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“Towards a Theology of Suffering:  
The Contribution of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II”

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“Towards a Theology of Suffering:  
The Contribution of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II”

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Pope John Paul II's 1984 Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris* shares a common anthropology with his “Theology of the Body” audiences delivered between 1979 and 1984. In them, drawing on his work in phenomenology as a professional philosopher, he discusses the revelatory potential of the human body. His method of inquiry into man's self-understanding of his nature and the struggles he faces invites academic investigation of both issues of human sexuality and human suffering. Analogous to his description of man's coming to understand a language of the body between spouses, there is also the potential for a communion of persons to be released in the experience of the mystery of human suffering by both the suffering person and the one who cares for him.

This dissertation investigates the themes addressed in Wojtyla/John Paul's teaching, particularly in the “Theology of the Body” with the purpose of synthesizing an anthropology found there in order to present an expanded theology of suffering as a much needed tool for a culture that often views the experience of suffering as only a negative one, something to be eliminated at all costs. Wojtyla/John Paul's view will be shown to counteract this mindset, treating the experience of suffering, though an evil in itself, as

uniquely affording the potential to release love and hope in the suffering person's relationship with God and others, as well as the for those who care for him.

Part I addresses the need for a better grounding of the issue of suffering in our current culture by evaluating the lack of discussion of this mystery in the realms of medical ethics, for even within Christian reflection the topic of suffering is often dismissed or eliminated rather than addressed as a revelatory part of human experience. Part II offers a brief synthesis of Wojtyla/John Paul's philosophical and theological anthropology by analyzing foundational writings, such as *The Acting Person* and his first encyclicals, as well as his presentation of the Theology of the Body. It will do so by analyzing both the content and method of his catechesis and evaluating how this catechesis addresses particular needs of contemporary culture, especially issues which form a basis for the understanding of the revelatory nature of the body as pertains to suffering. Part III articulates, per John Paul's request from the conclusion of the Theology of the Body catecheses, a more complete understanding of the role of suffering in Christian life. This section expands traditional views of the redemptive potential of suffering with John Paul's own thoughts on how the promptings of the body of the suffering person afford an opportunity for both greater self-awareness and communion with others. Part IV offers conclusions and briefly considers the possibilities for further development of a theology of suffering.

This dissertation by Peter C. Harman fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Sacred Theology approved by John S. Grabowski, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Moral Theology, as Director, and by Brian Johnstone, S.T.D., Ph.D., Professor of Moral Theology, and William Mattison, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Moral Theology, as Readers.

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John S. Grabowski, Ph. D., Director

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To Mom and Dad,  
With gratitude and love  
For life and faith generously given

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## INTRODUCTION

Suffering, which can be defined as “any experience that impinges on an individual’s or a community’s sense of well-being” is a constant within the human condition.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of contemporary culture, there is no single explanation of the source, cause, or purpose of suffering, though suffering itself is a universal reality. Even within the history of the Christian tradition, there are various approaches to or explanations of the reality of suffering, so that it is impossible to easily synthesize its mysterious presence and purpose in human experience, with each explanation having a referent in Sacred Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

The various theological explanations of the reality of suffering face a particular difficulty at the beginning of the third millennium. Great scientific and medical progress

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Sparks, “Suffering” in *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993) 950. He goes on to explain: “Synonyms include pain, grief, distress, disruption, affliction, imposition, oppression, discrimination, and any sense of loss or of being victimized. The negative experience may be physical, psychological, interpersonal, or spiritual, though in most instances it involves a combination of these.” Contrasting this theological definition is a medical one offered by Eric J. Cassel, “The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine,” in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 306, (March 18, 1982), p. 640: “The state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person.”

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 950-52. Sparks lists six theological approaches to suffering. The first is conceptualizing suffering and evil as part of a dualism in all of creation, in which the forces of good are in constant battle with the forces of evil. He calls the second, a classical, free-will or Augustinian theodicy, in which suffering is caused by evil and sinful choices. The third is a variation on this theodicy in which suffering is punishment for wrongdoing, a belief challenged in the Book of Job. He calls the fourth a redemptive or ransom myth, by which the focus changes from the cause of suffering to its meaning, where suffering is likened to the paying of a debt. Sparks calls the fifth approach the Irenaean or evolutionary model, in which the unfinished world and its inhabitants are engaged in a fictional struggle for completion. Lastly, he points to a faith solution, whereby all previous attempts to understand the mystery of suffering are inadequate, and the only plausible response is to accept the incomprehensibility of God’s will by man’s finite understanding.

