

Wojtyla's Personalistic Norm: A Thomistic Analysis

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THE FIRST principle of practical reason is “do good and avoid evil.” Nearly everyone agrees to this general starting point of moral theory, but the real challenge for moral philosophers is to formulate, in more specific terms, a way to systematically determine, in particular cases, what is good and what is evil. Karol Wojtyla offers a formula that purports to do this; he calls his principle “the personalistic norm.” Borrowing language from Immanuel Kant, Wojtyla formulates both a negative and a positive statement of the personalistic norm:

This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit 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.¹

Since this norm seems to be the foundation of Wojtyla's moral philosophy, and since the truth contained in it is not self-evident, a person who hopes to conduct a careful study of Wojtyla's thought ought to give serious consideration to the origin, the meaning, and ultimately the truth of the norm thus formulated. From a Thomistic point of view, the positive formulation is not a point of concern. Since this formulation is perfectly in line with natural law and traditional Catholic theology, the truth of this formulation can be granted and set aside. The norm in its negative

¹ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, Inc., 1994), 41.

aspect, however, as it is often repeated by Wojtyla (with a variety of minor modifications) requires clarification.

Wojtyla's personalistic norm, in its negative formulation, may cause some degree of discomfort for a Thomist, because it is essentially a formulation borrowed from Immanuel Kant.² Kant put forth his "practical imperative" (the second formulation of the categorical imperative) as part of a system of morals designed to replace the natural law, among other systems. Since Kant would not admit any knowledge of an objective world of being and values underlying the subjective realm of phenomena, he was forced to develop a moral norm that makes no reference to objective human nature.³ In his mind, his categorical imperative, in its three formulations, provided the necessary *a priori* basis for his non-realist moral theory.

Why then does Wojtyla, who embraces metaphysical realism and the natural law, employ the language of Immanuel Kant? Why does he, like Kant, formulate his personalistic norm in a way that makes no explicit reference to objective human nature? Wojtyla reveals his motivations for this mode of expression in *Love and Responsibility*. He says that Kant's position in the history of philosophy renders the Kantian formulation especially effective in the contemporary intellectual milieu. "It should be noted that Kant made this statement [that is, the practical imperative] in the intellectual climate of the epoch that ushered in our own and that is especially fruitful in it."⁴ In addition to the rhetorical utility of Kantian language, Wojtyla thinks that Kant's practical imperative is useful in confronting utilitarianism.⁵ Be that as it may, there are a number of effec-

² "The practical imperative will therefore be the following: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means." Immanuel Kant, *The Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 36, (section 429). Concerning the link, in Wojtyla's mind, between his personalistic norm, and Kant's formulation of his practical imperative, see Karol Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lange, 1993), 267: "Kant recognized this truth [that is, that humans should not become an object of use] and expressed it in his famous practical imperative. . . ."

³ Kant's moral theory is divorced, not only from an objective understanding of human nature, but from key elements of human nature, such as the passions, habits, virtues, vices, etc. On the importance of these elements in a Thomistic understanding of the natural law, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, "The Vision of Virtue and Knowledge of the Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera*, 5 (2007): 41–65.

⁴ Karol Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," 267.

⁵ Ibid. Cf. also *Love and Responsibility*, 37 and 39.

tive ways of refuting utilitarianism without adopting the language of Immanuel Kant.⁶ Insofar as Thomists have been in the business of refuting utilitarianism, they have also been in the business of refuting Kant's anti-natural law formulation of ethics. Both of these moral systems are opposed, in their origins and their express principles, to a moral philosophy grounded in the natural law.

There should be no confusion, however, about Wojtyła's intention to ground his moral theory in the natural law. Unlike Kant, who formulated his practical imperative as an attempt to avoid any link to objective human nature, Wojtyła explicitly intends to establish just such a link between human nature and his personalistic norm:

All norms, including the personalistic norm, as based on the essences, or natures, of beings, are expressions of the order that governs the world. This order is intelligible to reason, to the person. Consequently, only the person is a *particeps legis aeternae et conscia legis naturae*, which means that the person is conscious of the normative force that flows from the essences, or natures, of all beings.⁷

There can be no question, then, as to the philosophical roots of Wojtyła's moral thinking. While he uses Kantian language in an attempt to present his moral views to the contemporary world, his views are fundamentally rooted in natural law.

Although Wojtyła does not agree with the essentials of Kant's ethical system,⁸ his use of Kantian language, nevertheless, can be a source of

⁶ This is not the place for a rebuttal of utilitarianism, but the most effective refutation would presumably entail a revelation of internal inconsistencies (for example, the incommensurability of pleasures and pains), rather than a simple reference to the obvious fact that utilitarianism allows one to use a person. A utilitarian would simply respond that this is a *virtue* of the system.

⁷ Wojtyła, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics: Reflections and Postulates," in *Person and Community*, 287.

⁸ For two examples of Wojtyła's criticism of Kant's moral philosophy, see "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler," and "In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 23–56. For a general criticism of Kant's moral theory, see Richard Taylor, *Good and Evil: A New Direction* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 103–15: "It is probably safe to say that virtually no men think in Kantian terms in any of the practical affairs of life . . ." (103). Taylor summarizes Kantian ethics as follows: "To be genuinely moral, a man must tear himself away from his inclinations as a loving human being, drown the sympathetic promptings of his heart, scorn any fruits of his efforts, think last of all of the feelings, needs, desires, and inclinations either of himself or of his fellows and, perhaps detesting what he has to do, do it anyway—solely from respect for the Law" (113).

confusion on several levels. At the outset, there are problems with the distinction between using and not using a person, the distinction between treating a person as a means and an end, and the use of the logically restrictive term “merely.” Further problems arise with Wojtyła’s analysis of the experience of shame in relation to the “use” of a person. Finally, the alleged connection between Kant’s imperative and the command of Jesus Christ to love one another is questionable.⁹ To the extent that a moral theorist associates himself with Kant and these particular problems, the formulations of that moral theorist will be called into question.

A Thomist may ask himself the following question: how could St. Thomas Aquinas—who thoroughly understood the verb *utor* (to use) as well as the distinction between means and ends, etc.—have failed to see this essential moral insight? More importantly, a Thomist may ask, what should students of Wojtyła think, given his use of such traditionally anti-realist philosophical terminology?

Wojtyła has gone out of his way in an effort to reach out to the contemporary world with Kantian terminology. The difficulties of this effort, however, are several. One is that the richness, the depth, the complexities, and the very basis itself of a sound moral philosophy founded upon the natural law cannot be conveyed in the limited philosophical language of Immanuel Kant. Not only does the Kantian language fail to provide clear distinctions between morally right and wrong actions, but it also fails to indicate accurately a sound basis for these kinds of judgments. On the practical level, there is a difficulty as well, that doctrines put forth by Wojtyła, which are logical conclusions according to the natural law, simply do not follow when one attempts to derive them from the moral theory of Immanuel Kant. One can see, therefore, the need to clarify Wojtyła’s position regarding the natural law and his use of Kantian terminology.

