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## **THE COMMON SENSE PERSONALISM OF ST. JOHN PAUL II (KAROL WOJTYŁA)**

Demonstrating a linkage between Karol Wojtyła's philosophical personalism and common sense seems to necessitate showing Wojtyła's appreciation for classical metaphysics as being nothing other than a philosophical development of the common sense interpretation of reality.<sup>1</sup> In my article, then, I am going to support two claims. First, that the personalism of St. John Paul II is specified by the metaphysical philosophy of the Lublin Philosophical School (further mentioned as LPS), which in turn means that Wojtyła's philosophical legacy can not be properly understood unless examined against the background of the philosophical project of this School. Secondly, that Wojtyła's usage of phenomenological method fully complies with the metaphysical approach to reality.

### **A Framer of LPS**

Although in the 1950s the Faculty of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin (further mentioned as KUL) formally consisted of many professors, there were merely a few who not only delivered lectures but also contributed in conceiving and running some common project of doing philosophy. In 1954, when he started to commute from Krakow to Lublin, Fr. Wojtyła joined a group of three other Lublin scholars (namely

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<sup>1</sup> In accord with metaphysics, I assume that common sense is a cognitive habit to apprehend reality in its most fundamental aspects. It is elicited in spontaneous, pre-scientific cognition, which conditions a normal human development in the area of knowing, acting, and producing. For more on the metaphysical understanding of common sense, see Wojciech Daszkiewicz, "Zdrowy rozsądek" ("Common Sense"), in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., vol. 9 (Lublin: PTTA, 2008), 909–912.

S. Swieżawski, J. Kalinowski and Fr. M. A. Krapiec, O.P.) in their effort to establish a philosophical school. Their collective work gave birth to LPS. In time its name “began to function as a description of the program for teaching and the style for cultivating philosophy started in the latter half of the 1950s.” Consequently, the actual affiliation of a philosopher to LPS began to be determined by the way he or she cultivates and understands philosophy, rather than by his or her formal membership in the Faculty of Philosophy at KUL.<sup>2</sup> George Weigel noted that:

The KUL project was defined by a quartet of relatively young men who had become professors at KUL because Poland’s Stalinist rulers had expelled the older teachers. The four included Jerzy Kalinowski (the dean of the Philosophy Faculty, a specialist in logic and the philosophy of law), Stefan Swieżawski (a historian of philosophy and an exponent of the existential Thomism of Jacques Maritain), Father Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec (a Dominican specialist in metaphysics), and Father Karol Wojtyła (a specialist in ethics) . . . These were very different personalities, with divergent interests and academic specialties.<sup>3</sup> They nonetheless achieved what Professor Swieżawski later called a ‘rare and exceptionally fruitful collaboration,’ built around four agreements which were crucial to Karol Wojtyła’s philosophical project.<sup>4</sup>

Wojtyła’s philosophical project, in turn, was very much an integral part of the collective enterprise of the School. While each of its four framers developed his own personal philosophical interest in private, they discussed their achievements in public to make them more coherent with the overall philosophy of LPS.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, O.P., Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., *The Lublin Philosophical School*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Lublin: PTTA, 2010), 10–11. It means that LPS is not a synonym of the Faculty of Philosophy at KUL.

<sup>3</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 133.

<sup>4</sup> George Weigel, “Wojtyła’s Walk Among the Philosophers.” Address at a conference on “The Phenomenology of John Paul II” at Duquesne University, 1 December 2006 [<http://eppc.org/publications/wojtylas-walk-among-the-philosophers/>, accessed on 15.06.2014].

<sup>5</sup> Those public discussions took place on different occasions. For instance, one of them was held after Karol Wojtyła’s presentation during “The Philosophy Week” (Feb 13–17, 1961) at KUL. For the transcript of the paper and discussion, see Karol Wojtyła, “Personalizm tomistyczny” (“Thomistic Personalism”), *Znak* 13:5 (1961), 664–675.