has significantly reduced the amount of suffering (as experiences which challenge the individual's and community's well being). Ironically, this success which has reduced suffering has by that very fact rendered man less familiar with it, and therefore removed the context in which he deals with suffering when it does appear.<sup>3</sup> A loss in the concept of suffering having any purpose, has significant consequences not only for how man views and copes with his own suffering, but also for how attempts to address or remove suffering from the human scene are consistent with a notion of inherent human dignity.<sup>4</sup> To further investigate this need for a theology of suffering, and drawing from the anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II to assist in addressing this need is the purpose of this dissertation.<sup>5</sup> While there are other commentaries on his addressing the issue of suffering, the unique contribution below will be to use Wojtyla/John Paul's phenomenology, as articulated in his Theology of the Body catechesis, to extend his specific writings to address the issue of human suffering and to see it in a new light.

While suffering entails more than physical pain—for it requires by the definitions given above the mental capacity to understand pain as a threat to or loss of comfort and stability—it is injury, illness and the threat of death which most often and most strongly

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<sup>3</sup> George Weigel, *The Truth of Catholicism*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 113. Throughout this dissertation, the term "man" is intended to be inclusive of men and women, (i.e., "*homo*" not "*vir*").

<sup>4</sup> See among others Donald McCarthy and Edward Bayer, eds., "A Pastoral Theology of Suffering," in *Handbook on Critical Life Issues*, (Braintree MA: Pope John Center, 1988), 60, for the ethical questions stemming from suffering. "Why take innocent lives? What element of common human experience could possibly explain this? Sometimes the answer is human suffering. Sometimes human persons reach a point at which they believe they or someone loved by them would be better off dead than continuing to suffer."

<sup>5</sup> This work will use the name "Wojtyla/John Paul" or some variant of this address when referring to the Pope's teaching as a whole, both his pre-papal and papal writings. It will refer to him as "(Karol) Wojtyla" regarding exclusively pre-papal works, and as "(Pope) John Paul II" for publications after his election to the papacy.

thrust a person into a situation of facing suffering.<sup>6</sup> Therefore much of the discussion below will use examples of physical suffering and the current medical approach to healing as illustrations of the need for a better approach to suffering. But what is written here applies equally to suffering which has no physical origin.

The issue of human suffering is without a doubt a very personal issue, one that each person handles in a unique way.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, there are many common elements which suffering draws out of each person. Particularly in physical illness, the suffering person faces a situation which invites existential assessment: an assessment of one's own being as well as one's relationships with others. Suffering becomes a moment of potential for either withdrawing into oneself or reaching out to another. This is true for the person who suffers, and those who are able to address the sufferings of others.

When illness or trauma beset the body, the ability of the body to express the person is limited, even though the fullness of the person is still present. Illness and other afflictions of the body seem to turn a person in on

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Crowley, *Unwanted Wisdom: Suffering, the Cross, and Hope*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 25-26. Crowley speaks of suffering as "the great leveler" which cuts across all human life. While not everyone has the same lot in suffering, all persons face, though again not equally, the bodily reminders of illness and death. McCarthy and Bayer, "A Pastoral Theology of Suffering," 63. "Persons suffer even without pain, and persons can endure pain without really suffering...of course critical illness brings both pain and suffering."

<sup>7</sup> McCarthy and Bayer, "Pastoral Theology of Suffering," 63. "[E]very person suffers in his or her own particular way. Some individuals, for example, have prided themselves on their self-sufficiency. They suffer more acutely in critical illness than do others who are accustomed to depending on others. One's cultural and ethnic background may dictate whether visitors are welcome during critical illness. A person who is secure in a strong and happy marriage can handle critical illness better than someone in a marriage that is falling apart. A person who has successfully survived in a previous critical illness will often be better able to tolerate critical illness than someone who was never sick a day in his life. Similarly, a person suffering the same critical illness which others in the family have experienced will often be better able to cope with it. Persons who are able to understand the diagnosis and prognosis of their illness because of kind and sensitive explanations by physicians and nurses will suffer less than others, even if the pain is the same. Persons who pride themselves on physical strength or attractiveness will suffer more from the same weakening or disfiguring illness than others who pay little attention to strength or appearance."

himself, in order to preserve his energies for healing. This tendency, while appropriate to an extent, nonetheless can make it more difficult for the sick person to extend beyond himself to others.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of each kind of suffering therefore has the potential to be an experience of great personal and interpersonal significance.

