

KAROL WOJTYLA¹: A TWENTIETH CENTURY NATURAL LAW THINKER'S TRYST WITH "FREEDOM"

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PROLOGUE

To most non Christians and the non Catholics, the name Karol Jozef Wojtyla means nothing. Obviously the name is non-existent for the modern day lawyer. The name John Paul-II means something to all of us in the sense that he was the Pope and many romanticise the office of the Pope with mystical attributes. Karol Jozef Wojtyla who went on to become Pope John Paul-II was an intellectual giant, a sensitive human being, and an uncelebrated natural law thinker. His intellectual engagement was with "freedom". Freedom is at the heart of all civilization, culture and is a universal human value. Karol Wojtyla's ponderings over freedom is most fascinating and relevant in the modern context. This article intends to share this new face of Karol Wojtyla.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Karol Jozef Wojtyla was born to Karol Wojtyla Sr. and Emilia Wojtyla on May 18, 1920 in a small provincial city Wadowice in Poland. He was a member of the first generation of Poles to be born in freedom in 150 years, a fact he treasured and cherished all his life. Karol Jozef Wojtyla lost his mother when he was nine, but his father was one of his influential mentors.

The Poles are very proud of their geographical location, their language and their culture. Poland's tradition of religious tolerance was remarkable. The Germans tried to eradicate the Polish nation from history during the World War – II by destroying their language and their culture. A nation deprived of its political autonomy survived as a nation through its language, music, culture and religion – a movement in which Karol Wojtyla was an active participant.

He was the best student in town, an enthusiastic athlete and an amateur actor. His life took a twist during the World War-II. During the occupation he was a quarryman, a blaster, a manual labourer working in freezing cold without warm clothes yet he did not lose the freedom of spirit and he joined a cultural resistance movement and helped to create a covert theater. During this time the local parish priests were exiled and Karol took his first step towards spirituality under the influence of a lay missionary who was forming groups of

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1. Wojtyla is pronounced as *voj-TEE-wah*

young person called the “living Rosary”.

Like all young person even Karol Wojtyla went through the crisis of career choice after his father’s death. His choice lay between the altar and the stage. He eventually chose the altar and enrolled at the clandestine seminary run by the Archbishop of Krakow. During this period, he lost a number of his fellow seminarians to the Nazi excesses. After Poland’s so called “liberation” from the Nazis by the Red army, Karol Wojtyla was ordained a priest and graduated in theology. Having been exposed to the worker- priests in France and Belgium he returned to Poland and began a ministry to the University students that involved innovative worship, intense conversation, thousands of hours of confessionals. During this period he completed his second doctoral degree and joined the only catholic university behind the iron curtain as faculty. He was a popular teacher and his classes were always packed. During this time he broke taboo by writing his first book on the ethics of married life that celebrated human sexuality as gift of God that sanctified the relationship of husband and wife. He was consecrated a bishop at a young age of thirty eight and became the administrator of the archdiocese during this period. He was the craftsman of the new catholic openness to modern world and remained the General of the battle of conciliation to define religious freedom as a basic human right. He remained a relentless advocate for the religious and civil rights of the people. He became a Cardinal at the age of forty-seven but he remained very close to the lay mass, he skied and vacationed with them. His scholarly papers, intellectual deliveries, seminars and conferences are innumerable. He was elected Pope at the age of forty eight – the first Slavic Pope in history. In 1979 he triggered and led a non violent movement in Poland and eventually freed it from Soviet occupation. As a Pope he has exploited all modern means of communication and has travelled to all parts of the world. Till his last days he has remained the champion of freedom and human rights.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Karol Wojtyla was convinced that the crisis of the modern world was, first of all, a crisis of ideas, a crisis in the very idea of the human person. History is driven by ideas that form cultures. Ideas have consequences. If the idea of the human person that dominated a culture was flawed, one of two things would happen- either that culture would give birth to destructive aspirations, or it would be incapable of realizing its fondest hopes even if it expressed them in a most noble humanistic terms.

