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Before God and the Other: Tadeusz Styczeń’s Concept of “Aloneness” as a Bridge Between Philosophy and Theology of Karol Wojtyła

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Abstract

This article analyzes Tadeusz Styczeń’s concept of “aloneness” as a theological extension of Karol Wojtyła’s dynamic anthropology. “Aloneness” expresses the person’s irreducible uniqueness and openness toward God and others. It links embodied existence with moral responsibility, revealing the body—especially the face—as a sign of personal dignity and a theophanic expression.

Keywords

person, theology of the body, Wojtyła, Styczeń, sign

This article shows how Tadeusz Styczeń's concept of "aleness" serves as a bridge between the philosophical anthropology and the Theology of the Body (hereafter TOB) developed by Karol Wojtyła. The starting point of this reflection is the dynamic nature of human life, understood as an essential tension between the biological, personal, and relational dimensions. Wojtyła and Styczeń do not understand the human person as a static entity but rather as a dynamic being in whom action (*actus humanus*) expresses being (*esse*), and personal life is realized through participation with others and in reference to truth.

The issue explored in this paper gains particular importance in light of the ongoing discussion concerning the coherence of Karol Wojtyła's philosophy and theology. The question remains open as to whether these two aspects of his thought can be harmonized, and if so, how such a synthesis should be understood. In this context, Styczeń's concept may shed light on the internal connections between Wojtyła's philosophical anthropology and his theological understanding of the body and human relationships.

Building on Wojtyła's concept of human dynamism, the study turns to Styczeń's concept of "aleness"—a notion that links human bodiliness with openness to God and the other. Expanding upon Wojtyła's thought, Styczeń interprets "aleness" not merely as solitude in relation to other beings, but as an existential orientation toward the Other and toward God. In this way, the concept acquires not only a philosophical dimension but also a theological one.

1. A General Description of Dynamism

The dynamic nature of personhood is the axis of Wojtyła's reflections in *Person and Act*. More precisely, the dynamic nature of man is expressed by the fact that his action follows his being (*Agere sequitur esse*): man, by virtue of who he is, manifests his being in an active way. In Wojtyła's vision of man, the human form remains in an essential relationship to the personal dynamism of action:

It is clear that we cannot examine the human body in separation from the totality that is man, that is, without understanding that he is a person. Neither can we penetrate the dynamisms and potentiality proper to the human body without understanding the act and its personal specificity. In this

respect it is fitting to fully approve the vision of human reality bestowed on us by traditional philosophy (Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas), which, besides the element of “matter–hýle,” discovers in man just as in other beings of the visible world yet another element, namely, “form–morphé.” Hence, the theory of hylomorphism and the analysis of the human being conducted within the framework of this theory. The fundamental acceptance of this vision, however, does not entail the intention to reproduce the very formulas proper to the concept of hylomorphism. Our previous reflections have perhaps already adequately indicated the effort of rediscovering the dynamic human reality [that is, the personal dynamism] as a reality of person and act, even though the grasp of this reality in traditional philosophical anthropology is perfect in its own way (Wojtyła 2021, 311).

The interdependence of form and dynamism underlying Wojtyła’s anthropology points to the inseparability of ethical and ontological elements in an “adequate anthropology,” which prevents the loss of what is specifically human (John Paul II 2006, 13:2). This conviction is founded on the unity of life, which guarantees the dynamism inherent in man. The structure of the dynamism contains four levels: *suppositum*, the dynamism of actuation, the dynamism of act, and participation, which, consecutively emerging from one another, reveal man’s ever-deepening outward orientation as inherent in his life processes. Thus, *suppositum* as the foundation of all dynamisms contains the necessary condition of existence, a unique mode of existence (*esse*), needed above all for the appearance of fully personal action (*operari*), within the principle of *operari sequitur esse* (Wojtyła 2021, 548). Thus, already at this first level, a man possesses all the potentialities which serve him to unfold his personal dynamism.

