

# THREE KINDS OF PERSONALISM: THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF JOHN PAUL II'S THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

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## 1. JOHN PAUL II'S PERSONALISM BUILT ON THE TWO LAWS OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES* 24:3

*Gaudium et spes* 24:3 plays an important role in John Paul II.<sup>1</sup> When he defines true Personalism, he appeals to this text.

The hymn to love in the First Letter to the Corinthians remains the Magna Carta of the civilization of love. In this concept what is important is ... the radical acceptance of the understanding of man as a *person who "finds himself" by making a sincere gift of self* [*Gaudium et spes* 24:3]. A gift is, obviously, 'for others': This is the most important dimension of the civilization of love. We thus come to the very heart of the Gospel truth about freedom. ... Freedom cannot be understood as a license to do absolutely anything; it means a *gift of self*. Even more, it means an interior discipline of the gift. The idea of gift contains not only the free initiative of the subject, but also the aspect of duty. All this is made real in the 'communion of persons.' ... Continuing this line of thought, we also come upon the antithesis between individualism and *personalism*. Love, the civilization of love, is bound up with *personalism*. Why with *personalism*? And why does individualism threaten the civilization of love? We find a key to answering this in the council's expression, a "sincere gift" [*Gaudium et spes* 24:3].<sup>2</sup>

The Theology of the Body quotes *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 many times and in key places. For example, *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 explains why the human body has a spousal meaning.

One can understand this 'spousal' meaning of the human body only in the context of the person. The body has a spousal meaning because the human person, as the Council says, is a creature that God willed for its own sake and that, at the same time, cannot fully find himself except through the gift of self [*Gaudium et spes* 24:3] (TOB 15:5).<sup>3</sup>

Based on these texts and many others like them, one can define John Paul II's Personalism as a Personalism of the sincere gift of self in accord with *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, that is, a Personalism rooted in the union of persons in the Trinity and in Christ's gift of his life for us. It is a Personalism shaped by what the Theology of the Body calls a "hermeneutics of the gift" (TOB 13:2) that is, a comprehensive interpretation of reality in terms of gift. A hermeneutics of the gift is, of course, also a hermeneutics of receptivity and of communion. Gift and reception are correlative and communion is their fruit.

Let us take a closer look at *Gaudium et spes* 24:3.

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prays to the Father, "that all may be one. . . as we are one" (Jn 17:21-22) and thus offers vistas closed to human reason, indicates a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the union of God's sons in truth and love. This likeness shows

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<sup>1</sup> Pascal Ide, "Une théologie du don: Les occurrences de *Gaudium et spes*, n. 24, §3 chez Jean-Paul II," *Anthropotes* 17 (2001): 149-78, 313-44.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Letter to Families, *Gratissimam Sane*, 14, emphasis added, cf. John Paul II, Discourse to the Roman Rota, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997, §4.

<sup>3</sup> For the many other examples of the use of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 in the Theology of the Body, see the Index at Gaudium.

that man, who is the only creature on earth God willed for himself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self (cf. Lk 17:33).

John Paul II often focuses on two points in this text: (1) Man is the only creature on earth God willed for his (that is, man's) own sake. (2) Man cannot fully find himself except in a sincere gift of self. According to John Paul II, these two statements contain "the whole truth," "the integral truth about man" (see TOB, Index at "integral" and "truth"). They are the two fundamental laws of the life of persons as persons.

In order to see a whole in its integrity, one must see its beginning as well as its end without ignoring what lies in the middle. The two laws of the life of persons in *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 are related to each other as beginning and end and they cover the middle as well.

### a) THE BEGINNING: THE PERSONALISTIC NORM

"God willed man for his own sake," stands *at the beginning* of the life of persons. It is connected with rational *nature*, in virtue of which persons are persons in the first place. Rational nature enables the beings that have it to know and love the good. Only for them, therefore, can and does God truly will the good for their own sake. Wojtyła calls this first law of the life of persons "the Personalistic norm."<sup>4</sup> Aristotle touches on this norm in his discussion of friendship.

