Appreciative Musings on Normative Thoughts, Normative Feelings, Normative Actions

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This article consists of appreciative reflections upon Hoffman and Strawn's article, *Normative Thoughts, Normative Feelings, Normative Actions: A Protestant, Relational Psychoanalytic Reply to E. Christian Brugger and the Faculty of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (IPS)*. In the article, Hoffman and Strawn, although expressing broad agreement with Brugger, discuss six areas of apparent disagreement. The authors of the present response maintain that, with only a few exceptions, the disagreements are generally not substantive but based on avoidable misunderstandings. Nonetheless, a careful consideration of these disagreements serves to clarify the importance of philosophical anthropology for psychology.

The essayist G.K. Chesterton once wrote, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that "for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy" (1909, p. 15)—since Chesterton believed that a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions were governed by his or her basic presuppositions and first principles. In an article entitled *Anthropological Foundations for Clinical Psychology: A Proposal, E. Christian Brugger* (2008) and the faculty of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences argued that something similar applies, but to an even greater degree, as regards a clinical psychologist. A patient may reasonably want to know not simply the clinician's professional qualifications, but also the understanding of the human person (that is, the "philosophical anthropology") which the clinician has adopted—as, indeed, in practice a clinician will inevitably adopt such an anthropology.

Since some vision of the human person is unavoidable, one might as well be explicit and therefore criti-

cal about it. Brugger proposed one such explicit anthropology, drawn from the Catholic tradition. He deliberately put forward these views in the form of a "proposal," in order to invite critical comments. We are grateful that Hoffman and Strawn (2009) have so quickly taken up this invitation and offered criticisms in their article, *Normative Thoughts, Normative Feelings, Normative Actions: A Protestant, Relational Psychoanalytic Reply to E. Christian Brugger and the Faculty of IPS*.

Hoffman and Strawn (2009) express firm agreement on the need to make one's anthropology explicit. Indeed, for them the importance of this goes far beyond the therapist-patient relationship: "Christian sub-cultures, and culture at large, are adrift on seas of pragmatism that engulf the human spirit in solution-seeking activities based on inadequate theological and anthropological assumptions (p. 126)." They furthermore state that they "principally embrace" the eight premises of Brugger's model. Nonetheless, they find six points of disagreement, in relation to which they favor "alternative perspectives."[1]

One might reasonably leave the matter there: Brugger proposed a model; Hoffman and Strawn offered friendly criticisms in the context of general agreement with the model; and perfect consensus in such matters is not to be expected. However, because most of those points of disagreement, we believe, involve avoidable misunderstandings, rather than unavoidable differences in outlook or "perspective," we regard it as worthwhile to offer a few clarifying comments in reply, and by way of expressing our appreciation. These misunderstandings arise in some cases, we concede, from an imperfect manner of expression, but in other cases they seem based on a

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[1]The authors list five points of disagreement in a concluding paragraph, but the list omits the authors' critique of the IPS anthropology's affirmation of freewill.

misinterpretation. Hoffman and Strawn's first disagreement concerns our premise I.3, "since God is a knowing and loving communion of persons (a Trinity of Persons), humans are created as persons, to know all truth, especially about God, and to live in loving communion with God and other persons." They challenge the connection drawn there between human knowledge and communion with God:

We find Brugger's linking of this *gnosis* with *koinonia* to be a gloss that does injustice to the primacy of human relationality and are reminded of the Apostle Paul's admonition, "… Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge, but anyone who loves God is known by Him." (I Cor. 8: 1, 2 NRSV)

This seems a case where Brugger's expression was imperfect and led to a misunderstanding, and we intend to revise it in a future edition of the IPS Anthropology.[2] The phrase "know all truth" was not intended to mean that human beings are created to know *all truth which is capable of being known about the universe, other people's intentions, the mystery of God*, and so on. Of course only God can know all truth in that sense (cp. Mt. 24:36). We agree that in God's providence there are mysteries which human reason can never grasp, and it is important and humbling that human beings acknowledge this. Only the Spirit searches the "depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10).

