



Chrtc 390 Module 2 Slides:
An Overview of Perspectives
on the Person
by Paul Flaman

Introduction to the Person by Paul Flaman

- Discrimination between Personal and non-personal beings
- **The Bible and Christian Theology**
 - The Bible in a variety of ways says much re understanding God & human nature (Creation, Sin, Redemption; body, soul, heart, mind, spirit ...) but not a highly systematic theology of the “person” per se;
 - Gen 1:26-27 Humans in the “image of God” - this text has been used by Jews and Christians to support the special dignity of humans compared to non-humans, as well as to defend the sanctity & fundamental equality of human life in all its stages regardless of its condition.
- The term “person” came into wider use in the first few centuries of Christianity in understanding:
 - The Trinity: Three distinct Divine Persons (Father, Son/Word and Holy Spirit) in one God; and
 - The Incarnation: Jesus is truly God (2nd Person of the Trinity) and truly human (not only has a divine nature but also a human nature with a human body and soul).
- Church: Person of Christ (head) and members

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Philosophy:

- Plato (426-347 BC): dualist; what is immaterial including the soul is more real than the physical; influenced early Christian thinkers as Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD).
- Aristotle (384-22 BC): man is a “rational animal”, soul is the form (principle of life) of the body; influenced Medieval thinkers as Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 AD) and Western philosophy
- Boethius (480-524): defined person as an individual substance of a rational nature; influenced medieval thought; the pursuit of wisdom and love of God is the true source of human happiness.
- Descartes (1596-1650): Catholic, *cogito ergo sum* - I think, therefore, I am. Dualist: soul is conscious, thinks; body & animals are machines.
- Locke (1632-1704): empiricist, dualist; consciousness (including awareness and memory) is the criterion for the identity of persons.
- Hume (1711-76): radical empiricist; substance, self, personal identity, soul... are metaphysical fantasies; a person is nothing but a bundle of perceptions in a constant state of change. Change destroys identity.

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Philosophy continued:

- Kant: (1724-1804): transcendental method-synthesis of sense and intellectual knowledge, theoretical and practical; persons as subjects should never be treated as mere means; influential.
- Hegel (1770-1831): idealist; reality is Absolute Mind, Spirit, Reason manifesting itself in history; individual person is only a phase of this.
- Consider also Marx (materialist); Existentialism; Utilitarianism; Phenomenology; Personalism; Process Thought; Individualism; Feminism; Ecological Thought; Post-Modernism ... Thomism.

Law: persons have more rights than non-persons

- Consider the controversies re the human fetus & animals

Medical Research Council of Canada...

- Respect intrinsic dignity of human persons in research

We are all persons:

- neuroscientists, theologians and others. This course explores what it means to be a human person, and some of the implications of this, in the light of neuroscience & Christian theology (cf. philosophy ...)