He cherished Freedom and remained preoccupied with it all his life. The concept of freedom that entered Poland in the fifteenth century through Krakow’s Jagiellonian University was deeply influenced by the philosophy of

William of Ockham who said *Freedom is the capacity to assert one's will against the willfulness of others*². Over the years this idea translated to *nothing about us without us*. Today this is the mantra of all contemporary laws and developments.

His fundamental conviction was that the horrors of late twentieth century life, whether Nazi, Communist, Racist, Nationalist, or Utilitarian in expressions, is the products of defective concepts of the human person.

The modern age prides itself on its humanism and declares freedom to be its noblest aspiration. Though Karol Wojtyla shared the pride and the aspiration of the modern age, he believed that neither contemporary humanism nor the freedom it seeks to achieve has been given a secure foundation and the cracks in its foundations are not of interest to philosophers only; they are life-and-death matters for millions. For, a humanism that cannot be an adequate account of its most cherished values, freedom becomes self-cannibalizing. Freedom decays into license and anarchy threatens. According to him in the face of that anarchy, a host of evils, each promising security amid the chaos, is let loose and demons like the supremacy of race, or class, or the Masonic lure of utopian politics, chapter after chapter have always been lengthened by humanity's increasing technological accomplishments in creating weapons of mass destruction.

THE ELEMENT OF "NATURALISM": Very early in life, Karol Wojtyla began to think about a question of historic consequence-How might we realize our humanity in an age in which the artifacts of our own creativity threaten the very existence of the human society? As he pondered that problem, certain convictions grew in him. One was that the human person is a moral being and as such morality is not a culturally instructed and historically conditioned appendage to what is, essentially, a cipher. To be human is to be a moral agent. That, in turn, meant that we live in a human universe the very structure of which is dramatic. The great drama of any life is the struggle to surrender the "person- I- am" to the "person-I-ought to be." The dilemma of freedom is the choice between the freedom of being what I AM and WHAT I AM DICTATED TO BE. That struggle meant confronting, not avoiding the reality of evil. Evil had made itself unmistakably, manifest – in the world, in such distinctly modern enterprises as the holocaust and the Gulag Archipelago; in daily life, in the exploitation of one human being by another, economically, politically, or sexually and in poverty.

Karol Wojtyla, to this extent was a radical. It is important to clarity of

2. Radek Sikorski, Full Circle: A Home Coming to Free Poland, Simon and Schuster, 1997, P. 19 - 22

meaning of “radical” here, for it applies to Karol Wojtyla not in the sense of “further left” [on the conventional left/right spectrum] but in the sense of depth. The English word “radical” [like the French and Spanish radical and the Italian radicals] comes from the Latin *radices*, “root”. Karol Wojtyla’s radicalism as the American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once described is the simplicity that lies on the far side of complexity. Wojtyla has never denied the sometimes torturous complexity of the human conditions in the modern world. As he worked through those complexities intellectually, he became convinced that some things are, simply, true... that is “IS”. It is because it is and there is no explanation and reason... the TRUTH. This method of deriving the IS, is basically an *apriori* method attributed exclusively to natural law thinking.³ In more biblical terms Karol Wojtyla was seized early in his life by the “more excellent way” of which St. Paul spoke to the Corinthians⁴, the way of christen love, which the Apostles described as the greatest of spiritual gifts. And having been seized by this, Wojtyla attributed some of the torturous complexity of the human conditions in the modern world to Devine law as St. Thomas Aquinas⁵ did.

Now it must be admitted that there is something surprising about the advent of Karol Wojtyla as John Paul-II, particularly at the end of the twentieth century. This was, after all, the century that was supposed to witness the withering away of religion as a maturing humanity, tutored by science, out grew its “need” for the psychological props such as religious faith. The proposal, the public implications of the “more excellent way” that has been the lodestar of Wojtyla’s life, comes at a time when the cause of freedom has often taken to be synonymous with the cause of democracy, appears historically triumphant. The secular argument for human freedom, launched almost three centuries ago, under the rubric of “natural rights” has often been reduced to a calculation of probabilities. Democracy and the personal freedoms it respects are good not because they have an inherent moral superiority over other forms of organizing society, but because they are the least messy alternative in a world of dramatic differences. Being tolerant, civil, and, in a word, “Democratic” is just easier than being cranky and assertive. It keeps the lid on, so to speak.