In turn, in the dynamism of actuation, “something happens in man” (*actus hominis*) independently of his will or consciousness (somatic-vegetative and psycho-emotional processes). Obviously, the subject can, to some extent, influence what is happening in him, but he does not directly affect a significant change in actuations. Wojtyła describes this dynamism as passive (*pati*), because it is determined by the physiological functions of the body (including the sexual drive as well). Although actuations are not so fundamental as *suppositum*, as Amadeusz Pala notes, they constitute man’s bodily-spiritual unity, within which the category of biological life can be considered as a certain “visage” of his existence. And since this visage of the dynamism of actuation that makes up the

entirety of man's life functions is observable, it falls under phenomenological study, as complementary to the dynamism of being subject to metaphysical considerations (Pala 2018, 140).

The dynamism of act, on the other hand, occurs only when “man acts” (*actus humanus*) with full consciousness and freedom. So, in contrast to the dynamism of actuations, which consists in allowing something to happen and, therefore, is rather passive, the dynamism of act consists in action (*agere*) (Wojtyła 2021, 170). The difference between the two dynamisms points to the growing involvement of the interior life in man, which expresses itself in contact with the outside world through action. The ability to experience consciously this dynamism plays a key role, as it enables the emergence of a person's structure of self-determination, including self-governance and self-possession (Wojtyła 2021, 480). Significantly, the experience of an act is always accompanied by the experience of morality, so that a person, being the perpetrator of an act, realizes a certain moral value and becomes morally good or bad himself (Wojtyła 2021, 202). Thus, this dynamism means the fulfillment of the person through an act (*actus personae*). This is possible because in human dynamism the consciousness of action and the conscious action meet, enabling one to discover one's own personal efficacy and responsibility for the act (Wojtyła 2021, 135).

The fourth level of the dynamism proper to man is related to a person's participation in the community, in searching for self-fulfillment in action (Wojtyła 2021, 377).¹ Man (personal *esse*) is, as Wojtyła states, a *sui generis* in which ontology and conscious subjectivity are united. This union is possible due to the transcendent nature of human existence: horizontally—irreducibility to the actions performed, and vertically—irreducibility to the individual instantiation of human nature. As a result, a person is a “somebody,” as opposed to a thing, “something.” This distinction, which permeates the entire structure of human subjectivity, determines man's special attitudes toward his actions. Man is aware of the existence of potentialities whose use fulfills him. These potentialities that belong to the ontic structure of the person, as Wojtyła notes, enable him to be the efficient cause of his actions.

To put it differently, a man self-determines himself because he self-possesses himself. And since he self-determines due to self-possessing himself, he self-governs himself. Tomasz Duma assumes this understanding of action when

¹ Wojtyła calls it an aspect of the dynamism.

he writes that due to self-governance “a ‘new’ dynamic life factor of personhood enters a person’s realization of his subjectiveness” (Duma 2020, 451).² Man acting (with efficacy) realizes a personalistic value, which “consists in the fact that the person actualizes himself in the act; his proper fundamental structure of self-possession and self-governance is expressed in this fact” (Wojtyła 2021, 382). Through this he reveals himself as an entity existing in relation to others. Acting in the presence of others inevitably demands a correlation of actions with others—a co-action (*współdziałanie*). This correlation would be only a game of concessions and extortion, if man were not inherently capable of participation. Wojtyła defines participation as “a property of the person himself, an interior and homogeneous property that determines the fact that by existing and acting ‘together with others’” man exists personally (Wojtyła 2021, 386). Thus, he specifies the meaning of participation for being with others by writing: “Participation in diverse relationships of acting ‘together with others’ appears as a form of the person’s relation to ‘others,’ a form that is adapted to these relationships and is thus itself diverse” (Wojtyła 2021, 387).

2. Life and the Unity of the Dynamism

The above summary of Wojtyła’s understanding of the dynamism of man will now serve to justify the importance of the phenomenon of life as a consolidating factor, through which the symbolic character of human existence is possible. To describe the connection between the respective levels of the dynamism, Wojtyła refers to different manifestations of life (*życie*).

