

## From 'I' to 'We': Wojtyła's Phenomenology of Love

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### *Introduction*

Wojtyła's phenomenological analysis of human being and human action turns on the idea of self-determination, or the way that human beings, in choosing and performing actions, determine themselves through a possession of themselves that is at the same time a free governing of themselves. This self-determination is essentially dynamic, or essentially an energizing and activating of the self's powers, but it includes acts of cognition. Above all it rests on an awareness and assent to truth. In the case of love, or specifically sexual love, this self-determination presupposes certain affective and attractive feelings in the human psyche. But these feelings, while essential, are but the beginnings or materials of sexual love. They need to be *integrated*, as Wojtyła is fond of saying, into acts of self-determination whereby people not only *feel* for each other but also *commit* themselves to each other. At the level of feeling there is attraction, but there is not yet self-determination. But only self-determination can make attraction into love and only thus does love come truly into existence.

A key element in this analysis is what Wojtyła calls the *Personalistic Norm*, and in the light of this principle, interpreted according to the above idea of self-determination, Wojtyła shows what it means for two people, or two self-determining "I"s, to form a "We". In what follows I will first treat of this norm and then show how it relates to the idea of love, the idea of integration, the idea of the sexual urge, and finally the idea of

marriage. My presentation will also take the form of commented paraphrase. The reason for this is that Wojtyła's philosophical thought is, despite its penetration and novelty, so little known it is in especial need of being restated and rephrased. When it has been so, it is usually evident enough not to need much more by way of commentary.

*The Personalistic Norm*

The *Personalistic Norm* is based on the claims that the person is an objective reality in the world, that he has a unique interior life that revolves around truth and goodness, that he possesses the power of free self-determination. As such the person is his own master and judge and does not fall under the right or possession of another. To quote Wojtyła:

No one else can want for me. No one can substitute his act of will for mine. It does sometimes happen that someone very much wants me to want what he wants. This is the moment when the impassable frontier between him and me, which is drawn by free will, becomes most obvious... I am and I must be independent in my actions. All human relationships are posited on this fact. (*Love and Responsibility*, trans. Willetts, 1981; hereafter *LR*: 24).

From this it follows that when one's actions have for object another person (as they do above all in the case of love) they must accord with the facts about the person as just set out. So, for instance, it is contrary to the idea of the person to treat someone else as a means or an instrument for one's use or enjoyment. This would subordinate the other person to one's own ends whereas each person has their own ends and must be treated as

having their own ends (and not as having ends imposed on them willy nilly by someone else). I quote again:

[A] person must not be *merely* the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what any person is... Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right. (*LR*: 26-27).

The norm of treating persons as they are becomes the norm for all dealings with persons. This is encapsulated in the *Personalistic Norm*:

Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she too has, or at least should have, distinct personal ends (*LR*: 28).

Wojtyła is careful here not to call the person an end in himself as Kant does. This is no doubt because Kant understands man as having no moral ends given to him by nature or in experience. A man's ends only become moral insofar as he himself makes them moral by not pursuing them beyond what is allowed by the Categorical Imperative (the principle that one not demand for oneself in the pursuit of one's ends any freedom that one is not willing to allow others in the pursuit of their ends). Wojtyła rejects this view. For him action does, prior to and independent of choice, have ends that are moral ends and that focus on objective values that are moral values (in this Wojtyła follows Scheler).

But these ends are not external to the person nor are they imposed heteronomously from without, whether by others or one's own passions. Instead they are internal to the subjectivity and freedom of the person. Precisely this fact about the person is denied, however, when a person is used by another as a means to that other's own ends and enjoyment. For then the person's independence, the fact that, as a person, he can and should recognize and follow the good for himself through his own recognition of truth, is violated.

The only acceptable way to treat persons is with love. Love treats the person as an independent being with his own self-determination and his own self-chosen ends. Wojtyła's personalistic norm, in fact, has two aspects to it, a negative and a positive.

The norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love (*LR*: 41).

