attempts at the exploration of the passional character of reason or the rationality of emotion.”⁶⁹ However, she regards these as inadequate since,

these accounts are typically written from a philosophical perspective and so they do not reckon in a systematic manner with the particularities of the Christian theological tradition; and ... they mostly seek to overcome the dichotomy by leveling out differences between the two sides: either reason is integrated into a concept of emotion, or emotion is made an integral part of reason.⁷⁰

Tóth herself wishes to find “a median zone where affectivity and reason, love and logos coincide and, without losing their distinctive identities, interact in multiple mediations.”⁷¹ Furthermore, she holds that, despite the piecemeal way in which discourse on the emotions “has traditionally been scattered throughout various fields of moral and dogmatic theology,” the solution is not to be found in treating of the emotions in isolation, but by investigating them as an

⁶⁶ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁷ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁸ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁹ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁷⁰ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. x–xi.

⁷¹ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xi.

aspect of theological anthropology, where they can be looked at in the context of “the human condition with reference to God and creation, and reflection on the human person viewed in his relation to God, the Creator.”⁷² Thus Tóth holds that: “[The] theological logic of affectivity coincides with a larger logic that views the human person as being created in the image of God, recreated through Christ’s redemption, and destined to eschatological beatitude in the eternal life of the Triune God.”⁷³

Following Paul Ricoeur, Tóth points out that, in *The Republic*, there is another understanding of the heart that differs from that normally associated with Plato. Thus:

Plato’s description of the soul is dominated by the idea of unstable movement and a system of tensions that culminate in the median power of the *thumos*, which is not so much a mean, but rather a mixture or ‘*melange*’ of reason and desire: it sides both with reason (in the form of indignation and endurance) and it also sides with desire (in the form of irritation and fury) ... What is missing from the static political symbol of the soul is the dynamism of the soul, that is, its unity in movement towards the Ideas and the Good. By contrast, in the dynamic *thumos*, Ricoeur welcomes a versatile force that occupies a middle position between sensible desire (*epithumia*) and reason’s specific desire (*erōs*) and, in this manner, forms a kind of ‘affective node,’ constituting the field of human feeling *par excellence*. Therefore, Ricoeur’s key contention is to transpose Plato’s intuition into the mode of philosophical reflection by working out a modern theory of feeling where *thumos* as the ‘heart’ assumes a pivotal role.⁷⁴

From this starting point, Tóth goes on to develop a theological anthropology of the heart in dialogue with the Ricoeur and Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II. In Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology, she discerns an understanding of the heart as a “median zone,” a “dynamic site” where affectivity unites the sensible and spiritual polarities of the human person.⁷⁵ In John Paul II’s catechesis on conjugal love, she sees a break from “the intellectual versus body dichotomy [that] makes the biblically understood heart the centre of what is ‘spiritual’ in man, while, however, not setting the heart over against the body,

⁷² B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xi.

⁷³ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xii.

⁷⁴ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 44–45. See P. Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, transl. C. Kelbley, Chicago, IL 1965, pp. 161–163.

⁷⁵ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 232.

but making it the body's spiritual dimension."⁷⁶ Tóth concludes that: "[W]hat is distinctively human is not so much the abstracted intellect [which we share with the angels] as the symbolic heart, the seat of complex mediation between rationality, emotionality, and will and the site of relationality with regard to fellow humans and God."⁷⁷

Ratzinger's contribution to a theological anthropology of the heart

In developing her theological anthropology of the heart, Tóth draws especially on the work of Ricoeur and Wojtyła. Turning to the work of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, we find that he draws on other sources. Indeed, if we bring the work of Tóth and Ratzinger together, we have a very extensive foundation for the further development of a theological anthropology of the heart. Like Sokolowski and Spaemann, Ratzinger grounds his understanding in the biblical presentation of the heart. However, he does not stop there. He goes on to draw on the understanding of the heart found in the Fathers, especially Origen and Augustine, as well as Pascal, Newman, and Guardini. However, since he wrote no systematic treatise on a theological anthropology of the heart, rather than try to work through these sources systematically, an attempt will be made to follow its development more from a chronological perspective.

To find the beginnings of Ratzinger's anthropology of the heart, one must turn to his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*. There he offers a critique of the document's understanding of the human person. In doing so, he introduces some thoughts on the nature of the human heart. These specifically address the relationship between the heart and "interiority," the human being's relationship to God, human embodiment, conscience, and reason. Ratzinger's initial reference to the human heart is in his commentary on article 14, within the context of overcoming a body-soul dualism through a concept of "*interioritas*."⁷⁸ This concept reminds Ratzinger of Teilhard de Chardin's *intériorité*, that is,

⁷⁶ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 234.

⁷⁷ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 237.

