

**PERSON, COSMOS, AND TRADITION:  
(RE-)DISCOVERING THE IRREDUCIBILITY  
OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION WITH  
KAROL WOJTYŁA AND ERIC VOEGELIN**

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*Wojtyła has famously proposed a distinction between two contrasting but complementary interpretations of the human being, the personalistic and cosmological understandings, respectively. The latter characteristically treats the human being as reducible to the world of which man is a part, while the former recognizes the irreducibility of the person to her surrounding world. He argues that each understanding is necessary for a complete picture of the nature of the human being in its totality. However, given the history of philosophy's apparently one-sided emphasis, since Aristotle, upon treating man from the cosmological perspective, Wojtyła argues for the necessity of 'pausing at the irreducible' following the emergence of philosophical personalism in modern philosophy. Although Wojtyła insists that the two understandings can be harmonized, he gives little indication as to how such a difficult perspective can be accomplished. In Volume V of his Order and History, Eric Voegelin develops a similar distinction to Wojtyła's personalist and cosmological understandings. For Voegelin, the delimitation of the person as equally an object in the world and as a subject for the world represents the specific paradox of consciousness, which entered into Western philosophy in the Platonic analysis of the structure of human consciousness through the symbol of the metaxy. This paper argues that a dialogue between the personalisms of Voegelin and Wojtyła may hold the key to the advancement of Wojtyła's anthropology through the recovery of the classical movements in philosophy, which have been the carriers of the personalistic insight up to the present.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In his essay, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" (1993), Karol Wojtyła argues for a personalistic conception of the human being which, he insists, represents a genuine advance in the historical consciousness of human nature. Following

Scheler, for whom the unique place of the human being as a spiritual subjectivity is not so much *in* the world as *over and against* it, Wojtyła argues that modern philosophy delimits a new consciousness of the irreducibility of the person to its objective world. Reading the philosophical tradition through the lens of Aristotle's analysis of man as the *zoon noetikon*, the 'rational animal,' Wojtyła contends that traditional philosophy has underappreciated the transcendence of the human being with respect to nature, instead of treating man as in some sense still reducible to the world and its objectivity. By contrast to the 'cosmological viewpoint' represented in the '*zoon noetikon*,' Wojtyła proposes a 'personalistic understanding' of the human being as both an equally fundamental and, I argue, also equally traditional understanding of the human being, which views human being as irreducible to the world insofar as 'person' is a subject for a world of objects. In spite of the apparent contradiction between the personalistic and the cosmological understandings of the human being as either a subject *irreducible to* the world or as an object among other mundane objects *within* the world, Wojtyła insists that these two understandings can and must be harmonized if we are to have a complete picture of the human being. Provocatively, he suggests that all ethics and philosophical anthropology, and we might add all politics and metaphysics as well, must operate within the framework of this effort to harmonize the cosmological and personalistic understandings, a project which Wojtyła himself leaves open at the essay's conclusion.

Eric Voegelin, also influenced by Scheler, develops a theory similar in concept to Wojtyła's personalist and cosmological understandings. For Voegelin, the delimitation of the person as equally a part of the world and as a subject for the world represents the specific paradox of consciousness discernible throughout the history of philosophy. In Voegelin's personalism, the insight into the paradox enters into Western philosophy through the Platonic analysis of the structure of human consciousness in the symbol of the *metaxy* or the 'in-between.' Along with Wojtyła, Voegelin will read this structure as thoroughly imbuing the Western tradition with a perennial consciousness of man's irreducibility, albeit occasionally derailed or occluded at certain important junctures in its history.

This paper, through dialogue between the personalisms of Wojtyła and Voegelin, attempts to delimit the legacy of Christian personalism's (re-)discovery of the irreducibility of the person. I proceed through a discussion of the shared concerns of both Wojtyła and Voegelin in the critique of Husserlian phenomenology and the adherence to a Schelerian notion of the concreteness of personal subjectivity. From there, I develop their shared concept of the irreducibility of the person and their contribution to an understanding of the derailment and, most importantly, the recovery of a personalistic philosophy so crucial, as both thinkers aptly showed, to the development of an anthropology and ethics capable of staving off the depersonalizing dangers of modern culture and politics.

