

“Maturity Is Within Love, Transforming Fear.”

Love as the Proper Act of the Person in Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophical Anthropology

Jacob W. Francois¹

Abstract

This article presents Wojtyła’s “logic of the gift” in terms of man’s ability to fulfill himself through relationships of self-gifted love. As man continues to grow in his maturity through relationships of *communio personarum*, the human being can fulfill his task to become *someone* who is capable of relationships of love that transcend his fear of disclosing himself to the “other.”

Keywords

Wojtyła, fear, love, freedom, self-gift

¹ Jacob W. Francois – University of St. Mary of the Lake (Mundelein, IL)
e-mail: j.francois@dbqarch.org • ORCID: 0000-0002-7973-0908

*Maturity is also fear;
the end of cultivation is already its beginning,
the beginning of wisdom is fear,
based on a different layer of the same soil
where there is no need to escape,
only space
with which we measure grandeur.
We enter this space,
we depart from that beginning,
and so we slowly return:
for maturity is within love,
transforming fear.²*

In Karol Wojtyła's poem "Thoughts on Maturing," he muses upon the love within the heart of man as it matures through his confrontation with fear. Intrinsic to Wojtyła's personalistic philosophy is the idea that the human person is a creature who cannot be fulfilled on his own; he desires intimacy and union which gives rise to his need for self-gifted love.³ Thus, the human person must confront the fear that accompanies his self-disclosure to the other in a sincere gift of self. This poem condenses Wojtyła's philosophy into a concrete paragraph where the reader will see three major themes that run throughout his philosophical anthropology: 1) maturity is confronted fear, 2) the fruit of maturity allows for self-gift and 3) love is the proper act of the person. The topic of this article seeks to explicate Wojtyła's phenomenology of the gift within

² K. Wojtyła, "Myśli o Dojrzwaniu – Thoughts on Maturing," in: K. Wojtyła, *Poezje – Poems*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011), 224-225.

„Dojrzałość jest także bojaźnią.

Kres uprawy zawiera się już w jej początku -
początkiem mądrości jest bojaźń -
lecz spoczywa już na innych warstwach tej samej gleby,
nie jest już potrzebą ucieczki,
jest przestrzenią, którą mierzy się wielkość.

Przenikamy do tej przestrzeni,

oD.C.hodzimy od tego początku i tak wracamy powoli:
dojrzałość jest bowiem w miłości, która przemienia bojaźń.”

³ Cf. A. Flood, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Love: Aquinas on Participation, Unity, and Union*, (Washington, D.C., CUA Press, 2018). This is a good source to view a more Thomistic interpretation of love which served as the foundations of Wojtyła's personalistic approach of self-gifted love.

the interiority of the human person that overcomes fear as he makes an act of love through the disclosure of his interior “I.”

Self-Gift Transforming Fear

In St. John Paul II’s *Meditation on Givenness*, he shared that his spiritual director had once told him: “Perhaps God wills to give that person to you.”⁴ This became a milestone for the young Polish thinker who eventually come to see that all that exists is not independent of itself but is rather contingent and based upon a theology of the “gift.” Employed in macroscale, the theology of the gift shows that all being is contingent upon God who gives creation to itself. In a word, creation did not have to be at all! Thus, the relationship between creation and Creator constitutes a *communio* if fully employed through reciprocity between both parties (the only party who might not be pulling its weight is humanity).

One cannot speak of the philosophy of givenness in creation without reference to a Giver. Wojtyła’s philosophy relies on the argumentation contained within the Christian tradition (particularly Aquinas) which provides philosophical reasoning for the existence of God. Despite the tradition’s firm philosophical proofs for the existence of the Creator, Wojtyła believes that a philosophy of givenness provides an alternative route that can crack even the staunchest atheist’s disbelief. “There are times when all men, even nonbelievers, glimpse the truth of the *givenness* of creation and begin to pray, to acknowledge that all is a gift from God.”⁵ Thus, a philosophy of gift allows non-believers to see the truth of the twofold gift in the thought of Wojtyła.⁶ Namely, the radical gift is the gift of man’s person to himself (“I”) *ex nihilo* from God and the second is the fundamental gift which is creation as a whole (“thou”). It is in this knowledge of the givenness of creation and man’s gift of himself that allows mankind to discover reality anew for the first time. He describes this twofold gift as follows:

⁴ John Paul II, “A Meditation on Givenness,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* Vol 41, No. 4 (2014), 871.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 872-873.