### *The Nature of Love*

The general elements of love are identified by Wojtyła as attraction, desire, goodwill, reciprocity, and friendship. To attract someone means, says Wojtyła, more or less to be regarded as a good by the one attracted. This attraction is something cognitive as well as emotive and has an individual character according to the peculiarities of the individuals involved. Truth is thus an important part of attraction, the truth about the value of the

persons attracted to each other. This is highlighted by the fact that emotion can distort this truth, and false values are attributed to the person towards whom one is attracted, values that the emotion wants to be there though they are not there in fact. The result when the falseness becomes apparent is disappointment and even hate. Love as attraction is not, therefore, just a matter of the genuineness of the feelings one has towards a person. Certainly the feelings should be there and should be genuine. But the objective truth about the person should be there as well. The two when properly integrated together give to attraction a certain perfection that is part of a genuinely good and genuinely cultivated love.

Love as desire is a need for the other as being a good *for me*. The sexual difference shows up our limits as individual human beings, and the desire of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man are, as it were, an expression of our need for completeness. Desire is therefore self-interested but it is not simply sensual. Its focus is rather on the other person as such, who is conceived as a good for the one desiring.

There is nevertheless a danger that love as desire could degenerate into something utilitarian. What stops such degeneration happening is love as goodwill. One must go beyond longing for the other person as a good for oneself and must also, and above all, long for that other person's own good. Goodwill is this longing and it is the purest form of love. It contains no ulterior selfish motive and is inherently altruistic. Love between man and woman cannot help being love of desire, of course, but it must also move, and progressively so, in the direction of goodwill.

Reciprocity is when such love is responded to by the same love in the other so that it exists on both sides and is mutually shared. Love then exists *between*, and not just

*in*, the persons. It is on this basis – that the love of the one for the other is reciprocated by a return of love from the other – that two “I”s can become a single “We.” An unrequited or unreciprocated love would stagnate and be condemned to eventual extinction. Love has to be an interpersonal and not an individual matter.

Here one can see how love as desire can go along with love of goodwill. For a person who desires another desires that other as a co-creator of love and not merely as an object of appetite. When such love is genuinely reciprocated and the other does become a co-creator of love, there is a synthesis of love as desire and love as goodwill. If one or both parties, however, felt jealousy or feared unfaithfulness, this would be a sign that love as desire was predominating.

Reciprocated love can be of different kinds, depending on what each party contributes to it. If what they contribute is something relatively self-centered the love will be superficial and impermanent. If what they contribute is their personal love, a love focused on the person of the other, it will be durable and reliable. The parties can then trust each other and are freed from jealousy and suspicion. The fruit of this love is a deep peace and joy. But the trust and the accompanying peace and joy cannot exist when one or both parties have as their end utility or pleasure. It can only exist when the love is of the person for the person’s own sake, when it is based on the virtue, however imperfect, of genuine goodwill. Then life together becomes an opportunity for love to grow and to be strengthened by increasing virtue. It becomes a “school of perfection.”

Friendship consists in a full commitment of the will to another person with a view to that person’s good (that is, in goodwill). It is not the same as sympathy though it is accompanied and even preceded by sympathy. Sympathy is properly a feeling, an

“experiencing together” with another. As such it betokens both an element of community (there is a togetherness about it) and an element of passivity (it is a feeling not an acting). It is something that happens in man and not something that man does through choice and will. People can therefore succumb to it and be drawn to one another by the pull of emotions and not by conscious choice. This is love at an emotional stage without any commitment of the will and without any necessary reference to the objective value of the person. It has its place in love because it brings people together and makes them feel together; it is the empirical and palpable manifestation of love. But it is not the completion of love. Love must become friendship, the mutual commitment of wills, if it is to endure.