Wojtyła's contribution in establishing LPS may be shown by his involvement in constructing three pillars of the LPS philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

The main pillar of LPS is its endorsement of metaphysics. Both Wojtyła and his colleagues from the School openly admitted the inalienableness of metaphysics in understanding the reality of persons and things. Metaphysics entered Wojtyła's life when he was preparing himself for priesthood, and remained with him from then on. He used to recall a manual book in the philosophy of being by Fr. Wais which gave him a first and unforgettable flavor of metaphysics.

It was Father Klosak who first gave me Wais and told me to study him for an exam.<sup>7</sup> My literary training, centered around the humanities, had not prepared me at all for the scholastic theses and formulas with which the manual was filled. I had to cut a path through a thick undergrowth of concepts, analyses, and axioms without even being able to identify the ground over which I was moving. After two months of hacking through this vegetation I came to a clearing, to the discovery of the deep reasons for what until then I had only lived and felt. When I passed the examination I told my examiner that . . . the new vision of the world which I had acquired in my struggle with that metaphysics manual was more valuable than the mark which I had obtained. I was not exaggerating. What intuition and sensibility had until then taught me about the world found solid confirmation.<sup>8</sup>

And after several decades of his priestly ministry in the Church, he stated officially in his famous Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* that what the contemporary world strongly needed was "a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order

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<sup>6</sup> In his introductory essay to Karol Wojtyła's book, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok, O.S.M. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), ix–xvi, Stefan Swieżawski wrote that "[a]s a group, the Lublin philosophers shared a commitment to affirming the primacy of realistic metaphysics in philosophy, underlining the significance of philosophical anthropology, rediscovering the 'true' Aquinas, and applying his ideas to contemporary problems." (Samuel Gregg, *Challenging the Modern World: Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II and the Development of Catholic Social Teaching* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 1999), 74–75.)

<sup>7</sup> Mieczysław Maliński, *Pope John Paul II. The Life of Karol Wojtyła* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1982), 179.

<sup>8</sup> George Weigel, *The Final Revolution. The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (New York 1992), 82.

to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”<sup>9</sup>

Here, one might ask a question: why was metaphysics so important for John Paul II at every stage of his life? Even if it was to be always present, still it was not the only philosophical tradition which exercised its impact on his thought. For assistance in answering this question, I follow Rocco Buttiglione, who once referred to one of G. K. Chesterton’s apt remarks: “the error is a truth become insane, that opposes itself to other truths instead of looking patiently for its proper place in the organism of complete truth.” In this sense metaphysics is not just a philosophical current among others but a common compass showing which way a philosopher can avoid the absolutization of his own partial perspective. Thus, for Pope John Paul II, metaphysics guaranteed his orthodoxy (i.e. the correctness of his teaching) and his catholicity (i.e. his openness to the totality of truth and to dialogue with other perspectives).<sup>10</sup>

The second pillar of LPS can be described as a creative association of coherentism, realism, pragmatism and historicism. It follows that, for the LPS philosophers, any philosophical proposition is to be subject to a fourfold inquiry: that of logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy and the history of philosophy. In other words, any proposition which is put forward is to be: (a) internally consistent, (b) in accordance with reality and experience, (c) making allowance for its practical consequences, and (d) aligned with tradition, because we can understand and avoid errors only by knowing cultural consequences and considering answers given by our forefathers to questions we ask today.<sup>11</sup> While logical, metaphysical and historical approaches to philosophy were developed respectively by Kalinowski, Krąpiec and Swieżawski, Karol Wojtyła occupied himself with moral philosophy. Moral questions loomed large in his mind for all his life. He was convinced that

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 83. Certainly, it was not that he meant “to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought.” What he wanted was “to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being’s capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical” (id.).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Rocco Buttiglione, “The Political Praxis of Karol Wojtyła and St. Thomas Aquinas.” Paper delivered at a conference on Thomas Aquinas as Doctor of Humanity, October 2013, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Houston [<http://www.jp2forum.org/mlib/document/030514buttiglione.%20p.a.s.ta%20paper%202013.pdf>, accessed on 15.06.2014].