⁶ M. Sherwin, “John Paul’s Theology of Truth and Freedom: A Dissident Phenomenology in a Thomistic Anthropology,” *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2005), 545. Sherwin notes the difference here between Thomas and Wojtyła: “Thomas’s preferred word to express reality is ‘being,’ John Paul’s preferred term is ‘truth’.” It is from this Johannine theology “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32) that Wojtyła shows that the liberty of the human person is contained within man’s confrontation with the truth.

Creation thus means not only calling from nothing to existence and establishing the world's existence as well as man's existence in the world, but, according to the first account, *bārēšît bārā*, it also signifies *gift*; a fundamental and “radical” gift, that is, an act of giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.⁷

The “radical gift” is the Creator's willingness for the good of another to be. It is in this “radical gift” that man realizes that he is free because he is *a person*; a creature who is willed for his own sake. To understand the “radical gift,” man must confront the fear of relationship (thou) both within himself as *suppositum* and his relationship with the “other” (other persons both divine and human). As man grapples with this inner drama, he grows in maturity which allows him to be capable of giving himself through an act of love for the “other” which in essence, is something beyond himself, man's transcendent desire. This inner drama is what how one Thomistic theologian refers to as the “existential human nature” which resides within man. Sherwin notes that for “for John Paul the ‘truth about man’ is that although he suffers many limitations, being subject to suffering and death, he has a deep and restless desire for something greater (both a desire for truth and for freedom). Moreover, he experiences an inner summons to a higher life.”⁸

This higher life can be understood through man's disposition to utilize the philosophy of gift. The human person becomes aware that he must resist the urge to close himself off to the “other.” If man shuts in on himself, he becomes isolated and alone with his own gift; thereby rejecting the nature of the gift. Oftentimes when man is *incapable* of receiving the gift of his person or chooses not to give the gift of himself, it stems from *a place of fear*. Man must actualize his freedom in order to receive the *gift*. If he acts in freedom, he then forms himself through his human acts (*Actus Humanus*) and forms his destiny, his personal mission.⁹ Understanding the inner dynamic of our relationship to ourselves (through his *suppositum* and his interior “I”) should become “a source of enrichment for each of us. We would be in grave danger were we to be unable to recognize the richness in each human person. Our humanity

⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, (Boston, Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 180.

⁸ Sherwin, “John Paul's Theology of Truth and Freedom,” 547.

⁹ Wojtyła is building upon the philosophy of St. Augustine. Sherwin notes that “Perfect freedom, for Augustine, is not freedom *from*, but freedom *for*; it is the freedom to engage in the morally beautiful actions of the virtues, all of which are ways of loving God and neighbor.” M. Sherwin, “Freedom and the Fearful Symmetry: Theological Reflections on Freedom's Relationship to Truth,” *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2017), 1096-1097. It is only in man's use of freedom *for* his personal mission as a gift, rather than self-preservation and creating boundaries with the world that he can act upon reality.

would be in peril were we to shut [in] ourselves.”¹⁰ If man chooses to close in on himself, his ability to dive more deeply within his human nature is suppressed because he negates the freedom of the gift. In confronting his fear, the man dares to be *someone*! It is this confronted fear that matures man in his self-possession and allows him to actualize himself through relationships of self-gift.

The fear or incapacity to give oneself through a sincere gift of self is coined by Wojtyła as “original solitude.”¹¹ Wojtyła uses the imagery of Adam in the book of Genesis who does not find a suitable partner in the garden. “*Man is ‘alone’: this is to say that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique exclusive, and unrepeatabe relationship with God himself.*”¹² Man wrestles with his existence, not understanding the depths of his person and his relationship with God. Man becomes acutely aware of his solitude through fear.

When man does find a suitable partner, the man discovers a paradox (in his postlapsarian state). He fears of being used by the “other” while at the same time experiences the fear of isolation. In becoming aware of man’s desire for communion, he must confront the fear of his own solitude and observe how his nature compels him to become a sincere gift of self for the “other.” In his desire to be known, to know the other, man discovers the nature of disinterested love, to give himself fully and be known in the “thou” of another. “When man discovers the disinterested gift that the other human person is to him, it is as if he discovers the whole world in that other person. It is important to recognize that it can happen that this gift ceases to be disinterested and sincere in the realm of the human heart.”¹³ The desire to be loved and to act in love towards the other makes the individual confront himself in the exterior reality. He is faced with a choice: Do I surrender myself to the other? Or do I close myself off because of the fear that my gift will not be received in a relationship of reciprocal communion? These questions reveal man’s interior negotiation of trust as a result of his concupiscible state.¹⁴

Wojtyła understands concupiscence as hiding before the “other” in shame.¹⁵ Shame “shows a fundamental lack of trust, which already itself points to the collapse of the original

¹⁰ John Paul II, “A Meditation on Givenness,” 874.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 152.