Friendship is a personal act of choice, not a mere happening, and it engages the whole human being. But it needs sympathy to supply it with the emotional warmth that is proper to the human subject. The two things should go together: sympathy needs to be transformed into friendship and friendship needs to be supplemented by sympathy. That is why love must not be left at the stage of sympathy, where it typically begins and often with great intensity too. The sympathy must be actively and consciously molded into friendship. It is a mistake to measure love by sympathy and to think that the two come and go together. Sympathy is only the beginning. There is a positive need here for an education in love, a true art of loving, which would teach the need to transform sympathy into friendship. (*LR*: 73-100).

### *Integration*

In the acting subject that is man there are physical and emotional elements and these need

to be given their place in the structure of self-determination that a person essentially is. Integration concerns the parts of the person's subjectivity which, taken by themselves, are extrinsic to self-determination, and are thus primarily his bodily and emotional powers. These have a dynamism of their own, but if that dynamism is to be made personal it must be brought within the scope of, and subordinated to, the structure of self-determination. This is what is properly meant by integration and only in integration do these powers take on the meaning and quality proper to personal existence. Taken in abstraction, as they are when studied in the particular sciences, they lack this meaning. The sciences may be able to provide material for the understanding of the person but by themselves they do not reach that level and do not reveal the personal reality of man's somatic and psychic operations. The person-action unity in self-determination is logically prior to the psychosomatic unity.

'Soma' in Wojtyla's analysis does not precisely mean body nor does 'psyche' precisely mean soul. Soma is more properly the bodily functions as they enter into lived experience, and the psyche is more properly the feelings and emotions as they also enter into it. These aspects of experience are something that happens in man in contrast to what man does. But integration introduces these "happenings" into "doing" and makes them play an active part there. They thus belong to man not simply as he is an ontic reality, but also as he is an agent. They come to have a place in man's efficacy and not just in his subjectivity (*The Acting Person*, trans. Potocki, 1979; hereafter *AP*: 199, 202).

What is distinctive of the soma is "reactivity," which refers to the body both as it is outwardly discernible (limbs, shape, and so forth), and also as it is experienced from within in its organic functioning (muscle movements, heart beats, and so forth). The body

or soma is the territory and means for the performance of action and for the fulfillment of the person. It is also what places man in the realm of nature, making him share the external conditions of existence alongside the other animals. The vitalities of the body are primarily vegetative and reproductive and these, as such, are instinctive and spontaneous and not dependent on the self-determination of the person (digestion and gestation, for instance, just happen, regardless of what we may wish, after our acts of eating or intercourse). Such things also generally escape man's consciousness and are not taken up into his self-awareness. They operate, or fail to operate, on their own. Still, they are related to man's subjectivity and make possible the acts of the body that are under the control of self-determination. It is thus, for instance, that physical skills can be developed in the body. Of course the body can fail here and disease and loss of limbs can limit what a man can do. But these defects have a merely somatic and not a moral significance. Someone who is disabled is not thereby distorted in what makes him a person, for somatic disabilities remain external to the person ( "A human being with a high degree of somatic disintegration may represent a personality of great value." *AP*: 215). The disabled, therefore, whether physically or mentally so, remain fully persons and retain all the value that belongs to persons. There can be no case for setting them on a lower level or of making them instruments to others' goals and interests.

The body is also the ground or basis for certain instincts, as those of self-preservation and reproduction. But these instincts are not purely somatic, though they are rooted in the body. They also enter into the psychic and emotional life of man and thereby also into his self-determination. For that reason the significance of these instincts is not first in the bodily reactions but in the objective values and ends towards which they

point – for that is the sphere of the self-determination of the person. Here we find anticipations of Wojtyła's moral positions, that sexual activity is not a matter of instinct but of the true values present in the objective nature of the sexual act.

By the psyche Wojtyła means emotivity, and by that he means the complex of feelings, emotions, sensations, and related behaviors and attitudes, or all those things that have some dependence on the body (feelings and emotions have bodily occasions and correlates) but are not identical with it (emotions, for instance, are not vegetative reactions like digestion). One special feature of emotivity is that it contains a sensitivity to values. The emotions are sensitive responses to good and evil, and they can serve to intensify and heighten one's awareness of good and evil, rendering them vivid in a way that consciousness alone does not do. But emotive responses to values are not yet truthfulness about values. They are only raw material, as it were, and need to be integrated into the person through truthfulness (Wojtyła's debt to, as well as departure from, Scheler is particular marked here). It is such integration that is decisive for the acting person. Indeed the moment of truthfulness here is so important that self-determination may require one to act without or even against feelings. To follow feelings alone would be to lose oneself in what "happens" and become incapable of self-determination.