<sup>11</sup> See Henryk Kiereś, “Kultura klasyczna wobec postmodernizmu” (“Classical Culture in the Face of Postmodernism”), *Człowiek w Kulturze* 11 (1998), 242.

[n]o less important than research in the theoretical field is research in the practical field—by which I mean the search for truth which looks to the good which is to be performed. In acting ethically, according to a free and rightly tuned will, the human person sets foot upon the path to happiness and moves towards perfection. Here too it is a question of truth.<sup>12</sup>

The third pillar of LPS is its personalism, which finds its essential justification in the metaphysical account of the transcendence of the human being. Such an account emphasizes the two-fold transcendence of the person: (a) in relation to nature, through spiritual acts of intellectual cognition, love and freedom; and (b) in relation to community—through acts bound with the moments: subjectivity of rights, ontic completeness, religious dignity.<sup>13</sup> Thus, all the LPS framers have always been very sensitive about any reductionism of man. Karol Wojtyła repeatedly expressed his concern about the person; in 1968, for example, he wrote to his friend, Fr. Henri de Lubac:

I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart and devoted to the metaphysical sense and mystery of the person. It seems to me that the debate today is being played out on that level. The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. This evil is even much more of the metaphysical order than of the moral order. To this disintegration planned at times by atheistic ideologies we must oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of ‘recapitulation’ of the inviolable mystery of the person.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt that Wojtyła was always aware of the danger of collectivism, which in all its forms does make a horrible mistake of depriving man of his substantial status and treating him as an accidental part of the social whole. His contribution in recapitulating the inviolable mystery of the person culminated in his personalism tightly integrated with realist

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<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, O.P., *I-Man. An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe and others (New Britain, Conn.: Mariel Publications, 1983), 326.

<sup>14</sup> George Weigel, “John Paul II and the Crisis of Humanism,” in *The Second One Thousand Years: Ten People who Defined a Millennium*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 116.

metaphysics and ethics. With his focus on the fulfillment and irreducibility of the human person, he made his substantial contribution to the metaphysical account of man conceived as a potential and transcendent being.

Regarding the above mentioned matter, it seems difficult to consider the personalism of St. John Paul II in separation from the philosophical project of LPS. I fully agree with George Weigel, who in one of his conference addresses evaluated it as “unfinished.”<sup>15</sup> Definitely, the philosophical legacy of Karol Wojtyła should be taken as incomplete unless conceived as an integral department of the LPS philosophy as a whole. Wojtyła’s cooperative way of doing philosophy seems to be a provocative lesson for all those who believe in cultivating philosophy individually or providing complete answers by an individual philosopher.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Phenomenology of St. John Paul II**

While he was introduced to metaphysics by the book of Fr. Wais, Karol Wojtyła was presented with phenomenology by the writings of Max Scheler. It happened, of course, before he became a leader of LPS.

Why was Wojtyła attracted to Scheler? Perhaps it was caused by the popularity of that German phenomenologist among Catholic thinkers. Michael Waldstein pointed out that, in the introduction to his book on Scheler, Wojtyła noticed that Scheler’s ideas attracted the attention of Catholic thinkers for two main reasons. The first reason was of ethical nature. Catholic ethicists, who had always been focused on the real objects of human acts, that is, on the good or value, seemed to find an ally in Scheler against Kant. As they opposed Kant’s ‘formalism,’ in which moral goodness was a matter of the universal form of the categorical imperative rather than the material content of the will, they were naturally interested in Scheler’s criticism of Kant and his ‘material ethics of values.’ The second reason was of Biblical origin. Scheler’s thesis, that love for the person and

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<sup>15</sup> Weigel, “Wojtyła’s Walk Among the Philosophers.”

