Cardinal Karol Wojtyła's Book
A Monograph on the Person as the Subject of Morality[1]

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The written work becomes a shared asset of the community, as the intended recipient, to whom one's own thoughts are communicated. Therefore, in the name of this common good, we may share our reflections, including critical remarks, which are not, after all, synonymous with a negative evaluation.

It seems to me that the general solution proposed by the author can be reduced to a fundamental assertion: It is through an analysis of the human act that the person is affirmed as the subject of that act. This type of assertion (of course, as read through the work) seems to me to be fully justified, both from an ethical standpoint and, perhaps to a lesser extent, from a metaphysical standpoint. For in fact, the subjectivity of the person – that is in the primary understanding, the being of man – most adequately and most fully can be affirmed in the act and through the act, for it is precisely here that a person appears as a being that brings about in itself and for itself those new beings, radiated forth from itself, which did not exist before. The subjectivity of the person, and through it, the subjectivity of man's existence and his being, is undoubtedly justified and guaranteed in the human act and its ultimate understanding.

However, by that alone, have we obtained a theory of man, a physical anthropology? If by philosophical anthropology we understand a theory of man, such as has been constructed through philosophical analysis which renders him non-contradictory in the context of his essential and fundamental human operations, then one must, it seems, arrive at a negative conclusion. The work of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła does not constitute this type of anthropology, since it lacks an analysis of human activity within the essential context of human life. It is, however, an aspectual

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anthropology, an anthropology used by the ethicist and the moralist, and therefore an anthropology which allows for a deeper understanding of the person as a subject of morality.

Everything I say hereafter will now be a "variation" on the topic formulated precisely in this way.

The entire tradition of philosophical and theological literature has presented us with a concept of the person from the perspective of determined potentialities and determined sources of human action. Briefly stated, that through an analysis of *physis* – *nature,* attempts were made not only toward the determination of the structure of the being of man but also to discover the personal moment of man; as if the person appeared as some pinnacle moment in nature which, incidentally, is probably not true. This does not mean that the person is not the pinnacle moment of being, it merely means that the person does not lie along the line of the development of "nature," that is, of determinate structures of action. If then, we were to conceive of the person as a self-determining source of action, and not "determined," the opposition between nature and the person would become sharper. And it is precisely Cardinal Wojtyła's work that appears to be fundamentally devoted to the person of man's being; the person as a being in the primary sense, the being which is the subject in the act of subjectifying and therefore radiates forth from itself dependent instances of being, such as human acts. That moment is extremely valuable and has been little emphasized in the literature. But the accentuation placed on the subjective-personal aspect has been linked with the resignation, or the incomplete working out of the other aspect, more closely connected with an analysis of the very structure of being or even a theory of the human person. For emphasizing the existential moment places greater emphasis on the "I" as subject, while the content aspect remains underdeveloped. Thus, there is a lack of analysis, for example, of those characteristic features of personal being that are ordinarily enumerated in the classical current of philosophy (cognition, love, freedom, subjectivity of law, integrity, dignity). There is also no account of those characteristic structures of man's being about which so much has been written against the background of the classical interpretations of *De anima*. It is precisely these gaps, or the deliberate resignation of philosophical analysis, that make it difficult to accept the monograph as a work of philosophical anthropology. It is rather a study in the field of anthropology, specifically, a possible ethical anthropology constructed with a view to showing the personal subjectivity of man as the one who accomplishes the act and the personal being responsible for that act. Whereby the moment of "accomplishing" the act, and, through that act,

the "self-fulfillment" or "self-actualization" of the person, is elaborated to such an extent that the work constitutes a monograph on the person as a moral subject. And there probably is no comparable monograph in world literature in this regard.

I would see two reasons for such an outlined and broadly presented conception. The first is the profession of ethics and viewing the world and the human person from an ethical perspective. In this regard, the matter is both understandable and at the same time significant. But is that all? Or perhaps we have here a hidden postulate of the reducibility of the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of being? That is precisely how the matter was presented some years ago at the "Philosophical Week" by the author of the work under analysis. If this postulate were to be realized in some way, then I would again see two possibilities:

a) Limiting oneself to descriptions of states of consciousness and what occurs within consciousness, as a distinctive (intentional) reflection of reality. In this state of things, all the contents that are known and appearing in the consciousness are an aspectual rendering of reality. From the perspective of these contents, they are identical with reality, but this is only a one-sided identity. This means that the contents apprehended in cognition are identical, in the aspect of their apprehension, with reality, but this does not mean that reality itself is identical to the contents that are apprehended and appear in my consciousness. Reality is not only richer, and infinitely so, but it exists in and of itself as subject, whereas the contents apprehended in cognition (and appearing in consciousness) exist only by my existence, the existence of the knowing subject. In this state of things the data of consciousness cannot be reduced to reality, for they are only a formal sign of it, transparent, but aspectually and selectively representing that reality.

b) If however, from another point of view, no longer cognitive but ontic, we were to apprehend the acts themselves within the data of consciousness, as manifestations and emanations of the subjective being of the person, then, from the perspective of the reality of the cognitive act, which bears a specific content, we only seemingly analyzed acts of consciousness, for in essence we would be in the realm of ontology, since cognitive acts, as acts of a real subject are also a real (accidental) being. For the metaphysician, it is ultimately a matter of indifference whether material or spiritual (acts of cognition) entities are subjected to analysis. Both are real.