Nevertheless emotions are not, as such, a disintegrating force. They are rather material for integration and a part of the subjectivity of man that needs to be synthesized with his efficacy. Efficacy and emotion should go together, and emotions, with all their richness and vividness, should enhance the experience of value and the exercise of self-determination. The person in his acting should be an actor, but a full-blooded actor (if I

may so speak). He must be an integrated unity (*AP*: 220-258).

This is where the moral virtues come in, which are a sort of proficiency in integration. They make the best use of emotive energy rather than suppress it and in fact take over this energy for enhancing the energy of the will. For, as this integration with truth and self-determination progresses, emotions in their spontaneous moves of attraction and repulsion become sources for a spontaneous movement of the will itself toward real good and away from real bad.

Specifically as regards its role in love Wojtyła describes emotion as an experience of the other as a value, a positive good. The two emotions or emotional factors he identifies in the case of love between man and woman are sensuality and sentiment, of which the former seems to be stronger in man and the latter in woman. Both can lead to problems if they are not fully integrated into the self-determination of the person. Sensuality leads to a consumerist response to the person of the opposite sex and focuses on the body and the sexual use of the body rather than on the person. Sentiment is, by contrast, focused on the whole person but its danger is that it paints the beloved in false colors and depicts him according to some impossible or at least unreal image. Disillusionment is then the more or less inevitable result, and all the more so when, as is not seldom the case for the woman, she discovers that sentiment in man is a screen for sensuality and for the will to use her.

Both emotional factors are, however, necessary and have an indispensable place in love and sexuality. But they are material for love rather than love itself. Here Wojtyła's teaching on integration becomes especially important. These factors, like emotions generally, must, if they are to play their proper role in male-female relations, be

integrated into the person and become subordinate to his free self-determination with its focus on truth and therewith on the personalistic norm. The truth about the value of the person, one's own and others', must guide and fuse sensuality and sentiment into genuine love. Genuine love is always the affirmation of the value of the person; it is a "love in which sexual values are subordinated to the value of the person" (LR: 101-18).

### *The Sexual Urge*

The commandment to love is insistent at all times but it has a particular importance in the case of the sexual urge. This urge or instinct is, like all instincts, something that "happens" in man and is not an action but a basis for actions, a basis, that is, for the exercise of self-determination and of responsibility. Properly understood the urge is not directed to the *sexual attributes* of someone of the opposite sex but to a *human being* of the opposite sex. The urge does not exist in abstraction but in concrete individual men and women. Inevitably, therefore, it proceeds from individual to individual, not from sex attribute to sex attribute. If it is directed in some people to sex attributes as such, this must be held to be an impoverishment and a perversion.

The directedness of the sexual urge towards human beings of the opposite sex and the fact that it belongs to what happens in man make it naturally subordinate to and dependent on the person. Acting belongs to the person and is what the person *does*, not what the person *undergoes* through instincts and other happenings in him. The sexual urge is, therefore, only human when it is directed by love for the person and not when it is left at the level of an urge.

Nevertheless, or rather for this very reason, the purpose of the urge is not

understood from the fact of integration but from *what* it is that is integrated. The sexual urge as a natural reality is for the sake of reproduction, the prolongation of the species. Integration integrates nature into the person; it does not destroy nature. The purpose of reproduction belongs to the sexual urge because of what it is, because of its nature. It is not determined by the human will and is not changeable at will. The work of the will and of self-determination is to integrate this purpose into the person and into love for the person.