<sup>16</sup> On a *complaint* about the incompleteness of Wojtyła’s philosophy, see Ronald Modras, “The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II,” *Theological Studies* 41 (December 1980), 696–697: “Perhaps the greatest single difficulty with Karol Wojtyła’s moral philosophy is the fact that it is incomplete. These two articles give an indication of being the first two chapters of a book-length study similar to his anthropology in *The Acting Person*. Chapter 3 appears never to have been written, or at least has not been published. As it stands, the Cardinal’s metaethics leaves many questions unanswered. The consequent ambiguity leaves his theory open to the possibility that concepts like intrinsically evil actions and negative moral absolutes fit in quite neatly.”

following an exemplary person have great importance and play a central role in ethical life as a whole, seemed to be correlated with the Gospel's teaching on following and imitating Christ.<sup>17</sup>

In his biography of John Paul II, George Weigel wrote that Wojtyła had become convinced that the answers to the question, whether it was possible to create a solid philosophical foundation for the moral life on the basis of Scheler's phenomenology of ethics, were not to be found in the neo-scholasticism of Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.<sup>18</sup> Michael Waldstein, however, replied to Weigel that

[i]f Wojtyła set out to study Scheler's *Formalism* in this hope, one must conclude that he was disappointed. A Christian ethics cannot be built on Scheler. The answers were not to be found in the Phenomenology of Scheler. The failure of Scheler's system is not due to particular problems here or there; the failure is systemic. 'The whole difficulty is the result of the Phenomenological premises of the system and we must assign the blame to these principles.' Whatever should be said in detail about Garrigou-Lagrange, it is clear that Wojtyła's habilitation thesis defends Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophical ethics as the foundation for moral theology against Scheler's attempt to de-Hellenize Christian thought.<sup>19</sup>

In 1957, already as a member of the LPS team, Wojtyła openly expressed his support of Aristotle's ethics and his account of happiness. He wrote that an attribute of human nature

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Waldstein, "Wojtyła's Book about Scheler," 376 [[http://www.jp2forum.org/mlib/document/070511wojtyla\\_on\\_scheler.pdf](http://www.jp2forum.org/mlib/document/070511wojtyla_on_scheler.pdf), accessed on 20.02.2014].

<sup>18</sup> See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 127–128.

<sup>19</sup> Waldstein, "Wojtyła's Book about Scheler," 403. See also id., 401–402: "Wojtyła concludes his book with two theses: Thesis 1: The ethical system developed by Max Scheler is in principle unsuited for the scientific formulation of Christian ethics. For, although it establishes a relationship with the ethical content of the sources of revelation by defining ethical values as personal values, its Phenomenological and emotivist premises do not allow it to grasp this content completely and to understand it scientifically. In particular, Scheler's system is unsuited for grasping these sources theologically, which is absolutely necessary, given that they are sources of revelation and constitute an object of supernatural faith. Thesis 2: Although the ethical system developed by Max Scheler is in principle unsuited for the scientific formulation of Christian ethics, it can help us indirectly in our scientific work on Christian ethics. It facilitates the analysis of ethical facts on the phenomenological and empirical plane."

is above all the desire for happiness. It is something natural and necessary. Man is unable not to desire happiness. He wills it always and in everything although he does not always name the object of his desires. And precisely for this reason it can seem as if he did not desire happiness, but only strove for the various values with which he is concerned, because he desires happiness in all and through all.

The desire for happiness does not lie on the uppermost surface of willing and even less so on the surface of human acts. It is not difficult, however, to discover it in them and grasp it objectively—nobody will deny that this desire is always alive in the depth of willing.

Ethics can neither reject this fact, nor occupy itself with it to the exclusion of all else. According to its nature, Ethics is not the doctrine of happiness, because it is a normative science, while happiness stands outside and above every norm. Happiness is the goal of nature and cannot be an object of choice, while the norm concerns only that which is an object of choice. The object of choice is always a way on which a particular person must walk.

