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The Dignity of Human Persons in Wojtyla's *Philosophical and Theological Anthropology*

This chapter will examine the theoretical basis of Wojtyla's account of human justice. In investigating Wojtyla's theoretical account of justice, three primary questions will guide this work. First, the question of *epistemology*: How is knowledge about justice acquired? In other words, what is the basis (or what are the bases) for the way that Wojtyla defined justice?

Second, the question of *theory*: How does Wojtyla define justice? Of the numerous ways to define justice as that which gives the greatest utility, as fairness, as liberation, which does Wojtyla choose? This question is important because in defining justice, Wojtyla also defines the critical criterion for determining what just action is and what it is not.

Third, the question of *praxis*: How is justice cultivated in society? This question puts feet on Wojtyla's theory by exploring the nature and the impact of just social action. It also raises the question of psychology: what may impel persons to act with justice evening the midst of unjust circumstances? These three questions of epistemology, theory, and praxis will provide key points for development in the work of John Paul II and for comparison with Karl Barth. Yet before these questions can even be raised, one must discern the assumptions that drove Wojtyla's ethical theory.

The Shape of Wojtyla's Work: Thomist? Phenomenological? Or Both?

In numerous essays and books written during his years as a University professor, Wojtyla sought to bring various schools of philosophy into dialogue on the subject of ethics and the human person. The manner in which he did so is an important topic for this work because it illuminates

Wojtyla's epistemic basis for justice, a point on which we will compare his account with Barth's.

Current scholarship is divided on the shape of Wojtyla's work. Was Wojtyla's anthropology fundamentally phenomenological, borrowing elements from Thomism as Anna Tymieniecka and Robert Harvanek propose?[1] Or should his work be interpreted as primarily metaphysical, expanding Thomism with insights from phenomenology as Gerald McCool and John McNerny argue?[2] Other interpreters such as Gerard Beigel and John Saward claim that the later writings have a christocentric structure for anthropology.[3] Do Wojtyla's theological aims provide structure for his philosophical anthropology or *vice versa*? Or perhaps John Kavanaugh's argument hits the mark when he argues:

> Wojtyla's life and work, is a "dialectical" totality. Any approach [to his work] which is one-sided, dualistic or reductionistic will lead one astray. Each aspect of his life and thought cuts through and across the other aspects. The meaning of each part rests upon its relation to the other parts and the living totality itself. His phenomenology is Thomist, socialist, poetic, evangelical, dramatic, political and traditionalist. His Thomism is radical, phenomenological, contemporary, personalistic, and transcendental.[4]

Like McCool and McNerny, I suggest that Wojtyla's epistemological basis for moral theology was Thomist and that phenomenology provided a set of tools to explore and to confirm Thomist presuppositions. In other words, although he employed phenomenological tools for ethical purposes, he rejected Scheler's and other modern epistemologies as a starting point for ethics.

This position was demonstrated most clearly in his essay, "In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics." In this essay, he argued that the philosophy of being (illustrated by Aristotle and Aquinas) and philosophy of consciousness (illustrated by Kant and Scheler) are two bases for ethics that stand in "clear opposition."[5] The philosophy of being assumes that

1. Tymieniecka, "The Origins of the Philosophy of John Paul the Second," 16–27. Harvanek, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II," 1–22.

2. McCool, "The Theology of John Paul II," 29–54. McNerny, *John Paul II*, 14.

3. Beigel, *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II;* Saward, *Christ is the Answer*.

4. Kavanaugh, "John Paul II and Philosophy," 17.

5. Wojtya, "In Search of the Bases of Perfectionism in Ethics," in *Person and*

metaphysics is a science, a way of accurately describing a transcendent reality in which human beings participate through reason. In contrast, Kant limited human reason to consciousness, which "has no access to objective transcendent being."[6] Wojtyla argued that the phenomenologist, Max Scheler, held this assumption as well. Although Scheler believed that the good stands beyond consciousness, he refused to concern himself with it and dealt only with human consciousness.[7]

In the essay, Wojtyla argued that the philosophy of consciousness is an inadequate basis for moral good. He wrote:

> One could easily succumb to the illusion that for the construction of ethics it is best to proceed from an analysis of consciousness: if whatever is moral is also conscious, an examination of consciousness alone should allows us to discover all that it moral, all that informs the content of ethics . . . This turn out not to be the case. An analysis of consciousness alone allows us to discover only the contents of consciousness. Moral good, however, is not just a content of consciousness; it is also a perfection of the conscious being—and it is this first and foremost. The perfection of being can be apprehended only through an analysis of that being.[8]

This quote demonstrates Wojtyla's belief that the philosophy of being provides the only viable basis for morality because moral good transcends human consciousness.

While he utilized Scheler's phenomenology as a tool for exploring ethics, he continued to assume that the "*basis*" for morality transcended consciousness and must be conceptualized through the Thomistic metaphysics of being.[9] For, he concluded in this essay, "the Kantian norm and the Schelerian value ended up being suspended in a vacuum, so to speak because the complete human being is a being and not just consciousness."[10]

Community, 54. His argument centered around the concept perfectionism in ethics, the idea that "a person is perfected morally by good actions and devalued by bad ones," (46).

6. Wojtyla, "In Search of the Bases," 49.

7. Ibid., 52.

8. Ibid., 54–55.

9. See ibid., 48–49, on his appeal to Thomas as providing a superior Christian philosophy of being. See also "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community,* 175, in which he argued that an examination of the consciousness and values would point toward the eternal or transcendent reality of personhood.