Of the love of lifeless objects we do not use the word "friendship"; for it is not mutual love, nor is there a wishing of good to the other (for it would surely be ridiculous to wish wine well; if one wishes anything for it, it is that it may keep, so that one may have it oneself); but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake.<sup>5</sup>

It is with such a love of friendship, according to St. Thomas, that God provides for creatures whose nature gives them the power of intellectual knowledge and will. "Divine providence provides for intellectual creatures for their own sake, but for other creatures for the sake of these. . . Only the intellectual nature is, therefore, sought for itself in the universe, but all other things for its sake."<sup>6</sup>

Of course, while the Personalistic norm stands at the *beginning* of the life of persons, it accompanies the life of persons all the way through the middle to the very end. It remains forever true that persons must be loved for their own sake. Even they themselves rightly love themselves in this way, as Plato and Aristotle show.

In order to see the power of the Personalistic norm in establishing an "integral vision" of man, one must see its relation to the commandment of love.

This norm, in its negative aspect, states that 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 as a 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.<sup>7</sup>

According to the teaching of Jesus, the commandment "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19) sums up the whole law. "For this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12). The moral life as a whole becomes intelligible through this one commandment.

<sup>4</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1960 [1993]), 27-28, 40-44.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2, 1155b.30-31.

<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas, *Contra gentiles*, 3.112.2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

“Love and then do what you want! *Dilige et quod vis fac.*”<sup>8</sup> The Personalistic norm is indeed a royal highway into an “integral vision of man.”

## b) THE END: THE LAW OF THE GIFT

The second statement, “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self,” does not concern the *beginning*, but *the end* of the life of persons. “Fully finding oneself” refers to completion or perfection. Perfection needs to be acquired and is fully acquired only at the end.

The argument of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 for this second law of the life of persons is a strictly theological argument. In his prayer to the Father, “that they may be one as we are one,” Jesus shows a similarity between the union of divine persons and the union of human persons. This similarity between the Trinitarian and the human communion of persons shows the truth of the law of the gift. The Council insists very clearly on the newness of the revelation brought by Jesus. Jesus opens up vistas *closed to human reason*. He opens the unheard-of heart of God’s inner life. It may well be that the law of “giving and finding” is reflected also in the natural order, but *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 does not draw attention to this fact. It places us immediately in the innermost sanctuary of Trinitarian theology. “Love, an uncreated gift, is part of the inner mystery of God and is the very nucleus of theology.”<sup>9</sup>

*Gaudium et spes* 24:3 briefly alludes to the character of this innermost sanctuary in the phrases, “as we are one” and “union of divine Persons.” An earlier version of the text was more explicit.

Indeed, Catholic doctrine, opening up vistas closed to human reason, teaches that God, though he is one, subsists in three persons, each of which lives in such a way toward the others that it is constituted by that very relation. One can infer that human persons, since they are created in the image of God one and three and are reformed in his image, show in themselves a certain imitation of him. While, then, man is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, he himself is related out of himself toward others in such a way that he cannot find himself except by giving himself.<sup>10</sup>

The final text of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 is more scriptural, less theologically unfolded, but the essential point remains the same.

According to *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, the Trinity as exemplar is concretely mediated by Christ. The Council expresses this point by adding a reference to Luke 17:33, “The one who wants to save his life will lose it, but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it.” This is one of the very few sayings of Jesus reported by all four Gospels. The formulation of the saying in Matthew is closest to the formulation chosen by *Gaudium et spes* 24:3: “The one who *finds* his life will lose it and the one who loses his life for my sake will *find* it” (Mat 10:39).

Immediately before this saying in Matthew, Mark, and Luke 9, Jesus speaks about discipleship, denying oneself, taking up one’s cross and following after him. The law of losing and finding, which he formulates as a general law of the life of persons, is an explanation of this discipleship and particularly of the cross. This deep Trinitarian and Christological background

<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine, *In Iohannis epistulam tractatus*, 7.8.

<sup>9</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 55.

<sup>10</sup> See Francisco Gil Hellín, *Concilii Vaticani II synopsis, in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon Patrum orationes atque animadversiones: Gaudium et spes* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003), 171.

must be kept in mind when one reads what John Paul II has to say about “the gift of self” in the *Theology of the Body*.