Brugger meant the phrase instead in the sense that the human mind is open to truth generally, and, therefore, it is capable of receiving all truth which God wishes to lead us to. Our Lord even uses the phrase "all truth" in this way: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth," (Jn. 16:13, NRSV, Gr. *en têi alêtheia pasêi*[3]). Yet we would urge that this truth which God wishes to lead us to is not accidental to *koinônia* with God, but rather essentially involved in it, because one way in which God wants to share his life with us is by "declaring" to us what the Father knows: "All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will

take what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn 16:15, NRSV). Furthermore, Jesus states that it is only through knowledge "of what the master is doing" that we become friends with God, and our *koinônia* with the persons of the Trinity just is our friendship with God: "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (Jn. 15:15, NRSV).

What about Paul's statement that "knowledge puffs up"? The context of the verse (I Cor 8:1-13) is a debate about eating food known to have been offered to idols. In that context, Paul attacks gnosis because he is attacking the human presumption which would treat knowledge as if it might be separated from efficacious love of neighbor. Even so, there are other contexts in which Paul praises knowledge, for example: "I myself am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (Romans, 15:14). Hence, knowledge in the service of love is psychologically healthy and is the "truth that sets one free," but knowledge which functions narcissistically "puffs us up" and separates us from God and neighbor.

The second point of disagreement of Hoffman and Strawn concerns the statement in the IPS anthropological premises that "Human nature, because of Jesus' faithfulness to the will of the Father, is redeemed and restored to right relationship with God." They say that they agree that "Christ redeemed us from the curse" (Gal. 3:13), but they disagree with the IPS anthropology insofar as they hold that:

The emphasis of this promise (cf. Joel 2:28) is not anthropocentric, i.e. that humans are redeemed; rather the promise is Christocentric, i.e. 'as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.' (1 Cor. 15:22). Humans will be conformed to (share in) the likeness of the One who is "the firstborn" of us all (Rom. 8:29) and "the firstborn of all" (Col. 1:15, 18). Christ is not a reconstituted first Adam, but "the last Adam, … a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor. 15:45)

If we understand them correctly, Hoffman and Strawn (2009) are making three points. First, they deny that our redemption means a return to a *status quo ante*: Christ did not die for us in order merely to return us to the condition we were in when we were created, but rather to raise us up to a new life in him, in which Christ rather than Adam serves as our model. Second, they believe that an appreciation of

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[2]We thank Hoffman and Strawn for drawing to our attention the way in which this premise could be misunderstood. We plan to change "humans are created as persons, to know all truth, especially about God," to "humans are created as persons to enter into communion with God and other persons through knowledge and love."

[3]Given the use of the locative dative rather than the accusative in the phrase, its sense seems to be "within all truth," as if to say: in whatever direction the Spirit guides, it will be a direction that is enveloped in truth.

this theological point helps Christians not to be pre-occupied with themselves and their own salvation, but rather healthily to see their lives as rooted in the life of the Son of God, who is outside and beyond themselves. Third, they hold that this new way of life "for Christ" equips a Christian to understand even better what it is to be truly human: "In Christ's life," they say, "His relationships, His recorded normative thoughts, normative feelings and normative actions - we come to a fuller experience of what it is to be wholly human, wholly ourselves" (p.127).

We do not disagree with anything in this comment by Hoffman and Strawn. In the Catholic tradition, it is believed that the Fall of Adam was a *felix culpa*, that is, a "happy fault," precisely because the sacrifice of Christ was God's remedy for the Fall, and through that sacrifice we are raised up to a higher, supernatural life and destiny, which far surpass the happiness which Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden when they were first created.[4] The redemption allows us to become "adopted sons and daughters of God", who share in a new life, the life of Christ: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (2 Cor 5:17).

Again, in the Catholic theological tradition, we hold that, even though Adam came first in time, Christ represents the purpose and goal of human life: "The last Adam is indeed the first; as he himself says: 'I am the first and the last'" (Catholic Church, 2003, n. 359; citing St. Peter Chrysologus). This is why Catholics hold—in full agreement with Hoffman and Strawn—that human anthropology becomes clear only in the mystery of Christ: "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear. … Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear" (Gaudium et Spes, n. 22, in Vatican Council II, 1996). So the second point of disagreement is not a disagreement at all.[5]

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[4]In the *Exultet* during the Easter liturgy in Catholic parishes, the celebrant sings the famous line, *O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorem*, that is, "O happy fault! That merited for us such and so great a Redeemer!"

