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“Supernatural”  
Life

Subjective Structures  
of the Extraordinary

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## Subjective Structures of the Extraordinary

*“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered pantaloan,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes*

*And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”(1)*

Who has not marveled at Will’s turning phrases and precise verbiage. This, from *AS You Like It*, is particularly choice for those of us who have enjoyed the Bard’s acute observations and practical wisdom which hasn’t changed very much from his day to ours. Shakespeare put this now famous, un-idealistic statement in the mouth of Lord Jaques, “a faithful lord who accompanies Duke Senior into exile in the Forest of Arden. Jaques is an example of a stock figure in Elizabethan comedy, the man possessed of a hopelessly melancholy disposition. Jaques stands on the sidelines of life, watching and judging the actions of the other characters without ever fully participating in the action around him. Jaques alone refuses to follow Duke Senior and the other courtiers back to court, and instead resolves to assume a solitary and contemplative life in a monastery.”(2) The characteristics Shakespeare gave Lord Jaques for his part in the play applied to the end. The wonder of fiction is that the characters we read about we can recognize in our own lives, where no two people are alike. It also gives us the option, introspectively, of finding our own personal ego by reflecting on those fictional personalities i.e., “how does that apply to me?” It is not strange to ask the eternal question, “Who am I?” always with respect to others. An author lives the lives of all of his or her characters to some degree, almost like a child giving life to a

stuffed “teddy,” or a youth seeing himself or herself as the Lone Ranger or Snow White. We are continually in the process of character building for the “human” animal we call I.

They say it’s natural for us to become who we are. Yet, everything we have ever experienced, everyone we have ever known, in fact or fiction, coupled with our very own genes, has had a helping hand moulding who we have become; the mind/body unity we use to display *ourselves* and confront others. For the physiologist it seems obvious that we have become what we are through Evolution and Natural Selection from the first living cells on this particular planet even as early as 4.4 billion years ago, but it was not until *Homo Sapiens, wise man*, evolved that we could begin to know that. The organism who knows he knows, but doesn’t necessarily know himself all that well; a *person* in whom chance seems to have somehow taken a turn for the better *is* who we are. What is most interesting in the whole saga of human existence is that *man*, presumed to be created by chance and chemistry, can disregard both, and by human reason and free will, proceed to change so called nature and produce a “desired” human condition with human creativity, at least until some talented future ape writes the sequel to *As You Like It*.

I’ve always had a bit of a struggle with the word *natural* as something that, if left alone, simply becomes what it is by itself. Now that the “animal” has acquired reason and will, all that is left behind, all that human advancement calls natural, is believed to have a cause, and a cause is discoverable by scientists rather

than remaining a mystery. Mankind's *reasoning* created the idea of causality, notwithstanding the fact that *cause* actually existed before we knew about it. It was man whose reason understood cause and effect, and *he alone* was capable of changing either of them by choosing what is good or bad for himself and others. It is reasonable to assume that with freedom of choice, prompted by desire, many determined what is bad is good for them, and what is good is bad for them— depending on the disposition acquired while becoming a self. How many of us would be happy to take back choices we have made for ourselves and substitute others we could have made? Many wish the world was “naturally” good to them without having to make an effort to avoid what may be bad for them. It is! The *world* doesn't make choices, it is only “a stage” upon which we strut and fret our hour. Thinking as the world thinks can easily become a habit. Going along with a negative flow of ideas and activity has unfortunately derailed millions of promising lives, consider the Third Reich, the Soviet State or Radical Islam. Would you believe that there are people today who actually believe those ideologies to be good? For some, the reason given is that it's their perfect *right* as free people to do or believe whatever they wish. For others, they say they are following the irreconcilable dictates of their religion or state. What insane creed or crazy law would propose indiscriminate killing of innocent people? With this belief, all law, both natural and civil, becomes useless, and people become barbarians. Under these circumstances we would be living in a condition of hopelessness and selfishness where depravity becomes “the new normal.”