3. Apriori method, as opposed to empirical method, accepts things or conclusions in relation to a subject taken for granted without an enquiry or observation. The empirical or a posteriori approaches try to find out all arguments or causes in relation to subject matter.

4. I Corinthians 12.31

5. Karol Wojtyla did a major work on St. Thomas Aquinas. It will be discussed later in this article.

But if the social pressures of popularity and difference become more intense, the answer to the question within "why tolerant civil, democratic?" cannot simply be "because it works better". That essentially pragmatic answer cannot be sustained when radical, ethnic, or religious conflict reaches the boiling point. Nations are torn apart by war, colonialism and politics of subjugation. Only, a moral commitment to tolerance and democratic civility that is buttressed by norms transcending our immediate circumstances can be commitment to the freedom that is buttressed by our tolerance of the "otherness" or "difference" in caste, religion, race and thoughts. And this is the situation of a world in which "otherness" impinges on us daily, thanks to the transportations of communications revolution⁶.

Perhaps even more ominously, the promethean temptation to steal fire from the Gods and remake the human condition re-emerge on the edge of a new millennium, not only from race-or-class-based political fanatics, but also from science. Recent developments in biotechnology have raised question like who counts as a human being and it is now being debated in a way our grandparents could not imagine. Is a cloned human being a member of the human community? What about the socially unproductive and the inconvenient, the gravely handicapped, the elderly and the unborn? If, "what are these putative public good for? is the only question our cultures and our laws recognize, then we really are living in Aldus Huxly's Brave New World, and tyranny cannot be far around the corner⁷. This, according to Wojtyla, is a major concern of freedom.

Salvation history, Karol Wojtyla proposed, did not run parallel with human history. Salvation history was human history and it is to be read in its true depth against the horizon of its true destiny that took on an ecclesial dimension of the story of the humanity.

On the edge of the 21st century, Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II stood before the representatives of the nations of the world, and having looked into the heart of almost all great darkness of his time over the course of his seventy five years, offered an antidote against fear in favour of freedom:

"It is one of the paradoxes of our time that man, who began the period we call "modernity" with self confidence and assertion of his "coming of age" and of autonomy, approached the 20th Century fearful of himself, fearful of what he may be capable of, and fearful of the future. Indeed the second half of the twentieth century has seen the unprecedented phenomenon of humanity

6. George Weigel, Witness to Hope, Biography of Pope John Paul II, Cliff Street Books an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, [1999], Page 219

7. Ibid

uncertain about the likelihood of a future....In order to ensure that the millennium now approaching will witness a new flourishing human spirit, mediate through an authentic culture of freedom, men and women must learn to conquer fear. We must learn not to be afraid and discover hope and trust. Hope is not an empty optimism springing from a naïve confidence that the future will be better than the past. Hope and trust are premise of responsible activity and are nurtured in the inner sanctuary of human conscience. Hope for freedom is rooted in faith which is not an assertion of a religious option but the truth of the world."⁸ The words *Plus ratio quam vis* – Reason rather than force was the underlying truth of freedom⁹. Freedom, to him, grew like the language and like language it was an essential identity of one's culture and race.¹⁰ The human capacity for language made the human world possible ¹¹ the word is present in human history as a fundamental dimension of human experience of freedom. The word has made flesh and dwelt amongst us¹².