In keeping with St. Thomas’s deep respect for the truth, and for papal authority on matters of faith and (in this case) morals, a modern Thomist

⁹ This claim to be in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ is highly suspicious, and to some degree, amusing. Note that both Kant and Mill, who are diametrically opposed in the principles of their moral theories, claim to be in line with the command of Jesus Christ to love one’s neighbor. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *The Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 12, (section 399): “Undoubtedly in this way also are to be understood those passages of Scripture which command us to love our neighbor and even our enemy.” Cf. also John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1979) 16–17: “In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. ‘To do as you would be done by,’ and ‘to love your neighbor as you love yourself,’ constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.”

may want to clarify definitions and find distinctions which will reveal, to the extent that it is possible, a sound resolution of this matter. An essential part of this task involves a careful analysis of the language and the underlying moral theory of Kant as well as the language and the underlying moral theory of Wojtyła. In final analysis, one appreciates more clearly the degree to which Wojtyła is genuinely opposed (in theory, if not in language) to the philosophical grounding of Kant's "metaphysics of morals."

Analysis of the Verb "To Use"

According to Wojtyła's personalistic norm, it is wrong to use a person. In his words, a "person is the kind of good which does not admit use."¹⁰ Such an assertion would seem, from a common-sense point of view, to require some clarification, for, in the strict sense, the "use" of a person is irrelevant to the morality of an act. Innumerable situations abound that illustrate ways in which one *can* use a person (himself or another) in a morally acceptable fashion. For example, when Sally's frisbee lands on the roof, Sally could, in good conscience, use Pete's hands and his shoulders as a ladder, in order to reach her frisbee. The mere use of another person, *per se*, does not seem to imply moral evil; in fact, Pete's allowing himself to be used, as a ladder on loan to Sally, can be seen not only as morally permissible, but also as generous, charitable, and morally praiseworthy. On the other hand, if Sally were to use Pete's face (with or without his consent) as one rung on her *ad hoc* human ladder, most common-sense observers would question the moral uprightness of her judgment.

In actions involving the use of a person, the relevant moral factor is not so much the *use* of a person *per se*, but the way in which the person is used. From the perspective of the natural law, in most circumstances, purposely stepping on someone's face is judged to be evil, primarily because of the nature of the human person, the nature of the human face, the nature of the act of stepping, and the significance of these factors in regard to the human person as a whole. Other considerations, of course, come into play, namely, intention and circumstances. If, in some strange set of circumstances, stepping on Pete's face were the only means of saving their lives (for example, in order to reach a latch to open the door and escape from a burning building), then using him in this way might be morally permissible, and possibly even obligatory. Even then, one would have to consider the intentions of both willing parties. If Sally's motives were not pure, that is, if she did not will to use Pete in as respectful a

¹⁰ See note 1 above.

manner as possible under the circumstances, then even stepping on his hands could be seen as immoral.

From the point of view of natural law, the key lies not in the use or non-use of a person, but in the nature of the beings involved, in the nature of the act, in the degree to which the agents know and will the act, in their motives, and in the relevant circumstances. In other words, the key lies in factors that are intentionally excluded in Kant's practical imperative and that are not mentioned directly in Wojtyla's personalistic norm. From a Thomistic point of view, it would be a strange situation for people under the impression that they are employing "Catholic" moral theory to think that the key factor in moral decision-making is simply the distinction between using and not-using a person.

Probably the most significant reason why the distinction of use is not immediately rejected by most people as a morally insignificant factor, is that, in common parlance, the term carries with it a fairly strong negative connotation. Everyone can relate to the negative experience of having been "used." Upon figuring out the real intentions of a seducer, a woman may say to her friend that she feels she has been used. A similar experience may be encountered by an entrepreneur who is tricked by his business partner into signing over the rights to his own inventions and the fruits of his own labor. An unlimited number of examples can be produced, but they all seem to share something in common. The negative connotation attached to the term "use" derives not essentially from the fact of the use itself, but from the fact that, in some instances of use, the persons being used are, in Wojtyla's terminology, "objectified"; that is to say, they are treated only with the level of respect due to a sub-human being. In more traditional terminology, they are not treated in accord with the dignity of their nature. In other words, the negative connotation of the term "use" derives from the injustice involved in that particular kind (or instance) of use. Thus the "use" itself is not unjust, but the term "use" carries with it a negative connotation, because it implies, in some cases, a derogation of the natural law.

According to the natural law, matters of justice and injustice are traceable to the natures of the participants, and, to some degree, the circumstances involved. For Kant, however, these *a posteriori* factors are extraneous to the discussion. Having rejected such factors as irrelevant in the *a priori* realm of the "metaphysics of morals," the approach of his moral theory differs radically from that of the natural law. Instead of judging particular instances of *use* by the standards of *justice*, Kant attempts to make judgments of *justice* based on whether or not the action involves *use*. The negative connotation of the term helps to gloss over the fact that

the denotation of the term, by itself, does not bear the weight of the moral distinction he is trying to draw.¹¹

Even Kant, however, would admit that “use” itself is not the sole deciding factor in moral issues. Perhaps the critical distinction with respect to moral good and evil to which both Kant and Wojtyła are attempting to direct our attention lies not in an analysis of the verb “to use,” but in the treatment of a person as a means rather than an end.

The Human Person Considered as a Means Versus an End

In some texts, Wojtyła's presentation of the personalistic norm is focused on the alleged evil in treating a person as a means rather than as an end. In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyła states his position in these words: “Nobody can use a person as a means towards an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator.”¹² Once again, a Thomist will notice that Wojtyła is not explicitly focusing attention on the full analysis of the objective nature of a human being, as St. Thomas does, for example, in the second part of the *Summa theologiae*. In order to determine the moral status of any act, St. Thomas would be interested in what the person is doing (or what the person is failing to do); he would want to know how the action affects the person's natural perfection; he would want to know about the intent, the nature of the circumstances, etc.

According to Wojtyła's personalistic norm, on the other hand, the main factor is the status of a person as a means or as an end. For Wojtyła, it is wrong to treat another person as a means, primarily because in doing so, one places that person in service of an artificial goal not set by the person who is being treated as a means:

For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of taking decisions: these, most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self of a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as a means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.¹³

¹¹ The practical imperative does have some rhetorical value because of the negative connotation of “use.” W. D. Ross points to this utility of the second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative in his book *Kant's Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 53: “The second formula has in fact a great homiletic value; it is a means of edification rather than enlightenment. . . . For the bare logical notion of universalizability, the second formula substitutes something that makes a much warmer appeal to the human heart—the notion of the value of human personality wherever it exists.”