## WOJTYŁA AND VOEGELIN: A SHARED BACKGROUND

A brief reflection on the shared philosophical background by means of which a dialogue between these two thinkers may fruitfully be carried out will serve to demonstrate a comparable personalistic attitude derived from their contact with Schelerian phenomenology guiding both to insist upon the concreteness of personality

as the methodological starting point of philosophical inquiry, likewise providing the clue in both as to the nature of the person in her irreducible structure. The first indicator of such intellectual fraternity between Voegelin and Wojtyła is discernible in each thinker's critique of Husserlian phenomenology.

Wojtyła's cautious yet critical utilization of the phenomenological method is, at this point and in spite of various controversies, well-known.<sup>1</sup> This is evident in several places in Wojtyła's philosophical corpus, especially in his essay "The Person: Subject and Community," where he (1993, 226) insists that the Husserlian *epoché* may fruitfully be used only so long as it "retains the character of a cognitive method," but does not lead to inadmissible ontological conclusions. It is within these limits that Wojtyła pursues a phenomenological analysis of the subjectivity of consciousness. On the other hand, Wojtyła does not, as Juan Manuel Burgos has demonstrated, make use of the phenomenological method *tout court*. Rather, Burgos (2019, 96) writes, although inspired by Husserlian phenomenology, he "does not use the *epoché*... Wojtyła is convinced not by the method of the intuition of essences but rather by the induction of Aristotelian origin," a claim validated by a close reading of Wojtyła's (1979, 9, 14–18) efforts in *The Acting Person* to express the inductive rather than intuitionistic procedure of his analysis. It is with that background in mind, moreover, that Wojtyła (1993, 226) warns of the *epoché*'s potential to serve as a handicap to the proper encounter of reality, and especially the concreteness of personal reality. Wojtyła, in contrast to his understanding of the Husserlian variant of phenomenology, insists that personalist philosophy must encounter the human being *in* its reality, not in essential structures exhibited only through the *exclusion* of reality. Nonetheless, Wojtyła's reasons for insisting upon this movement from the essence to the reality will itself be based upon a phenomenological picture, albeit a Schelerian rather than Husserlian one.<sup>2</sup>

Voegelin was also concerned about developing a philosophy of man in order to answer the challenges of modern philosophy. Moreover, like Wojtyła, Voegelin sees the only plausible way to the development of such a philosophy as proceeding through the analysis of consciousness and the experiences through which the structures of consciousness are disclosed. Like Wojtyła, Voegelin (1978, 9) saw the qualified potential of phenomenology to offer useful analytic tools for this project. However, in letters to Alfred Schutz, he comments upon their shared dissatisfaction with the possibility of Husserlian phenomenology to be applied to the elaboration of "the social phenomena that were our primary concern," this in spite of what he (2000, 29) acknowledges was its great achievement in the discovery and analysis of intentionality. Voegelin's discontent with Husserlian phenomenology increased upon his first encounter with Husserl's *Crisis* texts. The problem, ultimately, was that Husserl had, through the *epoché* and the opening of an 'apodictic horizon,' attempted to abolish the reality of history, to annul the past (and philosophy itself) in the elaboration of a teleological conception of historical development culminating in the triumph of phenomenology. Upon realizing this, Voegelin (1978, 10) writes that he "had to get out of that 'apodictic horizon' as fast as possible," by annulling the *epoché* and allowing reality, and especially history, to flow back into the analysis once more.