10. Wojtyla, "In Search of the Bases," 55.

Interestingly, as John Paul II, he utilized the same metaphor to make a similar argument in 2005:

> If we want to speak rationally about good and evil, we have to return to Saint Thomas Aquinas, that is, to the philosophy of being. With the phenomenological method, for example, we can study experiences of morality, religion, or simply what it is to be human, and draw from them a significant enrichment of our knowledge. Yet we must not forget that all these analyses implicitly presuppose the reality of the Absolute Being and also the reality of being human, that is being a creature. If we do not set out from such "realist" presuppositions, we end up in a vacuum.[11]

Thus, we may conclude that Wojtyla's epistemological presuppositions were grounded in Thomistic metaphysics.

Yet in his ethical methodology Wojtyla employed phenomenological tools and modern philosophical insights, in order to "supplement" metaphysical reflection.[12] For example, Wojtyla critiqued the Aristotelian and Thomist teleological approaches to ethics in light of the modern turn to the subject. He described the "naturalistic" concept of the human being that both Aquinas and Aristotle employed as "rather inadequate," and as exerting a levelling effect on the concept of human personhood.[13] He argued that the emergence of the philosophy of consciousness and the phenomenological method enriched the study of persons and of morality. For this reason, he moved away from the teleological orientation of ethics toward a normative orientation in which morality is justified on the basis of values and norms. He explained, "'Virtues' and 'norms' themselves are not changing, but the way they are presented in the subject is."[14]

Thus in his ethics, Wojtyla utilized the phenomenological method to explore human consciousness in order to build a more comprehensive description of ethical values and norms. Yet he always assumed that such norms were not limited to human consciousness alone but found some correspondence in an objective order, the order established by the existence of God and the law of God.[15] We may conclude that while Wojtya/

11. JPII, *Memory and Identity*, 12.

12. Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, xiv.

13. Wojtyla, EMT, 104.

14. Ibid., 105.

15. Wojtyla, "The Human Person and Natural Law," in *Person and Community*, 184.

John Paul II utilized the phenomenological method, he continued to do so with the presuppositions of the philosophy of being.

Wojtyla's Epistemology: The Philosophical Basis for Knowing Justice

Having establishing that Wojtyla's epistemic basis for morality (and thus for his account of justice) was the metaphysics of Aquinas, a second question immediately poses itself: *How did Wojtyla interpret Aquinas' metaphysics?* This question is important for our examination of his work because it addresses one of the key points of comparison with Barth: the epistemological basis for accounts of justice. Karl Barth's early critique of metaphysics as a basis for ethics is well-known. Barth's particular focus for this argument centered around the Catholic concept of the *analogia entis*, or the analogy of being, which presupposed an analogous relation between the being of God and the being of humanity. Although many interpreters believe that Barth later relinquished this critique, I will argue in chapters four and five that the concerns underlying his initial rejection of the *analogia entis* remained relevant for Barth's ethical methodology. Thus, as we explore the Thomist epistemological starting points for Wojtyla's moral theology, I will examine his use of the *analogia entis*. Although Wojtyla does not use the term "*analogia entis*" in the essays we will examine, I will make the case that his appeal to it is intrinsic to his Existential Thomism.

In 1959, Wojtyla wrote an essay entitled, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm," in which he interprets Thomist metaphysics.[16] According to Wojtyla, Aquinas reconstructed the Aristotelian concept of the good by giving priority to the aspect of existence. Existence is a good and the good is identical with being. Assuming that every being has existence, every being is a good, for what determines good is sheer being. All beings have their own respective fullness of existence and, thus, of good. Because God has an unconditional fullness of existence, God is the highest good.[17]

Beings have different degrees of perfection and differing types of good. The good that exists in humans is the good of their rational nature,

16. In this essay, he argued that the metaphysical framework of Aquinas reveals the weaknesses of Scheler's phenomenology. This argument further substantiates my prior contention that Wojtyla's epistemology was fundamentally Thomist.

17. Wojtyla, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm," in *Person and Community*, 74.

a good that is not diminished by sin.[18] Another type of good is moral good. Moral good is destroyed by sin. Wojtyla explained, "The good connected with the very substance of our nature is not even diminished by sin, but the good connected with our natural inclination is reduced by sin, although not wholly destroyed, unlike the goods of virtue (moral good) and grace (supernatural good)."[19]

To varying degrees, creatures participate in God's fullness of existence and his unconditional perfection because they owe their existence to God. This belief has two implications. First, participation in existence entails resemblance; so greater participation in God, the fullness of existence, expresses itself in the greater degree of perfection of a given being.[20] Because humans are rational in a manner than animals are not, humans have a greater degree of perfection. Second, God is the supreme and transcendent measure of all beings. Wojtyla named this exemplariness of God, "the heart of the normative order," for the exemplar "is the transcendent measure for what is modelled after it."[21] The human measure of transcendence "results from the being's exemplification of the supreme perfection of Divine Being."[22] Thus, when Wojtyla spoke of the normative order, his basis for this order was God, who is the exemplary measure of all things. This normative order is key to Wojtyla's moral theology.[23]

Although Wojtyla did not use the term, the *analogia entis*, in his interpretation and affirmation of Aquinas' metaphysics, the essay clearly described the manner in which all being is analogous to the being of God. For both Aquinas and Wotjyla, being is only analogous, however. For God's being is perfect and necessary being; human existence is contingent, lived by participation in the existence of God.

18. Cf . Wojtyla, "Human Nature as the Basis for Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 96-97.

19. Wojtyla, MPB, 76.

20. Ibid., 77.

21. Ibid., 78.

22. Ibid.

23. In a subsequent essay, Wojtyla wrote, "From this follows the resemblance to God of all creatures in being; this resemblance has its own gradation. Both the resemblance as such and its gradations are gathered together and known in the mind of God as exemplars: the Creator sees in Himself the highest exemplar out of which beings are created and knows them in His image, that is to say, inasmuch as they imitate his essence, which is the first object of his knowledge. It is here that we find the nucleus of the normative order" (*Il fondamento metafisico e fenomenological dell norma morale sulla base delle concezioni di Tommaso d'Aquino e di Max Scheler*), 111–12. Translated by Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla,* 76.