¹² Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

Here, Wojtyla is attempting to express morality in terms of a norm that is based on one aspect of the human being, namely, the intellectual power that allows persons to set their own goals. If the term "person" is understood in the modern sense, Immanuel Kant, who denies any objective knowledge of being, is able to say the same thing (that is, one may not use a person as a means to an end).¹⁴

Using this distinction of means and ends as a key factor in moral theory, however, presents several problems. Consider, for example, a simple case of prostitution. Assuming that both Kant and Wojtyla would agree that this act is morally evil, how can the means/end distinction help in identifying the moral evil? According to the personalistic norm, the problem lies in the treatment of the prostitute by the client as a means to his own end. He wants pleasure, and he uses her as a means to his end; but in this case, his end is also, in a way, her end. She directly wills his end, and in freely choosing to will his end, she makes it her own. Unlike seduction or rape, where the perpetrator's will is imposed by trickery or by force, the end or goal of the client in prostitution is freely, knowingly, and implicitly, if not explicitly (that is, professionally) accepted by the prostitute. His end becomes, in an important respect, her end. She wills it as a proximate end, which is directed in turn to her further end, namely, the reception of payment.¹⁵ Just as the client wills her end as a means to his own end, she wills his end as a means to her own end. Both parties accept and incorporate each other's ends, to some degree, as their own. As is the case with any other business deal, they agree on a "common goal," namely, the satisfactory trade of goods and services. Wojtyla would have to say that "violence" is done in treating the person as a means, but in this case, no violence can be found with respect to this particular distinction, that is, with respect to imposing one's ends upon another. In this example, we do not find the violence of conflicting ends; on the contrary, we find (as we do in any legitimate business deal) a harmony of mutual cooperation. Neither is being used as a "blind tool" by the other.¹⁶ Wojtyla himself says the following: "*When two different people consciously choose a common aim, this puts them on a footing of equality, and precludes the possibility that one of them might be subordinated to the other.*"¹⁷ The key factor indicated

¹⁴ See note 2 above.

¹⁵ Note: not even the reception of payment is her final end. Money is obviously an instrumental goal, a means to some further end.

¹⁶ Wojtyla says that it is wrong to use another as a "blind tool." Cf. *Love and Responsibility*, 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28. Note: the issue of subordination is as questionable in moral theory as the distinction of use itself. If the subordination of one person with respect to

by Wojtyła, which allegedly accounts for moral evil in using another as a means, does not seem to apply to this situation.

The failure of the means/end distinction to accurately identify evil in particular actions becomes clearer in light of a comparison between prostitution and massage therapy. In the case of massage therapy, the client pays the therapist to rub parts of his body in order to fulfill his own desired end, namely, to improve circulation, relax tension, etc. Both the client and the therapist agree to use the therapist's body and subordinate the therapist's body to the client's own individual ends in exchange for money. If one can assume that there is a significant moral difference between prostitution and massage therapy (or any other legitimate business deal), that difference does not rest essentially on the means/end distinction; the two situations simply do not admit of a means/end distinction in which a moral differentiation can be found. To find a morally significant difference, one must abandon the means/end distinction and turn instead to an analysis of human nature, a move that Kant is not willing to make.

Another problem arises with the practical imperative in its command to always treat persons as ends in themselves. When Kant tells us that one should never treat a person, whether himself or another, as a means to an end, but that one should always treat a person *as an end in himself*, what does he mean? How does one treat a person as an end? What does it mean to treat someone as an end? Within the context of the Kantian metaphysics of morals, the answer to this question is far from clear.¹⁸ Literally, to treat something as an end means to seek it or pursue it, to focus one's energy on attaining it. Neither Kant nor Wojtyła intends this. It would be absurd to suggest that all persons demand to be pursued as an end or a goal.¹⁹

From the perspective of the natural law, one could say that a moral agent is required to treat another in a way that is respectful of that person's natural end (that is, in a way that does not intentionally frustrate that person's end). In this context, however, the term "end" is intended to signify a person's final end, the end written into his objective nature. Yet this is something that Kant, from his anti-realist, anti-natural-law perspective, expressly rejects.

another person were immoral, what would we be expected to think about the subordination of children to parents, monks to abbots, priests to bishops, etc.?

¹⁸ For a discussion of this problem and criticism of the practical imperative, see Ronald M. Green, "What Does it Mean to Use Someone as 'A Means Only': Rereading Kant," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 11 (2001): 247–61.

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, only the final end (that is, God) can be an end that is not in some way directed to another end. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948), I-II, q. 1, aa. 4–6.

Wojtyla, at this point, attempts to clarify his position. Without explicitly identifying man's final end (the final end written into human nature) as the end that demands respect, he identifies the "personal ends" of the person, rather than the Kantian notion of the person himself, as the ends to be pursued and respected:

[T]his principle should be restated in a form rather different from that which Kant gave it, as follows: 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. This principle, thus formulated, lies at the basis of all the human freedoms, properly understood, and especially freedom of conscience.²⁰

Note that here Wojtyla is not referring explicitly to the final end that, according to the natural law, inheres in every human being by necessity. Not only is he pointing to "personal ends," but he says that these ends are ends that the person has, *or should have*. The final end, as viewed by the natural law, and any proximate ends linked to it, are ends that every person *has*. There is no room for the idea that one "should have" such an end. A final end is a necessity of human nature, and the concepts of "should," and "necessity" are mutually exclusive. At the same time, nothing would prohibit the correspondence of the freely chosen particular "personal ends" (that one "should have") and man's objective, final end.

A problem still remains in Wojtyla's formulation. In some cases (for example, the care of children, of some teens, or of others who are persons but who are not sufficiently responsible for themselves) it would seem morally acceptable, if not morally obligatory, to identify *for the person* his proper end, even if it is contrary to that person's own subjective "personal ends" (even, in some instances, if it is contrary to that person's conscience). In addition, legislation necessary to a just society restricts by coercion certain personal ends. As St. Thomas says, "It is evident that every lawmaker intends to direct men by means of laws toward his own end, principally. Thus, the leader of an army intends victory and the ruler of a state intends peace."²¹ According to Wojtyla's formulation of the norm, such actions would be immoral.

²⁰ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 28.

²¹ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. Anton Pegis et al. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), III, ch. 115, par. 2: "Manifestum est enim quod unusquisque legislator ad suum finem principaliter per leges homines dirigere intendit: sicut dux exercitus ad victoriam et rector civitatis ad pacem."

Regardless of the formulation (by Kant or Wojtyła) of the prohibition against using a person as a means to an end, the distinction, by itself, fails as a universal moral standard. The fact is that we *can*, in good conscience, use a person as a means to an end. The means/end distinction, by itself, cannot help one to differentiate good from evil.