When we think of nature per se, generally we think of the “great outdoors,” the mountains, the prairies, the oceans “white with foam,” purity, cleanness, wholesomeness and so on. We seldom think of the essence of nature, or the “nature” of nature so to speak. Is nature something? Is it just out there or in there? Is it just a name we give to something untouched, or a feeling we have about pristine things? We may need to cherry-pick some the ideas about nature that philosophy has given us over the years to convince ourselves of its immanence and its necessity. In doing so there is a warning. Philosophical lingo can be difficult when trying to understand what may be essentially a simple concept. Certain post-graduate students and “philosophers” of all ages publish or perish using terminology that is only understandable to others in their field, and many may not be good writers to start with. Reading this kind of material for a long time, one becomes familiar with the terms and the usages as well as sometimes peculiar sentence structure. The thoughts they try to convey are usually not that complicated once one gets to know the meanings, or even the multiple meanings of the terms being used. For an artist, much of science is always a bit of a puzzle, even though there’s a lot of science in art such as grammar and chemistry etc., but the simple joy of learning is essential; and patience with persistence is always the doctor when one gets bogged down. The answers do come! Let’s start with a common definition of Nature from the Cambridge Dictionary:

*Nature: noun:*

*All the animals and plants in the world and all the features, forces, and processes that exist or happen independently of people, such as the weather, the sea, mountains, reproduction, and growth:*

*The force that is responsible for physical life, often called nature, and is sometimes spoken of as a person.(3)*

Here is what is supposed to be a simple definition of nature that explains it in a “nut shell;” yet it seems to be a little less simple than one would have hoped. The first part detaches people, that’s us, from all the “features, forces and processes that exist,” but includes us in the second part as a result of “the responsible force” of physical life called “nature,” sometimes called a “person.” Perhaps that “person” is the Mother Nature we have known since childhood. I’m sure this definition was written by a PhD, and we should understand exactly what he or she meant immediately. Maybe some do. Still, any good physicist would ask, what *is* that force that is responsible or the cause of life made of, and where did it’s power come from? I don’t know that there is currently an answer to that question, at least not in the Cambridge, unless, of course, you are a Vitalist: “A doctrine that says that the functions of a living organism are due to a vital principle distinct from physicochemical forces; a doctrine that suggests that the processes of life are not explicable by the laws of physics and chemistry alone and that life is in some part self-determining.”(4) In the past it was known as Animal Magnetism. Many famous scientists and philosophers held this idea, but it since has been discredited. I must be honest, I don’t think the

Cambridge definition is satisfactory for what we need to know about nature. We may need a little more detail, a bit more expository text to understand it clearly. Let's see what Wikipedia says under the heading:

***Nature:***

*“Nature, in the broadest sense, is equivalent to the natural, physical, or material world or universe. "Nature" refers to the phenomena of the physical world, and also to life in general. It ranges in scale from the subatomic to the cosmic. The word nature is derived from the Latin word natura, or "essential qualities, innate disposition", and in ancient times, literally meant "birth". Natura was a Latin translation of the Greek word physis, which originally related to the intrinsic characteristics that plants, animals, and other features of the world develop of their own accord. The concept of nature as a whole, the physical universe, is one of several expansions of the original notion; it began with certain core applications of the word by pre-Socratic philosophers, and has steadily gained currency ever since. This usage continued during the advent of modern scientific method in the last several centuries.”*

*“Within the various uses of the word today, "nature" often refers to geology and wildlife. Nature may refer to the general realm of various types of living plants and animals, and in some cases to the processes associated with inanimate objects – the way that particular types of things exist and change of their own accord,*

*such as the weather and geology of the Earth, and the matter and energy of which all these things are composed. It is often taken to mean the "natural environment" or wilderness—wild animals, rocks, forest, beaches, and in general those things that have not been substantially altered by human intervention, or which persist despite human intervention. For example, manufactured objects and human interaction generally are not considered part of nature, unless qualified as, for example, "human nature" or "the whole of nature". This more traditional concept of natural things which can still be found today implies a distinction between the natural and the artificial, with the artificial being understood as that which has been brought into being by a human consciousness or a human mind. Depending on the particular context, the term "natural" might also be distinguished from the unnatural, the supernatural, or synthetic.”(5)*