[5]In light of Hoffman and Strawn's remarks, we plan to amend the premise (III), changing "Human nature, because of Jesus' faithfulness to the will of the Father, is redeemed and restored to right relationship with God," to "In Jesus Christ, God redeems human nature; through union in baptism with Jesus Christ and His redemptive death and Resurrection, we become adopted children of God.(cf. Gal 4:5)."

By the way, it should be noted that although Hoffman and Strawn (2009, p. 126) rightly object to an anthropocentric account of the redemption, they apparently find no difficulty in an anthropocentric understanding of the Trinity: "The doctrine of the Trinity is not ultimately a teaching about 'God' but a teaching about *God's life with us and our life with each other*," they write. This is odd, because since the Incarnation and Trinity are the two central doctrines of Christianity, one would think that they should be understood with parity.

The third point of disagreement involves the affirmation in the IPS anthropology of a classical (that is, Aristotelian and Thomist) conception of the human soul: "The soul is the animating principle of the living human body" (IV.2); and "Every human person from the first moment of existence is a complete, wholly unified, living being constituted of a material body and an immaterial, incorruptible and immortal soul" (IV.1). Hoffman and Strawn suggest that the soul should not be hypostasized as a "thing," or separate substance, but rather be regarded as an emergent and functionally-specified quality, which they refer to as "soulishness." In contrast, Brugger's postulation of an immaterial, incorruptible and immortal soul, they say, "adds nothing of substance [sic!] to his theological or philosophical anthropology."

According to the different perspective which Hoffman and Strawn (2009) prefer:

> The chasm which separates human beings from all other creatures is not our possession of an immaterial and immortal soul, but our unparalleled capacity for relationship with God and each other. Our uniqueness resides in God's choice to relate to us as sons and daughters. Our soulishness is our conception of how God creates us, animates us, lives in us, recreates us and communes with us. We understand that God is intimate with us in a manner not experienced by His other creations. (p.128)

In reply we would begin by saying that it is clear in the IPS Anthropology that we reject Platonism and Cartesianism, according to which a human person is actually a composite of two substances, a soul-substance and a body-substance. We believe furthermore that the soul is appropriately understood as the "form" of the body, and to that extent we would be prepared to accept language such as "soulishness" in referring to the soul, and to agree to the pertinence of affirming the "unparalleled capacity for relationship with God and each other."

We would also observe that the IPS anthropology, although consistent with the classical philosophical tradition, situates its understanding of the soul

within the outlook of the Bible. Our first theological principle is that "humans are created by God in the image of God … as a unified whole, constituted of a material body and a spiritual soul" (I.2). The language of this principle is drawn from the Bible, with its notion of the whole person (Mt 26:38; Jn 12:27; 2 Macc 6:30), its idea of an internal principle of life or breath that originates in God (*néfesh*, Gn 2:7), and also its teaching that we are created in the image of God (Gn 1,27; Aquinas, I 35.2).

However, even after all of this is acknowledged, we still apparently differ from Hoffman and Strawn in two important respects. First, we believe that, conceptually and philosophically, the actions and emotional responses of a human person are properly conceived of as being initiated not by the body, or by bodily structures or processes simply, but precisely through this "formal" aspect of the human person which is the "soul." That is why we hold that "the soul is the animating principle of the living human body": by "principle" we mean a fundamental cause.[6] Bodily structures or processes (some of which are consciously discerned, and some not) may provide necessary conditions (or material causes) for the soul's agency; but they are not themselves the only or even the primary causes of thoughts, actions, or emotions. We hold that these causes are only secondary or relative compared to the soul.[7] That it is helpful to postulate an "animating principle" is perhaps clear from the following line of thought. Something active is needed to explain the functioning of a human being besides physical structures, which are in an important sense passive. For instance, the body remains the same, even though the molecules or atoms composing it are replaced every nine months or so. However, it remains the same by acting to keep itself the same, that is, by constantly renovating itself and repairing damage. It is rather like a continual restoration of a house to its original plan. The structure that the body is to take, admittedly, is latent in its DNA, but not its activity (especially its intellectual, spiritual, or transcendent activity). In addition, changes that come in the process of growth or aging are generally experienced in the context of personal continuity. We take the "soul" to be that which accounts for this non-reduc-

tionist activity and personal experience of the living human body.