Together with Jean Danielou, Wojtyła had the responsibility of producing an early draft of *Gaudium et spes* at a crucial point in the history of its composition.<sup>11</sup> He may well be responsible for the paragraph containing the two laws of the life of persons in the earlier form of that paragraph quoted above. At any rate, one finds the explicit joining of the two laws of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 already some years before the Council in Wojtyła’s *Love and Responsibility*, first delivered as lectures in 1957-59 and published in 1960. *Gaudium et spes* was promulgated five years later. One passage is particularly clear because it speaks about two specific laws that govern the existence and development of persons, the Personalistic norm and the law of the gift of self.

[O]ne person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another, whether to a human person or to God, and such a giving of the self creates a special form of love which we define as spousal love. This fact goes to prove that the person has a dynamism of its own and [that] . . . *specific laws govern its existence and evolution*. Christ gave expression to this in a saying which is on the face of it profoundly paradoxical: “He who would save his soul shall lose it, and he who would lose his soul for my sake shall find it again” [Matt 10:39].

Immediately after this statement, Wojtyła explains the first principle of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, the Personalistic norm.

Indeed, the problem of spousal love does contain a profound paradox, a very real, and not mere a verbal paradox: the words of the Gospel point to a concrete reality, and the truth which they contain is made manifest in the life of the person. Thus, of its very nature, no person can be transferred or ceded to another. In the natural order it is oriented toward self-perfection, towards the attainment of an ever greater fullness of existence—which is, of course, always the existence of some concrete “I”. We have already stated that this self-perfection proceeds side by side with love.

The manner in which Wojtyła explains the Personalistic norm in this passage is very close to the understanding of eros in Plato and of the desire for happiness in Aristotle. Wojtyła then turns to the second principle, the law of the gift.

The fullest, the most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in self-giving, in making one’s inalienable and non-transferable “I” someone else’s property. This is doubly paradoxical: firstly in that it is possible to step outside one’s own “I” in this way, and secondly in that the “I” far from being destroyed or impaired as a result is enlarged and enriched—of course in a super-physical, a moral sense. The Gospel stresses this very clearly and unambiguously—“would lose—shall find again” “would save—shall lose.”

In the final sentence of this passage, Wojtyła relates the two laws to each other.

You will readily see that we have here *not merely the personalistic norm but also bold and explicit words of advice*, which make it possible for us *to amplify and elaborate on that norm*. The world of persons *possesses its own laws of existence and of development*.<sup>12</sup>

With full clarity, this text formulates the two laws of the existence of persons found in *Gaudium et spes* 24:3. It formulates them as a comprehensive pair of principles that throw light on human life as a whole. Wojtyła even appeals to the same saying of Jesus to which *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 also appeals.

Wojtyła shows that the Personalistic norm and the law of the gift do not stand next to each other without any connection. The law of the gift “amplifies and elaborates” on the Personalistic norm. The two laws concern one single reality, namely, the life of the person, first

<sup>11</sup> See d’Ornellas, *Liberté*, especially pp. 22, 447-54, 481-3.

<sup>12</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 97, emphasis added.

in its beginnings and potential in human nature, then in its full realization in the relation of divinized love of the members of Christ who come to share in the life of Christ and the Trinity. In this perspective it becomes clear why John Paul II sees “the whole truth about man” expressed in *Gaudium et spes* 24:3. The beginning and the end, the natural order and its supernatural fulfillment, are embraced by the two laws.

## 2. KANT’S PERSONALISM BUILT ON THE FIRST LAW OF OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES* 24:3

In his treatment of sexual union and marriage, Kant uses a similar pair of principles, though in a manner that is quite opposed to *Gaudium et spes* 24:3 and to John Paul II’s hermeneutics of the gift.