Well, this surely puts a little more meat on the bones, but is still subject to a few comments, hopefully, without being too hypercritical. Even speaking in the broadest sense, having “nature” equivalent to the *naturally* physical, material-world or universe, is what could be called begging the question. By using *it* to explain *it* doesn’t explain *it*. Nevertheless, we do get an explanation of what it refers to. It refers to “the phenomena of the physical world, and also to life in general. It ranges in scale from the subatomic to the cosmic.” In this reference one could say that nature is *all* material existence. At this point in the referral, it does appear that “we,” at least, are not left out of *it*. When we recognize the fact there are various uses of the word

nature, i.e., “those things that have not been substantially altered by human intervention, or which persist despite human intervention, for example, manufactured objects and human interaction generally are not considered part of nature.”... It seems that I spoke too soon, but here we get the distinction: ....“unless qualified as, for example, ‘human nature’ or ‘the whole of nature’. This more traditional concept of natural things which can still be found today *implies a distinction between the natural and the artificial, with the artificial being understood as that which has been brought into being by a human consciousness or a human mind. Depending on the particular context, the term ‘natural’ might also be distinguished from the unnatural, the supernatural, or synthetic.*” In this complex aggregate it appears to me that we were ushered in the front door and then, because of what we do, we are politely escorted out the back. It is suggested we may be part of what is natural only by our existence, not by what we do. What we do or affect may not be natural. What the human organism does, if it’s not totally synthetic, can only then be either un-natural or super-natural. May I suggest that plowing the fields to plant wheat is a supernatural act, though not considered natural in the strictest sense of the word. When nature “takes it’s course” wouldn’t that apply to what an organism does as well as what it is? I believe the great distinction lies between what is natural and what is un-natural, and the great coalescence exists between what is natural and what is supernatural for the human race. When the gorilla probes the termite hill for a tasty desert, is she acting natural or un-natural? Perhaps she’s getting closer to her supernatural

cousins who wouldn't eat termites even if they were southern fried.

When Protagoras suggested that man was “the measure of *all things*,” did he think of man removed from nature; a creature set apart from nature? “Historically, it was in response to Protagoras and his fellow sophists that Plato began the search for transcendent forms or knowledge which could somehow anchor moral judgment. Along with the other older Sophists and Socrates, Protagoras was part of a shift in philosophical focus from the earlier Presocratic tradition of *natural* philosophy to an interest in *human* philosophy. He emphasized how human *subjectivity* determines the way we understand, or even construct, our world, a position which is still an essential part of the modern philosophic tradition.”<sup>(6)</sup> In other words, we need to know who *we* are in order to determine what everything else is. Finally, Darwin told us, theoretically, and tenuously by the way, that we might have come from apes. So here we are, a part of nature in one respect, and quite apart from it in another respect. In order to philosophize we needed to be human, to know our selves *before* we could know very much about anything else. We had to be “super-natural” in my opinion, to speculate as to the nature or the essence of things. This is exactly what the ancient Greeks did. Philosophy started as Physics. Here's the dichotomy: Most of today's philosophers understand that through human subjectivity we say what nature is, but having come from the animal kingdom (theoretically) we are the most important part of the nature we are continuously explaining. What would being “naturally

human” mean? It seems to me we’ve become much more than just a natural phenomenon. Anthropology is a great study, everybody has their theory about how and when evolution reached an important milestone when several upright, larger brained apes became the first man and woman. The real question is, was the transition from brain to mind planned or did it just happen by itself, “naturally.” All indications point to a conclusion that there was and is a super-natural intelligence behind it which the original groups of humans were able to deduce and call God. Long before they became PhD’s they were DD’s living in caves rather than a suite of rooms off campus. It’s not surprising that Wikipedia does not supply as good a definition of nature per se as one might expect. The remaining material in the entry titled Nature, is a very thorough treatment of nature’s manifestations and constituents such as Earth, Oceans, Rivers, Sky, etc., but the definition, for me, still leaves something lacking.