Happiness, by contrast, is not a way, but the goal of all the ways of human beings. It is, therefore, not difficult to agree that in a mediate way Ethics shows human beings the way toward happiness. Aristotle understood the role of happiness in this way, and so does the Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

In 1959, in turn, Wojtyła summarized his study on the metaphysical and phenomenological basis of the moral norm in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler, saying that

in the light of my analysis of the views of these two thinkers, St. Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler, I am led to conclude that the concept of a norm is justified in a system of moral philosophy that proceeds from an existential view of the good and is not really justified in a system of the philosophy of values.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “Die ethische Fibel” (“Primer of Ethics”), in *Erziehung zur Liebe: Mit einer ethischen Fibel* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald, 1957 [1980]), 110–111 (after: Waldstein, “Wojtyła’s Book about Scheler,” 403).

<sup>21</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Max Scheler,” in *Person and Community*, 93.



Even in 1969, in his famous *Person and Act* (in 1979, translated into English as *The Acting Person*), Wojtyła invoked classical metaphysicians as an important point of reference for his phenomenological study on man. He clearly stated that

[i]n this area of study what offers particularly convincing arguments is the philosophy of Aristotle, which was developed by St. Thomas Aquinas in the middle ages. We are not going to repeat here their arguments for the complexity of man and the essential irreducibility of spirit to matter. It is not excluded that analyses already attempted in this book, as well as those reserved for later chapters, in their own way consider the arguments of Aristotle and Thomas and in their own way shed on them some new light. More probably, however, they use the light shed by the philosophy of these two thinkers.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that all over the world Karol Wojtyła passes for a phenomenologist rather than a Thomist. Very few scholars are willing to admit that phenomenology was not essential, but rather a supplemental means of doing philosophy for Wojtyła, that he was a metaphysician who reached for phenomenology to gain not a full, but merely fuller grasp of man and that of his reality.<sup>23</sup> If we browse the internet to check the popularity of the phrase ‘phenomenology of Karol Wojtyła’ in comparison to the phrase ‘Thomism of Karol Wojtyła,’ the phrase with ‘phenomenology’ wins 1,260 to 1.<sup>24</sup> But even if Wojtyła deserves the name of a phenomenologist, all the advocates of this opinion have to admit that he was not faithful to phenomenology. Not only did he use to *betray* phenomenology with Thomism as often as he dared to appreciate metaphysics, but also he was disposed to do the same with any other philosophical current which would be aligned with Thomism. In 1979 at the Angelicum in Rome, he said that

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<sup>22</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne (Person and Act with Other Studies in Anthropology)* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1994), 228. The English translation of the book (*The Acting Person*) does not contain this quoted fragment.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Eduardo J. Echeverría, “In the Beginning...” *A Theology of the Body* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 167, n. 5: “For helping me to see clearly how ‘besides being a phenomenologist [John Paul II] was also a metaphysician,’ I am indebted to the late Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., ‘Metaphysical Realism of Pope John Paul II.’ Also helpful is Deborah Savage’s unpublished paper, ‘Centrality of Lived Experience in Wojtyła’s Account of the Person.’” On the publication of Deborah Savage’s paper see note 33.

<sup>24</sup> I cite the data from July 27, 2014.

every understanding of reality—which does in fact correspond to reality—has every right to be accepted by the ‘philosophy of being,’ no matter who is to be credited with such progress in understanding or to what philosophical school that person belongs. Hence, the other trends in philosophy, if regarded from this point of view, can and indeed should be treated as natural allies of the philosophy of St. Thomas, and as partners worthy of attention and respect in the dialogue that is carried on in the presence of reality. This is needed if truth is to be more than partial or one-sided.<sup>25</sup>

What I claim here is that the metaphysical view of man was regarded by Wojtyła as necessary, but insufficient. His Aristotelian-Thomistic formation found its enrichment in phenomenological method,<sup>26</sup> which was employed “merely in order to explore human interiority, including consciousness and self-consciousness.”<sup>27</sup>