To look at sex, therefore, from the purely biological or scientific point of view is inadequate. But it is no less inadequate to look at it from the point of view of the satisfaction of the libido in Freudian fashion. The sexual urge is not the expression of some pleasure principle; it is not merely or fundamentally an urge to enjoy (though of course enjoyment is necessarily part of its proper use). To think this is to adopt a narrow and purely subjective view of man. It is to absolutize the subjective desire for pleasure and to ignore, or at least to regard as accidental, the orderedness of sex to the transmission of new life. But man is not an instrument of pleasure in this way. He has the capacity to know and comprehend the full objective truth about himself as a real object in the world. He can therefore recognize the objective end of the sexual urge, its part in the order of existence and his own place in that order.

It would also be an error, an error about the person, to focus wholly on the order of existence and on reproduction and to see the union of male and female as being for that purpose alone. This “rigorist” interpretation would in fact make the spouses into instruments of reproduction and so reduce them to the level of being used. It would be another form of disintegration. Instead of sex being used by persons for their end, the

persons would be being used by sex for its end. But the personalistic dimension must not be allowed to get lost like this. In a true union of persons the natural purpose of the urge becomes the personal purpose of the spouses. It is integrated into their self-determination and becomes part of their freely chosen existence together, of their love for each other. The subjectivity of the spouses' interiority as persons must be united with the objectivity of sexuality (*LR*: 54-66).

The nature and need of such integration brings with it certain very definite ethical demands. The duty, inherent in the structure of the will and freedom, to choose the true good means that love must be focused on the person (not the body), and that love as an experience must be subordinate to love as a virtue, that is, to a deliberate and developed choice of the person and the good of the person for the person's own sake. In any choice there is a commitment of freedom and therefore in some sense a limitation too (to choose this person as spouse is necessarily to "forsake all other"). But freedom actually exists for the sake of such commitment, for the sake, that is, of love. Freedom is, as it were, the means and love the end. But this love, this gift of self to the other, is actually the fulfillment of freedom and of the person since that is what they are for. Freedom *wants* to commit itself. Hence love as self gift of person to person must precede and be the basis for the sexual and emotional elements of love. They must be founded on it and not vice versa. Otherwise one will lose the personalism of love and fall back into some naturalism or biologism or libidinism.

The person in his free self-determination is the fundamental truth of man. The rest must be integrated into that and not it collapsed into them. Hence true love is not led by the sexual instinct but leads it and assumes responsibility for it and for its inherent

purpose. Love is an ongoing task that necessarily involves education. It is a great work of persons – a way in which a man learns to live up to his high dignity as a free person called to full gift of self in love. Such love between man and woman has as one of its special tasks guarding against its own disintegration, that is to say, preventing the material and emotional aspects of love from falling out of their place in, and their subordination to, the free self gift of the person (*LR*: 118-40).

Here Wojtyła appeals to the virtue of chastity. This virtue has been much maligned and even “outlawed” from the soul, will, and heart of man. The reason for this is not, however, any discovery of some previously unknown truth in man or sexuality; rather it is due to resentment (Wojtyła picks up here again on the work of Max Scheler). Resentment is a feature of the *subjective mentality* where pleasure (emotional, physical) takes the place of superior values. It arises from a distorted sense of values and has its origin in weakness of will. It is a sort of hatred of the good because the good is hard and requires a great effort of will. And, of course, true love in the form of self-gift is both a great good and hard. It is not surprising, therefore, that such love and its distinctive virtues should excite resentment. Chastity is the particular object of resentment in this regard since it operates more than anything against the pursuit of mere pleasure in love. Chastity is, however, very necessary in genuine love. It betokens purity, and its function is to make love clear.