The Significance of the Term “Merely”

So far it is evident, not only that the distinction of use, by itself, is problematic in moral theory, but also that the distinction between means and ends is equally problematic. Kant apparently was able to recognize this, and he attempted to fix the problem by adding the term “merely.” While it is not wrong *per se* to use a person as a means to an end, it is wrong, according to Kant, to use a person *merely* as a means to an end. Following Kant’s lead, Wojtyła employs the same strategy in some texts.²²

What does Kant hope to gain from the use of the term “merely”? What does it add to the practical imperative? In essence, the addition of this term is an attempt by Kant to shore up the “use/non-use” and “means/end” distinctions. It is essential to Kant’s *a priori* moral theory that he find a way of distinguishing that mode of treatment due to persons from that mode of treatment due to non-persons without making reference to being or to the objective natures or faculties proper to various levels of beings.

Since moral philosophy is a practical science, a good moral theory has to function; it has to allow people to identify, in real-life cases, the difference between good and evil. The problem with Kant’s practical imperative is that it is not as useful as it might appear at first glance. Without the term “merely,” the imperative prohibits too much; with the term “merely,” the imperative prohibits almost nothing.

The practical imperative, without the term “merely,” would prohibit nearly all business dealings and a large portion of social interactions, including a significant number of friendships. A tremendous amount of human interaction involves treating a person, to some degree, as a means to an end. Aristotle considers friendships of utility in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and most morally upright readers of Aristotle agree that there is nothing intrinsically evil about such friendships, as long as they are respectful, honest, just, etc. It would be difficult to pass even one day without treating someone as a means to an end, yet all such instances would be prohibited if it were morally wrong simply to treat a person as a means to an end.

²² Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 26: “[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.” Note: neither Kant nor Wojtyła consistently employs the term “merely.”

On the other hand, if using another *merely* as a means to an end were the key to finding an action morally evil, one would be hard-pressed to find many evil actions at all. When one takes seriously the restrictive significance of the term “merely,” the scope of the imperative tightens considerably. Aside from Hitler, Stalin, and a few strange characters like them, it is hard to discover anyone who treats others *merely* as a means to an end.²³

When one considers issues of sexuality from this point of view, as Wojtyla so often does, the practical imperative and the parallel formulation of the personalistic norm (including the term “merely”) simply fail to produce the conclusions that Wojtyla intends. In the case of contraception, an example of something Wojtyla considers to be immoral, it would be absurd to say that spouses, by the mere intention to contracept, are thereby reducing themselves or their spouses to *merely* (simply, only, exclusively) a means. In no way does it follow, of necessity, that a contraceptive spouse does not will any further end (or good) whatsoever for himself or his partner. While it may be true that contraceptive spouses intend to use each other as means to the end of pleasure, it does not follow that they must, at the same time, exclude all other ends. Some of the natural ends of the marital act are, partially or fully, thwarted by contraception, but this does not prove that such ends, and others as well, are not in any way intended by the people involved. If the practical imperative were the key moral imperative, contraception would not be prohibited, because the contraceptive act does not necessarily entail using a person *merely* as a means to an end.

The same can be said of fornication, adultery, and prostitution. In none of these acts is it necessary that one use the other *merely* as a means to an end. Each involves some degree of use, but there is no reason to conclude that people involved in these acts do not intend goods or ends benefiting, belonging to, and willed by the other. It simply is not true to say that every fornicator is using his partner *merely* as a means to his own end. He may very well be willing the other’s consciously intended end, while enjoying his own benefits that happen to be attached. There certainly is evidence that some fornicators place the act with altruistic intentions. A young girl, for example, may agree to subordinate her own ends, goals, and purposes to those of her boyfriend. In this case, she is obviously not treating him *merely* as a means to an end.

Part of what separates fornication, adultery, and even prostitution (to some degree) from rape, in fact, is that the other’s ends are not completely subordinated to one’s own. The other is not merely used for one’s own

²³ Even Bin Laden, in addition to using his suicidal pawns, may have intended some good for those pawns, namely, their bliss with Allah and seventy-two virgins.

ends; on the contrary, each agrees to cooperate and act for the other's "distinct personal ends." The discriminating fornicator will not accept just any means *merely* as a means to his end of pleasure. He prefers, instead, a partner that shares his end as her own, as he shares hers as his own. In other words, he would prefer a partner who actually likes him and freely wills to please him. Their mutual use of each other, in contrast to rape, emerges precisely as a kind of use that does not reduce either one to *merely* a means to an end.

If acts such as these are truly cases of moral evil, they certainly are not morally evil on the grounds that they are instances of using a person *merely* as a means to an end. One text seems to suggest that Wojtyła recognizes, to some degree, the problem of the logical severity of the term "merely." He seems to be aware that terms such as "only," "merely," "exclusively," etc. would restrict the scope of prohibition much more than he would like, so he introduces the term "mainly":

[A] human being cannot be solely or mainly an object to be used, for this reason, that the role of a blind tool or the means to an end determined by a different subject is contrary to the nature of a person.²⁴

In this text, Wojtyła's personalistic norm departs from Kant's practical imperative. The distinction between good and evil is apparently a matter of degree: the degree to which a person is used. That is to say that a person must not act without at least some minimum degree of "good intentions" concerning the other person. Wojtyła, however, does not give any scale by which one can distinguish the degrees of use that are permissible from those that are not permissible. Must the "distinct personal ends" of the person being used be given a fifty percent or greater priority, or must the level of priority be higher? Where is one to draw the line? Are personal ends sufficiently commensurable? If a moral theory is to be practical, these issues must be clarified.²⁵

Since the negative formulation of the personalistic norm, as well as Kant's practical imperative, are not sufficiently precise to serve as universal norms of morality, there must be some more fundamental moral norm

²⁴ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 28. Note that even with this modification, adultery, fornication, prostitution, etc. would not be prohibited. In none of these cases is either party reduced to the status of a blind tool whose ends are determined by a different subject. The ends are decided individually by each person and happen to coincide in the mutual agreement of cooperation.