The natural use that one sex makes of the sexual organs of the other is an *enjoyment* (*Genuß*) for which one partner gives himself or herself (*sich hingiebt*) to the other. In this act, a human being makes himself into a thing, which is contrary to the right of human nature to one’s own person. This is possible only under one single condition: when a person is acquired by another *in a manner equal to a thing*, correspondingly the former acquires the latter [by a marriage contract], for in this way the person gains itself back again and reconstitutes its personhood. Now, the acquisition of one bodily member of a human being is at the same time an acquisition of the whole person, because the person is an absolute unity.<sup>13</sup>

For Kant, sexual intercourse is a gift of self contrary to the dignity of the person. In all sexual relations, whether in marriage or outside it, both persons turn themselves into mere things by giving their sexual organs, and thus their own persons, to each other for the sake of being possessed and “enjoyed.” Being used in such a way, Kant holds, is contrary to the autonomy of the person, contrary to the right every person has to himself or herself. Persons should be treated as ends, not means.

While man is unholy enough, the *humanity* in his person must be holy to him. In all of creation, everything one might want and over which one has power can be used *as a mere means*. Only man himself and with him every rational creature is *end in itself*. For, in virtue of the autonomy of his freedom, he is the subject of the moral law, which is holy.<sup>14</sup>

The only remedy for the loss of autonomy in sex is marriage. By marriage I permanently acquire my spouse as a thing. I thereby offset the loss of myself to her as a thing when she “enjoys” me in sexual intercourse. By a permanent contract I own the one who episodically owns me. In this way, I regain myself and my autonomy. It is like a man who wants to gamble, but is afraid of losing his money. And so he buys the casino. When he loses money he gains it back, because he owns the house.

The Personalistic norm as Kant understands it is equivalent to the categorical imperative, “Act in such a way that at any time the maxim of your will can at the same time be valid as a principle of a universal legislation.”<sup>15</sup> By acting according to the categorical imperative, Kant

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<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* [*The Metaphysics of Morals*], *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, [1793] 1902-), 277-78.

<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* [*Critique of Practical Reason*], *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, [1785] 1902-), 5.87, cf. 5.131. See also Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6.434.

<sup>15</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5.30.

holds, one grasps one's own dignity as an autonomous person who is self-moving in the most radical manner possible, namely, as the universal lawgiver for all persons. In this autonomy, one must see the moral humanity in oneself as the only thing that has absolute value, the only final end of the entire cosmos. It immediately follows that one must affirm the dignity of others as well. One can only be consistent with oneself in affirming one's own dignity as universal lawgiver, if one grants the same dignity to other persons.<sup>16</sup>

In its actual application, Kant's Personalistic norm works much like the golden rule in the teaching of Jesus. "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6,31). "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7,12).

Yet, this similarity goes hand in hand with a profound opposition between Kant and the Gospel. This opposition becomes apparent when one examines Wojtyła's argument for the Personalistic norm.

[A] person must not be *merely* the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what any person is. For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of taking decisions: these, most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self of a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.<sup>17</sup>

Noteworthy in this argument for the Personalistic norm is the focus on the person's ability, due to its *rational nature*, to understand the good, to understand aims or ends and pursue them. In Kant, the key point is not that the person can *understand and pursue* the good and ends, but that the person *is* the ultimate end of the entire cosmos.

Immanuel Kant . . . formulated . . . the following imperative: act always in such a way that the other person is the end and not merely the instrument of your action. In the light of the preceding argument this principle should be restated in a form rather different from that which Kant gave it, as follows: whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, *has, or at least should have*, distinct personal ends.<sup>18</sup>

Wojtyła's understanding of the Personalistic norm is indeed "rather different" from Kant's. *Being* an end differs from *having* an end, *being* the highest good differs from being *the beneficiary* of the highest good, *being* God differs from *having* God as one's end. Aristotle observes that if—and only if—man were the highest being, practical knowledge would be the supreme form of knowledge. He seems to be describing Kant.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up: The key to Kant's Personalism is the absolutizing of the autonomous dignity of the person as the highest end. The person must be treated as the final end, not a means. John Paul II's understanding of the Personalistic norm is opposed to Kant on precisely this point. It is closer to Aristotle's and St. Thomas's account of the love of friendship according to which persons *have* ends and the right way to treat them is to love them and to will the good for them as their end, for their sake.

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<sup>16</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* [Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals], *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, [1785] 1902-), 4.441.

<sup>17</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 26-7.

<sup>18</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 27-8.