The implications of the *analogia entis* for epistemology were spelled out at the end of his description of Aquinas when he wrote,

> Reason is able to conceive the very essence of the good. This, in turn, occurs without some sort of vision of "the good in itself," without a contemplation of the "Idea of the Good" conceived in a Platonic way. Reason abstracts the general concept of the good from the concrete particular goods we encounter in our actions.[24]

This quote is important for three reasons. First, it clarifies the significance of the *analogia entis* for moral epistemology. Wojtyla suggested that humans are able to posit norms because of "our ability to apprehend by means of reason the very essence of the good in a general way."[25] Why are humans able to do so? Because the goods that humans observe in this world and in their own actions are somehow reflective of, or analogous to, the good of God.[26] When we see a beautiful sunset, we can surmise something about the beauty of God. Likewise, when we see someone performing good action, we know something about the good of God. In this manner, the analogy of being provides the possibility of ethical knowledge when utilizing *a posteriori* reasoning.

Second, this quotation confirms what we suggested in Chapter One: Wojtyla's interpretation of Aquinas' epistemology is not of the Transcendental school of thought, for it appeals to *a posteriori* reasoning, a reasoning dependent upon the *analogia entis.* Third, this quote and this entire essay provides insight into Wojtyla's fundamental optimism in his account of justice. Wojtyla believed that all humans have epistemic access to norms of justice: all humans can posit norms that are good and true (to some extent) because of the *analogia entis* and because human nature (which includes reason)[27] has not been undermined by sin. In the cases when humans do *not* know justice, it seems to be due to the fact that their moral will, which has been weakened by sin, does not make the good its object, thus obscuring the truth about justice. He wrote:

24. Wojtyla, MPB, 81.

25. Ibid., 80.

26. Wojtyla, "The Problem of Separation of Experience from Acts in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 33; and "The Person: Subject and Community," *Person and Community*, 236. See also Buttiglione, 79.

27. Cf . Wojtyla, "Human Nature as the Basis for Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 96–97, in which he explains that the nature of humans is rational.

> The good is the object of the will, whereas the cognitive apprehension of the good—its objectification—is, according to St. Thomas, an object of reason. Both of these faculties work closely together with one another (*utraque ad actum alterius operatur*): the will wills so that reason may know; reason, in turn, knows that the will wills and what the will wills. A result of this cooperation of reason and the will is that the good and the true somehow mutually include one another.[28]

Thus, the will, which has corrupted but not totally destroyed the moral good that belongs to humans, may impair this epistemic capacity by rejecting the good. But humans who desire to know what is right, and desire to do what is good, have access to the objective order of God.

In this manner, by assuming the concept of the *analogia entis*, Wojtyla could universalize his ethic. In other words, he could argue that all persons have epistemic access to the good through reason and so all are held accountable to the good. Yet, in an interesting turn, he argued that reason alone is not enough. For example, while the precept of love is "in principle" accessible to reason, humans are unable to interpret it adequately without knowledge of God's intervention in human history through Jesus Christ.[29] In addition to the norms of natural law, there also exist norms that are revealed. Wojtyla wrote:

> When we shift from teleological ethics to normative ethics and attempt to reconstruct moral theology along the lines of the latter, we are faced with the question: what is the relation between norms contained in revelation and the norms of natural law, between "revealed virtues" and "natural virtues"? Are any of these norms exclusively "revealed," such that they could not be known without revelation? The possibility seems to exist of arriving at a purely philosophical understanding and acceptance of the entire moral content of the evangelical message, especially the precept that persons are to be loved by reason of the dignity vested in them. After all, according to revelation, particularly the teachings of St. Paul, the content of revealed precepts can also be known and is in fact known without revelation, in a natural way. This is also confirmed by general experience, which, in turn, stands at the basis of the current widespread call for dialogue. Obviously, such a purely rational interpretation of revealed norms involves a certain "compression" and "abbreviation" of

28. Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla,* 76.

29. Wojtyla, "Ethics and Moral Theology," in *Person and Community*, 105. Essay published in 1967.

> them. A purely philosophical interpretation is not adequate. In order to arrive at a wholly adequate interpretation, we must turn to theology and draw upon the full content of revelation.[30]

He followed this passage with an argument that moral theology and dogmatic theology must be intimately connected.

Upon first reading, it may appear that Wojtyla was asking the question, "Are there both norms which are revealed and norms which are known to the human without revelation, through natural law?" However, the argument that he proceeded to make does not answer this question and appears self-contradictory when his question is interpreted in this manner. Upon closer reading, I interpret Wojtyla's question to be, not one regarding the impact of revealed norms upon natural norms, but the question of the feasibility of justifying revealed norms apart from revelation. He was asking, "*Can revealed norms be justified by natural law?"* Beginning with this question, the passage can be interpreted more coherently. First, he answered that the possibility exists and he cited the teachings of St. Paul and general experience, to show how revealed precepts can be known in a natural way. Then he argued that purely philosophical interpretation of revealed norms is not adequate because without revelation we would know nothing of God's plan for salvation or of the intervention of the Incarnate God in human affairs. Thus, "not knowing this, we would also not be able to interpret adequately the moral contents of revelation (e.g., the precept of love) that are 'in principle' accessible to reason."[31] Thus, he answered the question, "*Can revealed norms be justified by natural law?*" in the negative. Theology provides the context for fully interpreting revealed norms.

This essay is key to interpreting Wojtyla's philosophical method for social ethics for two reasons. First, Wojtyla was not rethinking the foundation for moral norms in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. From a protestant perspective, the question of the relation between revealed norms vs. natural norms, would call into question the feasibility of natural law or knowledge about moral norms apart from scripture. However, Wojtyla so readily accepted the Thomist assumption that the *analogia entis* gives the human the capacity to know natural norms that he, seemingly, did not even notice this tension, which has been such a source of debate in modern theology. Rather, he embraced the conception that natural law does have access to a certain degree of truth.