What Wojtyła means here is that we must always be able to “see through” all the sensations and actions of lovers to the fact that their love is based on a sincere affirmation of the person, or that it is true personal love. Chastity does this above all because it fights to prevent concupiscence or sensuality from dominating, which would inevitably lead to

use of the beloved and not to affirmation of the person. It would muddy love which instead of being transparent in its focusing on the person would become a cloak to hide a mere utilitarian desire. Concupiscence unchecked would subvert all the values of true love. Chastity works to integrate concupiscence and sensual desire into love of the person. It works, in other words, to keep them pure and formed as they should be – subordinate to the truth about the person and about sex. It not only protects one's own person, therefore, against the destructive influence of irrational forces within oneself, but also, since love joins two persons, it protects one's beloved too from that same destructive influence. In sum chastity "consists in quickness to affirm the value of the person in every situation, and in raising to the personal level all reactions to the body and sex" (*LR*: 171, 143-73).

The components of chastity as so understood are identified by Wojtyła as shame and continence (or moderation). Shame arises "when something which of its very nature or in view of its purpose ought to be private passes the bounds of a person's privacy and somehow becomes public." Or again: "Shame is a tendency, uniquely characteristic of the human person, to conceal sexual values sufficiently to prevent them from obscuring the value of the person as such" (*LR*: 174, 187). Shame thus has an immediate application to the love of man and woman because, as already emphasized, sexual activity is only human when it is integrated into the person and the subjectivity of the person's inwardness in self-gift.

The love between man and woman is thus primarily an internal reality that only they themselves are fully privy to. Others can of course see the external manifestation of this love but they do not, by definition, enter into the inwardness that belongs to the

couple themselves. The sexual act and the sexual parts of the body, if displayed to others, would thus only be manifest in their externality; the inwardness of their integration into love of the person would not be thus manifest. Hence such public display would be matter for shame because it would fail “to conceal sexual values sufficiently to prevent them from obscuring the value of the person as such.” The persons instead would be displayed for others as using each other and as objects of use for each other.

Such sexual shame is thus not found in children at an age at which sexual values do not exist for them. But shame, and modesty, should and do naturally arise in children as they mature. Shame follows, however, a different course in the two sexes because of the difference in the psychological structures in man and woman. Since sensuality, or the orientation to the body as “an object of enjoyment,” is generally stronger and more importunate in men, there is a special need not only of restraint in men but also of modesty and shame in women, so that men are not seduced into treating female bodies as such objects. On the other hand, since women tend to be less aware of sensuality in themselves and of its natural orientation in men, they tend not to feel this need for modesty or of the need, in the presence of men, to conceal the body as a potential object of enjoyment. “The evolution of modesty in women,” Wojtyła therefore concludes, “requires some insight into the male psychology” (*LR*: 177).

Of course in true committed love between spouses there is no longer place for shame in their sexual relations with each other. Here shame is absorbed by love. For once love, true personal love, is in place, sexual values have necessarily been integrated and the body of the other does not descend to the level of being a mere object for use and enjoyment. Shame thus clears the way for love. For while love between man and woman

begins and develops on the basis of sexual values, it must in the end be based on the right attitude towards the value of the person. Shame, by keeping sexual values under a suitable veil, helps to ensure that this process to the personal level does actually occur and is not hijacked along the way, as it were, and kept back at the sexual level alone. It thus prepares the way for its own absorption into love when the sexual values have been integrated into and subordinated to the self gift of person to person. Despite its great value, however, in fostering true love between men and women, sexual shame is easily derailed, both from within and from without. There is need, therefore, for the young in particular to be educated in sexual shame. Shame should in fact form an integral part of their sex education.

As for the other part of chastity, moderation or continence, this is the “ability to find that mean in the control of sexual excitability and sentimental impressionability which will best facilitate the realization of love and avoid the dangers of exploitation” (*LR*: 195-96). The person has a special need to defend himself against emotional stirrings that threaten the natural power of self-determination. Everything is for the sake of the person and of the transcendence of the person through authentic integration. Moderation is thus fundamentally in accordance with nature (*LR*: 168) as indeed is shame and their joint realization in chastity. They preserve the person in the recognition and pursuit of objective values and of the truth of love and the person (*LR*: 194-208).