But it is precisely through the analysis of the spiritual acts, emanated by the knowing person that we meet with the only possible "manifestation" of the subject itself, given to us for analysis, which bears witness to the subject and points to the structure of the subject performing the act.

And in the analysis of this act, two sides can be distinguished: a) the side "from the subject," in so far as the act is precisely an emanation of the subject; b) from the second side "towards the object" insofar as through this act we attain the specific object. In a real act, much like a real stick with two ends, both sides always appear inseparably. However, in the analysis, one may pause at, or devote greater attention to, the first side, the act, to the extent it is viewed from the side of the subject, insofar as it emerges from the subject. However, the same act can be analyzed from the side of the object, to the extent it reaches the object and "apprehends" the object in a particular way.

Of course, in the act of cognition, or more broadly put, in human conscious life, there is an extraordinary richness of apprehended objects. And that is why it would not be a matter of objectivity as the objectivity of a cognitive or conscious act, but rather the subjective objectivity of that act. It is about the manner in which the object is apprehended through a cognitive or spiritual act. The manner in which the object is apprehended reveals something about the subject itself and indicates its characteristic features as a being. The analysis of various spiritual, conscious acts – mainly cognitive, (but not only!) – may become an instrument for constructing an anthropological philosophical theory.

In the work under discussion, it seems to me that there is a lack of analysis regarding human spiritual acts from the perspective of subjective objectivity, even though we constantly encounter subtle analyses of the first aspect of the act, namely, the act insofar as it emerges from the personal subject. This is because the analyses come from the pen of an ethicist interested in the connection between the act and the person. But one must not forget that the way an object is apprehended, the way the object is constructed, also reveals something about the person, and does so "objectively," by virtue of the objective nature of the act. It seems to me that, to a large extent, Thomas's intellectual legacy has not been fully utilized in this regard, not only in the field of anthropology, but precisely in the field of morality and especially in his *Summa Theologiciae* Books I-II, where, after all, we continually encounter an analysis of human act in terms of the characteristic domains of the object of that act; where analyses are conducted not only of various groups of acts performed by the personal subject but also, and this is of immense significance, of those acts that mutually condition and synthesize one another within the overarching function of cognition, volition, and choice; whether unperfected by habit or perfected through the influence of law, passion, and the sense of *debitum*. The material, long since conceived and articulated in a language, which may

differ from our own today, represents a body of work that must be taken into account in the field of anthropology, particularly ethical anthropology, for it has revealed a great many characteristics of the human being as the subject of moral action. And rethinking the old material in the context of contemporary philosophical currents would make it possible to bring out the many new potentialities contained in the texts of Thomas. And this is not just Thomas himself, but about the truth, which could be expressed more fully and clearly by taking into account the analyses of books I-II of his *Summa*.

The kind of knowledge analyzed by an ethicist or moralist is essentially just one type of human knowledge, phronetic knowledge, and therefore oriented toward and connected with action. Here it is enough to remember the history of the theory of phronetic cognition from the Greek tragedians, Heraclitus, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas. And yet man makes use principally of cognition of an informational type, and this in its many forms and under various conditions. In constructing a theory of man, one cannot fail to take into account this type of cognition and its fundamental, nodal forms, which bear witness to the human subject. In all of this, the matter of the human body and its role in shaping the spiritual profile of the person is also of considerable importance. Although the body is frequently discussed in the work under consideration, its role calls for a special investigation and treatment, for it is precisely the factor that conditions not only self-awareness but also a person's inner development, and above all, their moral development. The role of the body is considered against the background of specific activities that manifest the distinct nature of human existence.

In a word, in the outlined conception of philosophical anthropology, the understanding of man oscillates between emphasizing the role of the person as a self-existing "I" (that is a being-subject in the act of subjectification) of a rational nature. Nature and its role, its structure, and its modes of operation also demand consideration and analysis. The work, in accentuating the existential moment, the moment of the human person from the person's facticity (man as the subject performing the act!) seems to me to take insufficient account to the theory of the person (a theory manifesting itself in the analysis of the characteristic moments of personal life and its specific features), and also to give insufficient emphasis to the role of the "nature" of man. And yet, our understanding of man runs along the lines of the tension precisely between nature, that is, the determined (also from without!) sources of action, and the person as a free being, self-determining in bringing forth the act. However, since in the literature to date, the moments of nature and

structure have been fundamentally analyzed and are known to the reader familiar with philosophy, whereas the moments of personal life, as specifically personal, (particularly regarding the facticity of the human person were unknown) Cardinal Wojtyła's focus on precisely these moments appears immensely valuable and innovative, it enriches our vision of the human being in general and, above all, enables a deeper understanding of man as a being who creates and experiences moral order. However, philosophical anthropology still awaits a comprehensive treatment and, I hope, that my forthcoming work will, to some extent, complement the monograph discussed here.