30. Wojtyla, EMT, 105.

31. Ibid.

In a different essay, he explained why natural law is viable. First, he asserted the Thomist definition of the human person as "an individual substance of rational nature." Second, he defined natural law as "the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature."[32] From this he concluded that natural law intimately corresponds to the human being as a person, for "a rational ordinance corresponds to a rational being."[33] In other words, there is an objective rational order, toward which human reason is oriented (because of its correspondence to that order) and through which human reason encounters and participates in the eternal law of God.[34] Thus, the epistemological basis for natural law, for human norms, and specifically for norms of justice is, on the one hand, the correspondence of human reason to the eternal objective order.

On the other hand, the extended quotation above also points to a second aspect of Wojtyla's epistemology. Namely, he believed that Thomas' speculative theology was limited, indicating a limitation on the *analogia entis* as the sole means of knowledge about ethics. He said that philosophy and reason only go so far because they cannot adequately interpret the moral norms revealed by God.[35] Though the precept of love can be known through reason, philosophy is a good tool for "getting to the bottom" of this precept. While the moral contents of revelation are "in principle"

32. Wojtyla, "Human Person and Natural Law," 183.

33. Ibid., 184.

34. Wojtyla wrote: "From these elementary tenets, we see that law does not imply some sort of arbitrary interference of subjective reason in the objective world, but rather implies a basic orientation toward this objective order. This order is the order of values. Reason's orientation toward this objective order is expressed in its discovery and definition of that order. Consequently, this is not a subjective interference of reason in objective reality, in the sense that reason would impose its own categories on reality, as was ultimately the case in Kant's anthropological view, but a completely different orientation and attitude: the attitude of reason discerning, grasping, defining, and affirming, in relation to an order that is Objective and prior to human reason itself. I emphasize *to human reason,* since it should be noted at once that through the orientation of human reason toward the Objective order, which is itself an actual component of this orientation or 'ordinance of reason,' a singular encounter with the divine source of law takes place. This is brought out very strongly in the Thomistic definition of natural law. The encounter of human reason in its orientation toward the objective order is an encounter with the divine source of law. This encounter is very profound, for it involves participation in the eternal law, which is in some sense identical with God, with divine reason." "The Human Person and Natural Law," 184.

35. This presupposition is illustrated in the architectonic of Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentes.* In books 1–3, Aquinas "dealt with divine things according as the natural reason can arrive at the knowledge of divine things through creatures." *Summa Contra Gentes* 4.1.4.

accessible to reason, "without theology, there is no way to give a fully adequate interpretation of moral norms or of the so-called theological virtues."[36] Which virtues are "theological"? For Wojtyla, they are those virtues that "express in a special way the relation—revealed through 'facts and words'—of human beings to God."[37] By "relation," Wojtyla is referring to the salvation and sanctification of humankind in Jesus Christ.[38] For this reason, virtues like charity, hope, and faith are "theological," because they are only fully known through revelation.

In conclusion, for Wojtyla, human knowledge of justice may come through two venues: natural law and/or theology. Both of these venues are grounded in the reality of God but humans have access to them in different ways: one through the *analogia entis*, by which reason corresponds to the eternal reason of God, and the other through the revelation of God's relation to humanity. For Wojtyla, the ethical knowledge that humans gain through these venues is not contradictory. Rather, revelation offers a more adequate account of those virtues that are revealed. Thus, both of these ways to ethical knowledge must be taken into account in examining our second question for Wojtyla: "What his account of justice?"

Wojtyla's Account of Justice

Wojtyla articulated an account of justice that was based upon the personalistic norm: justice means treating people in accordance with their nature. Perhaps this was best illustrated through the contrast with utilitarianism, a theory that defines justice in terms of that which leads to the greatest amount of utility. Utilitarians believe that, because the aim of all rational individuals is to maximize their own happiness, justice entails facilitating the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people, given the possibilities at hand. Wojtyla critiqued this theory because of its tendency to view people as means to an end.[39] If the aim is pleasure, he said, persons are merely seen as a means to pleasure. By contrast, personalism views the person as an end, as a good in himself or herself.[40] Wojtyla wrote, "the personalist norm says: 'A person is an entity of a sort to which

36. Wojtyla, EMT, 105–6.

37. Ibid., 105.

38. Elsewhere, Wojtyla also includes the work of creation as God's revelation of himself. *SC,* 46.

39. Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 37.

40. Ibid., 40–41.

the only proper and adequate way to relate is love.'"[41] Thus, for utilitarians, the basis for human action is guided by pleasure; for personalists, the basis of action is love.

For Wojtyla, both love and justice interpenetrate the personalistic norm. Justice means "giving others what is rightly due them."[42] Yet what is rightly due to people? They are to be treated in accordance with their nature; justice is treating others with love. How are love and justice different? Wojtyla suggested that justice "concerns itself with things (material goods or moral goods, as for instance of one's good name) in relation to persons" whereas love is concerned with affirming the value of the person more directly and immediately.[43] Justice is one aspect of love; in order to love a person (to affirm their value), one must treat them justly. However, justice is not equated with love, for love does not consist merely in being just.

Wojtyla's Philosophical Account of Human Nature

It is obvious from this brief account of justice that Wojtyla's interpretation of human nature is key to his account of justice. If justice means treating people in accordance with their nature (or essence),[44] then one must also have a clear conception of what that nature is. From a philosophical perspective, Wojtyla appealed to the definition that Aquinas borrowed from Boethius: *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia.* The human being is an individual substance of a rational nature.[45] One property of rational nature is freedom.[46] Wotyla wrote, "The person, therefore, is always a rational and free concrete being, capable of all those activities that reason and freedom alone make possible."[47] The rational and free nature is Wojtyla's philosophical grounding for human dignity, for the human nature is a good in itself, a good that corresponds to the good of God's existence. The rational and free nature of humans is also Wotjyla's grounding for just action, which will be explored in a subsequent section.