¹² *Ibid.*, 146-153.

¹³ John Paul II, “A Meditation on Givenness,” 879.

¹⁴ Cf. V. Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” trans. Paul Wilson, in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (Armonk, NY, Sharpe, 1985). Havel speaks of the ‘lie’ that man participates in when he believes that he is alone. When man accepts the ‘lie’ of his solitude, then he becomes part of the problem of the totalitarian state, a system in which Wojtyła grew up in.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 249.

relationship ‘of communion’.’¹⁶ Concupiscence deprives the human person of mutual trust which is a fruit of communion in the intersubjectivity of the “other.” The lack of trust that can build up between two persons (either in friendship or in marriage) is based on Wojtyła’s reading of “concupiscence” and is an elaboration upon the Kantian ethical system of the categorical imperative. By elaborating upon this Kantian system (that man cannot be used as a means to an end but should rather be looked at as an end in himself), Wojtyła is able to show the self-giving of man as a “radical gift” that advances the human person’s dignity within a personalist system.¹⁷

One man can become the object of use to another. This is the utmost threat to our civilization, especially the civilization of a materially affluent world. A disinterested, loving predilection is then supplanted by the urge to take possession of the other and use him. Such an urge is a great threat not only to the other but especially to the person who succumbs to it. Such a person destroys within himself the capacity to be a gift, and thus destroys the capacity to live by the precept: “be more a man.”¹⁸

In reexamining Kant, Wojtyła uses the “logic of gift” as the cornerstone of his philosophy that prevents man from being used as an object by the “other” because of the ontology of the gift. Therefore, a “logic of the gift” shows the ontic structure of the universe as oriented towards an objective ethical system that allows for the flourishing of personalism.

What Wojtyła seeks to affirm is not just the objectivity of the other, but the objectivity of man’s interior subjectivity which promotes man’s autoteleological action that stems from the radicality of his own gift. At the heart of the creation of man *ex nihilo* is the “unique act of existence” that affirms man both as unique and unrepeatable. “The person is not merely an ‘individual humanity’ but the manner of individual existence that is proper [...] only to humanity. This way of being originates from the act that *the existence as an individual proper*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Cf. K. Rickert, “Wojtyła’s Personalistic Norm: A Thomistic Analysis,” *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2009), 653-678. Wojtyła “can engage in dialogue with contemporary moral theory; he can employ the Kantian language and, to some degree, the Kantian methodology, and nevertheless emerge from the process with essentially the same conclusions as one would find in the natural law.” (*ibid.* 676) Rickert clearly shows that the Wojtylian approach is not a wholesale acceptance of Kant’s philosophy, but rather is “quasi-Kantian” in his approach. (*ibid.* 677)

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 249.

to humanity is personal.”¹⁹ Within the radicality of man as gift at his genesis, the human person discovers himself as unique because of his interior structure that is objectively subjective. Man is unique in his existence because he is personally created by the Giver in an act that is entirely subjective. Subsequently, man continues to discover the richness of his subjectivity as he differentiates himself as a human person through his intellect and will in human action. Despite the radical freedom involved as an autoteleological agent, man becomes himself through his acts or as St. Thomas says “*actiones sunt suppositorum* (actions belong to their respective *supposita*).”²⁰ It is in man’s subjective discernment that he formulates objective action that reveals the dynamism of intersubjectivity which makes him who he is. In so doing, he overcomes the fear of being a passive “something” and becomes an active “someone” who is prepared for relationships of self-gifted love.

Affirmation of the Person Through Self-Gift

As a council father of the Second Vatican Council (as a bishop and later a cardinal archbishop), Wojtyła became directly involved in the drafting of some of the council’s documents. One of the schemas that he was involved with would eventually become the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” also known as *Gaudium et Spes*. One of Wojtyła’s favorite lines in the document would later become one of the most quoted lines in his papacy (as John Paul II) and is located in paragraph twenty-four:

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, “that all may be one [...] as we are one” (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.²¹

¹⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays – Person and Act*, (Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 185.