²⁵ From the point of view of the natural law, it is insufficient (no matter to what degree) to have "good intentions" for another person when the good intended for that person is inconsistent with that person's final end.

by which to judge the good or evil of human actions. Because Wojtyła is a realist, and is not confined by the *a priori* Kantian restrictions, perhaps his real intention underlying his formulation of the personalistic norm can be interpreted (despite his explicit association with Kantian moral language) as signifying something radically different from Kant's practical imperative. Perhaps the imperative prohibiting treatment of persons "*merely* as means to an end" can be interpreted essentially as a prohibition against the treatment of a person as an inanimate tool, as a thing owned simply to be used or abused as the owner sees fit. While Pete normally uses his screwdriver to drive screws, nothing prohibits him from using his screwdriver as a pry bar, a weed digger, etc.; in fact, nothing seriously prohibits him from destroying it, *qua* object of his act, on a grinder for the sheer pleasure of seeing a display of sparks.²⁶ If the practical imperative were simply intended to indicate that human persons are not to be misused or abused as one might misuse or abuse a tool (that is, if it were intended to indicate the natural dignity of a human being and the fact that this kind of being should never be used without regard to its nature and its ultimate end), then, to that extent, a Thomist would have no objection to it.

If the imperative, in the final analysis, really can be reduced to a prohibition against abuse, against actions in general that inhibit or prevent a person's natural tendency toward his final end, then a Thomist will recognize it as merely a vague statement of the famous precept of the natural law, to wit, "do harm to no one" (or "render to each one his due"). This may be what Wojtyła means when he affirms his personalistic norm, but it certainly is not what Kant means in his practical imperative. One could argue that the natural law is at the root of Kant's moral system, but Kant explicitly denies any such link to a realist metaphysics.

The Relationship of Use to the Experience of Shame

Another problem that arises with the Kantian language employed in Wojtyła's personalistic norm can be seen in Wojtyła's analysis of shame. For Wojtyła, an analysis of the concept of use is a key to understanding the root of shame. According to Wojtyła, at the root of the experience of sexual shame is the perception of using a person or of being used:

²⁶ This claim that nothing prohibits Pete from using, and even destroying, his screwdriver presupposes that other issues, such as intent and circumstances, do not prohibit this particular amusement. If screwdrivers were rare, he might be obligated to give it to a needy workman and find some other scrap steel to play with on the grinder.

Shame is not only a response to someone else's sensual and sexual reaction to the "body as an object of use"—a reaction to a reaction—it is also, and above all, an imminent need to prevent such reactions to the body in oneself, because they are incompatible with the value of the person.²⁷

Following (to some extent) the theory of Max Scheler, Wojtyła claims that the main cause of shame is that a person has been, or potentially could be, reduced to an object of use. The problem with this theory is that it contradicts abundant evidence from common experience. While innumerable examples can be produced in which persons experience shame while *not* being treated as objects of use, one can also find an abundance of examples in which persons are reduced to objects of use and yet do not experience shame. Use, therefore, does not function as the deciding factor.

It seems much more reasonable, from a Thomistic point of view, to locate the roots of shame not in use or the subject/object distinction, but in the awareness of a wide range of values inherent in the nature of the human being and human experience. From this perspective, the experience of shame can be seen to take root in a natural desire to hide the commission of morally evil actions, the cowardly submission to evil actions,²⁸ and other morally neutral or even positive (but private) situations.²⁹ The root of shame is not found in "use as an object"; on the contrary, it is found in the violation of the privacy naturally called for by particular situations in the human experience. A few examples will make this clear.

Why is it that some fornicators experience a profound sense of shame, while many others, who are equally aware that they are being used, do not experience shame at all? The dilemma dissolves when we realize that shame is not essentially linked to use. A few generations ago, a girl aware of the sense of shame linked to fornication would ask her partner, "are you going to respect me in the morning?" If shame were rooted in an

²⁷ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 177.

²⁸ For Socrates, committing evil is more shameful than suffering evil. The addition of the word "cowardly" is intended to leave open the possibility that one could suffer evil, in some cases, without any shame at all.

²⁹ Often, but not always, shame is associated with a sense of guilt. Examples of morally neutral actions that are frequently accompanied by a sense of shame (a desire to be concealed), and not by a sense of guilt, may include undressing, defecating, etc. Even some morally positive actions can be a source of shame. Cf. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 174: "We must not over simplify the matter by maintaining that people endeavor to conceal only what is regarded as bad—for we often feel ashamed of what is good, of a good deed, for instance."

awareness of use, an increase in fornication (and other such mutual use) ought to produce an increase in shame. What we find, however, appears to be just the opposite. In the present climate, it is not uncommon to find an abundance of fornicators who feel no shame (desire to hide) in their act of mutual use; in fact, as long as the use is mutual (and the consent is mutual), it is relatively common to find those who are proud of it and willing to make it public (the direct opposite of shame).³⁰

Since these fornicators without shame (not to mention people being *used* in legitimate business dealings and the like) are aware that they are using and being used, it does not seem plausible to locate the root of shame in use. If we see shame instead as a defensive response to potential abuse, or to some transgression against values inhering in the human person, this phenomenon of fornicators without shame can easily be explained. While fully aware that they are using and being used as objects, these people are relatively inattentive to the values inherent in the sexual act, and to the *abuse* suffered by those who commit such acts. The difference between those experiencing shame and those who do not experience shame, therefore, is not the awareness of use, but the awareness, to some degree or other, of the particular values transgressed in the act. This view, in fact, helps to account for the reduction of the sense of shame that occurs concomitantly with the rise in utilitarianism. Trained utilitarians, as well as our largely utilitarian society, find no shame in the fact of use because it is not there to be found. Shame finds its roots instead in a defensive concern for potential or actual transgressions against perceived values, presumably values inhering in human nature to which the utilitarians are blind, or at least inattentive.³¹

The Personalistic Norm and the Command to Love

If the personalistic norm is so problematic in its negative aspect, what does this mean for its positive form? Are the two linked? According to Wojtyła, they are not only linked, but the command of Jesus Christ to love is dependent upon the personalistic norm. The command finds its basis in the personalistic norm:

[I]t becomes obvious that if the command to love, and the love which is the object of this commandment, are to have any meaning, we must

³⁰ Bob Seger publicly, without shame, points to this kind of mutual agreement of use found in casual fornication: "I used her; she used me, but neither one cared; we were getting our share. . . ."

³¹ For Bentham and Mill, at least, there are no morally significant values other than pleasure.

find a basis for them other than the utilitarian premise and utilitarian system of values. This can only be the personalistic principle and personalistic norm.³²

Wojtyła says that one cannot both love and use a person: "There is a fundamental contradiction between 'loving' and 'using' a person."³³ This statement, which would evidently be false if "using" were taken literally, may tell us something about the connotation of the term in the mind of Wojtyła. Taken in the literal sense, the distinction between use and non-use, between means and ends, seem to be unrelated to love. It is certainly possible to treat someone as an end (to act for their personally desired ends) without loving that person, and at the same time, it seems possible to love another person and to use that person at the same time. The only way this Kantian language can be understood to express the full content of Wojtyła's concept of love is if the essential content of the natural law is implied in it, that is, if his language is reinterpreted in the light of being and the values involved with the fullness of being.