<sup>19</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.7. For Kant's explicit claim that practical knowledge is the supreme form of knowledge, see Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5.108.

### 3. SCHELER'S PERSONALISM BUILT ON THE SECOND LAW OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES* 24:3

While the key to Kant's Personalism resembles the first of the two laws of the life of persons expressed in *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, the key to Scheler's Personalism resembles the second of these two laws, the law of the gift. It is difficult to imagine two thinkers further apart from each other than Kant and Scheler. Granted, both belong to the trajectory of the philosophy of consciousness from Descartes through Kant to Hegel, but it is no accident that Kant stems from the Protestant North, Scheler from the Catholic South of Germany, an origin not erased even by his spectacular apostasy from the Catholic faith toward the end of his life.<sup>20</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar shows in his account of Scheler's Personalism that according to Scheler the highest and most perfect form of love is God's self-giving love as revealed by Jesus.<sup>21</sup> According to Scheler, one can see a radical reversal in the basic movement of love when one compares Plato's and Aristotle's understanding of love with the Christian understanding of love.<sup>22</sup> In Plato and Aristotle, love (*eros*) has an *ascending* movement of longing for fulfillment, fulfillment at the very end by the infinite good that constitutes the goal or object of human striving. In Christianity, according to Scheler, all attention is focused on the *descending* love of God (*agape*) in which fullness is first and self-gift is a necessary overflow. Balthasar summarizes:

It was only in this lavish self-gift in freedom that the self-glory and highest sovereignty of this love—neither bound by anything nor obliged to anything—was revealed. Once this “reversal in the movement of love” has been initiated by Christ, it becomes the true access to the supreme [value]: it is only “in performing this act of ‘bending down,’ in letting himself glide down, in ‘losing himself,’” that man can “gain the supreme [value]—becoming like God.” It is all the more surprising to Scheler that “the intellectual and philosophical expression of this singular revolution of the human spirit failed in an almost incomprehensible manner.” It was precisely “the Platonic definition of love as striving,” that “passed over into Scholastic philosophy, contrary to the innermost intentions of Christianity” so that “there never was, or at best there were only weak beginnings of, a philosophical understanding of the world and of life that sprang *originally* and *spontaneously* from the Christian experience.”<sup>23</sup>

Scheler's ambition, at least in his Catholic period, was to offer precisely such an understanding, freed from the accretions of Greek philosophy and Scholastic theology. His ethics, he notes, “presupposes Kant's destruction of these [Greek and Scholastic] forms of

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<sup>20</sup> See Dietrich von Hildebrand, “Max Scheler's Philosophie und Persönlichkeit,” in Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Die Menschheit am Scheideweg: Gesammelte Abhandlungen und Vorträge, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Karla Mertens* (Regensburg: Josef Habbel, 1954) 587-639.

<sup>21</sup> The chapter entitled “Personalismus” is the final chapter in Balthasar's treatment of Scheler. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele: Studien zu einer Lehre von letzten Haltungen*, 3 vols. (Einsiedeln and Freiburg: Johannes, 1937-39 [reprint 1998]), 3.84-192. Chapter 4, “Personalism,” 152-92.

<sup>22</sup> Scheler seems to be strongly influenced by Pierre Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution*. Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1908 [2001] which argues that two irreconcilable ways of understanding love clashed in the Middle Ages, namely, love as pure sacrificial self-gift and love as pure self-affirmation in the pursuit of the good for one's own sake. A similar thesis about love was proposed after Scheler by the influential Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953).

<sup>23</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele*, 3.153. Balthasar's quotes are taken from Max Scheler, “Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen,” in *Vom Umsturz der Werte: Abhandlungen und Aufsätze: Gesammelte Werke* 3 (Bern: Francke, 1912 [1955]), here 70ff. Max Scheler, “Liebe und Erkenntnis,” in *Schriften zur Soziologie und Weltanschauungslehre: Gesammelte Werke* 6 (Bern: Francke, 1916 [1963]), here 87ff.

ethics.”<sup>24</sup> The Personalistic norm as Wojtyła explains it (“one must treat the person *as having an end*”) implies precisely the Greek understanding of eros.