⁷⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., pp. 127–128. The relevant passage in *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 14 reads: "*Interioritate enim sua universitatem rerum excedit: ad haec profundam interioritatem redit, quando convertitur ad cor, ubi Deus eum expectat, qui corda scrutator* (For in his interiority he exceeds the whole universe of things: he returns to this deep interiority when he is turned within to the heart, where the God who probes the heart awaits him)."

the inner dimension of things which is a fundamental principle of all reality. Ratzinger thinks that the Pastoral Constitution partly draws upon this idea "in order to suggest a sort of intuitive representation of what 'interiority' in man, his mind and spirit, means and is."⁷⁹ Nevertheless, he thinks that Pascal's Fragment 793 is a stronger influence on the concept.⁸⁰ He refers the reader to where Pascal writes: "All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms do not equal the least of spirits; for the latter know all things, whereas bodies know nothing." Finally, he sees Augustine's theology of the interior life behind the mention of *conversio ad cor*, and how God awaits the human being in the depths of his or her being. Here are echoes of Augustine's spiritual experience of God being closer to us than then we are to ourselves, "that man finds himself and God by accomplishing a pilgrimage to himself, into his own inner depths, away from self-estrangement among things."⁸¹ Thus Ratzinger sees this text,

[as being] influenced by two fundamental concepts of Augustinian thought, by which [he] aimed at a synthesis of biblical anthropology, more historical in tendency, with the metaphysical conception of antiquity. The first is the distinction between the "homo interior" and "exterior." As compared with the corpus-anima schema, this introduces a greater element of personal responsibility and decision regarding the direction of life. It therefore analyses man more on historical and dynamic than on metaphysical lines. The second is the concept of the "philosophia cordis," the biblical concept of the heart which for Augustine expresses the unity of the interior life and corporeality. This again becomes a key concept with Pascal and here enters the conciliar text, bringing with it by implication a good deal of what Karl Rahner and Gabriel Marcel have had to say on other grounds and from other angles.⁸²

Ratzinger regards these concepts of heart and interiority as "the real theology of the body presented by this section," in contrast to a theology of the body which consists "of a purely regional theology concerning the body in contradistinction to the soul."⁸³ Rather, a genuine theology of the body must regard it in its full humanity, as the corporeal embodiment of mind and spirit, the

⁷⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁸⁰ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128. Ratzinger refers the reader to B. Pascal, *Pensées*, in the edition of Léon Brunschvicg, op. cit., p. 697.

⁸¹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁸² J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., pp. 128–129.

⁸³ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 129.

way in which the human spirit has concrete existence. He concludes: "It must therefore be a theology of the unity of man as spirit in body and body in spirit, so that a genuine theology of the body will be achieved in proportion as the 'cor' is spoken of as spirit 'to the extent that it has come close to the blood' and therefore no longer merely spirit but embodied and therefore human."⁸⁴

The interior quotation given by Ratzinger in this passage is taken from a book on Pascal by Romano Guardini, *Christliches Bewußtsein*. This has been translated into English as *Pascal for our Time*. Although this is the only quotation that Ratzinger, in his commentary, takes from Guardini, we shall see that there are many similarities between the two when it comes to the nature of the heart. This raises the question of how much of Ratzinger's understanding of the significance of the heart in the thought of Augustine and Pascal has come via his reading of Guardini. Regarding Augustine in particular, was Guardini or his own doctoral thesis on Augustine more significant?

Ratzinger's comments upon the relationship between the heart and conscience are brief. He sees the Constitution's teaching on the nature of human conscience in article 16 as taking "its place in a line of thought deriving from Newman" in that it avoids "any purely sociological or psychological interpretation of conscience," instead affirming "its transcendent character."⁸⁵ This character is described as a law written in the human heart by God. This makes the conscience a holy place, where one is alone with God and hears the voice of God. It is the innermost core of the human person.

Finally, Ratzinger looks at the relationship between human reason and the heart within the context of his comments on the attitude of the Church towards atheism in article 21. In discussing the difficulties presented by the article concerning its presentation of the roles of experience and reason in coming to a natural knowledge of God, Ratzinger points out that there were two requests to modify the text, one which wanted a reaffirmation of the definition of Vatican I regarding natural knowledge of God in order to emphasize the importance of reason over experience, and the other that, despite the revelation of Christ, God remains inaccessible, that in our present state people cannot intellectually see God in his essence.⁸⁶ In response to the second request, the commission responsible for adjudicating such requests gave the remarkable answer that the *theologia negativa* was a *disputata quaestio!*⁸⁷ Ratzinger remarks that in passing

⁸⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 129. See R. Guardini, *Christliches Bewußtsein: Versuche über Pascal*, Leipzig 1935, p. 187.

⁸⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁸⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 154.

over the essentials of the *theologia negativa*, the Council “took no account of Augustine’s epistemology, which is much deeper than that of Aquinas.”⁸⁸ He goes on to state that:

[Augustine] is well aware that the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical “*ratio naturalis*” [natural reason] which just does not exist, but only *ratio pura*, i.e. *purificata* [purified reason] or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the Gospel, the *cor purum* (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”). Augustine also knows that the necessary purification of sight takes place through faith (Acts 15:9) and through love, at all events not as a result of reflection alone and not at all by man’s own power.⁸⁹

It is important to note that Ratzinger does not question the existence of “natural reason,” but only that of “non-historical” natural reason. He wishes “to limit the neo-scholastic rationalism contained in the formula of 1870 [by placing] its over-static idea of ‘ratio naturalis’ in a more historical perspective.”⁹⁰ In this way, he seeks to balance the claims of both reason and experience.

When Ratzinger looks at the meaning of “heart” in the Fathers, he gives a different though not necessarily contradictory perspective to that of Špidlík. Ratzinger maintains that much patristic writing reveals a failure to synthesize fully this biblical image of the heart with the Platonic world of ideas. However, according to him, the Fathers were often aware of these two contradictory anthropologies, the Platonic anthropology having its center in the intellect, and the Christian in the heart.⁹¹ For example, according to Ratzinger, a reading of the *Confessions* reveals that “the stream of biblical theology and anthropology has entered into his [Augustine’s] thought and combined with an entirely different, Platonic conception of man, a conception unacquainted with the notion of ‘heart.’”⁹² Moreover, Ratzinger sees not just this opposition between Platonic and Christian views, but also an opposition between Platonic and Stoic

⁸⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 155.