In the first phase of his philosophical study, Karol Wojtyla first engaged himself with the philosophy of St. John of the Cross whose doctrine of faith had inspired him and wrote *Doctrina de fide apud S. Ionnem a Cruce* [the *Doctrine of Faith according to St. John of the Cross*¹³]. In this dissertation he came to the conclusion that human dignity was inalienable. Faith was in the inner consciousness of human being and there was a limit to the extent "reason" could access it and make it "objective" but faith could travel beyond reason and rational objectivity. Human person must enjoy freedom for an authentic relationship of mutual self giving, which can only be enjoyed in an environment of freedom. It is not like a algebraic formula but emerges from within the human heart.¹⁴

In the next phase of his philosophical pursuit, Karol Wojtyla delved into the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas and formed a study group that read

8. Pope John Paul II, "Address to the fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation" P. 16

9. Karol Wojtyla, "The problem of the Constitution of culture Through Human Praxis", in *Person and Community : Select Essays*, Peter Lang, New York, 1993 P.264

10. Pope John Paul II, *Curriculum Philosophicum*, unpublished autobiographical notes provided to Mr. George Weigel author of biography of Pope John Paul-II.

This thought is also similar to historical School of thought especially Karl von savigny.

11. Pope John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, P. 7 *Curriculum Philosophicum*.

12. *Ibid*

13. Karol Wojtyla, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, translated by Jordan Aumann, Ignatious Press, San francisco, [1981],

14. *Ibid*.

its way through of *Summa Theologiae* of Saint Thomas Aquinas¹⁵. He held on to his conviction about the objective reality of the world and he matured philosophically. When he began to focus more directly on ethics he came to a further conviction that the “objective” reality of the world disclosed important things about the virtues, about the pursuit of happiness and about moral duties in life.

THE PARADIGM SHIFT: Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas had built their philosophies from the foundation of cosmology. But starting with general theory of Universe and moving to a theory of human person did not leave much room for human freedom, and modern science had falsified many of the assumptions the ancient and medieval philosophers had made about the Universe. Some thinkers concluded from all this that morality was, at best, a pragmatic calculations.¹⁶ Wojtyla disagreed. He thought that beginning from a different starting point philosophy could probe into things *as they are*¹⁷ to help one to grasp the way human beings *ought* to act.¹⁸ This is where he made a shift in the “natural law way of thinking” and decided to look at the issues from the point of view of human experience. The human person’s moral experience of life “between” the person –I-am and the person-I-ought-to be was the stage on which the great moral question of good and evil, virtue and duty, presented themselves. This was where thinking about the philosophical foundation of morality had to begin.

But now Wojtyla stood at the cross roads of his intellectual prowess and pastoral training. To work out the dilemma he started on the works of Max Scheler¹⁹.

Max Scheler²⁰ was a disciple of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of the new philosophical method called “Phenomenology”²¹, wanted to re-link philosophical reflection to objective reality. This involves bringing

15. George Weigel, *Witness to Hope, Biography of Pope John Paul II*, Cliff Street Books an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, [1999], Page 95

16. Edward T. Oakes, SJ, “The Achievement of Alasdair Macintyre”, *First Things*, 65 (August/September), 1996, Pages. 22-26.

17. The concept of ‘IS’ in natural law. An apriori approach.

18. The concept of ought in natural law.

19. Robert F. Harvanek, SJ, “Philosophical Foundations of the Thoughts of John Paul II” in *The Thought of John Paul II*, ed. John M. Macdermott, SJ, Editrice Pontifica Universita Gregoriana, Rome, 1993,P.2

20. Born in 1874, died in 1928. Born a Jew later became a Catholic and later abandoned the Catholic faith. Thought to be a genius in the German academic world.

21. Observing a fact or situation that exists or happens.

back into philosophy everyday things, concrete wholes; study the basic experience of life as they come to us. It involves complex data analysis, and terminologies, but doing so takes one to the working of the mind of Karol Wojtyła. The daily experience of life can be reduced to empirical study of sense data, impressions etc. or phenomenology of studying the experience as a whole and as they are [IS] and create a philosophical foundation for the moral life on the basis of ethics and values.