He understood metaphysical anthropology as a cosmological approach to man which was objectively reasonable but omitting personal factors of a human life. In 1978, he wrote:

Traditional Aristotelian anthropology was based, as we know, on the definition . . . *homo est animal rationale* . . . [T]he definition is constructed in such a way that it excludes—when taken simply and directly—the possibility of accentuating the irreducible in the human being. It implies—at least at first glance—a belief in the reducibility of the human being to the world. The reason for maintaining such

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<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, “Address at the Angelicum,” *L’Osservatore Romano. English Weekly Edition* (17 December 1979), 6–8; Karol Wojtyła, “Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times,” in *The Whole Truth About Man: John Paul II to University Faculties and Students*, ed. James V. Schall, S.J. (Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1981), 221. Cf. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, O.P., *I-Man*, 326: “Doubtless the seeds of the theory of personal being are perceived very accurately and it would be proper to develop an analysis and considerations of the meaning of this topic by also taking into account phenomenological expositions and reflections. And in great measure, such reflections exist in philosophical literature, although they are not linked with the conception of a personal being.”

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery* (New York: Image Books, 1999), 93–94: “My previous Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was enriched by the phenomenological method, and this made it possible for me to undertake a number of creative studies. I am thinking above all of my book *The Acting Person*.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Edward Barrett, *Persons and Liberal Democracy: The Ethical and Political Thought of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 29.

reducibility has always been the need to understand the human being. This type of understanding could be defined as cosmological.<sup>28</sup>

According to Wojtyła, such a cosmological anthropology needed to be complemented by a personalistic understanding of man. In the same text he maintained that

[w]e should pause in the process of reduction, which leads us in the direction of understanding the human being in the world (a cosmological type of understanding), in order to understand the human being inwardly. This latter type of understanding may be called personalistic. The personalistic type of understanding the human being is not the antinomy of the cosmological type but its complement. As I mentioned earlier, the definition of the person formulated by Boethius only marks out the ‘metaphysical terrain’ for interpreting the personal subjectivity of the human being.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, phenomenology became a means by which Wojtyła found his way to the irreducible in man, the irreducible which was also, as he claimed, something objective.<sup>30</sup> Applying the phenomenological method turned out to be very helpful in saving human consciousness from the power of subjectivism and making it an object of realist philosophy. Exploring the human consciousness, however, needs a close cooperation of phenomenology and metaphysics. According to Rocco Buttiglione,

phenomenology helps to disentangle the intricacies of human experience and leads us up to the fundamental questions which properly belong to the realm of metaphysics. Metaphysics, for its part, helps phenomenology not to get lost in the mazes of its interpretations. Metaphysics allows us to see, in a certain sense, the fundamental frame and the skeleton of experience while phenomenology

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<sup>28</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” in *Person and Community*, 210–211. See also: Karol Wojtyła, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 171: “We can see here how very objectivistic St. Thomas’ view of the person is. It almost seems as though there is no place in it for an analysis of consciousness and self-consciousness as totally unique manifestations of the person as a subject . . . Thus St. Thomas gives us an excellent view of the objective existence and activity of the person, but it would be difficult to speak in his view of the lived experiences of the person.”

<sup>29</sup> Wojtyła, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” 213.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*, 211.

shows us the tendons and muscles supported by this skeleton. Together they constitute the living body of philosophical experience.<sup>31</sup>

John Paul II was very clear in his understanding of phenomenology and its relationship to metaphysics. In his famous *Memory and Identity*, he strongly emphasized that

[i]f we wish 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, of being a creature. If we do not set out from such 'realist' presuppositions, we end up in a vacuum.<sup>32</sup>

### Moral Sense and Common Sense

Given a special interest of Karol Wojtyła in moral philosophy, let us ask him a question: is there any connection between moral sense and common sense in his philosophy? Answering this question is focused on Wojtyła's phenomenological account of moral experience, in order to show its realistic foundation and its end which tends to be reinforced by metaphysics.<sup>33</sup>

What is human experience? According to Wojtyła, human experience can be explained by its two constitutive elements: a sense of reality and a sense of knowing. The sense of reality is "a basic orientation that grasps the fact that something exists with an existence that is real and objectively independent of the cognizing subject and the subject's cognitive

<sup>31</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, "The Political Praxis of Karol Wojtyła and St. Thomas Aquinas."