We will keep up the pursuit of a satisfactory definition, although it did occur to me, more than a few times, that “nature” is not a thing. Maybe it’s like heat or energy, a flux in matter as explained by the second law of thermodynamics. Or maybe it’s a state of being that is strictly material rather than immaterial, as faith, hope and love are. I believe there is a lot of power in those common realities regardless of the fact that most reductionists see them as creations of the human brain based only on sense experience.

In 2004 Kevin Knight started an endeavor called *New Advent*. It is a combo Blog, Encyclopedia, Thomas' Summa, Works of the Early Fathers, The Bible, and a pretty extensive library of Church Documents and more. Kevin's Catholic Encyclopedia is a wonderful scholarly work except for the fact that it was published in 1911. When you use it you've got to be careful, since many things have a different reading in today's world. Although dogma and doctrine have been added to, essentially not too much has changed. It, like Wikipedia, also tries to clarify the difference between nature per se and nature as a constitutive element such as the nature of a person with regard to distinctive features, i.e., his or her character, height, weight, intelligibility and so on. It's etymological content is also pretty much the same. I will gyp a few pieces from this noble work to see where they are alike or differ from the more secular Wikipedia entry, and to see what answers our grandfathers might have gotten had they used it:

***Nature:***

*Nature properly signifies that which is primitive and original, or, according to etymology, that which a thing is at birth, as opposed to that which is acquired or added from external sources. But the line that divides the natural from the artificial cannot be drawn with precision. Inorganic beings never change except under the influence of external agencies, and in the same circumstances, their mode of activity is uniform and constant. Organisms present a greater complexity of structure, power of adaptation, and*

*variety of function. For their development out of a primitive germ they require the co-operation of many external factors, yet they have within themselves the principle of activity by which external substances are elaborated and assimilated. In any being the changes due to necessary causes are called natural, whereas those produced by intentional human activity are called artificial.*(7)

We don't often speak of "inorganic beings" as they did in the days of Scholasticism. The inference here is to "spirits" or "angels" still believed to have an unseen presence in Catholic doctrine. I mean, if Jesus said "God is Spirit," what true believer will say that God is not Spirit (with the exception of Jesus), or angels like Michael or Gabriel don't exist. The good thing about Kevin's website is that you can check 20th Century documentation against 13th Century St. Thomas Aquinas and 21st Century ideas resulting from Vatican II. Great fun if you're so inclined. Let's continue:

*Stars, rivers, forests, are works of nature; parks, canals, gardens, and machines are works of art. If necessary conditions are realized, where the seed falls a plant will grow naturally. But the seed may be placed purposely amid certain surroundings, the growth of the plant may be hastened, its shape altered, and, in general, the result to be expected from natural activities may be modified. By training the aptitudes of an animal are utilized and its instincts adapted for specific ends. In such cases the final*

*result is more or less natural or artificial according to the mode and amount of human intervention.*(8)

This clip appears to agree with Wikipedia. Every time we humans get involved we spoil what is natural by “modifying” it. When we trained Willamena to scratch on the patio door to go out and pee, did we interlopers change her “nature?” Can she not be considered natural anymore because we trained her to do something she was not born to do originally? Is modifying nature, our human-nature? Many of our modifications have cured deadly diseases. I would rather think that what we do is supernatural. If the aptitudes and instincts of animals are “natural” and we enhance those aptitudes a notch or two so that they become, over time, natural to them as the result of our “super nature,” does that make the animal un-natural or synthetic? Isn’t that precisely what is happening to humankind since the brain to mind transformation? We appear to be becoming supernatural rather than remaining “natural,” as we were as an ape, that is if you agree with evolution. In my opinion, this has been the Creator’s plan in the order of nature from the beginning. From the “Big Bang” through the two natures in the person of Christ. What other than the human intellect sees this as the supernatural transition that it is.? “In Christian theology, divinization (deification, making divine, or theosis) is the transforming effect of divine grace, the spirit of God, or the atonement of Christ. It literally means to become more divine, more like God, or to take on a divine nature. The importance of

divinization (theosis) in Roman Catholic teaching is evident from what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says of it:

*The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature": "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son (or daughter) of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." [460]*

Arguably the most prolific of the medieval scholastic theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote:

*Now the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle.*

He also wrote of God's "special love, whereby He draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good" and he ultimately roots the purpose of the Incarnation in *theosis*.

Of a more modern Roman Catholic theologian it has been said: "The theological vision of Karl Rahner, the German Jesuit whose thought has been so influential in the Roman Catholic Church and beyond over the last fifty years, has at its very core the symbol of theopoiesis. The Roman Rite liturgy expresses the doctrine of divinization or theosis in the prayer said by the deacon or priest when preparing the Eucharistic chalice: (*"By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity."*) (9)

Since we started with the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia we should continue with it for a few other points which it makes. The title Nature, eventually segues into what is called "human nature," as distinguished from nature per se:

*"Nature properly speaking is the essence (or substance) of things which have in themselves as such a principle of activity (Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', 1015a, 13). By a process of abstraction the mind arises from individual and concrete natures to those of species and genera.(10)*

The above paragraph and the one below does a bit of a high wire act with regard to nature. The general theological tone coming out of nineteenth century Catholic teaching was primarily built on the Scholasticism of Aquinas, modified Aristotelian philosophy. The Monkey Trial or the Scopes Trial a famous American legal case would not take place until 1925 in which a substitute high school teacher, John Scopes, was accused

of violating Tennessee's Butler Act, which made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. Most Christians including Catholics were against the theory of evolution on biblical principles. Only the scholars, philosophers, and theologians, the educated class, really understood what Charles Darwin had published in 1859. The APA and the MLA citations given in the 1911 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia states: *Dubray, Charles. "Nature." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.*

Charles Albert Dubray (1875-1962) was a French Marist who wrote many text books for Catholic high schools and colleges including the entry we have extracted from New Advent for this essay. Upon reading the text of Dubray's entry, it strikes me as to how careful he was structuring his writing so as not to either negate or affirm the *Origin of the Species*, which I'm sure he must have read. For example, from what Dubray wrote above one could ask: If nature is the essence of things which are active, by what process of abstraction does the *mind* arise from individual and concrete natures?

Professor Dubray continues:

*A few special remarks must be added concerning human nature. This expression may mean something concrete, more or less different in various individuals, or more generally something common to all men, i.e., the abstract human nature by which*

*mankind as a whole is distinguished from other classes of living beings.*

That abstract nature we call human nature is perhaps the moment in time of the “rise” of Homo Sapiens, the brain to mind transition, the “missing link” that anthropologists have been searching for among the Hominid bones of the Pleistocene Era.

*In both cases it is conceived as including primitive and fundamental characteristics, and as referring to the source of all activities. Hence nature, as the internal principle of action, is opposed in the first place to violence and coercion which are external principles of action and prevent the normal play of human faculties. It is opposed also, but less strictly, to education and culture which at times may be the checking of natural tendencies, at times also their development and perfection. Education, physical and mental, is not a primitive endowment; it must be acquired and is built upon nature as on its foundation. In this sense habit has been termed a second nature. But although education is due largely to external causes and influences acting on the mind and the organism, from another point of view it is also the unfolding of innate aptitudes, and hence partly natural.*  
(11)

So here we are once again starting off as “natural” becoming much more than natural over time, supernatural so to speak. It’s difficult to get away from Professor Dubray’s entry in the 1911 Encyclopedia since he makes some very interesting points which, in my opinion, concur with the theory of evolution for the most

part. This, in a Catholic Encyclopedia, at a time when most Christians were wedded to the writer of Genesis for their explanations involving *Creation*, etc. I haven't got the heart to end Professor Dubray's entry here, so I will clip the rest of it for your interest. You can skip it if you wish, but you'll be missing some good stuff.