2.1. *Esse* and the Life of the Organism

For Wojtyła, the source of human existence is the *suppositum*, which means the subject in the aspect of being. This subject understood as a being (*esse*) lies at the root of every dynamic structure, every action and actuation of man—it is expressed in the phrase *agere sequitur esse*. However, *esse* is not the same as *suppositum*, but it is its constitutive aspect (Wojtyła 2021, 175). Following Aristotle

² The original array of the quote is as follows: “a new dynamic factor life of personhood enters a person’s realization of his subjectiveness.” The order of the two words has been changed to improve syntax.

and Thomas, Wojtyła understands life primarily as *esse*: life in the objective sense (*vivere viventibus esse*), but at the same time as a carrier of the dynamic human life (Wojtyła 2021, 215).

Wojtyła thinks that the human body is neither a mere biological organism nor just a carrier of human life: the living body is a human *modus* of existence that dynamizes itself through its inherent activity. This activity ties together the dignified existence of man with the sign character of his body. Life, in this context, is understood as the ontological basis for the transition from potency to act and, consequently, it makes possible any further dynamization of the subject beginning with the somatic-vegetative sphere, by making the concrete body a living organism (Wojtyła 2021, 192). *Esse* actualizing itself in the life of the organism ensures the continuity of the organism's existence through the biological transformations that constantly happen in it. The continuity of the organism over time, enabled by the actualization of *esse* in biological functions, creates the internal structure of the organism (*status in fieri*, actuation) which enables consciousness and mental processes to occur (Wojtyła 2021, 199). This view of Wojtyła permeates his entire philosophy of bodiliness, as it describes the special relationship between the body and human personhood:

The totality of this dynamism as well as its corresponding potentiality seems to have in man a completely different consciousness-related scope, much more modest and indirect, than the psycho-emotive dynamism. Man is conscious of his body—but as of *something that lives its proper life*. The consciousness of the body is also the indirect consciousness of the organism. Man, however, *does not possess a direct and particular consciousness of his organism*; he is not conscious of the individual dynamic facts (*actus*) that compose the entirety of the vegetative dynamism (Wojtyła 2021, 38 emphasis added).

In this account, the junction of the somatic-vegetative and emotive-psycho-spheres becomes that place where the life (of the organism) encounters lived experience (*przeżycie*) and together they ensure the continuity of the dynamism.

2.2. Lived experience (*przeżycie*)

Lived experience (*przeżycie*) pervades most of Wojtyła's writings and accompanies his account of the category of experience in general. Lived experience is present intrinsically in the relationship between the subject and his actions.

As demonstrated in the previous section, man responds to the conscious experiencing of his somaticity with action. However, as Pala aptly notes, any conscious action requires the involvement of the whole man—all the aforementioned levels of dynamism (Pala 2018, 142). Despite the multiplicity of levels of dynamism, man is perceived as a unity and experiences himself as a unity (Wojtyła 2021, 182). This is because these two types of dynamism are intertwined, together co-creating the life of a single subject. In this context, Wojtyła writes: "The dynamic unity of the subject 'man'—at least in the somatic layer—is first of all the unity of life, and only secondarily and in a sense collaterally the unity of lived experience" (Wojtyła 2021, 194).

In effect, in this dynamic unity of man, a distinction arises between the active in man and the passive ("man-acts" versus "something-happens-in-man"). This tension, which contains being oneself and having a relationship to oneself, brings the theme of lived experience into Wojtyła's anthropology, for it reveals man's subjectivity. In this tension, a man has lived experience of his subjectivity, but he is irreducible to it—the tension merges into his dynamism. This is because consciousness, the source of human subjectivity, plays a dual role: mirroring (it provides the content of consciousness) and reflecting (it connects the content of consciousness to the acting subject). In the subject who acts, these two create a special attitude toward his acts: the consciousness of action and the conscious action.