According to Wojtyła, every moral code has to answer the question of “why be good?” But the question cannot be answered in a cultural environment of distrust and suspicion by such traditional answers as “Because that is the way to do things” or “Because your legal system commands you to be good”. Why is that moral choices are not personal preferences? Why do the people not say “I ought to be good” or “I prefer to be good”? He answers the question saying that it is because everybody thinks “ought” is an imposition of someone else’s will upon them and hence a loss of freedom.

Though were important questions in European countries that professed communism or were forced to be under Red [Soviet] occupation, on both sides of the iron curtain the critical primary issue was whether modern human beings could talk about morality at all. Karol Wojtyła tried to find an answer in the thought of Max Scheler.²² On one hand he was grappling with Kant and on the other hand he continued to engage Scheler. As a teacher, writer, confessor and a person with such wide human contact, he synthesized the approaches: the metaphysical realism of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the sensitivity of human experience of Scheler’s phenomenology, and Kant’s second categorical imperative. Scheler’s phenomenology attracted Wojtyła because it rescued moral philosophy from the dry abstraction of Kantian ethics and cosmological considerations of Aristotle and Aquinas and restored the pathos, ecstasy, and the ethos of human life and attempted to ground morals in an analysis of the realities of moral choosing rather than in a formal abstract system of Kant.²³ However at the end of his study of Scheler, Wojtyła felt that Scheler too had failed to explain the moral choices that shape a person and morality and remained suspended outside the human universe²⁴.

22. Malinski, Pope John Paul-II, p. 110; Pope John Paul II, Curriculum Philosophicum, P. 7.

23. John H. Nota, SJ, Phenomenological experience of Karol Wojtyła, in McDermott, ed. The Thought of Pope John Paul II, Page 198.

24. Pope John Paul II, Curriculum Philosophicum, P.4; Karol Wojtyła, *Zagadnienie podmiotu moralności*, At the Center of Human Drama, translated by Schmitz, Catholic University of Lublin Press, 1991, Page. 154.

This was Karol Wojtyła's first sustained attempt to link the realist objectivity embedded in the philosophy he had learnt at the seminary and at the Angelicum to modern philosophy's emphasis on human experience and human subjectivity. His later philosophical work, reconciliation, synthesis, and "connection" would be among his principal intellectual traits enabling him to think through Thomism [Cosmology], Scheler [phenomenology], to love and responsibility, freedom and self denial, still later, democracy and public morality, market and solidarity.²⁵

What was puzzling was human nature in relation to freedom. In a situation where freedom was challenged why had some men and women acted like beasts while some others had shown remarkable heroism, while some were grotesquely self serving to the point of betraying friends, others were nobly self sacrificing laying down their lives for others. Wojtyła was convinced that the crisis lay at the modernity's understanding of the human person lay at the root of century's distress. These questions had taken a sharp edge in late 1940s and early 1950s.

By this time Karol Wojtyła had become a professor at the Catholic University of Lublin which was also known as Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski [KUL]. There he joined a group of philosophers popularly called the KUL Professors²⁶ to carry forward the understanding of freedom on one hand and to fight the great political-philosophical battle on Marxism's own ground, the question of true liberation of human person. This was a great opportunity for Wojtyła to think of freedom beginning with a distinct reflection on human experience [as things are i.e.IS] rather than cosmology. Because human beings are the only creatures aware of their own being, thinking should begin with the human person. The other fundamental distinctiveness of this group of thinkers was their commitment to reason.