From the viewpoint of natural law (and of Wojtyła), the lover plumbs the depths of being. He recognizes, appreciates, and affirms the ontic (and moral) value of the perfections found inhering in the being of the beloved. The lover is attentive not only to the full array of present perfections actualized in the beloved, but also to the potential perfections latent in the beloved. He perceives them, reverences them, and makes their fulfillment the primary object of his will. All of this he does in the real world of being. If love is directed towards good, and if good is convertible with being, then both Kant and Mill are incapable of accounting for true love, understood in this sense. Both of them are systematically inattentive to the fullness of love's object; they are axiomatically inattentive to the fullness of being.³⁴

What Does St. Thomas Say About Using People?

St. Thomas is always supremely attentive to being. In his philosophy, goodness is convertible with being. To be good means *to be*, to be fully; it means to actualize, as much as possible, the perfections proper to one's nature. Unlike Kant or Mill, St. Thomas never would have formulated a

³² Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, 231.

³⁴ Concerning Kant's lack of respect for real human beings, the complete and integrated beings recognized in John Paul II's "total vision of man," see Michael Neumann, "Did Kant Respect Persons?" *Res Publica* 6.3 (2000): 285–99: "What Kant respects is a somewhat Platonic and somewhat Protestant creature . . . [that is, *homo noumenon*]—a noble rational self, strictly segregated from a base empirical self [that is, *homo phaenomenon*, *animal rationale*]" (at 290).

moral theory without mentioning the perfection of beings in accordance with their proper natures. With this in mind, it is easy to see why, for St. Thomas, the distinction *per se* between using and not-using a human being does not present itself as a significant moral factor.

In the mind of St. Thomas, a human being is the kind of being that *does* admit of use. The question is never focused on *whether* a person is used, but rather on *how* a person is used. Several texts will show both the moral neutrality of the concept of use in St. Thomas's mind, and the general irrelevance of the notion of use in the context of the natural law.

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, St. Thomas explains that rational creatures are governed by divine providence in a special way. Unlike lesser creatures, which may be used for the sake of another, rational creatures are governed "for their own sake."³⁵ This special status, with respect to divine providence, is rooted in their natures. They "stand out above other creatures, both in natural perfection and in the dignity of their end."³⁶ St. Thomas recognizes that rational creatures rise above lesser creatures in two ways. First, rational creatures are able to move themselves freely and direct themselves to their ends. In other words, they are endowed with knowledge and will. Second, rational creatures are able, with the help of grace, to reach the ultimate end of all creation. They are able, with intellect and will, to know and to love God. No lesser creature is able to attain this final end, except in part, and by participation. St. Thomas concludes, therefore, that man is by nature free; man is governed for his own sake and not for the sake of any other creature.

At first glance, it may appear that St. Thomas's terminology ("for his own sake and not for the sake of another") is in agreement with the formulations of the practical imperative and the personalistic norm. This appearance, however, is misleading. St. Thomas's purpose in this context is to show the difference between lesser creatures and human beings—and the implications of this difference for their providential governance. Because of the elevated dignity of rational creatures, they are intended, in the fullness of their nature, to be free—free to direct themselves to their final end. Plants or animals, on the other hand, lacking the dignity proper to intellectual creatures, may be raised for slaughter as one might raise cattle or swine:

Through these considerations we refute the error of those who claim that it is a sin for man to kill brute animals. For animals are ordered to

³⁵ ScG III, ch. 112.

³⁶ Ibid., ch. 111: "Praecellunt enim alias creaturas et in perfectione naturae, et in dignitate finis."

man's use in the natural course of things, according to divine providence. Consequently, man uses them without any injustice, either by killing them or by employing them in any other way.³⁷

St. Thomas does not, however, imply that using another person (artificially directing another person to an end) is the key to morality. On the contrary, he provides examples in the very same chapter (112) of situations in which one may use others, and direct them to an end, that is, situations in which some humans may be subordinated to the ends of other human beings:

Thus, for instance, the end of an army is victory, and this the soldiers may achieve through their own act of fighting; that is why only soldiers are needed for their own sake in an army. All others, who are assigned to different tasks—for instance, caring for the horses and supplying the weapons—are needed for the sake of the soldiers in the army.³⁸

Here St. Thomas admits that there are cases in which some people rightfully function, in a certain mode and to some degree (that is, are used), for the sake of another and not strictly for their own sake. It is significant that St. Thomas uses the example of an army, because, unlike ordinary business dealings, the business of an army entails strict subordination of men to the orders of their superiors, subordination to the point of risking their very lives (sometimes against their own wishes—under threat of court marshal) for an end set by another. The deciding moral factor for St. Thomas, therefore, is not the distinction between use and non-use. Moral evil is not to be located simply in the subordination of one person's ends to those of another person.

Of course, in the ideal situation, a mature, responsible, rational creature ought to direct himself by his own free acts to his own final end, but this does not preclude, in any way, other orders of providence by which individuals may be directed (by cooperation, and in some cases by coercion) to the common good and finally to God. In order to prevent this confusion, St. Thomas brings his reader back to the very basis of the natural

³⁷ Ibid., ch. 112, par. 12: "Per haec autem excluditur error ponentium homini esse peccatum si animalia bruta occidat. Ex divina enim providentia naturali ordine in usum hominis ordinantur. Unde absque iniuria eis utitur homo, vel occidendo, vel quolibet alio modo."

³⁸ Ibid., ch. 112, par. 3: "sicut finis exercitus est victoria, quam milites consequuntur per proprium actum pugnando, qui soli propter se in exercitu quaeruntur; omnes autem alii, ad alia officia deputati, puta ad custodiendum equos, ad parandum arma, propter milites in exercitu quaeruntur."

law, and clarifies what he means when he says that intellectual creatures are governed “for their own sake”:

However, we do not understand this statement, that intellectual substances are ordered for their own sake by divine providence, to mean that they are not more ultimately referred to God and to the perfection of the universe. In fact, they are said to be providentially managed for their own sake, and other things for their sake, in the sense that the goods which they receive through divine goodness are not given them for the advantage of another being, but the things given to other beings must be turned over to the use of intellectual substances in accord with divine providence.³⁹

St. Thomas is simply pointing to the hierarchy of beings in the order of creation and showing that human beings are endowed by nature with higher dignity than the lower creatures. Animals may be used by humans, but humans are not intended (ultimately) to be used by animals. St. Thomas shows that human beings should not be treated as if they were animals, but he does not in any way imply that the *use or non-use* of human beings by other human beings is, *per se*, an indicator of moral good or evil. Several other texts will show further the insignificance of the idea of *use* in Thomistic moral theory.