Second, the soul's intellectual capacity to know the truth and to love the good, by its very nature, cannot be realized in a bodily structure or organ–even if it requires a bodily structure or organ (which the neurosciences can tell us much about) to operate fully and to manifest itself. It is precisely because this aspect of the soul goes beyond or "transcends" any bodily structure or organ, that it survives the death of a human being.

It would not be appropriate or possible to examine here the various arguments for this view–which is implicit in many Bible verses, and which has been endorsed by many theologians and saints and explicitly argued for by philosophers, beginning with Plato's *Phaedo* (Pakaluk, 2003) and Aristotle's *De Anima*. One motivation for the view is the intuition that the human mind has the capacity to know all of material nature, and yet the mind would necessarily be "blind" to aspects of nature if it were itself entirely a part of nature: only a power belonging to a higher domain can have the possibility of complete mastery of a lower domain. We believe that the mind would be thus blind if, like other parts of material nature, it involved no more than the "emergent" or relational properties that Hoffman and Strawn think make the soul distinctive.[8]

However, we can say the following in reply to Hoffman and Strawn on this point. We would begin by asking whether they hold that in principle something may exist which is immaterial and not dependent on a material body. We suspect that, as Christians, they do hold this: we suspect they believe that God does not have a body or depend on one; we suspect they believe that the second person of the Trinity, the Son, did not have a body before he assumed human nature; and additionally we would not be surprised if they believe, as we do, that there are numerous intelligences ("angels") which exist and yet which are immaterial. If Hoffman and Strawn believe some of these things and therefore concede that that is simply the way reality is–namely, that there really are immaterial beings, which exist independently of material bodies, and which nonetheless are capable

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[6]We use "principle" and "fundamental cause" in the sense of the Greek word, *archê*.

[7]The soul in turn is itself a "secondary cause," as is every other cause in nature, in relation to the ultimate first, efficient, and final causes involved in God's creative, sustaining and leading works.

[8]Aristotle's argument finds some resonances in, and can be understood as analogous to, some arguments by more recent thinkers. For example, it has often been supposed that Gödel's famous incompleteness theorems either show or suggest that the mind transcends the capacities of a calculating machine (J.R. Lucas, Roger Penrose (2002), Fr. Stanley Jaki, Fr. Benedict Ashley (2009).

of acting upon material reality–then they must concede that nothing rules out in advance that human beings, too, have some power or aspect, at least, which similarly operates in some way without dependence upon a material body. Thus they might well concede that the position affirmed by the IPS is at least a tenable position.

The next step is to ask whether the position of the IPS is not the more natural position to take, given the Bible and the common experience of Christians. We believe that God is an immaterial being; we believe that human beings are created in the image of God; furthermore, we believe that no material images of God can properly image God (Isa. 40: 18-20): it would seem to follow that human beings, too, if they are proper images of God, have an immaterial aspect–which is why, unlike the other animals, we have been made only "a little lower" than God (Ps. 8:5).

Again, we believe that after death comes judgment (Heb. 9:27); we believe that someone who loses his life (Greek: *psuchê*, "soul") for the sake of Christ will save it (Mk. 8:35, Mt. 16:25; cp. Mt. 10:28); it seems natural that only something quasi-substantial can be saved or judged; therefore, the human soul which may be saved and judged seems not to be a mere "soulish" quality of a body–just as the rich man (in our Lord's parable in Luke 16:19), who pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, could not have been simply an emergent property.

Note that, in affirming these things, we do not wish to deny that human persons are always dependent on God for our existence, for our participation in goodness and in truth, and for our relationality. Indeed, the affirmations that God has created the human person (both soul and body) in His image, and that he holds each soul in existence, are likewise affirmations that human immateriality and immortality are actually dependent upon God.