⁸⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 155. See also T. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2009, p. 4.

⁹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 153.

⁹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65. Ratzinger refers the reader to A. Maxsein, *Philosophia cordis: Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus*, Salzburg 1966, where Maxsein calls Augustine’s anthropology a *philosophia cordis*.

⁹² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65.

anthropologies, an opposition that actually presented the Fathers with “the opportunity of drawing on the Bible to create a new anthropological synthesis.”⁹³

Ratzinger maintains that this Patristic synthesis draws upon Stoic anthropology. For the Platonists, the intellect is the center of the human being. However, whilst Platonic anthropology distinguishes the individual potencies of the soul—intellect, will, and sensibility—and relates them in a hierarchical order,⁹⁴ Stoic thought is closer to the anthropology of the Bible, focusing, as it does, on the heart rather than the intellect. The Stoics conceived of the human person as a microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm. As this cosmos is fashioned by a formless primal fire which adopts the form of that which it creates, so the human body is fashioned and enlivened by this divine, primal fire, becoming hearing, sight, thought, and imagination. This primal fire in the cosmos is called “logos.” In us, it is called “the logos in us.” For the Stoics, as the sun is the “heart of the cosmos,” the human heart is the body’s sun, the seat of the logos in us.⁹⁵

For Ratzinger, this displays a profound philosophical intuition, which offered the Fathers the opportunity of reaching a new synthesis of Platonic thought and biblical faith. For him, it was Origen who made the most of this opportunity. It was he who took up this insight and gave it a Christian understanding. Basing his thinking on John 1:26: “Among you stands one whom you do not know,” Origen went on to assert that, unbeknownst to us, the Logos is at the center of all human beings, since the Logos is present in the center of every human being, the heart. As Ratzinger states:

It is the Logos which is at the center of us all—without our knowing—for the center of man is the heart, and in the heart this is ... the guiding energy of the whole, which is the Logos. It is [this] Logos which enables us to be logic-al, to correspond to the Logos; he is the image of God after which we were created. Here the word “heart” has expanded beyond reason and denotes “a deeper level of spiritual/intellectual existence, where direct contact takes place with the divine.” It is here, in the heart, that the birth of the divine Logos in man takes place, that man is united with the personal incarnate Word of God.⁹⁶

⁹³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 66. Ratzinger refers the reader to E. von Ivánka, *Plato christianus*, Einsiedeln 1964, pp. 315–351.

⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 66.

⁹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 66–67.

⁹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 67–68. Here Ratzinger cites E. von Ivánka, *Plato christianus*, op. cit., p. 326.

Although one may be tempted to call Ratzinger’s approach Augustinian or Origenian, it is in fact biblical. He works from the biblical symbol of the heart, a symbol which was adopted independently by the Stoics, and taken up by Origen, Augustine, Pascal, Newman, and Guardini.

In his analysis of the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer in his *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism*, Ratzinger constantly speaks of the human heart. Indeed, it is a theme that permeates the first two volumes of *Jesus of Nazareth*. As he sees it, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the conversion of the prodigal is a “change of heart.”⁹⁷ In telling the parable, Jesus seeks to woo the hearts of the murmuring Pharisees and scribes through the words of the father to his prodigal.⁹⁸ Jesus also wishes to speak to the hearts of the poor and downtrodden, like Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:19–31). Rather than leave them with embittered hearts (cf. Ps 73:13–22), he wishes them to behold the form of God (cf. Ps 77:14–15), that their hearts may be “sated by the encounter with infinite love.”⁹⁹ We are called to become like the “little ones” in the temple, who are able to praise Jesus with Hosannas because they see with pure and undivided hearts.¹⁰⁰ The alternative to faith in Jesus is a hardening of the heart. Whether it is in response to the parables, or to a miracle of Jesus (cf. John 11:45–53), putting God “to the test” leads to a “non-seeing” and “non-understanding,” a “hardening of heart.”¹⁰¹ We are all in a position of “not knowing” what we do (cf. Luke 23:34, Acts 3:14–17; and 1 Tim 1:13).¹⁰² It is the failure to recognize one’s ignorance that is fatal, because it blinds one to the need for repentance. It is a danger that especially threatens the learned.¹⁰³

In *Jesus of Nazareth* Ratzinger explains what he means by “heart.”

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Mt 5:8). The organ for seeing God is the heart. The intellect alone is not enough. In order for man to become capable of perceiving God, the energies of his existence have to work in harmony. His will must be pure and so too must the underlying affective dimension of his soul, which gives intelligence and will their direction. Speaking

⁹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007, p. 205.

⁹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 209.

⁹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁰⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco, CA 2011, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 193, 216.

¹⁰² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week...*, op. cit., pp. 206–208.

