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405-02 The Ethics of Karol Wojtyla: The Acting Person

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

"From Descartes on, philosophy becomes a philosophy of the human subject. More and more philosophy becomes an anthropology. For if man, his recognition, his psychic reactions and his cognitive situation, become the one 'bridge' which unites him with the rest of the world, then, in fact, human cognition and the mental reactions joined to them become the first objects of analysis. The analysis of man and the disclosure of his cognitive structures become the principal efforts of philosophers like Kant. On the other hand, the objective world is gradually given over to doubt, to such a degree that it appears as a function of the subject. Even in Hegel, whose subjective philosophy takes on an appearance of a strongly objective philosophical system, we are dealing with an extrapolating human thinking about the world, which becomes 'obedient' to the dialectic that it has discovered." Mieczylaw A. Krapiec, O.P, President and Rector, University of Lublin, I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology, pp. 15-16.

"Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being--in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people (perhaps still only that of his clan or tribe), and in the sphere of the whole of mankind--this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ Himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption." John Paul II, Redemptor Hominis, #14, 1979.

The Ethics of Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*: PHIL 405 02
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:30 A.M.-1:20 P.M.
Schmidt Memorial Fieldhouse 3
Teacher: Fr. Cyril W. Whitaker, S.J.
Office: Hinkle 116
Office Phone: 745-2059
Office Hours: By Appointment
E-mail: whitakerc@xavier.edu

The Course in a Nutshell

We begin with Adrian Reimers' book entitled Truth about the Good. This work gives us an overview and summary of Wojtyla's work. Reimers emphasizes the current need to recover an ontological sense of the good, and discusses the light that metaphysics casts on Wojtyla's thought and Wojtyla's insistence that phenomenology has to be grounded in a philosophy of being. Reimers makes every effort to show Wojtyla's novel insights into human action.

Then we dive into one of the most complex of texts, Wojtyla's The Acting Person. The work we do with Reimers' book should help us to make our way through what is Wojtyla's principal philosophical work, wherein we encounter the following themes: *consciousness and efficacy, transcendence of the person in the action, the integration of the person in the action, and participation*. If we know what he tells in *consciousness and efficacy*, the rest, I think, flows rather easily; **but the reading is steep and difficult. You must be willing, able, and eager to wade.**

We analyze the important shift from understanding the human person as a rational animal towards understanding him/her as an embodied person. We emphasize a return to things themselves, in the sense of returning to the truth about the human person, human love, and the

human body. We study the interior structure of the human person with a view to understanding how action reveals the person, how the person is the efficient cause of his/her action, and how the person is fulfilled in authentic relations with others.

Kenneth Schmitz's book, Person and Psyche, contains the material you will need to prepare for your final examination. This book, with its treatment of philosophy and psychology as distinct disciplines and yet close neighbors, applies much of Wojtyla's thought in its explanation of philosophical reflection and psychic activity as essential aspects of the integrity and health of the human person.

Some Goals of the Course

(1) We shall engage in critical, theological reflection by the method developed in Jesuit and Catholic practice, using human experience and religious traditions. (2) We shall formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources. (3) We shall discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions of morality and ethics, the nature of reality, the nature of beauty, and the reasonableness of a basic rudimentary faith (necessary for there to be any kind of society at all) and of religious faith. (4) We shall relate our knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to our own life's experience and the challenges confronting the world today. (5) We shall discuss philosophy as a way of life in pursuit of wisdom in order to live happily and well and as significant to the formation of the human person.

Required Texts

Truth about the Good: Moral Norms in the Thought of John Paul II by Adrian Reimers

The Acting Person by Karol Wojtyla

Person and Pysche by Kenneth Schmitz

Any other readings will be provided.

There are many, many books on Wojtyla's philosophical thought. If you want some recommendations, see me and I will recommend some. I like them all, but one of the best is Andre Ong's dissertation entitled The Philosophy of the Acting Person.

Attendance, Class Preparation, Quality of Work

You are required to be here for every class. I expect that you will excuse yourself from class by e-mailing me at the address above. Your final score will be reduced by five points for every unexcused absence.

Correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph structure, and all other skills we educated people are expected to possess and to use will be employed by the teacher and the students. You cannot expect an A if your work is not well done.

Grading and Course Requirements

There will be two tests throughout the semester. These will occur on the following dates:

February 15 and **April 15**. (30%)

There will be one five-page paper due. It will consist of a thesis, a statement of what you will do to defend the thesis, an argument, an explanation of why the thesis is important at all and to you in particular, and some articulation of where from within you this paper comes. The paper of the first third of the class will be due on **April 19**; that of the second third, on **April 22**; and that of the third third, on **April 24**. (25%). **Turning your paper in early is encouraged, will be much appreciated, and gain for you my undying admiration.**

There will be student participation. (10%).

There will be a final essay examination. (35%).

Assignments

1/7 Introductions, Syllabus, Two Quotations Above as Focus, Prelection of First Assignment, etc.

1/9-2/13 Reimer's Truth About the Good, twenty-five to thirty-five pages of reading for each class

2/15 Test I

2/15-4/15 Wojtyla's The Acting Person, twenty-five to thirty-five pages of reading for each class

4/15 Test II

4/15-4/17 Poetry of Karol Wojtyla: "The Quarry" and "Profiles of a Cyrenean"

4/19-4/22 Drama of Karol Wojtyla: The Jeweler's Shop

4/24-4/26 Preparation for Final Exam and Completion of Evaluations

Final Examination from 1:00-2:50, Wednesday, May 1, 2013