²⁰ *STh* II-II q. 58, a. 2.

²¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 24.

This line is essential in the thought of Wojtyła for two reasons: 1) it displays that the human person shares in the likeness of personhood displayed in the Divine Persons and 2) this likeness shows that the personal character of personhood and the relationality of self as gift which is intrinsic to personhood.²² This paragraph in the dogmatic constitution of Vatican II has become the canonized form of Wojtyła's "law of the gift." Wojtyła notes that not only is man a gift but "creation is gift, because man appears in it, who, as an "image of God" is able to understand the very meaning of the gift in the call from nothing to existence. He is also able to respond to the Creator with the language of this understanding."²³ Thus, man is the created substance who can understand the metaphysical structure of *creation as gift*.

As noted in *Gaudium et Spes*, man finds himself as the only creature willed for his own sake because he is *a person*.²⁴ In Wojtyła's analysis of Genesis (*Theology of the Body*), man finds himself in original solitude without the ability for self-gifted relationships prior to the creation of woman.²⁵ Man's natural desire for a relationship with the "other" gives him the impetus to mature as an agent of self-possession and self-gift.²⁶ He notes that self-possession/self-governance allows for the person to 1) receive the gift of themselves (radical gift) through self-knowledge, 2) use the freedom derived from his "unique act of existence" through an act of self-donation, and 3) receive the response of the gift from the beloved. This third action is often overlooked and is extremely significant as it brings man into communion with others through a sincere gift of self, *the other develops their personhood which is fundamentally relation*. Wojtyła emphasizes the person's need for maturity in self-possession and self-governance that bear fruit for self-gifted love as follows:

Each of us is capable of such a gift because each of us is a person, and the structure proper to a person is the structure of self-possession and self-governance. Hence, we

²² Cf. D.H. Delaney, *Viri Dignitatem: Personhood, Masculinity and Fatherhood in the Thought of John Paul II*, (Steubenville, Emmaus Academic, 2023), 87-100. Delaney does a concise presentation and analysis on Wojtyła's trinitarian and Christocentric anthropology stemming from his time at the Council in this work.

²³ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 180-181.

²⁴ Cf. A. Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła's Personalist Philosophy: Understanding Person & Act*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2016), 69-70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁶ Cf. T. Petri, *Aquinas and the Theology of the Body: The Thomistic Foundations of John Paul II's Anthropology*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2016). In Ch. 5 "The Spousal Meaning of the Body in *Theology of the Body*" Petri provides a wonderful analysis the 'Spousal meaning of the body' which is Wojtyła's most common usage of his underlying philosophy of giftedness and shows the need for Wojtyła's thought in wake of the confusion of *Humanae Vitae*.

are capable of giving ourselves because we possess ourselves and also because we are our own masters in the dimension of ourselves as subjects.²⁷

For Wojtyła, the degree to which someone matures is contingent on their ability to actualize their freedom. Man as a person is endowed with freedom; he can live this gift out to its fullest potential as he chooses. This philosophical belief would exfoliate itself in the pastoral setting of the confessional as Wojtyła would regularly tell penitents “you must decide.”²⁸ This is the decision of man! Man’s “radical gift” gives rise to the ontological reality that necessitates freedom on the part of the agent. If someone is coerced and isn’t free to give the gift, then there is no gift on their part, he is unable to mature as a person. The human person’s ability to actualize himself through self-gift is contingent on his ability to actualize his freedom which is a dividend of self-possession. When a man gives himself in an act of self-gift, he identifies himself with the gift, and in so doing he gives part of himself over through that gift.

Man’s actualization of himself as a gift allows him to grow in maturity of that gift through his actualization of self-governance and self-determination. “Scholastics expressed it in the phrase: ‘*persona est sui iuris.*’ Wojtyła reveals in his analyzes one more moment, necessary for the functioning of the structure of self-determination, namely self-mastery, the dominion of man ‘over’ himself, where the person controls himself.”²⁹ It is in man’s confidence as a being *sui iuris* that he becomes in-possession of the gift of himself and is able to give himself as a gift. As man gives himself as a gift to the “other,” trust is built between the two persons and a *communio* of reciprocity and affirmation of the gift occurs on the part of the beloved. In this relationship of self-gift man becomes more aware of his receptivity and the response of the “other” that allows the human person to grow in his ability to participate in this “law of the gift.” As he continues overcoming the fear of rejection and perfection of the gift in self-gifted action, man matures in the virtue of self-mastery that makes him an agent that is capable of love.