Due to the dynamic character of the human subject, the tension that arises between the consciousness of action and the conscious action is overcome in the lived experience of efficacy. Lived experience is related to the tension between the passive and the active in man, and thus to the possessive-expansive tendency in man, which leads him to manifest himself and to be present in the world through action. This dual observation leads to a link between lived experience and the dynamism of man—lived experience is a condition for activating the dynamism. The key moment in the relationship between human dynamism and the phenomenon of life is efficacy. Through the lived experience of passive elements of his constitution, man begins to act; he engages himself with the reality surrounding him.

Lived experience is the moment of getting involved—“touching true reality”—which simultaneously co-constitutes man as a subject and, what is crucial for this study, validates his body as a real sign in touch with objective truth, and not merely as a symbol without deeper meaning. Effectively, the lived experience of one’s efficacy intensifies a person’s dynamism by giving to it the direction “from oneself” by “I will.” Consequently, the human being acts as one who possesses efficacy, and this, in turn, makes self-possession possible. When a man acts, he encounters reality; he confronts and feels the truth about it (Wojtyła 2021, 141, 157). Wojtyła calls this ability to confront and feel the truth about reality “dependence in truth” and thinks that it is the basis for human “dynamic originality”: the possibility of rendering any act of transcendence or freedom is due to this specifically human relationship to truth (Wojtyła 2021, 241, 253). Therefore, this ability underlies self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination. In self-determination, the structures of self-possession and self-governance are revealed, without which they could not exist. Self-possession is revealed and confirmed in action through the will. Any actual self-determination, motivated by “I will,” is not possible without the person’s self-possession:

“I will” is precisely such self-determination, not as the content of lived-experience isolated from the dynamic whole but as the content deeply rooted in this totality. “I will” as actual self-determination structurally presupposes self-possession. For one can determine only what he really possesses. And only the one who possesses can determine. Man determines himself by the will because he possesses himself. At the same time, the will, every real “I will,” confirms and realizes the self-possession proper only to the person—the fact that he is *sui iuris* (Wojtyła 2021, 208).

2.3. Human interaction (*współżycie*)

By dynamizing himself through every act, movement, change, and transition from one state to another, man realizes and fulfills himself. However, man, due to the teleological nature of his existence, not only acts but in his actions seeks an end. This goal, due to the fact that man is a person, is relational. Together with the development of dynamism, a person opens himself up to interactions with other people. His self-fulfillment requires participation: action demands completion through interaction. Thus, a tension (“social feature”) arises in man between his own action flowing from his efficacy and the same actions of other

people (Wojtyła 2021, 378). Through actions characterized by the dynamic depth of his personhood, the human being achieves his fullness by being appropriate also to the other person—man acting finds his proper place in the world of persons (Wojtyła 2021, 383).

What makes the transition between the level of action-dynamism and the participatory dynamism possible is a person's capacity for *współzycie*. Wojtyła uses this word three times in *Person and Act*, including twice in the chapter on participation. Its meaning in Polish is threefold: (1) to commune, to keep in touch with someone else, to lead a common life with someone; (2) to have sexual intercourse with someone; and (3) to exist together, providing each other with the substances needed for life, or so that one individual benefits from the other. It is noteworthy that Wojtyła, in this context, assumes the existence of *współzycie* in the first and third senses when he talks about participation, and then its use is always accompanied by *współdziałanie* (co-action). In one place, when he speaks of the inseparability of the common good, dialogue, and solidarity, he states that the dynamically understood common good must fundamentally evoke the attitude of solidarity without closing itself to and severing itself from opposition. The principle of dialogue seems, therefore, very fitting for this structure of human community and of participation. The concept of “dialogue” has different meanings. At this point we mean to emphasize one of them, namely, the one that can be applied to the shaping and deepening of human solidarity even through opposition. For opposition can make the *interaction* (*współzycie*) and *cooperation* (*współdziałanie*) of people more difficult, although it should neither damage nor prevent them (Wojtyła 2021, 403; emphasis added).