Much of Voegelin's motivation for later rejecting Husserlian phenomenology is earlier revealed in a postscript to his (2000, 72) 1938 work *The Political Religions* indicating that the philosophical anthropology upon which the analysis of religion and

politics in that work had depended had been borrowed from his reading of Scheler. It is largely with this Schelerian background in mind, I contend, that Voegelin (1978, 200) consistently maintains that “human consciousness is not a free-floating something but always the concrete consciousness of concrete persons.” This ontological recognition becomes methodological, for Voegelin, so far as it demands that the development of a philosophy of consciousness become a philosophical anthropology centered upon the concretely historical *person* as the bearer of experience occurring within the order of being of which man is both a subject and a part, as both constituting reality and as constituted by it. It is precisely this recognition as well, with its Schelerian background, which led Wojtyła to the development of his all-important distinction between the cosmological and personalistic understandings of man and the impossibility of reducing man either to a mere part of or to a subject outside of the real cosmos of being. Wojtyła and Voegelin’s parallel recognition of this same phenomenon of man must now become the main subject of our discussion.

### THE IRREDUCIBLE PERSON AND THE ‘IN-BETWEEN’

Wojtyła saw the problem of subjectivity as the new focal point of philosophical and scientific concern, the explosion of which was at least partly owing to certain recent developments in the history of philosophy. Phenomenology is one such development, personalism another, but the intellectual trajectory of which these overlapping movements are more recent expressions embrace much of the history of modern philosophy itself since Descartes. Thus, Wojtyła (1993, 209) remarks upon the fact that today, “*more than ever before we feel the need—and also see a greater possibility—of objectifying the problem of the subjectivity of the human being.*” That it is especially ‘now’ that the problem of human subjectivity has the greatest possibility of adequate thematization is partly owing to the fact that contemporary philosophy is finally overcoming the “old antinomies that...formed an as thought inviolable line of demarcation between the basic orientations in philosophy.” One such antinomy, Wojtyła argues, includes a *prima facie* antinomious conflict between diverse understandings of man which are embedded in the history of philosophical understanding itself and which, in John Crosby’s (1996, 82–83; 2019, 116) reading of Wojtyła here, are mapped onto the divide between the modern and the premodern, especially the Aristotelian philosophical heritage.<sup>3</sup> Wojtyła presents the apparent antinomy in contrast between what he terms cosmological and personalistic understandings of man.

Wojtyła associates the birth of the cosmological understanding of the human being with the development of the Aristotelian anthropology and the emergence of the symbol ‘*anthropos zoon noetikon*.’ This symbol becomes a definition in Aristotle’s work so far as it designates the proximate genus and specific difference of the human being as the living being specifically and uniquely endowed with reason. While the figure of the *zoon noetikon* includes that which is irreducible and unique to the human being, it does so in a way that accentuates the fact that, although the human being is unique in its characteristic possession of *nous*, this noetic being finds its place within a framework essentially contiguous with all other living beings. In Wojtyła’s (1993,

210–211) words, “the 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.” From this perspective, Aristotelian science and its classical and medieval inheritors have always maintained a commitment to the reducibility of the human being within the enveloping cosmos since this is the condition for scientific understanding of the human being through Aristotelian science as such, which can operate only through common/universal structures. For that reason, Wojtyła designates this understanding of the person as ‘cosmological.’

Wojtyła readily acknowledges the importance of the cosmological understanding of man so far as, apart from the mundane categories through which the intelligibility of the universe of being is given, the complete symbolization of human experience cannot be accomplished. Likewise, the cosmological understanding produced the necessary conditions for the classical development of science as such. Nonetheless, the cosmological understanding is, taken in isolation, inadequate. This is because, in Wojtyła’s (1993, 211) assessment of the cosmological tradition, “the human being was mainly an *object*, one of the objects in the world to which the human being visibly and physically belongs.” However, even under the Aristotelian definition, there is a specific difference here which, phenomenologically, turns out to be irreducible to the status of a mere object, or a piece of being straightforwardly contiguous with the enveloping cosmos. In addition to being an object *in* the world, then, the person is also a subject of the experience *of* the world. The subjectivity of the human person marks out the region of the specifically irreducible in the human being. The understanding of man from this vantage point Wojtyła calls the ‘personalistic understanding,’ from the perspective of which, he (1993, 213) insists that “the human being is...given to us not merely as a being defined according to species, but as a concrete self, a self-experiencing subject.” If philosophy is to do adequate justice to the person as subject, we must proceed by ‘pausing,’ as Wojtyła puts it, at the irreducible. However, he insists that any apparent contradiction here resolves itself to the extent that, in reality, “the personalistic type of understanding the human being is not the antinomy of the cosmological type but its complement.”