*The problems to which the philosophical study of nature has given rise are numerous. All however centre around the question of the unity of nature: Can all the beings of the world be reduced to one common principle, and if so what is this principle? The first Greek philosophers, who were almost exclusively philosophers of nature, endeavored to find some primitive element out of which all things were made; air, water, fire, and earth were in turn or all together supposed to be this common principle. The problem has persisted through all ages and received many answers. Aristotle's primary matter, for instance, is of the same nature in all things, and today ether, or some other substance or energy is advocated by many as the common substratum of all material substances. After static unity, dynamic unity is looked for; that is, all the changes that take place in the universe are referred to the same principle. Dynamism admits forces of various kinds which, however, it tries to reduce to as small a number as possible, if not to only one form of energy manifesting itself in different ways. Mechanism holds that everything is explainable by the sole assumption of movement communicated from one substance to another. Teleological views give to final causes a greater importance, and look upon the ends*

*of various beings as subordinated to the one end which the universe tends to realize.*

*If nature includes both mental and physical phenomena, what are the relations between these two classes? On this point also the history of philosophy offers many attempts to substitute some form of Monism for the Dualism of mind and matter, by reducing mind to a special function of matter, or matter to a special appearance of mind, or both to a common substratum.*

*Finally, is nature as a whole self-sufficient, or does it require a transcendent ground as its cause and principle? Is the natura naturans (nature makes nature) one and the same with the natura naturata?(nature of itself) By some these expressions are used in a pantheistic sense, the same substance underlies all phenomena; by others the natura naturans, as first cause, is held to be really distinct from the natura naturata, as effect. This is the question of the existence and nature of God and of his distinction from the world. Here the question of the possibility of miracles is suggested. If nature alone exists, and if all its changes are absolutely necessary, everything takes place according to a strict determinism. If, on the contrary, God exists as a transcendent, intelligent, and free cause of nature and its laws not only nature in all its details depends ultimately on God's will, but its ordinary course may be suspended by a miraculous intervention of the First Cause.(12)*

I have underlined a sentence in the last paragraph concerning an issue in theology dealing with *both the imminence and the*

*transcendence of God and his creatures.* The concept of pan-en-theism, (not pantheism), is a theory common in most religions related in some ways to theosis. It may have some interest for you if you wish to look in to it. Those who do find an interest do not correspond with the idea that “God’s in his heaven, all’s right with the world.” Theology since Vatican II looks much more favorably but carefully towards evolution than it had during the latter days of the scholastic period. We’ve only had *The Origin of the Species* for 155 years. Still, as Jesus taught us, it is sincere faith that saves us from what would be un-natural regarding our human nature, our personhood.

The latter part of Professor Dubray’s entry sets the whole search for a understanding of exactly what nature *is*, in stark relief. If nature exists of itself as a necessity coming out of the big bang, (presuming the big bang is the start of the entire universe,) it would make no sense to look any further for a cause of all that is. Humans though, have always suspected that there was and is a cause beyond what is currently understood as chance. After the brain to mind transformation primal man saw God in nature, or more precisely as nature. Many of today’s physicist’s and cosmologist’s theorize about the universe coming into being using physical laws with concepts such as the “String Theory,” “Multiverses,” and other infinite, cyclic explanations. So it seems that it is in man’s human-nature, we look for a reason for being. If, on the other hand, nature is a creation of a Transcendent, Intelligent Being, all creation becomes dependent on it’s Author who can act with double-agency by having things make

themselves; *and* is both imminent and transcendent at the same time. This doesn't stop human-nature for trying to grasp the mysteries the physical universe offers him, (*natura naturata*), but it satisfies the need for a final cause which is part of his being. These two positions frame the endless argument of determinacy/indeterminacy which takes you to the body/mind problem, or the basic issue of matter over mind vs., mind over matter. One side considering all things to be only matter or physical, the other, all things to be essentially mental, having been derived from a Spiritual source i.e., "matter signifying a moment in the history of spirit."<sup>(13)</sup> The key word in this ancient debacle is the word "transcendent." "*Transcend-ent*: adjective: 1. beyond or above the range of normal or merely physical human experience. 2. (Of God) existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe."<sup>(14)</sup>