The final step is to ask whether a conviction of an immortal aspect of the soul is pointless for psychology, as Hoffman and Strawn might seem to suggest when they say it "adds nothing." We believe that this conviction is relevant to psychology in many ways, but we will draw attention only to two considerations, one theoretical and the other clinical. The theoretical consideration involves what the nature is of the chief object of study of psychology, a human being: Are human beings, in what we naturally are (that is, prior to our adoption as sons and daughters of God), completely contained in the natural world, or do we in some way "transcend" the natural world? If the former, then in principle a human being may be understood exhaustively in the way that any other natural object may be understood; if the latter, then the nature and destiny of a human being exceed the competence of natural science and must ultimately involve an element of "mystery". As Pope John Paul II expressed this point in his *Address to Members of the American Psychiatric Association and World Psychiatric Association* of January 4, 1993:

By its very nature, your work often brings you to the threshold of the human mystery…. The Church's own history of commitment to caring for the sick, especially the poor and the emarginated, is rooted in the conviction that the human person is a unity of body and spirit, possessing an inviolable dignity as one made in the image of God and called to a transcendent destiny. For this reason, the Church is convinced that no adequate assessment of the nature of the human person or the requirements for human fulfillment and psycho-social well-being can be made without respect for man's spiritual dimension and capacity for self-transcendence.

Hoffman and Strawn have rightly pointed out that knowledge, disjointed from love, "puffs up." The humble claim that the natural sciences reach a limit in what they learn about human nature and that therefore they must cede ground to higher disciplines requires some basis in the nature of things, and this, we maintain, is precisely a capacity for transcendence in the human soul itself.

The clinical consideration involves how a therapist treats his or her client. We treat things in certain ways, and regard it as fitting that we treat them thus, because of what we take them to be. We treat a cow as a means to our ends (as a beast of burden or dinner for the family) because we regard animals–in what they are, not merely in how they are looked upon or viewed by others–as lacking in rationality and a "spiritual dimension and capacity for self-transcendence." By the same token, we typically are consistently disposed to treat human beings with dignity, only to the extent that we are convinced that *something in them*–and not simply how someone regards them–has or implies a surpassing dignity. This conviction of the great dignity of the human person is, we maintain, a nearly indispensable help to effective and compassionate clinical practice; and yet we see such a conviction as underwritten and grounded by the ontological assertion that human beings have an immaterial and immortal aspect of their existence–and that we have this dignity regardless of whether we are a

baptized believer or not, but simply because God has created us in this way.

As a result, therapy based upon a Christian anthropology takes on a certain character, a way the therapist values or sees the client, which is not contingent upon a shared worldview, but which compels the clinician to have the utmost regard for the client. For instance, the therapist will chose interventions that befit the dignity of the client, not based simply on what clients desire or think they desire. Furthermore, the therapist will look to the interests of the whole person, taking into account the client's concerns not simply for living here and now, but also in relation to eternal life.

The fourth point of disagreement which Hoffman and Strawn discuss involves the way that the IPS anthropology is perceived to deal with the emotions. In its anthropology, the IPS mentions the emotions under the premise, "The human person is bodily," affirming that "in response to insights, perceptions and evaluations about their situations, [human persons] experience emotional responses and reactions; through training, humans can develop enduring emotional dispositions ordered in accord with what is truly good for them." Hoffman and Strawn (2009), in the most developed discussion of their paper, object to this formulation. They suspect that the formulation is a sign of an unbalanced rationalism and the expression of an unfortunate suspicion of the emotions:

The authors' placement of emotions as bodily responses and reactions could be understood both as a Thomist conception that denigrates the emotions as base or animalistic and an Augustinian bias that affect is the seat of utterly perverse bodily impulses. Both the Thomist and Augustinian characterizations of emotion privilege intellect and will as that which is most normatively human. (p.128)

They go on to argue that, because human emotional life is imbued throughout with rationality, the emotions should be mentioned under a different premise in the IPS anthropology, viz. premise VII, "The human person is rational."

We appreciate this friendly criticism from Hoffman and Strawn and accept the challenge that it entails. To clarify the IPS position, we believe that emotions "participate" in reason inasmuch as the pre-discursive intuitions and sense cognitions (perceptions, imagination, memory, and evaluative judgments) inform the emotions (sense affections) about the intelligibility of the world and human experience. In this anthropology, the emotions are

closely tied with these pre-discursive (instinctive and evaluative) judgments. As Moncher & Titus (2009, p. 28) say:

On the one hand, [emotions] express pre-discursive or instinctive judgments that come through sense knowledge of various sorts. The emotions thus provide signs of the intelligibility: within states of being, interactions, and events; and through attractions and repulsions, fears and hopes, angers and loves, and so on. On the other hand, the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach to the emotions–which is a foundation for the Catholic tradition–also correlates emotional expression and development with reasoning, willing, and interpersonal relationships.