When Wojtyła says that treating another as a neighbor is the condition for the existence of a community, he states:

The point of shaping *human interaction* (*współzycie*) and cooperation (*współdziałanie*) on different levels and on the basis of the different bonds that determine communities and societies is to make the “neighbor” system of reference ultimately decisive. If any human community impairs this system of reference, it dooms itself to a disappearance of the fullness of participation, to an abyss between person and community (Wojtyła 2021, 413–414, emphasis added).

The above quotes indicate the following role of *współzycie* for human dynamism: *współzycie* underlies the existence of a community, but it is irreducible

to human action or participation; it presupposes people being together; it enables people to participate in the community they form together; it engages the lower levels of human dynamism and, thus, constitutes a sign character of human body as valid for everybody with whom a person remains in relation.

3. Life Evolves in Personal Configurations

Wojtyła's theory of human dynamism in *Person and Act* concludes with an analysis of participation and, because of this, he points out that his book does not contain a theory of community, which is crucial for distinguishing the categories of dignity and the sign character of the body as valid (Wojtyła 2021, 467). In his article *Person: Subject and Community*, Wojtyła proposes a kind of continuation of the discourse from *Person and Act* by considering a person in the context of social life. He analyzes this on two levels: in the interpersonal relationship of "I-you" and in the social bond of "we". In light of the rest of his writings and the writings of his commentators, these two configurations could be regarded as an extension of the human dynamism and understood as manifestations of human life, for, as Wojtyła states: "Human life evolves... in the dimensions 'I-you' [and]... in the dimensions 'we'" (Wojtyła 2021, 511–512). This extension of the (life) dynamism allows us to see the anthropological reality of the human form's self-communication ("I-you") and its fundamental significance for the community's existence ("we").

Reflecting on the "I-you" relationship, Wojtyła states that the condition for its existence is the appearance of unity in the coexistence of a multiplicity of subjects. Man, perceiving the other ("you"), recognizes him as "another I" (Wojtyła 2021, 494).³ Since these two basic personal pronouns mutually define each other, man lives open (that is, directed) to other people:

It is sometimes maintained that "I" is, so to speak, constituted by "you." This capital brachylogy requires development and extension. The fundamental fact is that the "you" is always, like "me," someone or some other "I." Owing to this fact about the starting point of the relation "I-you," there is a certain plurality of personal subjects, namely, the minimal plurality of one plus one.

³ This element flows directly from previous levels of dynamism, but it represents a certain novelty not yet present in *współżycie*.

Nevertheless, we must base the analysis of the unity essential for the concept of community on the ascertainment of this plurality. The “you” is another “I,” different from my “I.” Thinking and saying “you,” I express at the same time the relation which, so to speak, extends beyond me but at the same time returns to me (Wojtyła 2021, 494).

This openness results in the twofold relation of subjects to each other: subject-object and subject-subject. In the first case, one subject reacts to the actions of the other subject (interaction), and in the second, as a result of unity in subjectivity with the other subject, a community of “I-you” is formed between them. This conviction reveals community (civilization) as affirming the transcendent value of another person by uniting parts within wholeness, irreducible to the compound of biological elements, but endowed with an axiological quality (John Paul II 2006, 2:4). The next and final level of human dynamism would be to turn to the common good. Having established a bond of mutual affirmation with the other subject, man as a subject turns, together with the other subject, towards what is good for both. This turning is accompanied by the emergence of the “we” configuration (Wojtyła 2021, 500–507), characterized by the “social dimension of the community,” whose significance is not limited to the sum of individual experiences: “not only one + one, but two” (Wojtyła 2021, 501). An emblematic example of the “we” configuration is marriage, whose rationale stems from conjugal love (Wojtyła, 2013, 40). Conjugal love, based on total self-giving, is an expression of the “law of gift” inscribed in the very being of the human person (Wojtyła, 2013, 285–291).