In this definition, Webster places transcendency outside of *normal* experience, I assume that would include the inability for humans to think transcendently; presuming that thinking is strictly cerebral, a mere physical act. Secondly, the definition places God apart from nature while most people believe God created and maintains nature. Now, admittedly, what most people believe doesn't prove anything from a scientific standpoint. Only by the empirical method, with repeated experimentation, are things considered *proven*, and offer credence in terms of scientific satisfaction. One can prove the nature *of* something, to ones gratification; but "nature of itself" can not been proven by the scientific method. The grand expansion, from the "primal

atom” on, is in certain stages of experimentation today, but the “initial cause” of the expansion transcends current human capability. There are, for the most part, only two hypotheses: Infinity, for which there is no definition, and God who is defined as Infinite. Since God, for the believer is infinite, he does not exist *apart* from the material universe, God is everywhere!(15) Only the “supernatural” human intellect, through the power of reason and free will has the capacity to embrace that prospect and attributes it to the grace of God, (*participation in the life of God*), externalized as faith.

The following couple of pages I have excerpted from the International Theological Commission’s publication of: *Communion and Stewardship, Human Persons Created in the Image of God, 2000-2002*. I believe that the human intellect’s transcendental capacity or it’s extraordinary thought processes, as a result of it’s human-nature from the brain to mind transition, can be called supernatural, even though it developed by “natural” progression over time. In this respect, “human nature” has a symbolic relationship to (Gen. 1: 27), where man is made in the image of God. This is not to be understood as man having been created as part of a different Supernatural Order, but simply that his “desire for God,” from the start, is extraordinary in the natural order of things. This “supernatural” phenomenon, for me, occurs in man’s “created nature.” The only man who had two natures was Jesus of Nazareth, who was both man and God in one person according to scripture. “*Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.*”(16)

“The explosion of scientific understanding and technological capability in modern times has brought many advantages to the human race, but it also poses serious challenges. Our knowledge of the immensity and age of the universe has made human beings seem smaller and less secure in their position and significance within it. Technological advances have greatly increased our ability to control and direct the forces of nature, but they have also turned out to have an unexpected and possibly uncontrollable impact on our environment and even on ourselves.”

“The Old Testament understanding of man as created in the *imago Dei* in part reflects the ancient Near Eastern idea that the king is the image of God on earth. The biblical understanding, however, is distinctive in extending the notion of the image of God to include all men. An additional contrast with ancient Near Eastern thought is that the Bible sees man as directed, not first of all to the worship of the gods, but rather to the cultivation of the earth (cf. Gen 2:15). Connecting cult more directly with cultivation, as it were, the Bible understands that human activity in the six days of the week is ordered to the Sabbath, a day of blessing and sanctification.”

“Two themes converge to shape the biblical perspective. In the first place, *the whole of man* is seen as created in the image of God. *This perspective excludes interpretations which locate the imago Dei in one or another aspect of human nature (for example, his upright stature or his intellect) or in one of his*

*qualities or functions (for example, his sexual nature or his domination of the earth).* Avoiding both monism and dualism, the Bible presents a vision of the human being in which the *spiritual is understood to be a dimension together with the physical, social and historical dimensions of man.*”

“Secondly, the creation accounts in Genesis make it clear that man is not created as an isolated individual: “*God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them*” (Gen. 1:27). God placed the first human beings in relation to one another, each with a partner of the other sex. The Bible affirms that *man exists in relation with other persons, with God, with the world, and with himself.* According to this conception, man is not an isolated individual but a person -- an essentially relational being. Far from entailing a pure actualism that would deny its permanent ontological status, the fundamentally relational character of the *imago Dei* itself constitutes its ontological structure and the basis for its exercise of freedom and responsibility. The created image affirmed by the Old Testament is, according to the New Testament, to be completed in the *imago Christi*. In the New Testament development of this theme, two distinctive elements emerge: the christological and Trinitarian character of the *imago Dei*, and the role of sacramental mediation in the formation of the *imago Christi*.”