41. Ibid., 41.

42. Ibid., 42.

43. Ibid.

44. Wojtyla wrote that "nature is equivalent to a thing's essence," "Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 96.

45. Wojtyla, TP, 167.

46. Wojtyla, "Human Nature as the Basis," 98.

47. Wojtyla, TP, 167.

Wojtyla's Theological Account of Human Nature

Yet Wojtyla acknowledged that an account of the dignity of human nature, which is grounded philosophically, may be further investigated in the light of theology. He built a theological basis for the dignity of human nature in his doctrine of God, doctrine of Christ, and his doctrine of the eschaton. We will briefly examine each of these three doctrines.

Doctrine of God

First, the doctrine of God reveals human nature because the transcendent God creates humans in his image for covenant with himself. Wojtyla wrote, "Each person is unique and draws his whole greatness from being rooted in his relationship with God, because he was created in the image and likeness of God, and also from the fact that God himself has a special relationship with each individual person."[48] Human nature entails likeness with God, lending humans an incomparable dignity among other beings, and especially over material objects. Second, because of this special relation with God, of creation and of love, the human discloses her own dignity by transcending or going beyond herself. Wojtyla wrote, "Man goes beyond himself by reaching out towards God, and thus progresses beyond the limits imposed on him by created things, by space and time, by his own contingency."[49] This capacity for transcendence critiques systems that define human nature in purely material terms. Third, God's act of creation attributes dignity to the human act. Human activity in creation is both dependent and autonomous: dependent upon the creator yet free for to discover, exploit, and order the laws and values of matter and society. [50] Likewise, action reveals dignity because it forms the human person in the likeness of God. In sum, likeness to God, transcendence, and activity reveal human nature as possessing a dignity beyond compare in the natural world.

48. Wojtyla, *WC*, 133.

49. Wojtyla, *SC*, 16.

50. Ibid., 49. He quoted *GS*, 36: "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth, and excellence, its own order and laws. These men must respect as he recognizes the methods proper to every science and technique."

Doctrine of Christ

The doctrine of Christ also reveals the dignity of human nature. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ reveals the dignity of human nature through his incarnation and through his redemption. First, humans find their dignity in the mystery of the incarnation because it expresses the love of the Father.[51] Wojtyla wrote,

> Contemporary people in this last quarter of the twentieth century, whose human dignity has been ignored and infringed in so many ways, come to Christ's stable in Bethlehem to ask who they are and why they are in the world, bringing with them their existential anxiety. And when they come to Bethlehem, like each of us they find the reply in the manger on the straw: "I have given them power to become children of God."[52]

Human dignity has been so compromised that people no longer understand that they are made in the image of God.[53] Through his incarnation, Jesus brought humans back to this truth. Thus, Jesus "defined and ordained this dignity when he, the Son of God and coexistent with the Father, became one of us—a man."[54] By becoming human, he raised humanity to a dignity "beyond compare."[55]

Second, the covenant, shattered by original sin, is rebuilt by redemption through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[56] People are divided in themselves because they often refuse to acknowledge God as the source, upsetting the relationship that links them to their final end and breaking the right order that should reign in their relationship to the self and to others.[57] The human is unable to overcome this sin except through the freedom and strength given him in Christ's redemption. Wojtyla wrote, "Redemption is from sin which degrades man, and in this redemption—in its essence and effects—we find the fundamental and inexhaustible means

51. Wojtyla, *SC*, 102.

52. Wojtyla, *WC*, 57.

53. Wojtyla, *SC*, 32–33.

54. Wojtyla, *WC*, 58. Wojtyla also wrote, "The incarnation of the Son of God emphasizes the great dignity of human nature; and the mystery of the redemption not only reveals the value of every human being but also indicates the lengths to which the battle to save man's dignity must go." *SC*, 102.

55. Vatican Council, *GS,* 22.

56. Wojtyla, *SC*, 25–26.

57. Vatican Council, *GS,* 13; *SC*, 76–77.

by which man is restored to his proper value."[58] Wojtyla called this redemption universal, in the sense that all people are involved in the paschal mystery of Christ.[59] The human realizes himself and restores dignity to humanity through self-abandonment to God and through the giving of himself to another.[60]

Third, Christ reveals human dignity by calling humans to share in his mission of love. Christ provides the answer to the question, "What is man?" As Wojtyla quoted from *Gaudium et Spes*, "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."[61] When he said this, did Wojtyla mean that no knowledge of the human is possible outside of Christ? Did this mean that he was grounding knowledge of human nature in Jesus Christ? Based upon his method and his definition of the *image of God* above, he was not implying that the mystery of humanity is revealed only in Christ. Rather, the revelation of Christ clarifies that which is already known about humanity. The revelation of grace perfects the revelation of nature. Thus, while the creation reveals that humans have dignity because they are in the image of God, Christ reveals the extent of this dignity through his incarnation, his act of redemption, and his calling for humans to participate in his gift of love.

Eschatology

Finally, humans discover their dignity in the hope of the eschaton. Wojtyla contrasted Christian eschatology with the secular eschatology of temporality and materialism. He questioned positive evaluation of the progress of

58. Wojtyla, *SC*, 77.

59. "All this holds true not for Christians only but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery." *GS,* 22; *SC,* 79–80.

60. Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of Vatican II*, 60–61.