One of the guiding concerns of Scheler’s Personalism of self-giving love is to answer Nietzsche’s objections against Christianity, according to which Christian love is born of the resentment (*Ressentiment*) of the weak against the strong. A lack of vitality, Nietzsche argues, makes Christians unable to enjoy life and so, out of resentment, they transmute weakness and wretchedness into virtues.<sup>25</sup> Scheler counters that Christian love is free of such resentment because it is a movement of free giving out of fullness; it is a selfless descent from the heights to the depths.

What does the bourgeois man, who “wants to become something,” and who secretly measures himself by his lords and kings even when he rebels against them—what could he know of voluntary self-abasement, of the sweet urge of pouring oneself out felt by those who *are* something (the ἑσθλοί, the noble), who do not see themselves as standing on the heights precisely because they do, as a matter of course, stand on the heights? Humility, this is precisely the movement of self-abasement, the movement of coming down from above, of coming from the height, of God letting himself glide down to humanity, of the holy one to the sinner—this free, daring, fearless movement of a spirit whose fullness, a fullness possessed as a matter of course, makes it impossible for him even to understand the concept of lavishly giving oneself away and squandering oneself (*Selbstverschwendung*).<sup>26</sup>

Scheler’s work is incredibly rich and varied. His Personalism could be unfolded in many directions, as Balthasar shows in his masterful study. For example, Scheler has a deep understanding of solidarity based on Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov* and in this respect inspired John Paul II’s social thought and action (*Solidarnosz*). He has a deep understanding of the person’s consciously lived experience, which deepened Wojtyła’s Personalism above all in *The Acting Person*. He has a deep understanding of the expression of the person in the body that inspired John Paul II’s account of expression in the *Theology of the Body*. He has a profound account of shame that is also reflected in the *Theology of the Body*. He has a deep understanding of the imitation of Christ, evident particularly in his discussion of St. Francis of Assisi. Many other examples of Scheler’s profound insights and his influence on John Paul II could be mentioned. Certainly, Wojtyła learned much from Scheler that is positive and one can trace many influences.

In his habilitation thesis in moral theology on Scheler (which, by the way, has not been translated into English), Wojtyła chose as his point of departure Scheler’s teaching on the imitation of Christ. The main question he raises is, “Can we, or to what degree can we, attempt

<sup>24</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, xxviii, German 20.

<sup>25</sup> See esp. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, essay 1, chapter 14.

<sup>26</sup> Max Scheler, “Zur Rehabilitierung der Tugend,” in *Vom Umsturz der Werte: Abhandlungen und Aufsätze: Gesammelte Werke 3* (Bern: Francke, 1915 [1955]), 25. Scheler goes on after this text to argue that the weak man’s true desire is to rule. He only serves his master because he is too weak to dominate him. Servility is second nature to him precisely because of his weakness. Humility, by contrast, is the virtue of the natural lords. The natural lord is humble even when he rules. He is humble at the core of his being before God. For such a man, the willingness to serve is the center of his being, while for the base and servile man it is an attitude on the periphery forced upon him by the circumstance of his weakness. The desire to rule is the center of the servile man’s being, while for the genuinely humble man it is a possibility on the periphery which he does not actively pursue, because he already stands on the heights.

to interpret Christian ethics with the help of Scheler's system?<sup>27</sup> In raising this question, Wojtyła meets Scheler at a point that is not incidental, but deeply embedded in Scheler's own intentions. Scheler's attempt to de-Hellenize and de-Scholastify philosophy in order to reach (for the first time in the history of philosophy!) the Personalist philosophical understanding of the world that springs originally and spontaneously from the Christian experience of self-giving love can and should be appropriately tested by raising precisely this question.

In structuring his argument, Wojtyła follows Aristotle's four causes (minus matter). Chapter One of the thesis gives a preliminary overview, Chapter Two examines Scheler's account of the formal cause of moral goodness, namely, moral goodness; Chapter Three his account of the efficient cause, the acting person; and Chapter Four his account of the final cause. This Aristotelian structure of the overall argument seems quite pointed in a book about a philosopher whose project it was to free Christian philosophy from Greek and Medieval philosophy, particularly from Aristotle. Wojtyła's conclusion is, on the whole, negative. (See the summary of the thesis that has been distributed together with this paper).