Hoffman and Strawn have pointed out the importance of the neurosciences for understanding human agency, and we agree. Titus & Moncher (2009, p. 59) have noted that:

Recent neurobiological research suggests that human emotions are indispensable in human action (Damasio, 1994; Goleman, 1995, LeDoux, 1998). An Aristotelian-Thomist perspective, for its part, has argued that certain virtues reside in the embodied emotional dispositions (not just in reason and will). These emotional virtues express a pre-discursive (pre-conscious) type of embodied participation in reason. Although responsible action demands further rational adjudication and choice, such emotional appraisals rely on instinctual and acquired neural circuitry, and thus are properly considered bodily.

These reflections suggest the importance of an "affective life" in a larger sense than emotions strictly speaking. For example, a recent case (Moncher & Titus, 2009) points to the importance of first healing the emotional and interpersonal wounds of a person precisely so that the cognitive and volitional aspects are able to be employed most effectively.

The IPS anthropology mentions the emotions under the heading "bodily" for these reasons, but also in order to guard against a merely subjective or phenomenological understanding of the emotions, which would regard them as solely experiential and no more than "feelings". In accordance with the concern of the IPS anthropology to view the human person in his or her entirety, we think, in contrast, that it is important to acknowledge the bodily conditions and dispositions which contribute to the manner and intensity with which we experience emotions; and, because we suppose that the error of regarding emotions as purely phenomenological is widespread, we attempted to counterbalance this by mentioning emotions under the heading "bodily". In no way was that classification meant to imply any denigration of the emotions, their "intrinsic rationality,"

or pre-discursive intelligence and judgments embedded in emotions.[9]

Hoffman and Strawn in a fifth point take issue with the IPS anthropology on the topic of human freedom. This fifth point seems based on a misconstrual of the IPS premises, and therefore we will not devote much space to replying to it. The IPS anthropology asserts that "Humans … are capable of free-choice"—note that this is an assertion about our "capability" merely—and then the anthropology goes on to assert that, "Although they are free, they are limited by multiple factors and to varying degrees." Hoffman and Strawn seem to attend only to the first assertion, not the second, when they insist that "freedom to choose is mediated by the extent to which a person is compromised by unconscious processes, including irrational emotions and distorted perceptions of reality and personal history, which actualize irresponsible, immoral, destructive and /or unloving choices." This is fully consistent with the IPS anthropology. Freedom is "mediated"; indeed, it was in awareness of the role of such things as emotions and distorted perceptions that the IPS anthropology affirmed that in practice there are multiple "limits" upon freedom.[10]

A final and sixth point of disagreement arises when Hoffman and Strawn discuss what the IPS anthropology says about the virtues: "The development of freedom involves growth in capacities to choose good and avoid evil, also referred to as developing the moral virtues" (VIII.4). Hoffman and Strawn strenuously object: "We could not disagree more." But here too their objection seems based on a misconstrual. They interpret the IPS anthropology to be asserting that acquired virtue alone is sufficient for safeguarding human freedom and protecting a person from evil and sin. They claim that the IPS is committed to "a failing paradigm for the avoidance of evil," and they say that "human motives frequently breach the parapets of moral virtue."

We agree with Hoffman and Strawn that the acquired virtues alone and in isolation are not adequate safeguards against wrongdoing and sin, and the IPS anthropology does not say otherwise. It says

merely that growth in freedom to choose good and avoid evil "involves" the moral virtues; that is, those virtues are in usual circumstances necessary for this sort of psychological growth.[11] It should be noted that, when we refer to "virtues," we include not only intellectual cognitions and choices, but also the pre-conscious, pre-discursive, intuitive, and evaluative judgments that (1) set the human person and community of persons toward actions that with the aid of discursive reason and will become more knowingly good and (2) are human nature's basis for receiving grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit—as intimated by Hoffman and Strawn's reference to the prophet Joel (2:28): "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh."[12]