The KUL Professors had something in common. They were all veterans of cultural resistance against Nazism, seen the films of Hitler's Nuremberg party rallies, they were subjected to more than five years of Nazi propaganda, they had lived through a brutal occupation. They realized the futility of mere

25. Rocco Buttiglione, "Toward an Adequate Anthropology", *Ethos*, special Edition no. 2 (1996), page. 237-246.

26. The group included Jerzy Kalinowski [Dean of Faculty of Philosophy, a specialist in Logic and philosophy of Law], Stefan Swiczawski [Historian of philosophy and an exponent of the existential Thomism of Jacques Martin], Father Mieczyslaw Albert Krapiece [Dominican specialist in metaphysics], Father Karol Wojtyła [a specialist in ethics], Father Marian Kurdzialek [specialist in ancient philosophy] Stanislaw Kaminski [a specialist in epistemology or theory of knowledge]

reflection and so they were determined to illuminate upon what men and women *ought* to do. They believed that the history of 20th centuries various torment, proved that defective understanding of human person, human community, and human destiny were responsible for mountains of corpses and oceans of blood so they wanted to get a firmer purchase on truth of the human condition in a way that was distinctively modern and grounded in philosophical tradition of the west.²⁷

To answer these questions a philosophical initiative was sketched out by the KUL professors that linked the three large areas – metaphysics, anthropology, and ethics, and of these, ethics was believed to be most important in context of that time. This was because Communism was proving unsatisfactory reductionistic account of as things were. Its totalitarian politics stripped men and women of their power of choice, of responsibility and thus their humanity.

The counter to both communist materialism and communist politics was in itself a complete humanism and freedom that gave a more compelling account of human moral action. They began with a conviction that they would be radically realistic about the world and human capacity to know it failing which raw forces would take over the world and truth would become the function of power and “not an expression of things as they are”. A common communist era joke in Poland of that time was: “Party Boss: ‘How much is 2+2?’ Polish worker ‘how much would you like it to be?’” Later, the political meaning of realist assumption of the KUL Professors was expressed in the famous solidarity election poster that read “for Poland to be Poland, 2+2 must always be 4”. Human beings can only be free in the truth, and measure of truth is reality²⁸. All through this exercise Karol Wojtyla maintained that responsible giving and not self assertion was the road to human fulfillment which he considered to be a universal moral demand arising from the dynamics of human person who is truly a person in relationship. This thinking led him to the issue of unity and liberation. In a poem entitled “Stone Floor”²⁹ he writes:

“In this place our feet meet the ground, on which were raised
So many walls and colonnades... if you do not get lost in them but

Go on finding

Unity and sense-

It is because She is leading you. **She connects not only the space of a**

27. Stefan Swiezawski, “Introduction: Karol Wojtyla at the Catholic University of Lublin” in Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, p. ix-xiii.

28. *Ibid*

29. 1963

Renaissance building, but also spaces in us.... “[emphasis is authors]

The crucial issue of all times, he suggested before the Vatican II³⁰, was a human person whose dignity emerged from an interior life and who had to proceed on the road to liberation conditioned by scientific positivist and the dialectical. According to him this was the fundamental crisis of this age and to meet this challenge less emphasis had to be given on those things that separate us, and searching instead for all things that bring us together. This was essential for the proclamation of a compelling human freedom. He led the Vatican II to frame what is known as *Dignitatis Humanae* that helped to change the history of 20th century that reads:-

“... Freedom of this kind means all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups, and every human power so that within due limits nobody is forced to act against his/her conviction in private or in public, alone or with association with others ... Right to freedom is based on the dignity of the human person as is revealed by reason itself and this right must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of the society as will make it a civil right.³¹

Dignitatis Humanae included a number of points urged by Archbishop Karol Wojtyla inter alia human dignity involves a moral obligation to seek the truth. Knowing the truth involves an obligation to live according to that truth. Obligation to seek truth cannot be fulfilled unless men and women enjoy both psychological freedom and immunity from external coercion for it is by free personal assent that men must adhere to the truth they have discovered.³²

Later he wrote a book called *Person and Act*³³ where he worked in detail the philosophical issues involved in putting the older Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy of being together with Schelers philosophy of consciousness and arriving at a philosophical argument for moving from Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* [I think, therefore I am] to *Conosco ergo sum* [I understand, therefore I am] and went on to provide a clear philosophical grounding to the Church's commitment in Vatican Council II in face of greatest crisis in humanism. It had been affirmed that a human person, precisely as a person had a right to freedom and such freedom is inclusive of the right to pursue and seek the truth. A person who was pursuing/seeking the good directs himself to something that is objectively good. The internal dynamism of one's freedom impels one to seek seriously that which is good and also that which

30. Second Vatican Council

31. *Dignitatis Humanae* p. 2

32. *Ibid* Pages 2-3

33. Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, Reidel Publication [1997]

is true³⁴.