In his *Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians*, St. Thomas explains that, while wives should be subject to their husbands, husbands should not lord it over their wives (or their children) as one might over a servant. The intention of the husband and father, according to St. Thomas, must never be selfish; on the contrary, he should always have as his primary intended goal the good of the family and the good of the larger community. With this loving and benevolent attitude, however, the husband and father can, and ought to, use his wife and children:

[T]he difference [between the master/servant relationship and the husband/wife relationship] is that the master uses his servants for his own benefit, but a man uses his wife and children for the common benefit.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., ch. 112, par. 10: “Per hoc autem quod dicimus substantias intellectuales propter se a divina providentia ordinari, non intelligimus quod ipsa ulterius non referantur in Deum et ad perfectionem universi. Sic igitur propter se procurari dicuntur et alia propter ipsa, quia bona quae per divinam providentiam sortiuntur, non eis sunt data propter alterius utilitatem; quae vero aliis dantur, in eorum usum ex divina ordinatione cedunt.”

⁴⁰ *Commentarium super ad Ephesios*, ch. 5, 1.8 (my translation): “[S]ed differentia est in hoc, quod dominus utitur servis suis quo ad id quod est sibi utile: sed vir utitur uxore et liberis ad utilitatem communem.”

To the modern mind (and especially one steeped in the practical imperative or the personalistic norm) this may sound harsh, brutal, and barbaric, but to one who understands the fullness of the natural law, it makes perfect sense. St. Thomas recognizes that we all use each other on a regular basis. As lovers of Christ, we are willing to be used by a loving master. As lovers of spouses and parents, we are willing to be used by loving spouses and parents. As employees, we are willing to be used equitably by our employers. Enlisted soldiers are willing to be used by their country, even to the point of death. At the core of love is the desire to serve, to be useful, to be a servant in service of the needs of the beloved. What St. Thomas is pointing out in this context is that while a man may govern his wife and children, he must do so with a view to the common good, just as Christ, who governs the Church, does so with a view to the good of the Church. He says that Christ is the head of the Church, "not for his own utility, but for that of the Church."⁴¹

Once again, the key is not to be found in use, but in the way in which a person is used. To see that St. Thomas draws no moral distinction between using a person and using any other object, one can turn to a rather blunt passage in the *Disputed Questions on Evil*:

[I]f someone superfluously uses his food, he sins venially, just as the one who superfluously uses his wife, unless there is something else that makes either one a mortal sin. If someone, however, were to use food that is stolen or that is prohibited by law, he sins mortally; less however than the fornicator, insofar as food, or any other exterior thing, is more remote from the life of man than human semen, as was said.⁴²

For St. Thomas, the important factors are the conditions of the use rather than the use itself. The glutton is at fault, not for using food, but for doing so outside the boundaries of reason. The fornicator (or lustful husband) is at fault, not for using another, but for doing so outside the boundaries

⁴¹ Ibid. (my translation): "et hoc non ad utilitatem suam, sed ecclesiae. . . ." Note that with confidence in the goodness of the will of God, John Henry Cardinal Newman is able to say to God, "I am born to serve Thee, to be Thine, to be thy instrument. Let me be thy blind instrument. I ask not to see—I ask not to know—I ask only to be used." John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Lead, Kindly Light*, ed. Hal M. Helms (Orlean: Paraclete Press, 1987), 8.

⁴² *Questiones disputatae de malo*, q. 15, a. 2 (my translation): "[S]i quis utitur superfluo cibo suo, venialiter peccat sicut qui superfluo utitur sua uxore, nisi aliud sit quod utrobique peccatum mortale. Si quis autem cibo furtivo utatur, vel prohibito per legem, peccat mortaliter; minus tamen quam fornicator, quanto cibus vel quaelibet res exterior a remotiori se habet ad vitam hominis quam semen humanum, sicut dictum est."

of reason. In both cases, the factor that adds malice is not use, but misuse. In the first case, it is the misuse of food—the failure to direct the food and the faculty of digestion to their proper ends. In the case of lust, it is the misuse of the sexual faculty (in oneself and in another)—the failure to direct that action to its natural end.

A parallel text can be found in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, which further clarifies St. Thomas's views about the moral neutrality of using a person. In this article, he addresses the question "whether someone sins mortally in knowing his wife while not intending some marriage good, but intending pleasure alone."⁴³ In the *sed contra*, he says the following: "[O]ne who uses food for pleasure alone does not sin mortally. Therefore, it is similar for one who uses a wife only on account of desire."⁴⁴ Once again, the key is in the intention, that is, in the willful direction of goods and human acts toward, or away from, their natural ends.

In the body of the article, St. Thomas shows that it is wrong to attempt to identify the level of moral malice with the degree to which one uses his spouse for the sake of pleasure. In his mind, seeking pleasure can be good or bad, depending on *other* concomitant factors. In this case, the relevant factors are the marriage goods and the boundaries of marriage:

[A]nd therefore it must be said that if pleasure were to be sought outside the honesty of marriage, in such a way that someone, with respect to his wife, would not care that she is his wife, but only that she is a woman, if he were prepared to do it with her even if she were not his spouse, it is a mortal sin; . . . If, however, pleasure were sought within the limits of marriage, namely, in such a way that pleasure would not have been sought in another other than his wife, then it is a venial sin.⁴⁵

For St. Thomas, the marriage act should only be placed within respect for the boundaries of marriage and with the intention of a marriage good (in modern terminology, for the purpose of the unity of spouses or of procreation); in other words, the marital act should only be placed within the context in which it can serve its natural purpose and reach its natu-

⁴³ *Commentary on the Sentences*, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (my translation): "[Q]ui cibo utitur propter delectationem tantum, non peccat mortaliter. Ergo, pari ratione qui utitur uxore tantum causa libidinis."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3: "[E]t ideo dicendum, quod si delectatio quaeratur ultra honestatem matrimonii, ut scilicet quia aliquis in conjuge non attendat quod conjux est, sed solum quod mulier est, idem paratus facere cum ea etsi non esset conjux, est peccatum mortale; . . . Si autem quaeratur delectatio infra limites matrimonii, ut scilicet talis delectatio in alia non quaereretur quam in conjuge, sic est veniale peccatum."

ral goals. If the act is placed within the primary intention of marriage goods and pleasure is sought at the same time, there is no sin at all. For St. Thomas, "pleasure in a good action is good, and in an evil action, it is evil."⁴⁶ Pleasure is not an evil; seeking pleasure is not an evil, and using another for the sake of pleasure, *per se*, is not evil.⁴⁷

On the other hand, if one were to use his wife "only on account of desire," such use would enter the realm of sin. Here again the key is not the *use*, but the *other* relevant factors. When one uses his wife for pleasure, failing to intend the natural fulfillment of the act, he abuses or misuses his sexual faculty and the sexual faculty of his spouse—he fails to use them correctly, reverently, naturally. In this case, if he respects the boundaries of marriage—if he uses her in such a way that, without intending the proper end of the marriage act (that is, the marriage goods) he, nevertheless, respects the fact that she is his wife—he sins venially. This is the sort of sin that arises from man's weakness as a result of his fallen nature; it is the sort of sin, according to St. Augustine (and St. Thomas), for which we say daily the Our Father.⁴⁸

If one were to move another step away from the redemptive power of the institution of marriage and a step closer to the corruptive power of lust, if one were to use his wife, not intending a marriage good, but for the sake of pleasure, while also being apathetic as to whether she is his wife or not (that is, as if she were a harlot), then he sins mortally.