Let us look at the very end of Wojtyła's argument which deals with God as the end of the moral life. This point of the argument is most relevant to the main thrust of Scheler's Personalism: agape as opposed to eros, self-giving love out of fullness as opposed to the striving love of Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, which contaminated Christian philosophy.

Scheler agrees with Kant that happiness cannot be the goal of moral goodness. Yet, while Kant locates happiness far from the core of the person as the irrational object of sensual inclinations, Scheler gives it the most central possible place in the human spirit as the *source* of all morally good acts.

Deepest happiness and complete bliss are dependent in their being on a consciousness of one's own moral goodness. *Only the good person is blissful.* This does *not* preclude the possibility that this very blissfulness is the *root* and *source* of all willing and acting. But happiness can *never* be a goal or even a "purpose" of willing and acting. *Only the happy person acts in a morally good way.* Happiness is therefore in no way a "reward for virtue,"<sup>28</sup> nor is virtue the *means* to reach bliss. Rather, happiness is the root and source of virtue, a fountainhead, although it is only a *consequence* of the inner *goodness* of the person.<sup>29</sup>

The innermost source of bliss, according to Scheler, is a participation in the divine nature when one acts "in God." Such participation in the divine nature is an unsurpassable fountain of unsurpassable bliss. No reward could equal such bliss.

In his existence and his acts the "good" person directly takes part in the nature of God, in the sense of *velle in deo* [to will in God] or *amare in deo* [to love in God], and he is blissful in this participation. A "reward" from God could only put a smaller and lower good in place of a higher one, and a superficial feeling in the place of a deeper pleasure.<sup>30</sup>

Wojtyła points out that it is difficult to reconcile this understanding of unsurpassable bliss with the teaching of the Gospels on reward and punishment, in which bliss, understood as the beatific vision of God, is promised as a reward, not pointed out as an existing reality.

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<sup>27</sup> Karol Wojtyła, [Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Assumptions of Max Scheler's System of Philosophy] *Über die Möglichkeit eine christliche Ethik in Anlehnung an Max Scheler zu schaffen*, ed. Juliusz Stroykowski, *Primat des Geistes: Philosophische Schriften* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald, 1953 [1980]), 65.

<sup>28</sup> "[Happiness is] . . . the reward and end of virtue." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.9; 1099b.16-17.

<sup>29</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 359, G 359-60.

<sup>30</sup> Scheler, *Formalism*, 368, G 368, translation modified.

We see that in the teaching of revelation, all emphasis in the doctrine of eternal blessedness falls on the object of blessedness, namely, the divine nature, which is this object. In Scheler's phenomenological system, of course, this doctrine cannot be grasped and expressed. . . . No good that comes from outside the person can be a greater good than the good which the person finds in himself when he experiences himself as the source of a morally good act. . . . The greatest happiness and the greatest suffering—man draws these from within himself, he himself is its source for himself. This point of view seems to separate us completely from the Christian teaching. Given such a point of view, can we establish any point of contact with the revealed truth according to which the object of man's final blessedness is the divine nature?<sup>31</sup>

Wojtyła's answer is in the end, no. A Personalism in which human love is a free descent from inner fullness and joy is irreconcilable with Christian faith.

To summarize, Scheler, like Kant, attributes a quasi divine value to the human person. This excess seems to be due in part to his concern to answer Nietzsche's attack on Christianity. To protect Christianity from Nietzsche's charge that it transmutes weakness and suffering into virtue, Scheler paints a quasi divine picture of the human person. The key to his Personalism is the bliss of the morally good person, who experiences his own individual value essence as an absolute fullness. It is bliss without need, with no desire for a divine reward. The person already has the final end within himself and descends to other human beings from this fullness in purely self-giving love. Like Kant's Personalism, Scheler's Personalism is thus anti-Trinitarian. The dependence and receptivity implied in sonship does not play a constitutive role in it.