### *Marriage*

Wojtyła draws a distinction between the aims of marriage and the norm of marriage. The *aims* of marriage are the three traditionally identified: the continuing of existence through

children (*procreatio*), conjugal life (*mutuum adiutorium*), and legitimate orientation of desire (*remedium concupiscentiae*). The *norm* of marriage, by contrast, is love. Love is thus not properly an aim of marriage; it is the principle and virtue of marriage. All the aims of marriage must be carried out in love if the marriage is to be personal, a genuine union of persons. But love must, in its turn, respect the objective aims of marriage in order to be a marriage, a sexual union of persons of the opposite sex. “Sexual morality and therefore conjugal morality consist of a stable and mature synthesis of nature’s purpose with the personalistic norm” (*LR*: 66-67).

The ethical consequences of Wojtyła’s personalism in the context of marriage concern the exclusivity of marriage, the indissolubility of marriage, the social and religious context of marriage, and the indissoluble tie between sexual activity on the one hand and reproduction and the union of persons on the other. All these are related to and founded on the truth about human sexual love and the person.

The love of man and woman, if it is to be a union of persons who, according to the personalistic norm, may never be a mere object of use or enjoyment, needs a suitable framework. This framework is marriage understood as monogamous and indissoluble. If a man and woman unite as persons and the focus of love is the other person, it must continue as long as the person continues. For if it ended while the person continued it would not have been focused on the person after all but on something else – something else that could come and go while the person lasted. Since the person ends, at least as far as the specific union of marriage is concerned, only with the death of the body (for marriage connotes a union of bodies), death and death alone is the proper terminus of marriage. Remarriage is then possible (though of course not necessary) and compatible

with the personalistic norm. A married couple could also, for sufficiently serious reasons, separate while each was alive, but that would not dissolve the marriage (and so would not permit a second marriage to someone else). Marriage has an objective reality once contracted that no subsequent changes of circumstances or will can dissolve. Otherwise the personalistic norm would be violated (*LR*: 214).

Monogamy is also a requirement of marriage. Since the union of one man with one woman is already sufficient for a full sexual union of persons, there could be no need, as far as this goes, for another union of the same sort with another person at the same time. Any further need would either be for numerous progeny or for sexual use, and both of these ends, if made the object of the union, necessarily offend the personalistic norm. So if the personalistic norm is to be observed in its fullness, as becomes the dignity of the person, marriage has to be monogamous.

Marriage must also be a social institution and not a mere private commitment between the spouses. For man is a social being and his existence and action inevitably have a social character. Hence there is a need, a felt need, to make marriage public and to sanction it in a public way. The relationship of the spouses is justified and legitimated for them, of course, through their genuine love for each other as persons (for only thus does their love fulfill the personalistic norm and satisfy the objective order of justice set up by that norm). But because of man's social character, the spouses also need to have this justification and legitimation recognized, respected, and fostered by their family, friends, and the wider community. This is what public marriage does. Such open witness of love is all the more necessary in view of the offspring that are the natural fruit of marriage. For children are themselves new members of society and, through them, the marriage

becomes a family, which is itself a society and the basis of all larger societies. Hence for all these reasons marriage must find its reflection in the practices and law of those larger societies. And this is what it means for marriage to be an institution.

In a society which accepts sound ethical principles and lives in accordance with them..., this institution is necessary to signify the maturity of the union between a man and a woman, to testify that theirs is a love on which a lasting union and community can be based (*LR*: 220).

Marriage, of course, is a union of persons in their sexuality as well as in their persons, and this too carries ethical consequences with it. The chief and most profound one that conditions all the others is that of integration. The sexual union is integrated into the personal union and cannot be separated from it without offending the personalistic norm. But the stress here must be on the term *integration*. To integrate means that the sexual act, with all its natural and biological reality, is taken up into the love of persons. Integration does not mean that sexuality gets changed from what it naturally is into something else. Integration is not change but subsumption. Consequently sex is not something that a couple may use as they wish. On the contrary they may only use it according to what it naturally is. Here the natural order and the personal order meet. When a couple united in marriage choose to engage in sexual activity, they are choosing to engage in the creation of new life. This is not just a matter of the nature of sex; it is a matter of love of the person too. For the human person is a sexual being and to love the person is to love everything about the person, including the objective truth of their

sexuality or the fact that written into sexual activity is the possibility of parenthood (*LR*: 226-30).