Preliminary to the question as to how such complementarity may be achieved, it is worth noting that, for Wojtyła, what is gained in the pause at irreducibility is the full, concrete experience of the unrepeatable uniqueness of the individual person which cannot adequately be captured *even if* the emphasis is placed upon the analysis of the specific difference in man as the living being who lives specifically through the activation of a capacity for *nous*. Only from the recognition of the irreducible subjectivity of the human being can I gain the fact that I am not just any rational agent whatever, but *this* rational, self-possessed and self-governing agent who is thus neither some disembodied transcendental subjectivity nor a purely material and causally determined body. Consequently, the pause at the irreducible is the condition of full recognition of both human personality and moral responsibility. At the same time, Wojtyła (1993, 214) insists, while we cannot complete the picture of the person purely through the reduction of the human being to the cosmologically conceived ‘*zoon noetikon*,’ “we also cannot remain within the framework of the irreducible alone (for then we would be unable to get beyond the pure self),” to the personal self in its real

concreteness. The personalistic understanding's full possession of the concrete personal self requires supplementation by the cosmological view. The accomplishment of such harmonization and complementation is, understandably, a challenging perspective to achieve. It requires that we, in some sense, privilege analysis of the irreducible over the reducible. This is the case because the irreducible has traditionally been underappreciated in the philosophical tradition following Aristotle, even in the Boethian effort to define the person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia* (individual substance of a rational nature), since even this reduces the irreducibly unrepeatable subject to the common category 'substance.' Thus, Burgos interprets Wojtyła's reading of the history of philosophy quite starkly when he (2019, 108) characterizes Wojtyła's position as entailing that,

...[f]or the ancient Greeks, man was a thing in the world of nature, certainly special but nonetheless only one natural thing. In Western culture, under the influence of Christianity, persons emerged strongly from the world of nature as something radically different. This radical emergence, which established an unbridgeable gap between persons and other beings, had important philosophical consequences that were not grasped by classical philosophy (including medieval philosophy).

However, since, for Wojtyła, "*lived experience essentially defies reduction,*" the harmonization of the cosmological and personalistic understandings of man remains, in the end, a challenging project not yet realized. Nonetheless, it is upon the resolution of this problem that the whole of anthropology and ethics will rest. Thus, we must, with Wojtyła, continue to pursue tools for the resolution of this task. I argue that such tools can be found in the work of Eric Voegelin, who recognizes precisely the same problem in the pursuit of an adequate philosophical anthropology, yet whose reading of the history of philosophy provides him with analytic tools distinctively prepared to advance Wojtyła's project further.

Voegelin's meditation on the problem proceeds from an effort to analyze the human consciousness of 'order' in the political, ethical, metaphysical, and religious senses. As his philosophy of consciousness finally comes together at the end of his life's work, Voegelin introduces the reader to a paradox of consciousness, at first motivated by the analysis of the problem of philosophical language concerning the equivocal idea of a 'beginning' in the composition of a book that is itself a part of a historical and cosmic temporal project, and thus a continuing chapter in an ongoing, but not endless, series of ever-new beginnings. Facing such an equivocation, Voegelin (2000, 29) asks, "[w]hat is the structure in reality that will induce when experienced, this equivocal use of the term?" Voegelin replies, arguing that the equivocation is rooted in the paradoxical structure of consciousness itself, particularly in the twofold forms of a conscious relation to the reality of which each discrete conscious act is the correlate. Voegelin (2000, 29) writes,

we speak of consciousness as a something located in human beings in their bodily existence. In relation to this concretely embodied consciousness, reality assumes the position of an object intended.

Moreover, by its position as an object intended by a consciousness that is bodily located, reality itself acquires a metaphorical touch of external thingness.