From an ecumenical perspective of dialogue about theological anthropology and psychology, we wish to reiterate that a Catholic vision affirms that the very heart of Christian life is relational (Catholic Church 2003) because of the nature of the theological virtues of faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 3:22; Catholic Church 2003, n. 1987), of hope in God's promises of eternal beatitude in the life to come and grace in this life, (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23), and of charity-love for God and neighbor (Mt 22:38-39; Mk 12:30-33; and Lk 10:27). A Catholic approach treats these virtues of faith, hope, and charity, in connection with grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as foundations for all complete and true virtues (Aquinas ST IIa-IIae, questions 1-46; Catholic Church, 2003, n. 1812-1841). Through these gifts of God, the Christian receives not only the basis for a supernatural life (involving justification, redemption, reconciliation, and holiness) but also the basis for living a Christian life in the everyday world.

The relationship between God's grace, virtue, and psychological health is complex. Moncher & Titus (2009, pp. 29-33) have explained symptom reduction as a certain capacity for virtue and the psychotherapy processes as a certain preparation for

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[9]In a future version of the IPS Anthropology we intend to revise our treatment of the emotions to make clear our general agreement with the viewpoint expressed by Hoffman and Strawn.

[10]Despite their criticism, Hoffman and Strawn actually point out in passing that the IPS anthropology affirms limitations on freedom: "Brugger acknowledges limitations to freedom in the second corollary concerning volition."

[11]Admittedly there are static notions of virtue or radically pessimistic anthropologies that are not those of IPS' anthropology. Moreover, the word virtue can mean: an act; a norm for right action; or a disposition toward acting rightly, at different levels (psychological and theological), while demanding an interconnection of the virtues for a good life overall (Moncher and Titus, 2009, 25-26).

[12]This conception of virtue is far from being peculiar to the Catholic tradition; similar conceptions have been advanced by Stanley Hauerwas (1974) who is Methodist; Craig R. Dykstra (1981) who is Presbyterian; and François Dermange (2007) who is Calvinist (Reformed).

growth in virtue. Although a positive-virtue psychology identifies the dispositions that express healthy functioning and goals, a psychotherapy of virtue does not necessarily talk of "virtue" per se with the client. Rather, the therapeutic assessment and treatment of fears and anxieties, anger and compulsive thoughts, despair and depression, and so on, are the matter for therapeutic strategies and practices that seek to develop personal dispositions, incarnating correlatively courage and patience, calmness and practical wisdom, hope and initiative.[13] Therapy in this context presumes some minimal level of interpersonal and emotional/bodily health, which provides the foundation for incorporating the use of strategies that more directly use the client's positive cognitive capacities, affect, and relationships.

Our understanding of virtue theory does not hold that virtue is all or nothing, completely existent or absent. Rather the developmental trajectory of psychological and moral growth is complex because of the embodied, rational, volitional, and relational dynamics. We agree with Hoffman and Strawn that "human motives frequently breach the parapets of moral virtue." It was in recognition of this that Titus (2009, forthcoming) has discussed how the Catholic anthropological tradition treats the issue of the "flawed hero" through the working of the grace of charity and practical wisdom, which incite continuing personal conversion and development of virtues (an ongoing conformity to Christ), and requires not only an interconnection of the virtues but also the support of communities of justice and charity. Clinicians can assist in this process through engaging clients with a clear, objective sense of healthy functioning towards which the therapeutic relationship is ordered. In this way, the treatment process is constantly (and compassionately) checked against its ability to assist the person to grow in virtue, while recognizing and addressing barriers that arise in this regard.

So then, we have examined six putative points of disagreement, and we found that, with only a few exceptions, the disagreements were based on avoidable misunderstandings or traceable to differences in emphasis. A reader may ask, then: Is there no real disagreement between the approach of the IPS and the approach favored by Hoffman and Strawn? Are all of the differences merely illusory? Not to be contentious for its own sake, but rather to provide a starting point for further reflection, we conclude with a brief comment about the doctrine of justification and its relation to an underlying conception of anthropology and psychology, where we believe a significant difference may potentially open up.

The IPS anthropology asserts that, although "Human nature remains weakened by sin ('concupiscence'—disordered emotions, weakness of reason and will)" the human person "can be assisted, and in certain ways healed, and also divinized, by divine grace (i.e., persons can become holy)." While one of the authors (Strawn) comes from the Wesleyan tradition that finds "an affinity with this understanding of persons becoming holy," Hoffman and Strawn correctly point out that many Protestant Christians would disagree: "Protestants in the Reformation traditions of Luther and Calvin would articulate a bifurcated understanding of persons being simultaneously holy and just in Christ and continuing in evil apart from Christ."[14] They say nothing more about this point of possible divergence in perspective, but simply call attention to it.