These facts clearly rule out from sexual relations any interference with the sexual activity that would render it incapable of producing offspring, as in particular artificial means of contraception (for that would be to de-sex sex). One is talking here of interference in the sexual act, not of the natural rhythm of sexuality. Since it is part of the order of nature and of sexuality that this order “leaves the connection between the sexual act and reproduction in particular marriages a matter of some uncertainty” (*LR*: 233), it would be absurdly strict, indeed unnatural, to demand that every sexual act be actually procreative, or to say that intercourse is only permissible if the couple hope to have a child as a result of it. To use nature’s order is very different from breaking nature’s order. Natural family planning, therefore, or periodic abstinence and the use of the woman’s natural infertility to space the birth of children, would be perfectly legitimate.

Such periodic abstinence is, however, not a mere technique; it is or should be a virtue, the virtue of love and continence. It is an expression, indeed, of the personalism of marriage, or of the fact that the self gift of the spouses to each other is a personal union that gives to sexual intercourse a necessary role in the fostering of love and not just in procreation. It is also an expression of the fact that marriage is grounded on the affirmation of the value of the person and that married love, to be mature, must ripen to the point where the exercise of the virtue of continence is possible and where it is one of the factors giving shape to the whole pattern of the couple’s love. Inability or refusal to abstain, even for good reason, must betoken some sort of distortion of love away from the person toward mere sexuality. (*LR*: 231-44, 282).

By the same token, of course, it now follows that if, because of the integration of the nature of sex into personal union, nothing may be done to exclude the procreative aspect from sex, then it also follows that nothing may be done to exclude the nature of sex from the personal union into which it must be integrated. The reproduction of children outside the context of the union of the spouses necessarily, therefore, offends the personalistic norm as much as artificial contraception offends it. Wojtyła does not discuss this aspect explicitly, but it is clear that his philosophy of the person would exclude, for instance, *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate motherhood, cloning and so forth. This is not because such things offend biology (on the contrary they make special use of biology), but because they absolutize biology and denigrate both the person and nature (*LR*: 226; *Person and Community*, trans. Sandok, 1993: 294).

For Wojtyła does not proceed simply from the nature of the sexual act but rather from this nature as integrated into the person. He speaks not only of the meaning of the conjugal act that results from an understanding of its nature, but also of the *intended* meaning, or the meaning that the spouses themselves give to the act. They should signify in their act the meaning that the act itself has and not some other meaning. This is, of course, another way of speaking of the fact that the objective realities of the body must be taken up into the self-determination of the person.

It would thus be false to accuse Wojtyła of biologism in the matter of sexual love. His approach is thoroughly personalistic and holistic, one that takes account of and accepts both the order of the person and the order of nature. Those who would, in the name of the person, sanction the rejection or breaking of the order of nature, are themselves failing to see the fact of integration. Physical and psychological health are

preserved in personalism and not otherwise. It is those who would separate sex from the person, says Wojtyła, who are producing neuroses and ill health.

### *Conclusion*

Wojtyła's phenomenology of the person and sex is thus a remarkable and remarkably compelling defense of what are too often dismissed as merely traditional mores. Wojtyła shows that, on the contrary, these mores, when rightly interpreted, are thoroughly at the center of and integral to the very idea of the person. The idea of the person is what, of course, defines and characterizes the modern mind in its most distinctive features. But if Wojtyła is right, this idea is only rightly understood and its concretization in individuals only fully realized when the person and sexuality are fused together in the structure of self-determination in the way he explains. Wojtyła's philosophical thinking on love and sex thus constitutes a thoroughly modern reformulation, or rather I would say modern demonstration, of the wisdom of the ages. For that reason if for no other it deserves to be far better known and studied than it is.