“Pope John Paul II stated some years ago that “new knowledge leads to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a

hypothesis. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge” (“Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Evolution” 1996). In continuity with previous twentieth century papal teaching on evolution (especially Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Humani Generis*), the Holy Father’s message acknowledges that there are “several theories of evolution” that are “materialist, reductionist and spiritualist” and thus incompatible with the Catholic faith. It follows that the message of Pope John Paul II cannot be read as a blanket approbation of all theories of evolution, including those of a neo-Darwinian provenance which explicitly deny to divine providence any truly causal role in the development of life in the universe. Mainly concerned with evolution as it “involves the question of man,” however, Pope John Paul’s message is specifically critical of materialistic theories of human origins and insists on the relevance of philosophy and theology for an adequate understanding of the “ontological leap” to the human *which cannot be explained in purely scientific terms*. The Church’s interest in evolution thus focuses particularly on “the conception of man” who, as created in the image of God, “cannot be subordinated as a pure means or instrument either to the species or to society.” As a person created in the image of God, he is capable of forming relationships of communion with other persons and with the triune God, as well as of exercising sovereignty and stewardship in the created universe. The implication of these remarks is that theories of evolution and of the origin of the universe possess particular theological interest

when they touch on the doctrines of the creation *ex nihilo* and the creation of man in the image of God.”

“Our ontological status as creatures made in the image of God imposes certain limits on our ability to dispose of ourselves. The sovereignty we enjoy is not an unlimited one: we exercise a certain participated sovereignty over the created world and, in the end, we must render an account of our stewardship to the Lord of the Universe. Man is created in the image of God, but he is not God himself.”(17)

Trying to track down a satisfactory definition of nature, objectively, is not possible without getting wrapped in the definitions of human-nature or of something’s nature as an internal principle such as it’s development or it’s typical activity. It’s only by our human nature, as persons, that we are set apart from nature per se, though we did develop, naturally, while becoming human. Most people are fully aware of the fact that the theory of evolution is “more than a hypothesis” to quote St. John Paul II: “Human nature, embodies both practical and theoretical rationality, which gives us, as humans, a special dignity and certain moral rights and duties.”(18)

If you happen to be a believer in the Genesis story, corroborated by Jesus’ life, death and resurrection; and his promise to us of salvation, by his death on the cross: it is not at all unnatural to see the connection between mankind having been made in the *imago Dei*, to being redeemed in the *imago Christi*. In doing that, we are proclaiming our “super-natural” human nature.

Feast of St. Louis and St Joseph Calasanz, Priest.

Gospel Acclamation today:

“Your word is truth, O Lord: consecrate us in the truth.”

**NOTES**

1. As You Like It, Wm. Shakespeare: Act II, SceneVII
2. Spark Notes, As You Like It
3. Cambridge Dictionary, Nature
4. Webster, Vitalism
5. Wikipedia, Nature
6. Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Protagoras
7. New Advent Encyclopedia, 1911, Nature, Chas. Albert Dubray (1875-1962)
8. Ditto
9. Wikipedia, Divinization, (Christian)
10. New Advent Encyclopedia, 1911, Nature, Chas. Albert Dubray
11. Ditto
12. Ditto
13. Benedict XVI
14. Webster, Transcendent

15. Baltimore Catechism I, II, III. IV
16. John 14: 11, NASB
17. International Theological Commission, Communion and Stewardship 2000-2002
18. Professor Joseph Koterski SJ, St Louis U., Fordham U.