We mean freedom above all as *self-mastery* (self-dominion). Under this aspect, self-mastery is indispensable *in order for man to be able to “give himself,”* in order for him

²⁷ K. Wojtyła, “The Family as a Community of Persons,” in: *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans by Th. Sandok, (New York, Peter Lang, 2008), 319.

²⁸ G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, (New York, Cliff Street Books, 2001), 17.

²⁹ K. Stachewicz, “Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophy of Freedom,” *Teologia i Moralność* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2020), 155.

to become a gift, in order for him (referring to the words of the Council) to be able to “find himself fully” through “a sincere gift of self” [*Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3].³⁰

When man chooses to actualize self-dominion over himself, the human person dives deeper into his identity of personhood and he further develops his capacity for being a gift, both to himself, his creator, and others. If he is not able to govern himself as gift and his receptivity of the “radical gift,” then he will not be able to receive himself back as a gift through the beloved’s response to his gift. Thus, he will be unable to “find himself” in the dimension of the gift.

Every person must give himself as a personal gift for the other, even in the smallest of ways, so he is continually finding, as he further discerns, his “unique act of existence.” Wojtyła explains the finding of oneself in one’s own personal gift as follows:

*This finding of oneself in one’s own gift becomes the source of a new gift of self that grows by the power of the inner disposition to the exchange of the gift and in the measure in which it encounters the same and even deeper acceptance and welcome as the fruit of an ever more intense consciousness of the gift itself.*³¹

This phenomenological approach of receiving man’s objectivity through his subjectivity allows the person to govern himself as a concrete whole. In a way, subjectivity in Wojtyła’s thought is grounded on the acceptance of one’s interior “I” as gift; this is how the person is able to effect self-mastery.

Fundamental to enriching one’s subjective “I” is when the “I” is affirmed in the eyes of the other in what Wojtyła terms the “affirmation of the person.” “The ‘affirmation of the person’ is nothing other than welcoming the gift, which, through reciprocity, creates the communion of persons; this communion builds itself from within.”³² The affirmation of the person brings man back to himself, but in so doing, a communion of persons is bound together through their mutual self-gifted response. In the affirmation of the other(s) the human person is able to participate in the fullness of his own personhood through *communio*. This mutual recognition of persons within the community of self-giving as gift, results in the communitarian dimension of the “law of the gift” and becomes the *communio personarum* (communion of

³⁰ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 186.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³² *Ibid.*, 188.

persons). In the *communio personarum*, the human person receives himself back from the other and can see his objectivity reciprocated and affirmed, thereby bringing about maturity within the human subject. Man becomes affirmed in his own goodness and discovers the richness and affirmation in his “unique act of existence.”

Marriage, for Wojtyła, is the most concrete example of human givenness in physical form as it gives rise to the mutual affirmation of the person through receiving the gift of one’s body through mutual reciprocity. In marriage, the bodily gift and receptivity of the other is what Wojtyła calls “spousal character.”³³ This interpretation of human sexuality shows a biological reception of the gift in the human species in its bodily character. However, the antithesis to the receptivity of the sexual act is grasped in Wojtyła’s analysis of shame. Shame is experienced when someone is “a ‘potential object of enjoyment’ for persons of the other sex.”³⁴ This is why in Wojtyła’s *Theology of the Body*, shame is the fear of being looked at as an object of enjoyment or desire; not an affirmation of oneself as a person *qua* person in the gaze of the other. This is what it means to be someone rather than something, it strikes at the heart of one’s personhood. Shame through concupiscence becomes the enemy of mature love which could potentially use the “other” and not receive the “other” as a gift. Concupiscence casts “doubt on the gift” and man falters as he questions his identity.³⁵ Man then asks questions like: “Does this person affirm my personhood? Or do they seek to use me for their own enjoyment?”

Man has a responsibility not only to affirm his *telos* in becoming a gift for the other, but also to create relationships that affirm his personhood. Man finds himself in this personalistic paradox; to fulfill his nature, he must give himself as a gift but in relationships with those who will not use him as an object of their own self-gratification. If not, he participates in relationships where he will not be received or reciprocated, and this becomes a cause for fear within himself as a battle of two egos ensue. This occurs when other “persons” have not matured enough in self-mastery to participate in the “law of the gift” for a meaningful relationship and rather focuses on one’s own ego for his personal good rather than the common good of both persons. As one Wojtylan philosopher notes “if [reciprocity] is based on the honorable good (*bonum honestum*), reciprocity will be mature, profound and immovable. If it

³³ *Ibid.*, 193.