61. Wojtyla, *SC,* 75. Vatican Council, *GS,* 22. See also Wojtyla, *SC*, 117. Vatican Council, *GS*, 22, confirms, "It is therefore through Christ, and in Christ, that light is thrown on the riddle of suffering and death which, apart from his Gospel, overwhelms us." *SC*, 80.

humanity as growing material gains have coincided with enormous moral shortcomings. He wrote that our "century of progress" has become the age of totalitarianism's death camps or liberalism's sickening prosperity, which has given rise to drug addictions, murder, and new social problems. Yet the Christian hope affirms that there is "the seed of eternity inherent in man, who cannot be reduced to mere matter, rebels against death."[62]

In sum, Wojtyla argued that the Christian revelation affirms and enhances the philosophical insights of Aquinas because it highlights the dignity of human nature. From a theological perspective, human nature is revealed in the acts and promises of God as well as the human capacity to transcend the material realm and to act freely.

The Justice that Corresponds to Human Nature

This section has raised the question, What was Wojtyla's account of social justice? Thus far we have seen that Wojtyla defined justice by using a personalist norm: justice means treating people in accordance with their nature. Then we explored the meaning of human nature in Wojtyla's philosophical and theological thought. His philosophy affirms that human nature is rational and free. This rationality and freedom affirm the dignity of each person, for it is a rationality and freedom that corresponds to the very nature of God's being. Theology affirms the incomparable dignity of humanity revealed in God's creation, salvation, and eternal preservation of each human life as well as in human transcendence and action. Because every human has such dignity, justice means treating every human in accordance with their nature; therefore treating all human persons with dignity.

This chapter has described Wojtyla's account of justice for individuals, but individuals naturally form into various societies and communities.[63] This reality raises the question of social morality, defined by Wojtyla as the question of "how to create a system of relations between the individual and society that results in the fullest possible correlation between the person's true good and the common good that society naturally seeks."[64] This ideal is a difficult balance between the error of individualism, which places individual good above the common good, and totalism, which attempts to subordinate persons in a way that the true good of persons is excluded. Between these two lies the personalist norm for justice. Wojtyla wrote,

62. Wojtyla, *SC*, 159.
63. Wojtyla, TP, 173.
64. Ibid., 174.

"Thomistic personalism maintains that the individual good of persons should by nature subordinate to the common good at which the collectivity, or society aims—but this subordination may under no circumstances exclude and devalue the persons themselves."[65]

Throughout his works, Wojtyla utilized this norm of personalism to account for justice. He critiqued those political and economic systems or technological advances or philosophies that did not uphold the dignity of persons, arguing consistently that all human developments must remain at the service of humankind.[66] The particular implications of this ethics of social justice will be examined more fully in his work as John Paul. Important for our purposes is the fact that the account of justice is personalist in nature: justice is treating humans with dignity, in a way that accords with their dignified nature.

Just Action in Society

Our final section explores the question of the cultivation of justice in society. It adds one more layer to the account of justice by drawing the link between theory and praxis. A theory of social justice divorced from an exploration into the question of how just societies are formed provides little benefit. Wojtyla argued that justice begins with individual human actions that shape societies.

The Consciousness and Efficacy of the Person

Wojtyla explored the nature of human ethical action in his book, *The Acting Person.* While continuing to maintain Thomistic assumptions about the rational and free nature of human persons, he used phenomenological tools to shed further light on the person as disclosed in human consciousness. Specifically, in this book, he examined the human's experience of the self in action.[67] He argued that man, himself, is the origin of his acting and the experience of efficacy is the awareness of being the agent and creator of the action being performed.[68] Yet man is not only the agent of action but also the recipient in the sense that "something-happens-in-man" when he acts. Thus, ethical experiences are not only intentional contents

65. Ibid.
66. For example, see *Sources,* 301–3; and *SC*, 108.
67. Wojtyla, *AP,* xx.
68. Ibid., 68–69.

of experience but they actually form persons.[69] For example, beginning with the value of justice and behaving justly in accordance with that value creates a just person.

In phenomenological analysis, this differentiation of human action (between agent and recipient) tends to divide the human. So Wojtyla argued that the metaphysical field of man's ontological structure (as the source of man-person) could synthesize the *efficacy* and the *subjectiveness* of man.[70] These two aspects of human action prove to be of pivotal importance for Wojtyla's ethics. First, analyzing the experience of *efficacy* provided vital insight into human freedom in action. He identified freedom as the decisive moment of the experience of efficacy. Freedom constitutes the structure of "man-acts."[71] Second, human experience of *subjectiveness* served to explain the formative nature of human action. Wojtyla wrote, "It is man's actions, his conscious acting, that make of him *what* and *who* he actually is. This form of human becoming thus presupposes the efficacy or causation proper to man."[72] Thus, this phenomenological approach clarifies the structures in which the choice of a good action serves to both create a good and to form the person as good. By implication, to treat another in a manner that is just has a positive impact upon the self because it forms the virtue of justice within one's self.

The Freedom of Human Action

Wojtyla examined the relation between the will and the person in which "the will manifests itself as a feature of the person and the person manifests himself as a reality with regard to his dynamism that is constituted by the will."[73] He calls this relation *self-determination*. Yet only through a structure of self-possession in which the person fully possesses and governs himself is self-determination possible.[74]

69. Wojtyla, "Act and Lived Experience," in *Person and Community,* 95–96; "The Problem of the Will in Analysis of Ethical Act," in *Person and Community,* 8–17.

70. Wojtyla, *AP,* 74–75.

71. Ibid., 100.

72. Ibid., 98.

73. Ibid., 105. In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla's argument for the transcendence of the person focuses on the will. In the essay "Act and Lived Experience" he argues that both feelings and cognition also indicate the transcendence of the person. See discussion in Schmitz, *At the Center*, 49.