Dignitatis Humanae which had later matured into Gaudium et spes the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in Modern World, the church proposed how the world might achieve its aspiration of freedom and build a civilization characterized by justice, peace, and prosperity through an enriched and deepened concept of human person. In order to root this idea in firm philosophical foundation in *Person and Act* Karol Wojtyla devoted much of his thoughts to the mystery of the PERSON because he felt that contemporary evils consisted of degrading the person by pulverization of his/her uniqueness. Personhood, he argues is constituted of one's freedom, which one comes to know through truly human acts, for example paying a debt one has freely contracted rather than cheating the person. One does not repay the debt for fear of imprisonment or due to internal pressure of guilt but because he freely chooses to do good. In that free choosing the person also binds himself to what he knows to be good and true. According to Karol Wojtyla in that free choice lies the "transcendentalness" of the person. The person goes beyond himself; he grows as a person by realizing his freedom and confronting it by good and the true. Through one's freedom one can narrow the gap between the the person one IS and the person one OUGHT to be. Freedom on modern reading is radical autonomy. "I am a *self* because my *will* is the primary reference point for my choosing", Wojtyla disagrees with this. According to him index of freedom is self mastery and not self assertion is the index of freedom. Self mastery cannot be achieved by repressing or suppressing what is natural to a person but by thoroughly channeling the natural instincts of mind and body that deepens one's humanity because they confirm to things as they are. Empiricists try to find the human "center" in the body or its processes, Kantian idealists try to find it in the psyche in the structures of one's consciousness, Wojtyla leapfrogs both the approaches and demonstrates that moral action is where the center of the human person lies and that is the core of humanity-for in moral action mind, spirit and body comes into a unity of a *person*.³⁵

Such a person lives with other persons in the world and Wojtyla takes a position beyond individualism and collectivism. Radical individualism, according to him is inadequate because a person can grow into humanity through interaction with others, collectivism strips the person of freedom, and thus his or her personhood. Wojtyla suggests conformism means abandoning freedom, noninvolvement is solipsistic, cutting off from others eventually results in

34. Id. 285.

35. Id. At pages 285-287

implosion of oneself, opposition or resistance can be an authentic approach to life in society, if it means resistance to unjust customs or laws in order to liberate the full humanity. Solidarity is an authentic attitude towards society in which individual freedom is deployed to serve the common good and the community supports and sustains individuals as they grow into a truly human maturity. “It is attitude” Wojtyla writes “that allows man to find fulfillment of himself in complementing others”³⁶ He could not have known when he was writing this that “Solidarity” would become the banner under which the history of 20th century would be dramatically changed.

EPILOGUE

These pages are inadequate to reflect the whole philosophy of Karol Wojtyla and what is presented above are within too narrow a frame. The proposal of moral foundation of person, humanity and society is a sequel to Aristotolian-Thomist thought on natural law and there is a paradigm shift in focus from apriori cosmic beginning to a apriory human-moral foundations of Karol Wojtyla. The free society based on his distinctive understanding of the nature and dignity of the Person is assuredly universal in character. His philosophy has generated two important human rights principles viz. “Nothing about us without us” and “Solidarity”. These two principles have been instrumental in changing the history of 20th century. It is a clarion call for “all men and women of goodwill” to uphold freedom and not to lose freedom at any cost.. The Papacy has traditionally denied a universal reach. John Paul’s Pontificate is the first in history in which that claim has been empirically validated. There is hardly any obscure corner of this planet that has not been touched in some way by the life of this Pope and by his proposals for humanity’s future.

36. Ibid