³⁴ K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willetts, (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 176.

³⁵ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 236-237.

is based solely on either the useful good (*bonum utile*) or pleasure (*bonum delectabile*), hence on the attitude of use, reciprocity will be shallow and unstable, eventually developing into a volatile arrangement of two egoisms.”³⁶ In pursuing relationships of utility, persons exfoliate their inability to actualize their freedom and therefore do not image the *communio personarum* that Vatican II envisions as the image of human community. If man is not affirmed in his personhood, he will not be able to discover his “unique act of existence” and grow in his personal mission. He needs to receive himself back through the reciprocity of the other to see himself as an object returned to himself for further self-discovery. In this affirmation of the gift by the other in the *communio personarum*, the human being discovers the “personalistic norm” where he discovers himself as person and the distinctiveness of his interior “I.” “The personalistic norm tries to emphasize the *particular position of man as a person* and the distinctness and transcendence which result from it.”³⁷ Not only does man discover that he is himself *someone* rather than *something*, but must not use the “other” as an object of use.³⁸ In acting within the personalistic norm, man can live out his “individual act of existence” and act in such a way that encapsulates that which makes him more human. The capacity of one’s humanity is determined by their ability to receive their identity from the radicality of the gift and the actualization of their *suppositum* within the cosmos.

Self-Gifted Love as the Fruit of Maturity

The idea of love as the proper act of the person is not original to Wojtyła’s thought but is defined within the Christian tradition, particularly in St. Thomas Aquinas. In the Thomistic tradition, love is defined as *amare est velle aliculi bonum* (to love is to wish good to someone).³⁹ However, what Wojtyła emphasizes in his personalistic thought is that love is intrinsically relational and can be seen in his use of the phenomenological method. This relationality between persons within the “logic of the gift” becomes the full expression of love in Wojtyła’s thought and is seen in the use of the phrase *communio personarum*. As Mary Shivanandan shares in her book *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, the idea of *communio*

³⁶ G. Ignatik, *Person and Value: Karol Wojtyła’s Personalistic and Normative Theory of Man, Morality, and Love*, (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2021), 132.

³⁷ K. Wojtyła, *Man in the Field of Responsibility*, (South Bend, St. Augustin Press, 2011), 74.

³⁸ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 41: “the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”

³⁹ *STh* I-II q. 26, a. 4.

personarum in Wojtyła is not original to his thought but rather stems from his theological reflections that occurred during Vatican II. On a biographical note, the idea of *communio personarum* proves that Wojtyła's use of the term develops as a fruit of his experience of the Council which brought about a spiritual and intellectual transformation for the Polish thinker, so much that he described the Council as "a seminary of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰

As part of the subcommittee for the redrafting the Schema on the Church in the Modern World, which met in Ariccia in February 1965, Wojtyła might conceivably have contributed the phrase *communio personarum* to the text. However, in the Wednesday Catechesis (November 14, 1979), Pope John Paul II specifically attributes the phrase to Vatican Council II: "Solitude is the way that leads to the unity which, following Vatican II, we can define as *communio personarum*."⁴¹

Communio personarum as a fruit of the *Gaudium et Spes* posits that man can only find himself through a "sincere" or a "disinterested gift of self." The sincerity of the gift given to the other is to will the good of the other as other constitutes a unity of persons.

When the "law of the gift" is freely exercised by the person, man participates in the communitarian end for which his love is destined. In his understanding of the metaphysical framework of love through self-gift, Wojtyła displays the relationship of the *communio personarum* in the language of the "I-thou" relationship.⁴² He describes these participatory relationships as a singular unity of openness to the other that forms a shared "we" between both parties who constitute the *communio personarum*.

Participation thus understood, namely as the property of the person, by virtue of which he is and remains himself in the social community, seems to condition the authentic *communio personarum* both in the "we" relations and in the "I-thou" inter-personal relations. Both consist in opening; both are shaped on the basis of the transcendence proper to the person. The "I-thou" relation opens up directly to man. *To participate*

⁴⁰ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 155.

⁴¹ M. Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2001), 72.

⁴² Cf. G. Hołub, "The Person in Dialogue," in G. Hołub, *Understanding the Person: Essays on the Personalism of Karol Wojtyła*, (Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021), 146-163. Hołub describes the philosophical backdrop of the 'I-thou' relationship starting with Buber and closing on Wojtyła's use of the term for the sake of the *communio personarum*.