Christian philosophical analysis of the means by which suffering of the physical type is addressed, namely, contemporary medical practice, shows a clash of two worldviews.<sup>9</sup> The views overlap in the desire to heal the sick and free them from the presence of suffering.<sup>10</sup> They differ in an assessment of the absolute dignity of the human person and the evaluation of the proper use of medical science to treat illness and relieve suffering. They continue to diverge and become more separate from each other.

Today the trajectories of these two views of what it means to be human are diverging sharply. Each gives rise to a different system of bioethics, a different way of defining the good for humans and the right and wrong use of biotechnology. This divergence is most concretely evident in the academic and public debates regarding 'human life' questions, e.g., technically assisted procreation, abortion, the uses of embryonic stem cells in research and therapy, the appropriation of biotechnology for purposes

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<sup>8</sup> Tara Seyfer and John Travaline, "The Theology of the Body and Modern Medicine: Informing the Practice of Healing," *Linacre Quarterly* 75, February 2008, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund D. Pellegrino, "Catholic Health Care Ministry and Contemporary Culture: The Growing Divide" in *Urged on By Christ: Catholic Health Care in Tension with Contemporary Culture*, Edward J. Furton, ed., (Philadelphia, National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2007), 14. "Catholic health ministry sees care for the sick as a sacred ministry pursued in fidelity to the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is dedicated to the relief of suffering within the constraints of divine law. It gives primacy to man's spiritual destiny as well as his temporal well being. Contemporary culture for its part also seeks to relieve suffering and to improve the quality of human life. Its restraints, however, are imposed by human law, and its end is primarily the quality of man's material life, without reference to divine law."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. "These two worldviews overlap in their use of biotechnology to heal, help, and relieve the sufferings of the sick. They differ sharply, however, in their conceptions of the personal dignity which His Holiness, John Paul II designated as the criterion for all use of biotechnology. For Catholic health care, personal dignity is an intrinsic, inviolable, God-given quality of all human life. It is possessed equally by the weakest and most fragile among us as well as by the most robust and the strongest. Contemporary culture acknowledges human dignity as a first principle of human rights and bioethics. But it does so as a quality conferred by human law. On this view human dignity can be gained, lost, weakened, or transformed according to the human will."

of enhancement beyond the needs of therapy, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. These debates are becoming more querulous, making dialogue more difficult.<sup>11</sup>

It is the presence of suffering which brings about much of the debate as to the means by which illness should be treated.<sup>12</sup>

Pope John Paul described the increasing refusal to view all human beings as equal in dignity, and therefore able to be manipulated for the pursuits of others, as the result of a “profound crisis of culture.”<sup>13</sup> He notes that the attacks on human life at its most vulnerable moments, its beginning and end, which once would have been considered criminal acts are now beginning to be viewed as rights, seeking legal recognition and are made available through the health care profession.<sup>14</sup> Contemporary questions about ethical treatment and research to alleviate human suffering, often find their “answers” in the very fact of their scientific possibility, the so-called “scientific imperative” within medicine that whatever is possible ought therefore to be attempted.<sup>15</sup> But something

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Scientist: We now have the shackles taken off” *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 2009, 7, On the president’s repealing of federal restrictions on funding embryonic stem cell research: “‘It’s a wonderful thing to see science now being in the hands of scientists, to see it becoming less politicized,’ said Dr. John Kessler, chairman of neurology at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine. ‘It allows us to do the things we hope to be able to do to cure disease and treat people.’”

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, “The Gospel of Life,” Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1985) no. 11, p. 26, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87, (hereafter *AAS*) 1985, 401-522.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Tadeusz Pacholczyk, “The Holy Grail of Reprogramming: A New Era for Stem Cells?” Presentation for the Twenty-Second Workshop for Bishops by the National Catholic Bioethics Center, Dallas TX, February 3, 2009, as cited in the promotional materials for the publication. “Some of the scientists who advocate the destruction of human embryos have never really taken the moral concerns very seriously because the creed they subscribe to is the so-called ‘scientific imperative,’ namely that science must go forward, as if it were the highest good. It must be able to do whatever it wants, wherever it wants, whenever it wants, and nobody should be pushing ethical viewpoints to limit what researchers do. That of course, is a completely untenable position because we regulate what scientists do all the time. The very mechanism by which we disperse federal money puts all kinds of checks and balances on what researchers can do and there are certain types of research like germ warfare and studies or nuclear bomb development that the government

much more basic is required to give a proper framework to these questions, an understanding of what it means to be human and how suffering is a part of the human condition.<sup>16</sup>