Importantly, in the context of our discussion, Wojtyła in TOB attributes the sign (that is, spousal) character of the body to the personal specificity of human life (John Paul II 2006, 27:3) without providing a satisfactory philosophical *rationale* for this attribution. In other words, although there is a significant connection between the person, the sign, and the gift, Wojtyła does not explain it in reference to key anthropological categories (that is, the dynamism of the person or the “we” configuration) (John Paul II 2006, 59:2). Consequently, his theology and philosophy remain disconnected. By contrast, such an explanation can be found in Tadeusz Styczeń.

4. “Aloneness” as a Dignified Life

Styczeń elaborates on Wojtyła’s account of the dynamism and the unified character of the (life) dynamism. Styczeń thinks that a person essentially exists in a dignified manner: the way man lives, that is, how he stands in the world surrounded by other people, is a source of moral responsibility and demands respect. Moreover, living in this way is essential to the sign character of the body—a key element of Wojtyła’s TOB. Styczeń explains this while elaborating on the notion of “aloneness” (Styczeń 2013, 89; Schindler 2008, 406),⁴ which, according to him, is similar, although not identical, with Wojtyła’s “solitude” (Styczeń 2014a, 127). Styczeń’s notion is more general than Wojtyła’s, and it can be complemented not only by the solitude of a person of a different sex (“double solitude”), but by the singularity of another person with whom one lives in an interpersonal configuration: to perceive someone’s aloneness means to see him as existing toward God (John Paul II 2006, 9:2).

The difference between Styczeń’s and Wojtyła’s notions lies in their different emphasis. Wojtyła’s point of departure is the analysis of the text of *Genesis* concerning the original situation of man, while Styczeń analyzes man in the personal configuration of “I–you” (Styczeń 2013, 130, footnote 23).⁵ Effectively, Wojtyła focuses on the complementarity of man and woman, while Styczeń focuses on the intersubjective relationship in general—which is more fundamental than sexual complementarity but at the same time carries a theological significance that Wojtyła attributes to the sexuality of the human body.⁶ Styczeń’s aloneness, concerning man as living toward God, expresses a threefold truth about man: first, man’s life is a source of responsibility on account of his relationship to God; second, the specificity of man’s life (that is, his dynamism) makes man apt for the relationship with God; and third, God himself is respected in the affirmation of human personhood.

⁴ This includes reference to being a person (*osoba*), being apart (*osobno*), and being in private (*na osobności*). Schindler has something similar in mind when he uses the term “aloneness.”

⁵ According to Styczeń, in his writings Karol Wojtyła reveals the uniqueness of a person through his “interiority” (“I” as the unchangeable author of his act) and his “interior face,” acquired, as it were, through fulfilled or unfulfilled calls to love, and thus realized or unrealized opportunities for self-fulfillment.

⁶ The spousal relationship is for Styczeń, as in Wojtyła’s case of “solitude,” the culminating realization of aloneness.

In order to justify his view, Styczeń notes three specific features of man's existence in comparison to all other creatures: man exists differently than other creatures, in a higher way than everything around him (that is, he is capable of what other creatures are not), and distinctively—because he is someone else (“separate”) in relation to (or toward) other people:

Man is not only intrigued by the fact that he is “different” and “higher” than everything else in this world. Man is also intrigued by the fact that each of the people is “distinctive” from other people. Let's look at our faces for a moment!... the “aloneness” of man among the world of things is inextricably accompanied by the separateness... of man among the world of persons. Also among persons, each person is “distinctive,” is precisely alone (Styczeń 2014c, 233).⁷

The discovery of the aloneness of the human person among the world of things is accompanied by—as part of the self-discovery of “I” as “I”—the discovery of the duty to love each person for himself on the part of each person, the duty to establish a personal relationship with each of them. But to discover the aloneness of a person in the midst of persons is to discover that each person is distinctive from the others, unique among them, unrepeatable and irreplaceable by any other (Styczeń 2014b, 68).

For Styczeń, the face is an emblem of the whole body, which reveals aloneness better than any other part of the human body:

The face makes it possible not only to read the “aloneness” of the personal self in its unique “here.” It reveals to us, moreover, its singularity in the unique now” of its facial expression and gaze... The face is a unique living trace of the history of “this one life,” despite all the imperfections of this sign (Styczeń 2013, 133).