In this relation of consciousness to its world, consciousness is apprehended as an embodied subjectivity irreducibly standing over and against the comprehending world of objects of which it is an essential correlate. Following Husserl, Voegelin designates this form of consciousness as intentionality. However, consciousness does not have the characteristic of being only and essentially intentional, contrary to the picture often associated with Husserl.<sup>4</sup> In addition to intentionality, Voegelin conceives an equally important and irreducible moment of conscious experiencing. In this regard, he (2000, 29) writes,

we know the bodily located consciousness does not belong to another genus of reality, but is part of the same reality that has moved, in its relation to man's consciousness, into the position of a thing-reality. In this second sense, then, reality is not an object of consciousness but the something in which consciousness occurs as an event of participation between partners in the community of being.

This structure of consciousness—in which the subject is itself a part of the comprehending reality, specifically that piece of it that awakens to itself in conscious life—Voegelin terms ‘luminosity’. In this form of experience, he (2000, 29–30) writes, “reality moves from the position of an intended object to that of a subject, while the consciousness of the human subject intending objects moves to the position of a predicative event in the subject ‘reality’ as it becomes luminous for its truth.”

In Voegelin's distinction between intentionality and luminosity, and the two interpretations that come with it, of man as a subject irreducible to a world of things, and of man as a piece of a comprehending reality, one might discern the basic lines of Wojtyła's distinction between the personalistic and the cosmological understandings of man. Indeed, the similarities are striking, but there are important differences in nuance as they pertain to each thinker's understanding of the distinction that needs to be articulated, especially as they bear upon the interpretation of the place and significance of personalism in reference to the historical tradition of philosophy. Whereas Wojtyła sees the necessity that philosophy today should ‘pause’ at the experience of the irreducible, giving the personalistic understanding, in spite of its incompleteness, a kind of preeminence by contrast to the historically well-worn cosmological understanding, Voegelin, instead wants to pause at what he would contend is, from the specifically modern perspective, the more frequently ignored structure of luminosity, ostensibly providing what Wojtyła had called the cosmological understanding a greater degree of analytic preeminence. I argue, though, that these two positions are not contradictory, in particular, if we take care to understand the important differences between the cosmological and the luminous understandings that render them incompletely equivalent. It is, in fact, through the language of ‘luminosity’ that Voegelin attempts to overcome the limits of the intentionalist interpretation of the conscious subject of phenomenology and of the coarse objectivism of the

cosmological understanding alike. Consequently, one can argue that personalism is not, fundamentally, a more recent irruption into the philosophical tradition occurring by and large in modernity, but is, rather, the essential form of philosophy itself since Plato. Thus, the recovery of philosophy from the modern malaise of more properly gnostic, rather than philosophical, speculation is *eo ipso* identical with the recovery of an adequate personalism.

Continuing, Voegelin (2000, 30) writes, “when consciousness is experienced as an event of participatory illumination in the reality that comprehends the partners to the event, it has to be located, not in one of the partners, but in the comprehending reality.” That is, the ‘reality’ to which the luminous consciousness of the one who knows herself as a piece of a comprehending reality is related is paradigmatically *not* an objective world of mere ‘things.’ Such a thingly reality is the correlate of consciousness as subject, but the luminous consciousness is not a regression to the other side of the correlative, and antinomious structure ‘subject-object,’ but rather comprehends a reality that itself cannot be reduced to a single pole of a tensionally structured cosmos. Instead, it manifests its belonging to a reality that is a univocal whole. For Voegelin (1956, 1), reality is holistically constituted as a community of being marked out by the transcendent poles of God, world, society, and self, all of which are irreducible to one another and all of which are unintelligible as ‘things’ taken in monadic isolation. Rather, each tensional pole of the community of being participates in the others so far as they are irreducible to the status of mere things in the world. Voegelin (2000, 30) emphasizes this point when he writes that, “consciousness has a structural dimension by which it belongs, not to man in his bodily existence, but to the reality in which man, the other partners to the community of being, and the participatory relations among them occur.”