¹⁰³ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week...*, op. cit., p. 208.

of the *heart* in this way means precisely that man's perceptive powers play in concert, which also requires the proper interplay of body and soul, since this is essential for the totality of the creature we call 'man'. Man's fundamental affective disposition actually depends on just this unity of body and soul and on man's acceptance of being both body and spirit. This means he places the body under the discipline of the spirit, yet does not isolate intellect or will. Rather, he accepts himself as coming from God, and thereby also acknowledges and lives out the bodiliness of his existence as an enrichment for the spirit. The heart—the wholeness of man—must be pure, interiorly open and free, in order for man to be able to see God.¹⁰⁴

What this passage reveals is that, for Ratzinger, the heart is not to be identified simply with the intellect, or the will, or the passions, or the senses, or the body, or the soul. Nor is it to be identified with the *ego*. Rather, it is the *locus* of the integration of the intellect, will, passions, and senses, of the body and the soul. One could say that, for Ratzinger, the human heart *is* the personal integration, the integration by the person, of these aspects of their humanity.

Ratzinger says that the heart is “the wholeness of man.” In a sense, to call it the locus of anthropological integration is still inadequate. One is almost tempted to say that the human person is “all heart.” However, what this phrase “the wholeness of man” leads us to is that this side of the Beatific Vision none of us are fully human. Rather, we all have wounded hearts since none of us are fully whole. In this world, there have only been two who were and remained fully human, Jesus and Mary. In his *Mary: The Church at the Source*, Ratzinger goes so far as to make a comparison between the human heart and Trinitarian perichoresis. Commenting on Mary's pondering “all these things” in her heart (cf. Luke 2:51), he writes:

Mary sees the events as “words,” as happenings full of meaning because they come from God's meaning-creating will. She translates the events into words and penetrates them, bringing them into her “heart”—into that interior dimension of understanding where sense and spirit, reason and feeling, interior and exterior perception interpenetrate circumincessively.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 92–93.

¹⁰⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, transl. A.J. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2005, pp. 70–71.

By this reference to "pondering," Ratzinger includes the memory as a faculty that must be integrated into the heart. The only human faculty that he does not mention in relation to the heart is imagination, although I think that the explicit inclusion of memory suggests the implicit inclusion of imagination.

In common with Augustine, Pascal, Newman and Guardini, Ratzinger thinks of the heart as the place that "knows." Like Pascal and Guardini, he regards the heart as the center of one's inner life. However, Ratzinger does not say anything about the heart knowing first principles. Unlike Pascal and Newman, he does not contrast the perception of the heart with Enlightenment reasoning. Not just "reasoning," but all reason has its limits. The "comprehension" spoken of in Eph 3:14–19 is that of a lover.¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger's understanding of the heart's perceptive power is in its ability to know "the other." By means of the heart God is perceived. The heart is "man's inner eye."¹⁰⁷ It is the heart that must inquire after God, must "seek his face."¹⁰⁸ Following Guardini, Newman, Augustine, and ultimately the Beatitudes, it is the "pure of heart" who see God.

Guardini's anthropology of the heart seems to be a major source for Ratzinger's. As has been said, it may be that both Augustine's and Pascal's understanding of the heart have been mediated to Ratzinger through Guardini. One might even say that Ratzinger's understanding is "condensed" Guardini, with the caveat that Ratzinger's anthropology of the heart has a far greater biblical foundation than Guardini's.

The symbolic theology of the Father's heart

Although the Old Testament speaks of God having a heart far less frequently than it speaks of the human heart, such occurrences are spread throughout it. As applied to God, "heart" is used in the same senses as it is used of human beings. Thus, God is grieved to the heart (cf. Gen 6:6). He ponders in his heart (cf. Gen 8:21), and the thoughts of his heart stand for all generations

¹⁰⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 55. As Ratzinger says: "As long ago as the Fathers, in particular in the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, this passage had led theologians to stress that reason had its limits." And: "For 'you only see properly with your heart,' as Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince says. (And the Little Prince can be taken as a symbol for that childlikeness which we must regain if we are to find our way back out of the clever foolishness of the adult world and into man's true nature, which is beyond mere reason)" (ibid., p. 55).

¹⁰⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 94.

(cf. Ps 33:11). He accomplishes the intentions of his heart (cf. Jer 23:20; 30:24). He will give his people shepherds after his own heart (cf. Jer 3:15), and he does not afflict and grieve his people from his heart (cf. Lam 3:33). His eyes and his heart will be in the temple forever (cf. 1 Kgs 9:3; 2 Chr 7:16). His heart recoils against handing his people over to destruction (cf. Hos 11:8).

As a preeminent example of the biblical basis for understanding the “heart of God” Ratzinger proposes Hosea 11. After portraying the immense proportions of God’s love for Israel, his son, Hosea presents God’s lament for the lack of response from this son. After declaring that the result of this refusal to respond to God’s love will be banishment, enslavement, and destruction, there comes a complete change of key, a blatant contradiction: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! ... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger ... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy (Hos 11:8–9).”¹⁰⁹

In Ratzinger’s view, this passage exemplifies the Old Testament’s teaching about the heart of God. It is the organ of his will and the measuring rod of human behavior. The Flood demonstrates that the pain in God’s heart at human sinfulness causes him to send destruction. But the insight into human weakness on the part of the same heart causes God to refrain from repeating that judgment. Hosea 11 takes these insights to a new level. According to Ratzinger, “God’s Heart turns around—here the Bible uses the same word as in the depiction of God’s judgment on the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (sic) (Gen 19:25); the word expresses a total collapse ... The same word is applied to the havoc wrought by love in God’s Heart in favor of his people.”¹¹⁰ Regarding this point, Ratzinger cites Heinrich Gross as follows: “The upheaval occasioned in God’s Heart by the divine love has the effect of quashing his judicial sentence against Israel; God’s merciful love conquers his untouchable righteousness (which, in spite of everything, remains untouchable).”¹¹¹