Styczeń explains how the demand for affirmation is mediated by the experience of the face:

The experience and lived experience of the singularity of the person in his face and the experience and lived experience of the singularity of the person as the incommunicability of the “quality of being perpetrator” of his act complement each other. No one else but I will experience me and have a living experience of me in the fulfillment of this beholding act. I remain forever alone, “alone” in the face of the decision I should make. No one will take away from me the good or bad of its realization. The sole perpetrator and “unshared” subject of them also remains their only “eyewitness.” But on the other hand,

⁷ In the Polish text, distinctiveness is rendered as “different than other persons.”

I have also never seen myself and will never directly see my own face. After all, in the mirror I can only see its reflection. An eyewitness to the presence of my person from this side can only be someone else. The face of the other, viewed by me in a “*facies ad faciem*” situation, is the only living mirror in which I can look at myself “from that side.” “A living face cannot be viewed as a ‘thing in itself’ independent of the observer. The face always reflects the onlooker. When looking at someone, we see at the same time ourselves, our own social reflection” (Styczeń 2013, 135).

By virtue of his unique dignity, the person becomes a *locus* of divine self-revelation. The human face, as the most expressive sign of personal interiority, does not merely reveal psychological states; it manifests the irreducible uniqueness and mystery of the person. This visibility of the person through the body—especially the face—renders the human being a natural theophany.

This theophanic character is possible due to aloneness, which Styczeń considers as a precondition for personal communion. The person is a mystery not to be possessed but to be received with reverence, akin to the sacred. Thus, genuine interpersonal relationships, especially those characterized by love and self-gift, become privileged sites where the divine is made manifest. In such encounters, the other is not a mere object but “Thou” who discloses something transcendent. Furthermore, love constitutes the ethical and metaphysical space in which God is revealed:

However, the truth about human dignity does not negate the truth about the contingency of human existence... [Contingency] reveals that the dignity of the person, together with their existence, has its direct source in the unceasing creative act of the Personal Absolute of Love, through which each person finds themselves as a gift to themselves from the Creator and, at the same time, finds every other person as, in their dignity, assigned to them to be ultimately affirmed by the one who causes persons to exist at all and, in existing, to exist as persons (Styczeń 2013, 138).

Since God is love (1 Jn 4:8), the structure of interpersonal gift—a person giving themselves freely to another—mirrors the Trinitarian life and thereby reveals it. Hence, the human person does not simply point to God; rather, in the very act of loving and being loved, the person makes God present. Ultimately, Styczeń affirms that the person, by embodying relationality, freedom, and the capacity for love, is a visible sign of the invisible. In their irreducible uniqueness

and openness to communion, the human person becomes not only a bearer of divine image but also a living theophany.

Conclusions

Styczeń's account of aloneness—as an extension of the personal dynamism—not only provides a better conceptual apparatus to grasp the theological specificity of man's moral and social life, which is broadly described by Wojtyła, but also specifies what the symbolic (that is, theophanic) character of the body consists of. For Styczeń, living in the “I-you” configuration is deeply ontological, not just moral. Consequently, the human being, including the body, lives toward other persons, and this enables the person to understand that openness to the other person is not meaningless, but it expresses a deeper order of things. This conviction, in the form of a seed present in Wojtyła, enables us to understand the meaningfulness of human bodily existence. The obligation to respect the human being is inscribed in the very structure of human life and, at the same time, in his relationship to the Creator. The dignity that is the fruit of the personal dynamism, expressed through the body (specifically through the face), is the condition for reading the body as a sign. While in his work Wojtyła shows the way in which the body as a sign gains its meaning in the spousal relationship by virtue of the complementarity of the sexes, Styczeń shows that the meaningfulness of the human body is a source of moral responsibility. It would be worthwhile for further research in this area to show how the theological depth contained in TOB could be applied to areas of morality other than sexuality.

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