For Christians, attention given to the sick and suffering stems from an extension of the mission of Christ, who himself brought healing and commanded that those who suffer be treated with compassion.<sup>17</sup> Christians have seen an overlap in these two sources, and have adapted what various cultures have found beneficial in medical practice for their own pursuit of medicine as a vocation of healing.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is not the case that the Church in her vast medical and healing ministries intends to set itself above and against the culture, but rather at this particular moment in time, it finds some methods used to address suffering as contrary to the dignity of the human person, placing more weight on the intermediate good of freedom from suffering, over the inherent dignity of the human person.<sup>19</sup>

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strictly regulates already. Other kinds of research are criminal, such as performing medical experiments on patients who don't give their consent."

<sup>16</sup> Leon Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 18.

"Finding good answers to these tough questions is the deepest challenge for a truly human bioethics, one that seeks to keep human life human. Answers depend not on science or even on ethics but on a proper anthropology, one that richly understands what it means to be a human animal, in our bodily, psychic, social, cultural, political and spiritual dimensions. For we cannot even begin to discuss the possible dignity of human embodiment, human procreation, or human finitude if we do not grasp their being and meaning."

<sup>17</sup> John Love, "The concept of Medicine in the Early Church," *Linacre Quarterly* 75, August 2008, 225.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. "Even if Christians understand sickness and healing primarily in light of the life, teaching, and example of Jesus, it cannot be conclusively stated that the Christian understanding represents any sort of anthropological break with these primitive origins. On the contrary, far from questioning the inherent moral goodness of curing the sick and injured, a fundamental Christian philosophy of medicine builds upon the insight of other cultures which, centuries prior, had already developed a connection between good health, happiness, and the preservation of community."

<sup>19</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction, *Dignitas personae*, "Bioethical Questions and the Dignity of the Human Person," Vatican Translation, *Origins* 38, no. 28 (December 18, 2008), no. 4, p. 439. "These developments [significant strides in medical science with regard to human generation] are certainly positive and worthy of support when they serve to overcome or correct pathologies and succeed in re-establishing the normal functioning of human procreation. On the other hand, they are negative and

If at other times in history, while the concept and requirements of human dignity were accepted in general, discrimination was practiced on the basis of race, religion or social condition, today there is a no less serious and unjust form of discrimination that leads to the nonrecognition of the ethical and legal status of human beings suffering from serious diseases or disabilities. It is forgotten that the sick and disabled people are not some separate category of humanity; in fact, sickness and disability are part of the human condition and affect every individual, even when there is no direct experience of it. Such discrimination is immoral and must therefore be considered legally unacceptable, just as there is a duty to eliminate cultural, economic and social barriers that undermine the full recognition and protection of disabled or ill people.<sup>20</sup>

The current need for an anthropological grounding to address the phenomenon of suffering is great.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps without intending to do so, developments in ways to address human suffering themselves lead to value judgments on bodily health and raise the expectations for medicine to succeed in eliminating the presence of suffering from the human condition.

The idea of man underlies a whole set of humanistic issues which arise out of the technological potencies of modern medicine. Matters formerly the concern of the speculative and imaginative intelligence are now technological realities. Medicine can prolong or terminate life, control conception and fertility, elevate our moods, or blunt our pain and anxieties. To apply these measures is to challenge traditional meanings of the value and dignity of individual life, of the family, of suffering and dying, or of the individual versus social good.<sup>22</sup>

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cannot be utilized when they involve the destruction of human beings or when they employ means that contradict the dignity of the person or when they are used for purposes contrary to the integral good of man.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., no 22, p. 444.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph McInerny, “The Roots of Modern Subjectivism,” in *Creative Love: The Ethics of Human Reproduction*, ed. John Boyle, (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1989), 12-13. “It is sometimes thought that we can bypass questions of philosophical anthropology and metaphysics and go straight to the discussion of moral problems. This may be possible when there is sufficient community of viewpoint on that anthropological and metaphysical background, but precisely that is absent today. I think it is a grievous mistake to try to present traditional morality within the constraints imposed by the anti-metaphysical current of modern thought.”