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Personal Reflections* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 13. See also Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 70: "At this point phenomenology seems to infringe boldly upon metaphysics, and it is here that its reliance upon metaphysics is most needed; for phenomena themselves can visualize a thing clearly enough, but they are incapable of a sufficient explanation of themselves."

<sup>33</sup> In my further analysis of Wojtyła's personalism, I am greatly indebted to the article by Deborah Savage: "The Centrality of Lived Experience in Wojtyła's Account of the Person," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* LXI:4 (2013), 19–51.

act, while at the same time existing as the object of that act.”<sup>34</sup> The sense of knowing, in turn, is “a sense made possible by the first; it is because the subject experiences a ‘sense of reality’ that he also experiences a ‘sense of knowing.’ This second sense is the result of the subject coming into contact with what exists; it manifests itself as a tendency toward that which really and objectively exists . . . as true.”<sup>35</sup>

Wojtyła claims that, while considering experience as consisted of these two senses, we can define the nature of cognition and provide a further explanation of the sense of reality, which must be seen as transcendent in relation to cognition. This must be so since, if reality and cognition were identical, the tendency of the intellect to seek the truth would be unintelligible. Cognition goes beyond itself because “it is realized not through the truth of its own act . . . but through the truth of a transcendent object—something that exists with a real and objective existence independently of the act of knowing.”<sup>36</sup>

Is it this way that morality is cognized too? Yes, it is. For Wojtyła, morality is a part of reality which has its own intelligible content, because it is transcendent to the act of cognition and given in the experience of human decision-making. The experience of deciding exercises a formative influence on the potentiality of the human intellect. This influence is always accompanied by a certain primordial understanding that is broadened and deepened with consecutive experiences of the same moral acts (decisions). The disposition to truth that is essential for intellectual cognition is gradually transformed into a habit of understanding that is also grounded in experience. Wojtyła maintains that, unless this is allowed, there is no way to sustain the realism of ethics.<sup>37</sup>

Is the experience of morality accompanied only by understanding? No, it is not. It is natural that, when experienced, decision-making appeals not only to intellect, but also to emotions as much as it evokes them by virtue of the moral good or evil it contains. Thus, morality can be accompanied either by joy and spiritual contentment, when contains the moral good, or by despair and sorrow, when contains the moral evil. For Wojtyła, our feelings are or can be indicators of the moral content of our decisions; they bear witness to the maturity of our own personhood and humanity;

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<sup>34</sup> Id., 38.

<sup>35</sup> Id.

<sup>36</sup> Id., 38–39.

<sup>37</sup> Id., 39.

they are the way through which the reality of morality manifests itself to us.<sup>38</sup> But, though the experience of morality is accompanied by emotions, Wojtyła claims that we apprehend the specific moral good or evil, contained in decisions, not through them, but through understanding. The specific moral aspect of experience cannot be felt unless at the same time being understood.<sup>39</sup>

Now then, is there any connection between moral sense and common sense? The answer cannot be other than positive. If reality includes external and internal objects of experience, common sense must be a cognitive habit which not only pursues the apprehension of the outer world, but also strives to apprehend the inner reality of man. For Wojtyła, then, moral sense is nothing less than the common sense of morality. Consequently, as a component of common sense, moral sense is an integral part of metaphysics and makes the latter an indispensable element of moral life which conditions the understanding of human being in general and the full understanding of a man in particular. For, by metaphysics, the man can be provided with the understanding of human nature which he or she does not choose, but which qualifies his or her personal development in the area of knowing, acting, and producing. Only when based on the metaphysical interpretation of man, the phenomenological insight into the moral experience of a human person can enjoy its special status in the personalism of St. John Paul II.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Id.