In all three cases (no sin, venial sin, and mortal sin) one may recognize the use of a person for pleasure. The difference lies not in the use, but in the abuse or misuse of the sexual faculties found in oneself and in one's spouse. In this view of sexuality, St. Thomas actually preserves, in a sense, a beautiful seed of self-sacrifice at the core of the experience of human love. A lover ought to want to be used (lovingly—and not abused) by the beloved. He hopes to serve the beloved, to be a servant for her, to be used by (that is, to be useful to) her.

Every lover (in the sense of *eros*) wants to be used by the beloved, in a respectful and loving way, for pleasure. A lover would rightly be saddened, and insulted, were the beloved to say, "I'm doing this for the

⁴⁶ Ibid: "operationis bonae est delectatio bona, et malae mala."

⁴⁷ Cf. St. Thomas, *Commentary on the Ethics*, bk. VIII, l. 3, n. 17 (my translation): "So then it is obvious that the friendship of virtuous men comprehends not only good in an unqualified sense, but also pleasure and utility." "Sic ergo manifestum est quod amicitia virtuosorum non solum habet bonum simpliciter, sed etiam delectationem et utilitatem."

⁴⁸ St. Thomas quotes St. Augustine in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, *sed contra*.

sake of the marriage goods, but I can assure you I am not touching your body as a means to pleasure.” A similar reaction might be expected if one were to say to the beloved, “I have no use for you.” In a special sense, eros is, by nature, linked to a respectful, mutual use of persons for the end of pleasure, always in accordance with the more primary pursuit of higher, more essential goods. According to St. Thomas, such use is not evidence of moral evil unless it excludes the marriage goods or exceeds the bounds of the marriage itself, that is, unless it excludes the natural end of the marital act or involves disregard for the confines of marital fidelity.

In this view, St. Thomas keeps his focus trained on the fulfillment of human *beings*. He draws our attention to the perfection of nature. His concern is not with the distinction between use and non-use of persons; instead, he is concerned with the distinction between proper use and misuse or abuse. This distinction, however, rests essentially on a realist anthropology rooted in metaphysical realism, the very realism that was rejected by Immanuel Kant.

Conclusion

Karol Wojtyla’s adoption of Kantian language in the field of morality does not follow upon an adoption of Kantian epistemology and a Kantian rejection of metaphysics. On the contrary, Wojtyla explicitly rejects anti-realist epistemology.⁴⁹ How then is one to reconcile Wojtyla’s manifest metaphysical and moral views with his strange choice of Kantian language in the moral sphere? In Wojtyla’s mind, he can engage in dialogue with contemporary moral theory; he can employ the Kantian language and, to some degree, the Kantian methodology, and nevertheless emerge from the process with essentially the same conclusions as one would find in the natural law. This, at least, seems to be the project that Wojtyla has set out to accomplish.

Given the nature of this project and the present analysis of the personalistic norm, several challenges come to mind:

1. Those interested in understanding the mind of Wojtyla and the basis of his moral doctrine, are challenged to recognize the immeasurable abyss that separates Wojtyla’s moral theory from that of Immanuel Kant. They are challenged to take up, once again, a careful study of the rich and complex machinery of traditional natural law as it is articulated by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, for this body of

⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, see especially sections 55 and 82.

moral theory is the foundation that supports Wojtyła's moral theory and separates his thought from Kant's rationalism.⁵⁰

2. Thomists are challenged to look beyond the theoretical and practical difficulties in Wojtyła's Kantian terminology and to recognize that the natural law provides the basis in which Wojtyła claims that the personalistic norm is rooted.

A Thomist who continues to consider moral matters in accordance with traditional formulations of the natural law, therefore, should not feel out of touch with the mind of Wojtyła.

A Thomist, in fact, may rest assured that his own conclusions in the long run may actually represent the intentions of Wojtyła more accurately than those drawn from Wojtyła's own quasi-Kantian formulations. Since distinctions of "use" and of "means and ends" cannot be expected to express the fullness of truth found in the natural law, the viability of the project of translating the moral doctrine of the natural law into Kantian terms is, at minimum, theoretically problematic as well as practically dangerous and misleading.⁵¹

Since Wojtyła, in fact, is a realist as well as a proponent of the natural law, perhaps the best solution, from a Thomistic point of view, is to offer a formula for translating his words. Whenever Wojtyła expresses the negative form of the personalistic norm, namely, "it is wrong to use another as a means to an end," one should translate the whole phrase as follows: "it is wrong to *ab-use* or *mis-use* another person." Better yet, one should simply replace the phrase with the famous precept of the natural law: "do harm to no one" (or "render to each one his due").

In this way, one will draw the expression back down to the objective realm of the natural law, where it is more likely to convey the realist mind of Wojtyła. Here we find a formula that successfully bridges the gap between the general command of the first principle of practical reason

⁵⁰ Cf. Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience," in *Person and Community*, 42–43. "At this point I am convinced that the ethics of Aristotle and St. Thomas is based on a proper relation to experience and, moreover, that their view of the ethical act is the only proper and adequate description of the ethical experience."

⁵¹ Another danger arises in placing emphasis on the value of *persons*, rather than on the value of human *beings*. As opposed to the traditional notion of person, defined by Boethius (that is, an individual substance of a rational nature), the modern notion of person (that is, a conscious subject of understanding and will) can be interpreted to exclude certain human *beings* who are considered as non-persons. This, in fact, is the tactic used by many who argue in favor of abortion and euthanasia.

and the specific commands needed in the practical realm of human experience. Here we find a formula that is unambiguously rooted in the source of value—in the objective being of the participants in the moral sphere. Here we find a formula that works, that avoids the labyrinths of confusion, and that accurately and clearly distinguishes good actions from evil actions. Here we find a formula that respects traditional philosophical language⁵² and properly links the moral philosophy of Wojtyła with the basis of natural law in which it ultimately is rooted. **N·V**

⁵² Note that John Paul II himself, in *Fides et Ratio* (section 55), makes the following plea in favor of traditional philosophical language: “My revered predecessor Pope Pius XII warned against such neglect of the philosophical tradition and against abandonment of the traditional terminology.”