*means in this case to turn to the other "I" on the basis of personal transcendence, and thus to turn to the full truth about this man and, in this sense, his humanity.*⁴³

The essence of the *communio personarum* is contained within the mutual *givenness* of two personal "I's" becoming a shared "we." The "I-thou" relationship shows a dimension of openness to participation which is required for the *communio* in the "we-ness" of persons through self-gift. It would be impossible for someone in the "I-thou" relationship to hold back the fullness of the gift from the other within this unitive para-circumincession within the *communio personarum*. It is against the nature of the union! If one party holds back, then they will not find themselves in the highest state of love, but rather in Wojtyła's lower levels of love (either as love of attraction or desire). If one of the persons in the *communio* does not love the other as other, the relationship between them is seen rather as an object of profit or gain and they thereby fail to see the "other" as an end in itself.

Regardless of their subjective motives (either active or unintentional), when one person holds back the fullness of his gift of self, then the process of "alienation" occurs.

We hold *that alienation is in its essence a personalistic problem* and in this sense, of course, both a humanistic and an ethical one. As the antithesis of participation, alienation contributes to or (depending on what the alienating factor is) creates an occasion for *man to be* to some extent *deprived of the possibility of fulfilling himself in the community*—either in the *social* community "we" or in the *inter-personal* community "I"—"thou."⁴⁴

Alienation is a product of one's lack of maturity in personhood or the knowledge of the gift (the gift being given or the gift being received). Alienation also occurs when a lack of reciprocity makes a person impotent to participate in self-gifted relationships. Thus, others in the relationship with him feel the lack of *communio* because of the other's alienation and lack of reciprocity. The reality of alienation is not always perceived as active action but can be observed as the omission of self-gifted action. A person plagued by alienation—either out of selfishness or fear—lacks the reciprocity that constitutes meaningful relationships that bring man back to himself as envisaged in *Gaudium et Spes*.

⁴³ Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 510.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 511.

In alienation, we see fear and shame creep into the human *suppositum* that prevents him from freely choosing how to disclose himself through autoteleological action. Man is faced with the choice of how to love each person in accordance with the disclosure that he has given to each relationship. Man is free to disclose his interior “I” to whomever he chooses through an act of self-gift, but these relationships will then constitute him as a person because of his relationality. In willing the other’s good in the *communio personarum*, man becomes formed and revealed through the “I-thou” relationship. Only in mutual reciprocity which bears fruit to the mutual “we-ness” between persons does man find himself in a true communion of persons. “Love is always a mutual relationship between persons. This relationship in turn is based on particular attitudes to the good, adopted by each of them individually and by both jointly.”⁴⁵ The love within the *communio personarum* is directed through man’s autoteleology as he incorporates the good and his disposition for the good within himself to then build up the good of the *communio*.

It is within this *communio personarum* that the human person can participate, by analogy, in the *ad intra* life of the Trinity. “God imprints on humanity the mystery of that communion which is the essence of his interior life. Man is drawn up into the mystery of God by the fact that his freedom is subjected to the law of Love, and love creates interpersonal communion.”⁴⁶ The freedom contained in man, though his autoteleology, self-mastery, and self-governance exist all for the sake of love and thereby shows man as a creature who has been created in *Imago Dei*. To examine the love that exists between the divine persons, the reader must observe the levels of love that Wojtyła describes in his book *Love and Responsibility*. Wojtyła interprets the highest love as can be seen in the *communio personarum* or the *ad intra* life of the Trinity as “love as goodwill.” This analysis of love shows what is lacking in the other two notions of love: *amor complacentia* (love as attraction) and *amor concupiscentia* (love as desire). The lower levels of love lack the notion of *disinterested* self-gift. Disinterested love is demanded by the ontological nature of man who is built for self-gifted relation which in turn builds the *communio personarum*. *Amor benevolentiae* overcomes the superficialities of self-interested love which is observed in love of desire or attraction.