Is this and other occurrences to be dismissed simply as anthropomorphisms and no more? Does Ratzinger understand the term “heart,” as applied to God, in a merely metaphorical sense or as something more? When Hosea speaks prophetically of God’s heart recoiling within him, of his compassion growing

¹⁰⁹ Quoted by J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹¹ H. Gross, *Das Hohelied der Liebe Gottes. Zur Theologie von Hosea 11*, [in:] *Mysterium der Gnade (Festschrift J. Auer)*, eds. H. Rossman, J. Ratzinger, Regensburg 1974, p. 89. Quoted in J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 63–64. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 10, where Benedict quotes the same verses from Hosea.

warm and tender, is this to be placed in the same category as the Psalmist asking to be guarded as the apple of God's eye and hidden in the shadow of his wings (cf. Ps 17:8)? The answer lies in *Jesus of Nazareth* where, in the context of his discussion on maternal images of God in Sacred Scripture, Ratzinger states that, "The image language of the body furnishes us ... with a deeper understanding of God's disposition toward man than any conceptual language could."¹¹² At first glance he would seem to be saying that *images* enable us to understand God better than *concepts* do. If one thinks of understanding only in terms of the intellect, even the intellect informed through the senses, this seems to be nonsense. However, Ratzinger holds that it is the *heart* that *sees*. This means that knowing is not simply an intellectual activity, but an activity that involves the whole person. One knows God, not as an object of study, but in a personal encounter. The heart is the organ of seeing. One sees through loving. It is the lover who truly sees, who truly knows, the beloved. It is in yearning for God, loving God, enjoying God, that one knows God. Just as a woman's experience, with its sensation, emotion, and self-giving, of relating to the helpless child within her, is summed up by the word "womb," so our experience of knowing and loving God in our sensual, emotional, intellectual, volitional, imaginative, and mnemonic life is summed up by the word "heart."

This is the burden of Ratzinger's commentary on Eph 3:18–19: "[that you] may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Thus, Ratzinger comments:

As long ago as the Fathers, in particular of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, this passage had led theologians to stress that reason had its limits. This is the origin, in the latter tradition, of the *ignote cognoscere*, knowing in unknowing, which leads to the concept of *docta ignorantia*, thus the mysticism of darkness comes about where love alone is able to see. Many texts could be quoted here, for instance, Gregory the Great's "*Amor ipse notitia est*"; Hugh of St. Victor's "*Intrat dilectio et appropinquat, ubi scientia foris est*"; or Richard of St. Victor's beautiful formulation: "*Amor oculus est et amare videre est*" ("love is the eye, and to love is to see").¹¹³

¹¹² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 55.

In his use of images such as heart with reference to God, Anthony C. Scigliano Jr. claims that Ratzinger is one with the *ressourcement* theologians of the twentieth century in their adoption of the symbolic theology of the Fathers. Scigliano introduces the *ressourcement* retrieval of this way of theologizing.¹¹⁴ He claims that theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Marie-Dominique Chenu did the following:

[They] systematically [elevate] symbol (*Vorstellung*) over concept (*Begriff*). This does not mean that they turn to an irrationalist form of theology, but rather that human reason needs to be regulated by the symbolic world of Scripture and Christian worship, within which a deeper reason is disclosed that can heal and perfect distorted or inadequate human reason. This divine reason, however, cannot be reduced to human propositions and univocal statements; rather, it presents itself in the paradoxical joinings of spirit and matter, meaning and expression that can disclose a reality that transcends human rationality, yet does not destroy it. Indeed, only insofar as these paradoxical forms guide reason, can reason itself find its true vocation. Put otherwise, symbolic paradox reveals divine mystery.¹¹⁵

Matthew Levering questions this position. In response to Scigliano he states that:

This insistence on the inadequacy of “human propositions and univocal statements” is, on the one hand, nothing new: not only the fathers but also Thomas Aquinas and indeed almost the whole Christian theological tradition would certainly agree. The question, on the other hand, is whether the appropriate response is to elevate “symbol (*Vorstellung*) over concept (*Begriff*).” The fathers’ intense conceptual work militates, in my view, against the favoring of “symbol.” The notion of “symbol” does not serve theology better than does the notion of conceptual judgements of truth, once one recognizes that the letter, too, allows for surplus of meaning.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ A.C. Scigliano Jr., *Pope Benedict XVI’s Jesus of Nazareth: Agape and Logos*, “Pro Ecclesia” 17 (2008), pp. 174–178. For another example of Ratzinger’s use of symbolic theology, see his account of Easter symbolism in J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 112–113.

¹¹⁵ A.C. Scigliano Jr., *Pope Benedict XVI’s Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., p. 175.

¹¹⁶ M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, p. 207, n. 114.

This is a debate that requires further investigation. Germane to such a debate would be a comment by Yves Congar:

A symbol is the place where and the means by which we can apprehend realities which the concept fragments in its attempt to reproduce them exactly. It is also apt to indicate the transcendence of revealed spiritual realities. One may take a more rational expression as an adequate statement. Images do not allow such an illusion. Thomas Aquinas comes close to supposing that in this respect the coarsest are the most fitting. Perhaps I should say: the more material, but they can also be suggestive and beautiful.¹¹⁷

Here perhaps Gabriel Marcel can help us, when he says that a mystery is not to be confused with a problem.

