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*La voie de l'amour: une interprétation de Personne et acte de Karol Wojtyła, lecteur de Thomas d'Aquin.* Aude Suramy. Vatican: Pontificio Istituto Giovanni Paolo II per Studi su Matrimonio e Famiglia, 2014. ISBN: 9788882729806. Pp 707.

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Based on Suramy's Sorbonne Ph.D. thesis, *La voie de l'amour* represents the latest in cutting-edge scholarship on the thought of Karol Wojtyła/Pope St. John Paul II (1920–2005). In this work, Suramy seeks to provide an interpretation of Wojtyła's magnum opus, *The Acting Person* (1969), that situates this philosophical treatise on the nature of the person in the context of Wojtyła's other works on figures such as St. John of the Cross, Max Scheler, Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. As such, this work represents a most ambitious undertaking, requiring a breadth of knowledge uncharacteristic of most Ph.D. dissertations, as well as considerable linguistic competence in both Polish and Latin. Suramy's return to the original Polish is impressive, although, since she relies upon the bilingual Polish-Italian second edition of *The Acting Person*, Suramy overlooks a couple of important points that are stated clearly in the first Polish edition but are either omitted or understated in subsequent editions.

Suramy reads *The Acting Person* ultimately in light of the sixteenth-century Spanish mystical St. John of the Cross' *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, arguing that the structure of *The Acting Person* mimics the ladder of mystical ascent that St. John of the Cross proposes in his work from (1) a state of unbelief to (2) a state of knowledge of God and then to (3) a state of love of neighbor. Suramy is correct to highlight the significance of St. John of the Cross for Wojtyła's work, and her attempt to bridge the gap between Wojtyła's work on faith in St. John of the Cross and on the nature of the human person, providing a holistic interpretation of Wojtyła's philosophical and anthropological corpus, is much to be commended; however, in seeking to interpret *The Acting Person* as structurally parallel to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, she commits a number of major interpretive errors central to the thesis of her work.

The first major error is her focus on the final chapter of *The Acting Person*, an error that a number of other scholars also commit (e.g. Rice [2007]). For Suramy, the climax of *The Acting Person* is the vocation of the human being to "participation" (working with others), and, according to Suramy, this is evidenced by the fact that Wojtyła dedicates the final chapter of the work to the topic of participation. The accentuation of the significance of the final chapter of the work that Suramy's ladder of ascent theory requires runs counter to much contemporary scholarship on *The*

*Acting Person*, much of which relies on Wojtyła's own statements in the work that the final chapter constitutes a "mere appendix" that was, at all events, "incomplete." Suramy, being aware of this problem, attempts to demonstrate the priority of the final chapter on participation in a number of ways: (1) she criticizes the French translation "mere appendix," arguing that term "mere" ("seule") does not appear in the original Polish version of the statement; and (2) she claims that the epithet "incomplete" ("inachevée") refers to the work as a whole, and not to the final chapter. Both of these claims are seriously flawed, since: (1) in the Polish sentence that Suramy adduces, the adjective "mere/seule" appears in the form of the adverb "tylko"; and (2) a careful reading of Suramy's use of the text here reveals that the text is being distorted to suit her interpretation, since the texts that Suramy cites to support her claim make it clear that the work as a whole is an "esquisse trop imprécise" (not "inachevée"), and the statement about something being "inachevée" refers only to the final chapter of the work and not to the work as a whole (see 517–518 n. 300; 159 n. 42). Finally, Suramy neglects the clear representations of the introduction to the second Polish edition, according to which, "the last chapter of the book, which carries the title 'Outline of the theory of participation,' introduces us into another dimension of the experience that 'the human being acts,' which necessarily must be highlighted here, but a full analysis of which we do not undertake in this study" (Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [second edition, 1985], 27, translation mine).

The second major error is Suramy's attempt to link the purpose of *The Acting Person* to that of Wojtyła's earlier work, *Love and Responsibility* (1960), a link that is essential if *The Acting Person* is to be understood as a spiritual ascesis culminating in love of neighbor. This attempt to represent Wojtyła's work in this way is grounded in a statement in Wojtyła's papal reflection *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994), in which Wojtyła claims that both *Love and Responsibility* and *The Acting Person* stemmed from the same source. This statement has convinced numerous scholars of the teleological link between these two works (e.g. Rice [2007]; Modras [2008]; Tymieniecka and Duncan [2010]), but, although both works may function to corroborate each other's anthropological and ethical claims, the text of *The Acting Person* itself does not justify Suramy's explicit linking of the purpose of the two works, since, in the first Polish edition, Wojtyła is careful to state emphatically and unambiguously that this is not the case: "it is possible that the vision of the person, which we desire to attain in the context of this study, confirms in its own way the legitimacy of the principles formulated in the ethical study *Love and Responsibility*. If this is the result of this work, then it is at all events the result of this work only in an incidental and additional way" (Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* [first edition, 1969], 25–26, translation mine). This is a point that Suramy and others have neglected since they rely upon the second Polish edition, in which this statement has been removed.

The third major error concerns Suramy's understanding of the nature of Wojtyła's divergence from St. John of the Cross' path of mystical ascent. According to Suramy, whereas *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* describes the soul's path of supernatural ascent, the path of ascent in *The Acting Person* is an entirely natural path, the knowledge of God entailed in the act of vertical transcendence being akin to Jacques Maritain's concept of natural knowledge of God. At this point, Suramy's interpretation transgresses against one of the cardinal principles that Wojtyła endeavoured to establish in his work on St. John of the Cross; namely, that there neither is nor ever can be such a thing as natural knowledge of God, since faith, as the modality of knowledge of God proper to the finite human intellect in this life, must bear a specific likeness to God that intrinsically precludes its being categorized as a natural phenomenon. For that reason, if it is true, as Suramy claims, that, for Wojtyła, the knowledge of truth attained in the act of vertical transcendence is a form of knowledge of the divine transcendentals, and that this knowledge of the divine transcendentals is a necessary rung on the ladder of ascent to love of neighbor, then, in light of St. John of the Cross's doctrine of the impossibility of natural knowledge of God, authentic love of neighbor must ultimately be grounded in a divine act of supernatural revelation. This is a conclusion that St. John of the Cross himself endorses, arguing that all impulses of the will directed towards the neighbor are disordered without the assistance of supernatural grace (see St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 270–271; 302; 308). Furthermore, not only does Suramy's naturalist reading of *The Acting Person* disregard the significance of Wojtyła's appropriation of St. John of the Cross's concept of faith, it also stands in tension with Suramy's own account of the alignment between Wojtyła's account of faith and De Lubac's thesis concerning the supernatural finality of the human being in the context of Wojtyła's work on St. John of the Cross (although the accuracy of her exposition of De Lubac is also questionable).

In conclusion, Suramy's work provides a great deal of important contextual information about *The Acting Person* as well as about a number of Wojtyła's other works, but her interpretation of *The Acting Person*, namely that it concerns a path of natural ascent to love of neighbor, is counterindicated by the clear representations of *The Acting Person* itself and by Wojtyła's appropriation of the concept of faith of St. John of the Cross. However, its questionable conclusions notwithstanding, by virtue of both its breadth and use of original sources, this work definitely merits an important place on the Wojtyła scholar's bookshelf.