Love as desire is not the whole essence of love between persons. It is not enough to long for a person as a good for oneself, one must also, and above all, long for that

⁴⁵ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 73.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, “A Meditation on Givenness,” 875.

person's good. This uncompromisingly altruistic orientation of the will and feelings is called in the language of St Thomas *amor benevolentiae* [...] Love as goodwill, *amor benevolentiae*, is therefore love in a more unconditional sense than love-desire. It is the purest form of love.⁴⁷

Rather, "love of goodwill" shows the inner capacity of man who gives his will over to the other as a sincere act of self, for their own sake. *Amor benevolentiae* requires the lover to have previously matured in self-possession to make a proper act of love of goodwill. To will the good of the other signifies that there is a disinterested gift, not interested in one's self-interest, but turned fully towards the "thou." To fully turn towards the "thou" is to confront the fear that there may never be a shared "we." This is the cost of love. However, the disinterested self-gift of *amor benevolentiae* shows the heightened relationship of disclosure between persons that can cause fear. This very real fear is present either in deep friendship, family, or one's spouse that constitutes a *communio personarum* and stems from the fact that the beloved might reject the gift of self enacted by the lover. However, fear is dispelled through the maturity of love as the persons concretize the two "I's" into a shared "we," and man in turn fulfills his nature as a *person*.

Wojtyła was aware of the human person's fear to love; he confronted this disparity at the beginning of his papacy when he stepped out onto the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica and exhorted the world to "Do not be Afraid!" Man in his fear to love questions how to give the gift of his freedom. Thankfully, Wojtyła reminds us that "freedom exists for the sake of love! If freedom is not used, is not taken advantage of by love, it becomes a negative thing and gives human beings a feeling of emptiness and unfulfillment."⁴⁸ As man matures in his gift of self through relationships of *communio*, the human person fulfills his task to become *someone* who is capable of relationships of love. By entering this "space" of disinterested love, man can mature within love that "transforms fear."

*We enter this space,
we depart from that beginning,
and so we slowly return:*

⁴⁷ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

*for maturity is within love,
transforming fear.*⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Dojrzewaniu – Thoughts on Maturing,” 225.

Bibliography

- Acosta, M. & Reimers, A.J., *Wojtyła's Personalist Philosophy: Understanding Person & Act*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2016).
- Delaney, D.H., *Viri Dignitatem: Personhood, Masculinity and Fatherhood in the Thought of John Paul II*, (Steubenville, Emmaus Academic, 2023).
- Flood, A.T., *The Metaphysical Foundations of Love: Aquinas on Participation, Unity, and Union*, (Washington, D.C., CUA Press, 2018).
- Havel, V., "The Power of the Powerless," trans. by Paul Wilson, in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Keane, (Armonk, NY, Sharpe, 1985).
- Hołub, G., *Understanding the Person: Essays on the Personalism of Karol Wojtyła*, (Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021).
- Ignatik, G., *Person and Value: Karol Wojtyła's Personalistic and Normative Theory of Man, Morality, and Love*, (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2021).
- John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. by M. Waldstein (Boston, Pauline Books & Media, 2006).
- John Paul II, "A Meditation on Givenness," *Communio: International Catholic Review* Vol. 41, No. 4 (2014), 871–883.
- Petri, Th., *Aquinas and the Theology of the Body: The Thomistic Foundations of John Paul II's Anthropology*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2016).
- Rickert, K., "Wojtyła's Personalistic Norm: A Thomistic Analysis," *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2009), 653–678.
- Second Vatican Council. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et Spes*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 7 December 1965.
- Sherwin, M., "Freedom and the Fearful Symmetry: Theological Reflections on Freedom's Relationship to Truth," *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2017), 1085–1100.
- Sherwin, M., "John Paul's Theology of Truth and Freedom: A Dissident Phenomenology in a Thomistic Anthropology," *Nova et Vetera* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2005), 543–568.
- Shivanandan, M., *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*, (Washington D.C., CUA Press, 2002).
- Stachewicz, K., "Karol Wojtyła's Philosophy of Freedom," *Teologia i Moralność* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2020), 151-162.

Thomas Aquinas St., *Summa Theologiae*.

Weigel, G., *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, (New York, Cliff Street Books, 2001).

Wojtyła, K., *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willetts (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981).

Wojtyła, K., *Person and Act and Related Essays*, trans. by G. Ignatik (Washington, DC, CUA Press, 2021).

Wojtyła, K., *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. by Th. Sandok, (New York, NY, Peter Lang, 2008).

Wojtyła, K., “Myśli o Dojrzewaniu – Thoughts on Maturing,” in: K. Wojtyła, *Poezje – Poems*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011), 224-227.

Wojtyła, K., *Man in the Field of Responsibility*, trans. by K.W. Kemp and Z. Maślanka Kieroń (South Bend: St. Augustin Press, 2011).