To clarify further the meaning of this refusal to reduce luminous reality to the status of a thing, Voegelin suggests that, “if the spatial metaphor be still permitted, the luminosity of consciousness is located somewhere ‘between’ human consciousness in bodily existence and reality intended in its mode of thingness.” In appealing to the metaphor of a ‘between,’ Voegelin self-consciously invokes Plato as the first philosopher, through the symbol of the *metaxy* (‘in-between’), to analyze such an event. In prioritizing the analysis of consciousness through the figures of the ‘in-between,’ of participation, and of luminosity, Voegelin insists that consciousness self-conscious of itself as a member of a community of being that is irreducible to mere thinghood is far more than man reduced to a thingly object located in material space and time, subject to forces of material causality, and stripped of a life of inwardness. Rather, the event of participation discloses that it is precisely in the inwardness of man that reality becomes luminous for itself, again not as a monadically closed subject mysteriously transcending itself only to get out into a world of things, but possessing traditional hallmarks of ‘personhood’ in the personalist tradition, i.e., it is consciousness as an event of a reality become luminously and inwardly *relational*.<sup>5</sup> Such a move makes *person*, rather than mere subjectivity or objectivity, the paradigm of scientific intelligibility; it also constitutes the beginning of a rapprochement between the cosmological and personalistic understandings of man inasmuch as it reveals the philosophical senselessness of the absolutization of each that Wojtyła is most interested in rooting out. In Voegelin’s understanding, luminosity discloses man as



irreducible to the status of an object—crucially—, *much like the reality of which he is a part*. If Voegelin is right to draw these conclusions, then it is necessary now to understand the implications of Voegelin’s personalism for the history of philosophy and for the reading of that history in Wojtyła, which Voegelin will both confirm, challenge, and push forward in new ways.

## PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND THE DERAILEMENT/REDUCTION OF MAN TO COSMOLOGICAL IMMANENCE

As already mentioned, Wojtyła places the origin of the cosmological understanding in the emergence of the ‘*zoon noetikon*,’ whose interpretation of man loses the inwardness and individual uniqueness of the personal subject that is the hallmark of the personalistic understanding. Nonetheless, Wojtyła admits that the personalistic understanding is not a distinctly modern contribution, although its rebirth is largely confined to the modern project of philosophical analysis.<sup>6</sup> Wojtyła (1993, 211, 212) writes, “a belief in the primordial uniqueness of the human being, and thus in the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world, seems just as old as the need for reduction expressed in Aristotle’s definition.” Wojtyła does not name the traditions in which the personalistic understanding maintains itself through history, although he (1993, 213, 165) does discount both the Boethian and the Thomistic philosophies as possible contenders for the personalist mantle. If then, the idea of man as irreducible is as ancient and perduring as the cosmological idea of man, then one might wonder where precisely in the historical tradition it is to be discovered. To this unspoken question, Voegelin addresses an answer.

In the passages already referenced, Voegelin invokes Plato in locating the place of consciousness neither in the world nor out of it, but in the ‘in between’—the *metaxy*. In the Platonic context, the *metaxy* expresses the experience of the soul ‘between’ the mortal and the divine, the worldly, and the otherworldly. It is in part because of this that the human being, even in the context of luminosity, cannot be reduced to the reality of the cosmos as a purely immanent thing but is, rather, a part of the structure of the cosmos stretched between transcendence and immanence as irreducible poles of the community of being. In Voegelin’s (1978I, 104) reading, for Plato and the tradition of classical philosophy which he initiated and which always remained at least circumspectly bound up with Platonic thought, “if man exists in the *metaxy*...any construction of man as a world-immanent entity will destroy the meaning of existence because it deprives man of his specific humanity.” Plato, as the great philosopher of the experience of *nous*, of divine reason inhabiting the soul and of the soul’s interior movement—masterfully articulated, for instance, in books II-IV and VII-IX of the *Republic* in which the analysis of the effects of injustice upon the soul of the *polis* becomes analogically transmuted into the analysis of the journey of the soul to or away from the divine *Agathon*, of the inner travails of the soul in grip of injustice and enthralled in the depths of doxic *agnoia* in the metaphor of the cave, etc.—refuses to reduce man to the status of an external object among other external objects in the cosmos. His refusal, however, is not because man is the subject of the experience of a world of thingly objects, but because Plato experiences the soul as the ‘place’ where

reality is opened to a beyond towards which it is in constant procession; it is, Voegelin (1978, 96) writes, the passive “sensorium of the divine *aition* and at the same time...[it is] the site of its formative manifestation.” For Voegelin (1978, 97), ultimately, it is in the Platonic inwardness of the soul in its state of unrest that the movement of philosophy begins, and thus the discovery of man as a being irreducible to the cosmos of surrounding things.