A problem is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I myself am involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as "a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity." A genuine problem is subject to an appropriate technique by the exercise of which it is defined; whereas a mystery by definition transcends every conceivable technique.¹¹⁸

One could add "and every conceivable thought." In the case of the mystery of God, one encounters this mystery in our personal relationship with him. One cannot know God as an object, only as a Thou in an I–Thou relationship.

¹¹⁷ Y. Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, transl. D. Smith, London 1986, p. 4. Congar's reference to Aquinas can be found in the *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3: "As Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. I), it is more fitting that divine truths should be expounded under the figure of less noble than of nobler bodies, and this for three reasons. First, because thereby men's minds are the better preserved from error. For then it is clear that these things are not literal descriptions of divine truths, which might have been open to doubt had they been expressed under the figure of nobler bodies, especially for those who could think of nothing nobler than bodies. Secondly, because this is more befitting the knowledge of God that we have in this life. For what He is not is clearer to us than what He is. Therefore similitudes drawn from things farthest away from God form within us a truer estimate that God is above whatsoever we may say or think of Him. Thirdly, because thereby divine truths are the better hidden from the unworthy."

¹¹⁸ G. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being: Reflection and Mystery*, transl. G.S. Fraser, South Bend, IN 2001, pp. 211–212.

So, what are these images of God's heart attempting to convey? Since God is spirit and not body, does one relegate the love of God to a level something *less* than human love, something anemic in comparison? As God is "God and not man" (Hos 11:9), is his love to be understood as *more than* or *less than* human? Is spirit something more ephemeral, less substantial, than matter? There is the danger of regarding God as a kind of super angel, bodiless and therefore passionless. It seems axiomatic that since God has no body, he can have no passions. Yet, Ratzinger, after affirming that "suffering presupposes the ability to suffer, it presupposes the faculty of the emotions," goes on to affirm that the Father suffers.¹¹⁹ He states that it was Origen "who grasped most profoundly the idea of the suffering God and made bold to say that it could not be restricted to the suffering humanity of Jesus but also affected the Christian picture of God."¹²⁰ According to Ratzinger, not only does the Father suffer in allowing the Son to suffer, but the Holy Spirit also shares in this suffering, groaning within us, as St. Paul says (cf. Rom 8:26).¹²¹ Furthermore, he sees Origen as giving the normative definition for interpreting the theme of the suffering God: "When you hear someone speak of God's passions, always apply what is said to love."¹²² He sees Origen's position being developed by St. Bernard's dictum: "*impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis* [God is passionless, but not uncompassionate]."¹²³ Yet, he thinks that St. Bernard's line of thought does not do full justice to the reality of God's suffering given in Scripture and tradition.¹²⁴ In spite of all this, Ratzinger thinks that this position does not lead to a new Patripassianism, such as that apparently proposed by Jürgen Moltmann.¹²⁵

Ratzinger concludes his comments on the God who is *impassibilis—sed non incompassibilis* by referring us to John Paul II's encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* which, according to Ratzinger, takes up this very point. In particular, he draws our attention to "its highly significant note 52."¹²⁶ Since John Paul II does not write with scholastic precision in his letter on the mercy of God, identifying his teaching on the question of a God who cannot suffer, but can be compassionate,

¹¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 57–58.

¹²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58, n. 10.

¹²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11.

¹²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11. Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, transl. R.A. Wilson, J. Bowden, London 1974, pp. 267–278. For more on this issue, especially the influence of von Balthasar and Jacques Maritain on Ratzinger's understanding of how God can suffer, see P.J. McGregor, *Heart to Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 314–321.

¹²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11.

is no easy task. There seems to be a certain ambiguity on his part regarding the nature of mercy as a divine attribute and the human experience of that mercy. On the one hand, he outlines a particular relationship between love, justice, and mercy which defines mercy as the *revelation* of love which is greater than justice.¹²⁷ Believing in the love of the Father revealed in the Son means "*believing in mercy*. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were love's second name."¹²⁸ Herein, John Paul II seems to be saying that one experiences God's love as mercy. Furthermore, he states that:

Some theologians affirm that mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God, and the Bible, Tradition and the whole faith life of the People of God provide particular proofs of this. It is not a question here of the perfection of the inscrutable essence of God in the mystery of divinity itself, but of the perfection and attribute whereby man, in the intimate truth of his existence, encounters the living God particularly closely and particularly often.¹²⁹

Thus far, for John Paul II, it seems that mercy is not a perfection of God in himself, but the way in which human persons experience that love in their fallen condition. However, when one looks closely at the note that Ratzinger particularly refers to, one seems to find a different perspective. Note 52 is a long analysis of the Old Testament terminology used to define the mercy of God. It especially analyzes the meaning of two terms, *hesed* and *rahamim*. The first of these "indicates a profound attitude of 'goodness.'" It "also means 'grace' or 'love,'" as well as fidelity. It is a "love that gives, love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin."¹³⁰ The second of these is derived from the root *rehem*, meaning "womb." Hence, it denotes the love of a mother. According to John Paul II: "[This love] is completely gratuitous, not merited, and ... in this aspect it constitutes an inner necessity: an exigency of the heart ... Against this psychological background, *rahamim* generates a whole range of feelings, including goodness and tenderness, patience and understanding, that is, readiness to forgive."¹³¹

¹²⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4.