## CONCLUSION

John Paul II's Personalism is built on the two laws of the life of persons expressed by Vatican II in *Gaudium et spes* 24:3. Kant's Personalism is built on a principle apparently similar to, but in fact profoundly opposed to, the first principle of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, the Personalistic norm. The absolute moral dignity of the human person as an autonomous agent is, according to Kant, the unsurpassable final end of the whole cosmos. Scheler's Personalism is built on a principle apparently similar to, but in fact profoundly opposed to, the second principle of *Gaudium et spes* 24:3, the law of the gift.

It is difficult to conceive a disagreement that is more radical and fundamental than this disagreement between John Paul II on the one side and Kant as well as Scheler on the other. The final end determines everything. A Personalism for which God is the final end differs most radically and fundamentally from Personalisms in which the final end is found already within the human person.

John Paul II's Personalism is much closer to the Personalism of Greek and Medieval philosophy and theology, particularly that of Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas.<sup>32</sup> In one of his essays Wojtyła refers to himself as, "We in the Thomistic school, the school of 'perennial philosophy'..."<sup>33</sup> He first encountered the thought of St. Thomas in the writings of St. John of the Cross rather than in Neo-Thomist manuals. St. John of the Cross offers a profoundly

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<sup>31</sup> Wojtyła, *Scheler*, 183-4.

<sup>32</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: P. Lang, 1961 [1993]).

<sup>33</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "The Human Person and Natural Law," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: P. Lang, 1970 [1993]), here 181.

experiential and in this sense Personalist rereading of St. Thomas, focused on the spousal gift of self and its ultimate roots in the Trinity.

One might appeal against these theses to the Preface to *The Acting Person*, in which Wojtyła writes,

Granted the author's acquaintance with traditional Aristotelian thought, it is however the work of Max Scheler that has been a major influence upon his reflection. In my overall conception of the person envisaged through the mechanisms of his operative systems and their variations, as presented here, may indeed be seen the Schelerian foundation studied in my previous work.<sup>34</sup>

According to this statement, Wojtyła aligns himself more with Scheler than with Aristotle. Yet, this preface is written entirely by the editor of the American edition. It expresses her opinion, not Wojtyła's.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Wojtyła learned much from Scheler and felt a deep debt of gratitude to Scheler. Nowhere, not even in the habilitation thesis on Scheler, does one find even a trace of *animus* against Scheler; nowhere does one find a wholesale rejection of Scheler. *The Acting Person*, however, is a case in point for measuring the overall closeness and distance between Wojtyła and Scheler. When one compares *The Acting Person* to Wojtyła's thesis on Scheler, one quickly realizes that it concentrates as a whole on establishing precisely what Wojtyła found missing in his second major criticism of Scheler, namely, the responsible causal efficacy of the person. It does so, in part, by a better use of the phenomenological method, so that the debt of gratitude exists even at a major point in which Wojtyła corrects Scheler.

The overall situation is clear. In the face of Personalisms inimical to Christian faith, such as those of Kant and Scheler, Wojtyła / John Paul II sustains the Personalism of the Catholic tradition and of perennial philosophy as reaffirmed in a new way by the Second Vatican Council (esp. *Gaudium et spes* 24:3). This Personalism is present in Scripture and the liturgy. John Paul II insists, for example, that the Letter to the Ephesians is Personalistic in the full sense of that term.

[Ephesians 5] ... is Personalistic in the full meaning of the word, which was already shown in the earlier analyses of this text. The language of the liturgy is equally Personalistic—both when we consider Tobit and when we consider the present [marriage] liturgy of the Church (TOB 117:3).

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<sup>34</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, viii.

<sup>35</sup> In an editorial note signed by her initials (p. x), the editor, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, distinguishes “the original draft of the preface” (printed on pp. xi-xiv) from “the definitive version of the author's preface” (printed on pp. vii-ix). The original draft contains no such statement about Scheler and Aristotle. Tymieniecka notes that Wojtyła did not proofread the “definitive version” and that he might have added “personal touches” during proofreading. She does not clarify whether he read the “definitive version” at all and approved it in a provisional manner before proofreading. If personal touches were to be added only at the proofreading stage, the implication seems to be that they were not yet present in the “definitive version” before proofreading. The authoritative third edition of the Polish and the similarly authoritative Italian version do not contain this preface.