This Platonic insight is likewise present in Aristotle, and, for Voegelin, is only lost to the extent that the *zoon noetikon* becomes less a symbolic tool of analysis and more a final and literal scientific definition which closes off the future need for the *analytic experience* of a reality that cannot be *defined* but only *symbolically addressed*. To give a brief example, in Voegelin’s (1978, 62) analysis of Aristotelian *phronesis*, we must understand that the phronimonic consciousness of what is right by nature (*physei dikaion*) “has its being in man’s concrete experience of a justice which is everywhere the same and yet, in its realization, changeable and everywhere different.” The effort to resolve the tension of this experience is a project subject to the *tyche*, the luck, of performing right action conditioned upon the experience of what, in the Christian context, will later be called ‘grace,’ so far as *phronesis* is part of a fortuitous divine movement pervasive in the universe and alive in a particularly explicit way in the human rational soul crucially revealed, in Bk. X, ch. 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as more divine than mortal and whose life (the *bios theoretikos*) immortalizes us the more we live in it. And yet, for Voegelin, Wojtyła’s identification of the loss of subjectivity and of reductionism in the Aristotelian science of man, which occurs around the effort to *define* man as the *zoon noetikon* does contain an important insight.

The Platonic intuition is that experience of mortality opens the soul to an erotic reorientation toward the truth of transcendent reality; but this truth, Voegelin (1957, 363) insists, is “not a body of propositions about a world-immanent object; it is the world-transcendent *summum bonum*, experienced as an orienting force in the soul, about which we can speak only in analogical symbols.” In the Christian context, this insight is carried over into the evangelical identification of Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, i.e., as the re-orienting pole of life in the *metaxy* through whom salvation is won. In the classical context, it is not only the reality of the *summum bonum* which cannot be reduced to a world-immanent object about which a science, or a body of propositions taken in literal truth, may be developed. Rather, it is also the soul as the locus of the divine epiphany of this truth, and by extension, the human being as a concrete whole, which also cannot become the subject of a literalizing science replete with definitions solving the anthropological problem for all time. Yet, Voegelin holds, it is the tendency of Aristotle to do precisely this—in Voegelin’s (1957, 277) language, to derail the philosophical symbolization of man in the *metaxy*, by tearing the symbols of philosophical experience “out of their experiential context and treat[ing them] as if they were concepts referring to a datum of sense experience.” The derailment of the Platonic symbolism begins with Aristotle’s effort to pursue philosophy as a logical science; the derailment continues in the course of every contemporary philosophy that loses the luminosity of consciousness and the interior experience of man in the *metaxy*, the openness, and relationality of the soul and of the reality of which it is a part, for the closed scientific system of literal definitions and final answers.

## CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING NEED FOR PERSONALISM

I will conclude with a brief assessment of the contribution Voegelin can make to the continuation of Wojtyła's personalistic legacy. First, if we take seriously Voegelin's analysis of the history of philosophy and of the nature and structure of human reality in light of the inner experience of consciousness, not only as intentional but as luminously personal in its openness and relationality to a correspondingly relational and irreducible community of being, then there is quite a bit that Voegelin and Wojtyła can speak to each other. Moreover, it is precisely in this conversation that Wojtyła's effort to express the complementarity of the personalistic and the cosmological understandings of man can most fruitfully take place, allowing the person to be a concrete, embodied being at home in the world, and yet also irreducible to it. Furthermore, Voegelin's analysis of the history of philosophy powerfully expresses the truth of Wojtyła's assessment that the Aristotelian tradition has tended to be reductionistic in character, although not inasmuch as it fails to appreciate the subjectivity of man, but so far as it tends to lose sight of the ineffability of human personal reality and to transmute what can only be disclosed through the careful analysis of personal experience—and by extension through the effort to cultivate the re-orienting movements in the soul necessary to the experience of philosophical reality—to the form of a scientific description that is true propositionally, whether I experience it conditionally through the ordering of my soul or not.