74. In a side note, Wojtyla explains that the person as creature may also be seen as belonging to God but this relation, which medieval philosophers refer to as *persona est*

Wojtyla showed the connections between the freedom of the will as self-determining and the transcendence of the person in action. In other words, the freedom to choose just action is not determined historically, socially, or materially. It is grounded in the capacity of humans to transcend contexts and boundaries and to act freely. This free action is what determines the self, for "in every 'I will'—the self is the object, indeed the primary and nearest object."[75] Thus, the structure of self-determination in each genuine "I will" reveals the person's transcendence in action.[76] Wojtyla explained this assertion by defining *transcendence* as going over and beyond a threshold or boundary. "In every action, the person transcends his structural boundaries, his nature and its drives, by making himself a somebody through the action."[77] Wojtyla named this indicator of human freedom *vertical transcendence*.[78] Because the person is free and determines himself, he ascends over his own dynamism in vertical transcendence.[79]

Freedom indicated a special self-reliance that goes together with self-determination. Wojtyla wrote, "To say that man 'is free' means *that he depends chiefly on himself for the dynamization of his own subject.*"[80] Free will manifests itself in the ability to choose.[81] However, Wojtyla differentiated this freedom from Kant's autonomy by describing the intrinsic relation between human freedom and an objective order of the good and the true. Wojtyla's free will has the freedom *for* objects or values but dependent upon truth.[82] The freedom of the will presupposes a reference to truth for "it is the essential surrender of the will to truth that seems finally to

sui iuris, does not overshadow self-possession. *AP,* 106.

75. Ibid., 108–9.

76. Ibid., 111.

77. Beigel, *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II,* 16.

78. This contrasts with horizontal experience, which he explains as "transgressing the subject's limits in the direction of an object—and this is intentionality in the 'external' perception or volition of external objects." *AP,* 119.

79. Ibid., 124.

80. Ibid., 120.

81. Ibid., 132.

82. Ibid.; and Beigel, *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II,* 17–18. Elsewhere, Wojtyla argued that the will is a potentiality for the good because of the capacity for free will and because it is a specifically rational faction on human nature and in the concrete person. Reason plays a norm-setting role by submitting different goods to the will in light of the objective norms rooted in reality. "The Problem of the Will in Analysis of the Ethical Act," in *Person and Community,* 8–17; and "Act and Lived Experience," in *Person and Community*, 95–96.

account for the person's transcendence in action, ultimately for his ascendancy to his own dynamism."[83] A "moment of truth" is contained in every authentic choice of decision making for "if choice and decision were to be without their inherent moment of truth, if they were to be performed apart from that specific reference to truth, moral conduct most characteristic for the man-person would become incomprehensible."[84] However, despite this moment of truth, humans too often fail to choose the "real good," and this choice of the will leads to the experience of guilt or sin.[85] Thus, the freedom he describes is a freedom in reference to truth and good because truth is the basis for the person's transcendence in action.[86]

The performing of an action not only shapes the human but also brings personal fulfillment. The structure of self-possession, of man's willing and acting, serves as the basis for morality. In other words, ethics cannot be bracketed out or treated as an existential moral reality. Morality is founded in anthropology for it conceives of humans as responsible subjects of their actions that are realized through themselves. The roots of morality grow out of the person while also fulfilling the person. Only in such a cycle can morality be concretized. The truth of moral norms that determine rightness and wrongness are expressed in human experience through the creative role of the conscience, which "shapes the norms into that unique and unparalleled form they acquire within the experience and fulfillment of the person."[87] Through responsible and good action informed by truth, the human fulfils himself.

From this account, Wojtyla's optimism regarding human action is evident. Unlike the Protestant emphasis on the corruption of the will under sin, Wojtyla emphasized the capacity of the will to act justly. For Wojtyla, the will is free to choose just action regardless of the boundaries of nature, history, and society. Such a claim is vital for his theory of justice because gives it a universal appeal; all persons have access to the truth of "what justice is" and all persons have the capacity to behave justly. In as much as Thomistic metaphysics is theological, this claim has theological grounding. However, Wojtyla conceived this capacity as a philosophical claim, a claim dependent upon God's being and the subsequent existence of the normative order. The claim is not by necessity dependent upon

83. Wojtyla, *AP*, 138.
84. Ibid., 139.
85. Ibid..
86. Ibid., 146.
87. Ibid., 165.

God's action. By contrast, Barth had a more pessimistic conception of human capacities to know and to act justly, a pessimism that only took a more optimistic turn because of the action of God.

Wojtyla's emphasis upon the self-determining nature of human action provided insight into his claim that persons make themselves morally good or morally bad. For Wojtyla, the moral act is a free act that is self-determining. What is unclear in his work is the extent to which this moral bad-ness impacts human dignity. Does the person who performs morally bad action somehow reduce his dignity? Or is the dignity of human nature located in the rational nature alone, a good that is not diminished by sin.[88] Certainly Wojtyla would not want to claim that the morally bad person undermines his own dignity and nature through his action, for such a claim would mean that such persons need not be treated with the same dignity as the morally good person. Yet if act is self-determining, then morally bad action may entail a morally bad nature.

Such a concept opens Wojtyla's thought to this potential to treat others justly means to treat them in accordance with their natures. This concept appears to establishe a philosophical basis for retributive justice rather than restorative or transformative justice. Retributive justice maintains that proportionate punishment is a morally acceptable response to a crime. For example, Deuteronomy 19:21 appeals to retributive justice in demanding, "eye for eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." While Wojtyla's *theological* ethic does not lead to this ending point because of his appeal to love and to mercy that surpass justice, his *philosophical* ethic, the ethic by which he made his universal appeals, appears to. This fact suggests some contradiction within his account of Christian justice.