We would suggest that how one understands the justification and sanctification worked through Christ and the Holy Spirit is crucially relevant for psychology, for instance, in its assessment of guilt and self-esteem. Catholics hold that Christ instituted a definite sacrament for the forgiveness of sins ("Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" Jn. 20:22-23; cp. Mt 16:19; & 18:18). According to the Catholic view, someone who has recμourse to sacramental confession may have complete confidence afterwards that the guilt of his sins has been entirely forgiven and that his soul stands fresh before God, as a new creation. Furthermore, we regard this confidence as based in an objective reality, the concrete circumstances of the sacrament, rather than on a subjective feeling. Furthermore, Catholics hold that, through the sacraments, the grace of God is infused into the soul and begins to transform it from within, so that justification is real and intrinsic, rather than imputed and

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[13]These dispositions are but a few of the major virtues, associated virtues, and character strengths that are related to psychological health (Aquinas, ST IIa-IIae questions 47-148) and that are construed and categorized somewhat differently in the positive psychology movement (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

[14]Recently the World Lutheran Federation and the Catholic Church published a joint declaration on the doctrine of justification (1999). While some old bones of contention have been buried (for those who accept the clarifications in this document), there are some differences relevant to psychology which seem to remain.

extrinsic. We believe that Christians by sanctification begin to become in this life the new creatures that God wishes us to be when he invites us to share his life with him in heaven forever. This is not to say that all of the *effects* of sin vanish; moreover, without doubt the insidious effects of sin require a continuing conversion and receptivity to the Holy Spirit–in the very structures of emotion, cognition, volition, and relationality–for a Christian to grow in conformity to Christ. Indeed, it is at this nexus that the clinician often finds himself, working with clients who are striving to change, but who struggle in both the effects of past sins on their current life (often interpersonal relationship strife), and also their current failings that may persist to some degree.

Now suppose that someone held, in contrast to the Catholic view, that personal sin (and not simply the effect of sin) always touches the very center of the person, and that it is never truly forgiven. It would seem that, in that case, a person's self-esteem will remain unsettled, and he might very well look somewhere else for its grounding. Someone who accepted this alternative conception would understandably suffer an inappropriate sense of lingering guilt, pressing and weighing him down, such as is seen clinically with scrupulosity. Or, alternatively, his inappropriate guilt may come to be perceived by him as omnipresent, so that there is a risk of its undercutting the role of an appropriate sense of guilt. If, on the other hand, he thinks "my self-esteem comes only from Christ," but Christ's sanctification does not really touch him, but is only imputed, then it's not clear that he has any "self-esteem" at all. The IPS anthropology is meant to help us disentangle not only the "sin from the sinner" but also the effects of sin from the person, and thus to allow the therapist confidently to encourage the client towards growth in virtue with the help of spiritual resources, while also breaking the grip of inappropriate focus on unhealthy or unwarranted guilt, and on feelings of worthlessness.

Clearly, much more could be said along these lines. Overall the Catholic tradition holds that the guilt of original and personal sin is forgiven through Christ (through Baptism and the Sacrament of Reconciliation) and that personal esteem is founded in the common human dignity (founded in being created in the image of God) as well as the particular life of grace and union with Jesus Christ that God principally works in the person, but not without the latter's collaboration. Each Christian faces a constant call to conversion, away from new sins and also the enduring effects of sin. However, hope springs from God's faithfulness and his promises of grace to believers and communities.

Rooted in this philosophical and theological anthropology, the psychotherapist can use the psychological sciences and the whole array of the client's resources in order to aid in overcoming destructive notions and practices based on inappropriate guilt and self-esteem, and in approaching fuller freedom, health, and happiness. A hearty Christian anthropology can facilitate not only a notional understanding of Christ's normative thoughts, feeling, and actions, but also graced efforts at instantiating a virtuous character disposed to reasoning, willing, feeling, and acting, in ways that are both creative and faithful to the Christian calling.

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