¹²⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 7. All italics in this and subsequent quotations from this document are original.

¹²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 13.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

One should immediately recognize the similarity of this understanding with Ratzinger's understanding of *rahamim* in his meditations on the Father's heart in *Jesus of Nazareth*.¹³²

John Paul II claims that both the terms *hesed* and *rahamim*, as well as some other lesser used terms, present an image of God's "anxious love, which in contact with evil, and in particular with the sin of the individual and of the people, is manifested as mercy."¹³³ He notes that these terms used to denote the mercy of God "clearly show their original anthropomorphic aspect ... [an] obviously anthropomorphic 'psychology' of God."¹³⁴ However, while John Paul II indicates to us that these terms cannot be used univocally of the Creator and creatures, it should be noted that *hesed* is a conceptual term and *rahamim* is derived from a material image. *Hesed* is analogical and *rahamim* is metaphorical. Ratzinger's preference for *rahamim* in describing the mercy of God brings us back to his conviction that "symbolic," "metaphorical" language, at least in some instances, can give us a deeper understanding than conceptual language of God's dispositions towards us.

The heart of Jesus: divine love in a human heart?

In an Australian hymn by James Phillip McAuley and Richard Connolly entitled *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, the antiphon says: "Jesus, in your heart we find love of the Father and mankind; these two loves to us impart, divine love in a human heart."¹³⁵ The last phrase raises the question: What love *does* one find emanating from the heart of Jesus? If the heart is identical to the person, the ego, then it makes no sense to speak of Jesus as having a human heart, since he is a divine Person. Yet if, as Ratzinger holds, the heart is the place of integration of the intellect, will, passions, memory, imagination, and senses; of the body and the soul; the place of the personal integration of these elements of human nature, then one can speak of Jesus having a human heart. It will be the integrated humanity of a divine Person.

An attempt has been made to demonstrate that Ratzinger presents us with an anthropology of the human heart and a theology of the Father's heart. To what extent does he bring them together in a Christology of the heart of Jesus?

¹³² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 139, 197, 207.

¹³³ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³⁵ J.P. McAuley, R. Connolly, *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, [in:] *The Living Parish Hymn Book*, ed. A. Newman, Sydney 1965, no. 142.

Ratzinger does not directly address the question of the nature of this heart. Rather, he reveals his thoughts on its nature within the context of devotion to it. The first question one needs to answer is whether he intends his anthropology of the heart to be applied to the heart of Jesus, or only to the human hearts of those who are devoted to Jesus. For the human heart of Jesus is unique amongst hearts. No other human heart is that of a divine Person. The second question pertains to the relationship between the heart of the Father and the heart of Jesus.

In a paper on the substance and foundation of devotion to the Sacred Heart, Ratzinger states that he simply seeks to trace the answers of Pius XII’s *Haurietis Aquas* to the questions which had been raised regarding the continuing value of the devotion in the wake of Vatican II. He claims that his reflections, in the light of subsequent theological work, seek to clarify and draw out the teaching of the encyclical.¹³⁶ Ratzinger sees in *Haurietis Aquas* an anthropology and theology of bodily existence. According to him, the body is the self-expression of the spirit, its image. It is the visible form of the person, and since the human person is the image of God, the body is the place where the divine becomes visible. This is why the Bible can present the mystery of God in terms of the metaphors of the body. This presentation is a preparation for the Incarnation. In the Incarnation of the Logos, wherein the Word makes the “flesh” its own, one finds the fulfillment of a process which has been taking place since creation: the drawing of all “flesh” to Spirit. For Ratzinger: “[The] Incarnation can only take place because the flesh has always been the Spirit’s outward expression and hence a possible dwelling place for the Word; on the other hand it is only the Son’s Incarnation that imparts to man and the visible world their ultimate and innermost meaning.”¹³⁷

The Incarnation means that God transcends himself and enters the passion of the human being. This self-transcendence brings to light the inner transcendence of the whole of creation, with “body” being the self-transcending movement towards spirit, and through spirit, towards God. In the human passions of Jesus, “the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament are radicalized and attain their ultimate depth of meaning.”¹³⁸ In Jesus, and especially in his pierced heart, the invisible God becomes visible. Unbelieving Thomas, in touching the Lord, “recognizes what is beyond touch and yet actually does touch it; he beholds

¹³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 51.

¹³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 52. See also J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, ed. J.R. Foster, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004, pp. 319–322.

¹³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 57.

the invisible and yet actually sees it.”¹³⁹ Strikingly, Ratzinger quotes a passage from Bonaventure: “The wound of the body also reveals the spiritual wound ... Let us look through the visible wound to the invisible wound of love!”¹⁴⁰ For Ratzinger, the corporality of Jesus, especially his pierced heart, reveals the love of the Father for us, a love which is an “invisible wound.” This brings us back to the question of God’s impassibility. For Ratzinger: “The passion of Jesus is the drama of the divine Heart [as portrayed in Hosea 11] ... The pierced Heart of the crucified Son is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of the Heart of God.”¹⁴¹

We have gone some way towards answering our question about the relationship between the heart of Jesus and the Father’s heart. But what of the humanity of the heart of Jesus? Ratzinger answers our question by citing *Haurietis Aquas* to the effect that the love to be found in the incarnate Word is not only a spiritual love like that which is given expression in the Old Testament, but that the love of the heart of Jesus is also a fully human love, since the Word did not assume an imaginary body.¹⁴² Indeed, the spirituality of the heart which we are invited to enter into is the spirituality of the place where “sense and spirit meet, interpenetrate and unite,” and corresponds “to the bodily nature of the divine-human love of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴³ The heart of Jesus must be a fully human heart, for this heart is not just an expression of the human passions, but also the “passion” of being human. The heart is the epitome of the passions, and without it there could have been no Passion on the part of the Son.