Human Action in Community

After examining the action of the individual person, in his book, *The Acting Person,* Wojtyla then turned to investigate the significance of his findings for the community. Wojtyla aimed to explain the social character of human nature and human action in community using the concept of participation. He introduced the definition of participation: having a share or taking part in something. Then he sought to investigate how a person, when he acts together with other people, retains the value of his own action while sharing in the realization and the results of communal acting. A human's existing and acting together with other persons enables him to

88. Wojtyla, MPB, 76.

achieve his own development through participation. Wojtyla contrasted this idea of participation with *individualism*, in which the individual is the supreme and fundamental good and others' interests are seen as limitations, and *totalism*, which subordinates the individual to the community in a coercive fashion. He claimed that the intellectual conception of humanity underlying both systems is impersonal:

> Every human being must have the right to act, which means "freedom in action," so that the person can fulfill himself in performing the action. The total freedom of action, which results from its personalistic value, conditions the ethical order and simultaneously determines it. On the other hand, the moral order instills into human actions—in particular, those within the orbit of acting "together with others"—those determinants, and thus also limitations, which are the consequence of purely ethical values and norms.[89]

Wojtyla argued that the common good is the foundation of authentic human communities. Participation emerges as a property of the human person from the reality constituted by common acting and common being.[90] Because Wojtyla defined human persons in terms individual substance, he did not make the claim that participation in the Other is grounded in human essence.[91] Rather than grounding participation in the material reality of human persons, the human capacity entails potential for participation in the Other, which he may freely choose. In other words, for Wojtya, participation is a potential dependent upon human capacity. In so choosing participation, the human forms himself and contributes to the common good.[92]

Wojtyla named two virtues that promote authentic participation and build up the common good: *solidarity* and *opposition*. *Solidarity* indicates a constant willingness to accept and realize one's share in the community. The attitude of solidarity seeks the benefit of the whole even when the common good requires the sacrifice of one's own share. The attitude of *opposition* means that one will not withdraw his membership in the community but that he will seek the good of the community by contesting that

89. Wojtyla, *AP*, 332.

90. Ibid., 339–40.

91. Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?," in *Person and Community*, 201.

92. Wojtyla, "Participation or Alienation?," 203. Cf. Gregg, *Challenging the Modern World: Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II and the Development of Catholic Social Teaching*, 201–11.

with which he does not agree. These two attitudes provide the basis for dialogue, a theme constant throughout John Paul's social writings. Dialogue seeks to bring out what is right and true and to eliminate partial, preconceived, or subjective views and attitudes.

In the essay, "The Person: Subject and Community," Wojtyla sought to identify the "special value" of community that corresponds to the person's fulfillment through act.[93] He argued that this special value is the *communio personarum*, or the "communion of persons." This communion takes place in interpersonal relationships as persons face one another in "I-thou" relationships.[94] The *I* and *thou* enable one another to develop by discovering the other and oneself in the other. The fullest experience of interpersonal community occurs when the *I* and *thou* reveal themselves and mutually affirm through word and act the dignity and transcendent value of the person.[95]

In the social dimension of the community, persons stand together in the pursuit of the common good, the good of society. The *I* and *thou* relationships of the interpersonal community become the *we* relationships in the social community as the *I* and the *thou* find their mutual relation in the common good, in accordance with the natural law. The core of the social community is this relation of many *I*'s to a common good.[96]

The implications of Wojtyla's use of the Boethian definition of human nature as "individual substance" is perhaps seen most clearly in his account of participation. Conceiving of humans as individuals means that participation is not a reality but a potential for individuals within society. This point is of vital importance for the later dialogue with Karl Barth, who grounded participation in human nature.

93. Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community*, 219–63. See also Beigel's summary, *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, 25–28. Wojtyla adopts this language from Martin Buber, *I and Thou*.

94. Wojtyla, *PSC*, 240–44.

95. Ibid., 245–46.

96. Ibid., 247; and Beigel, *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, 27. Because this work is focusing upon the grounding of social ethics in the ontological aspect of personhood as the key point of dialogue, we will not be addressing John Paul's understanding of the common good in fuller detail. Hollenbach deals with such concerns as the notion of the common good impinges on issues of social justice and human rights in *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. While exploring this notion in comparison with Barth would prove fruitful, it is not within the scope of this work to do so.

Conclusion

This chapter presented Wojtyla's account of justice in three parts: epistemology, theory, and praxis. It argued that Wojtyla's epistemological basis for justice was two-fold. On the one hand, he appealed to an interpretation of the Thomist metaphysical of being, which assumed the analogy of being in asserting that humans are capable of knowledge of justice through epistemic access to the normative order, or natural law. Through this appeal to natural law, Wojtyla could make knowledge of justice universal, something that all persons had access to through the norms that correspond to their natures. On the other hand, Wojtyla acknowledged that revealed norms also yield important information about justice, such as (a) the connection between justice and love and (b) deeper insight into human nature and dignity.

This chapter secondly described Wojtyla's account of justice. He used the personalist norm to argue that justice means treating persons in accordance with their nature. From a philosophical perspective human nature is rational and free in correspondence to God's being. In addition, revelation demonstrates that humans are dignified "beyond compare" (a) because of the acts of God in creation and salvation (b) and because of the corresponding human capacity for action and for transcendence. To treat another as just is to treat him or her with the dignity according with this nature.

Third, this chapter explored the nature of just human action. Wojtyla argued that persons are both subjects and objections of human action so that human action is self-determining. This self-determination is reaffirmed by Wojtyla's argument that human action is transcendent: it is determined by no one but the one who acts in freedom. This conception proved especially relevant to his context of social and political oppression because it offered persons hope and freedom from the despair that they may be determined by the negative aspects of their context. Wojtya wanted to account for the capacity of humans to free to act justly and courageously even in contexts, such as his own, where systemic dehumanization had reached new heights. Just action depends not upon one's experience of justice or injustice but upon one's capacity to act and to experience one's own just action as self-determining. This capacity is human greatness, Wojtyla believed.

While answering each of these three questions regarding justice, I sought to demonstrate throughout that Wojtyla's epistemology, his theory of justice, and his account of human potential for just action are

fundamentally optimistic. As someone who lived within a context of oppression and suffering, Wojtyla appealed to that which he saw as the best in persons and in human potential. He wrote in a manner that sought to lift people up beyond their material contexts and toward discovering the dignity all humans so that they might treat others with dignity and create political and economic systems that maintains the value of the each person.