<sup>39</sup> Id., 39–40.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Douglas Flippen, “Was John Paul II a Thomist or a Phenomenologist?,” *Faith & Reason* 31:1 (Spring 2006), 65–106. Flippen provides several particularly interesting quotations; for example: “Reflecting on Wojtyła’s anthropology, we can describe it as an existential personalism, which is metaphysically explained and phenomenologically described. By consciously using these two philosophical disciplines, Wojtyła sheds a new light on man. He enriches St. Thomas Aquinas’ classical philosophy of man by availing himself of the contemporary phenomenological method.” (Andrew Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyła’s Existential Personalism* (New Britain, Ct.: Mariel Publications, 1980), 59). “Personally, I believe Wojtyła was trying to disclose the basis in concrete lived experience for theoretical—and especially for metaphysical—ethical considerations, and he found the phenomenological method particularly suited to this end. His aim was not to replace metaphysics with phenomenology, but to supplement metaphysical reflection with phenomenological description as a way of gaining access to the processes of knowing and acting. I do not believe Wojtyła ever rejected the primary and fundamental role of the realistic philosophy of being in anthropology and ethics, but he did see phenomenology as a useful tool for describing the experiential base, and he tended to view phenomenological language as more communicative than scholastic terminology.” (Stefan Swieżawski, “Karol Wojtyła at the

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Already it is more than a dozen years that I teach metaphysics at a diocesan seminary. My teaching experience shows that today there are no such seminarians as Karol Wojtyła, who on their own are able to discover the importance of metaphysics. Today, the seminary professor has to persuade his students about the value of metaphysics, because these feel no interest in learning it. To be persuasive, the seminary professor must know how to answer questions like: What's a universal value of metaphysics?, or: Why is metaphysics needed for every man? In my opinion, effective answers to these questions are included in the common sense personalism of St. John Paul II. Following the Pope's philosophy, we arrive at understanding that, although not all can be professors of metaphysics, metaphysics is needed by all, because, as moral beings, we all need to make choices and decisions. And since decision-making involves the understanding of ourselves and our world, nothing is more essential for this understanding than metaphysics and its common sense approach to reality.

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**THE COMMON SENSE PERSONALISM OF  
ST. JOHN PAUL II (KAROL WOJTYŁA)**

**SUMMARY**

The article aims at showing that the philosophical personalism of Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) stems from the common sense approach to reality. First, it presents Karol Wojtyła as a framer of the Lublin Philosophical School, to which he was affiliated for 24 years before being elected Pope John Paul II; it shows Wojtyła's role in establishing this original philosophical School by his contribution to its endorsement of Thomism, its way of doing philosophy, and its classically understood personalism. Secondly, it identifies a purpose of Woj-

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Catholic University of Lublin," in Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community*, xiv.). "Wojtyła's method consists of two steps: phenomenological description and metaphysical synthesis. Phenomenology is useful as a starting point for anthropology and ethics, Wojtyła holds, because of its ability to discover and describe many aspects of the human phenomenon which otherwise would be unknown to a metaphysician. As we saw, however, in *The Acting Person's* analyses . . . any phenomenological description is in need of a synthesis, since it considers the human person under many aspects. Such a synthesis can be obtained only through a metaphysical analysis which is able to describe the ultimate roots of all the phenomenological aspects of the human phenomenon." (Jarosław Kupczak, O.P., *Destined For Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyła / John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2000), 146–147).

tyła's use of the phenomenological method in his personalism and reconstructs Wojtyła's possible answer to the question whether there is a link between moral sense and common sense in human experience.

**KEYWORDS:** John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła, personalism, common sense, Lublin Philosophical School, Thomism, metaphysics, phenomenology.