If the heart of Jesus is a truly human heart, wherein lies the difference between his heart and ours? Ratzinger puts it this way; the Stoics saw the heart as the guiding power of the human being, that which “held things together.” For Cicero and Seneca, the heart was that which held a being together. The task of this heart is self-preservation, holding together all that belongs to it. But the heart of Jesus has “overturned” this definition (cf. Hos 11:8). It engages in self-surrender rather than self-preservation. This heart saves by opening itself, by giving itself away. Rather than being only the place of integration, it allows itself to “collapse.”¹⁴⁴ For Ratzinger, the resolution of the riddle of the heart of

¹³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 53. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 17.

¹⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 53. See also Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 48 (1956), p. 241.

¹⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 55–56. Citing Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, op. cit., pp. 322–323.

¹⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁴⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 69.

God which “collapses” is to be found in the New Testament in the Passion of Christ. In this Passion: “God himself, in the person of his Son, [suffers] Israel’s rejection.”¹⁴⁵ There, God takes the place of the sinner, and gives us sinners the place of the Son. The words of Hosea 11: “My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender,” reveal the drama of God’s heart in the Passion of Jesus. For Ratzinger, “The pierced Heart of the crucified Son is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of the Heart of God, which overthrows righteousness by mercy and by that very action remains righteous.”¹⁴⁶ One can encounter God “in Christ [who] has shown us his face and opened his heart [to us].”¹⁴⁷ It is in this heart that one encounters the heart of the Father. It is this heart which calls to one’s heart.

But what about our hearts? For Benedict XVI, the heart of every Christian must be transformed by Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit. This is to fulfil his promise that rivers of living water would flow out of the hearts of believers.¹⁴⁸ According to him, “The Spirit ... is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ’s heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them.”¹⁴⁹ This will enable Christians to fulfil the “program” of the Good Samaritan, which is the program of Jesus; “a heart which sees.”¹⁵⁰

Do we need a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart?

We are suffering from a new dualism, one which has been called a disassociation of head and heart. However, expressing the disassociation simply in these terms could be misleading. In fact, as Tóth has shown us, we are suffering from a disassociation of the intellectual faculty from the sensual-emotional-volitional faculties. One could also call this disassociation a *de-kardia-zation* of reason. Furthermore, in our current separation of head and heart, more and more people are opting for the heart over the head. Our current age has been variously labelled post-modern, post-Enlightenment, and post-Christian. To these could be added post-rational. After the death of God, we are experiencing the

¹⁴⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, no. 4. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 17.

¹⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 19.

¹⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 31.

death of human reason. We seem to be in the last stage of the disintegration of the human person. This fragmentation has been occurring for some time. We could trace it back to the sexual revolution's treatment of a woman's body as her enemy, such that many women think it necessary to engage in a kind of chemical warfare, the Pill, against their own fertility. Or we could go back further to the Enlightenment's loss of a sense of anthropological integrity, beginning with René Descartes' separation of the body and the soul, and witnessed to be Friedrich Schleiermacher's position that, "Understanding, will, and emotion are the three provinces of the human mind, and none can be transmuted into any other."¹⁵¹ However, now it would seem that experience's time has come. More and more, it appears that we are entering the Age of Emotion, or the Age of Affectivity, but this is an affectivity disassociated from rationality, an affectivity that dominates both the reason and the will. Whether it concerns "identity politics" and "cancel culture," including the increasingly vexed question of transgenderism, or any of the other great moral issues of our time, the prevailing attitude of many people is: "I am what I feel," "I am what I desire." Thus, if a man says that he feels that he is really a woman, he can treat his body as a mere appendage to his "real" self, which is his "affective" self.

Could developing a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart help us overcome this increasing anthropological disintegration? As someone who has recently begun to teach an introductory course to seminarians on spiritual theology, one text I have been using is Jordan Aumann's classic *Spiritual Theology*.¹⁵² Aumann approaches the subject from a Thomistic perspective. It is great in some ways. It gives the students a very clear idea of the various human faculties and how they are related to each other. Yet, I find also that something is lacking in it. On its own it can give the impression that the human person is like a finely crafted Swiss watch, and that to be holy means to have all the parts working smoothly together. It does not adequately convey the sense of the human person as an integrated whole, nor the "passionate" nature of being human, whereas Ratzinger takes an approach which does emphasize these things, and "analyses man more on historical and dynamic than on metaphysical lines."¹⁵³ I think that this is the sense that our anthropologically fragmented neighbors, and we ourselves, need so desperately to recover. We need to rediscover a true understanding of human affectivity and human wholeness. I think that a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart could have real therapeutic value and

¹⁵¹ J. Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, San Francisco, CA 2009, p. 63.

¹⁵² J. Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, London 1980.

¹⁵³ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

great evangelical potential for addressing our current anthropological malaise. This malaise focuses too exclusively on isolated human experience. What better medicine can be found than one which restores the harmony between this experience and all the other aspects of our humanity?

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