Nonetheless, Voegelin's analysis also tends to indicate a deeper sense in which the recovery of the irreducible in man in Wojtyła's work marks out the significant contribution of personalism to philosophy today. Inasmuch as personalism insists that the human being cannot be reduced to the status of an object, although the person is still very much a member of reality, it can be argued that this insistence represents a recovery of the classical tradition of philosophy itself. This is important to the extent that, as Wojtyła agrees, such a refusal of reductionism of any sort is the only sure cure for avoiding the disorders that are represented by a subjectivism cut off from the commonality of a shared reality as well as to resist the depersonalizing trends of modern social life which are its fruits, the alienation which makes of the person a mere thing to be used, abused, and disposed of, the likes of which has so tragically marked the history of the last century, and which continues to afflict us in our own day.

## NOTES

1. An overview of the controversies may be found in "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II," by Robert Harvanek (1993, 1–22) and, more recently, in Juan Manuel Burgos' (2019, 101–106) article "Wojtyła's Personalism as Integral Personalism: The Future of an Intellectual Project."

2. This is the point that Burgos (2019, 102) in his otherwise excellent article does not quite appreciate. Wojtyła need not exit phenomenology for what Burgos calls in its place an 'integral personalism' as an alternative epistemological and ontological philosophy contrary to the phenomenological one, because, *pace* Burgos' reading of phenomenology, not all phenomenology need include an *epoché* nor does all

phenomenology accept the *epoché*. Moreover, Wojtyła is equally inspired by a phenomenological philosophy other than the Husserlian one that does not utilize an *epoché* in this sense, namely the Schelerian variant. I (2013, 17–20) have elsewhere provided a brief discussion of the necessity and the fruitfulness of a phenomenology without an *epoché*.

3. In the latter text, Crosby extends the historical demarcation to include Augustine as the proto-representative of a distinctively ‘modern’ philosophical trend of understanding the person in light of the subjectivity of experience, ‘modern’ because it would only be brought to full fruition in the context of modern rather than ancient or medieval philosophy.

4. Husserl’s own ability to conceive of structures of consciousness beyond the merely intentional is unquestionable, although little noticed and little understood, especially from the perspective of phenomenology. For a more complete discussion of this topic, see my (2019, 255–293) article “Time, Eternity, and the Transition from Phenomenology to Metaphysics in Edith Stein, Edmund Husserl, and Eric Voegelin.”

5. Joseph Ratzinger (1990, 443–447) has demonstrated the foundational importance of the theme of relationality to personalism in the background of the Christian theological use of *persona/prosopon* as fundamentally an existentially relational rather than ontologically substantialist concept. Ratzinger still suffers, from a Voegelinian perspective, from the misconception shared by Wojtyła that, by and large, the pre-Christian philosophical world was primarily substantialist in its ontological orientation. Indeed, Stephen Menn’s (1995, 18) analysis of God as ‘*Nous*’ in Plato, which is not interpreted as a substance or a subject-like power which bears rational activity, but primarily as a virtue in which cosmic order participates, goes a long way towards justifying the notion that pre-Christian philosophy can readily accommodate the Christian personalist insight into the existential relationality rather than ontic substantiality of *persona*. However, Ratzinger’s study is particularly valuable for underscoring the critical importance of a relational outlook for qualifying a philosophy as personalist and thus is equally critical for extending the personalist insight to the classic form of philosophical speculation itself.

6. Wojtyła’s admission on this score goes a long way towards confirming Mark Spencer’s (2015, 148, 151) argument in response to Wojtyła that, even on Wojtyła’s personalist terms, Aristotelian anthropology is prepared to accommodate the personalist understanding of man, and indeed already contains it, albeit expressed with different symbols.

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