<sup>22</sup> Edmund Pellegrino and David Thomasma, *A Philosophical Basis of Medical Practice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 32-33.

As the presence of suffering is most often the impetus for seeking medical treatment, and its elimination is the immediate goal of contemporary medical practice, the role that suffering plays in human life needs to be more thoroughly investigated. Suffering is an experience which has ontological significance—not merely involving sensations of the body. The fact of pain and suffering has a direct affect on the intrinsic value of the person who suffers, in that it impacts the whole being of the person who experiences it.<sup>23</sup> The current era of technological and scientific advances poses questions to religious views of suffering, particularly Christian ones, that cannot be ignored.<sup>24</sup>

The issue of suffering is at the heart of many discussions in the field of moral theology. While recognized as an evil, Christian theology seeks to find in suffering, a meaning for the individual who experiences it. As in all experiences of the cross, as St. Paul notes, the temptation always remains to view suffering as having only a negative value.<sup>25</sup> Fleeing from the reality of suffering is an almost instinctual reaction, and is manifested in many ways in contemporary culture, which will be discussed below. This flight is a failed attempt to address a reality of the human condition outside man's complete control. The Christian response to suffering is one that diverges from this path, and seeks to address suffering by delving into the lessons that suffering makes possible

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<sup>23</sup> Adrain J. Reimers, "The Significance of Suffering," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, (Spring 2003), 55-56. "Suffering, especially severe pain, has direct impact on the whole of one's being. The migraine sufferer feels incapacitated and has to fight through the pain to carry on with normal life activities. The oncologist's diagnosis of leukemia stands as an obstacle between the patient and everything normal. Pain presents itself as an obstacle, a hindrance as real as any physical barrier."

<sup>24</sup> Crowley, *Unwanted Wisdom*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> See 1 Corinthians 1:23-25, cited here and hereafter unless specifically noted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. "...but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

and the potential responses for relationships when suffering enters into them. Such an approach can provide a more adequate anthropology for the ways in which scientific medicine ought to treat illness, as well as the way man treats those who face suffering. This investigation requires a view of the human person as an intentionally embodied reality, whereby that embodiment is itself a signifier of the dignity of the person in accord with the plan of his Creator. Suffering is therefore not arbitrary, nor only an imposition on man's freedom, but rather a means by which he may experience something of himself and of another which has higher revelatory significance.<sup>26</sup>

The choice of Wojtyla/John Paul as the source for a greater development of a theology of suffering is due in part to the high profile and timing of his papacy at the end of the twentieth century, a century that witnessed great developments in science and medicine. But it is also due to his development of a Christian anthropology adequate to address the rapid changes in the moral compass of the end of the century. The “adequate” anthropology of Wojtyla/John Paul is built upon an affirmation of the dignity of the person and at the same time a recognition of man's fundamental orientation toward communion with God as well as with other persons.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, “The Splendor of Truth,” Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1993), no 48, p. 66, *AAS* 85, (1993), 1133-1228. “The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator. It is in the light of the dignity of the human person—dignity which must be affirmed for its own sake—that reason grasps the specific moral value in certain goods towards which the person is naturally inclined. And since the human person cannot be reduced to a freedom which is self-designing, but entails a particular spiritual and bodily structure, the primordial moral requirement of loving and respecting the person as an end and never as a mere means also implies, by its very nature, respect for certain fundamental goods, without which one would fall into relativism and arbitrariness.”

<sup>27</sup> See Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), xxii.

The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the contribution of Wojtyla/John Paul, demonstrating that the unique dimensions of the experience of suffering, both for the one who suffers and for the one who cares for him, offer the potential for a positive experience for a building up of a more authentic communion of persons than what often takes place in contemporary culture when facing the mystery of suffering.

As a philosopher, Wojtyla expressed an insight into the challenges of his era, “The central problem of life for humanity in our times, perhaps in all times, is this: participation or alienation.”<sup>28</sup> In the mystery of suffering, both in one’s own suffering and in dealing with the suffering of others, man is invited to either participate in opening himself up in communion with another, or to alienate himself from others if that presents a painful experience. Wojtyla/John Paul realized the need to present moral teaching by way of reintroducing contemporary culture to the metaphysical framework of Christian anthropology. Wojtyla’s investigation in phenomenology grounded his appreciation for its needing to be rooted in Christian theology. The Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et spes* provided the highlight for the future pope’s frequent use of the term “communion of persons,”<sup>29</sup> possible only by man’s gift of himself to another. John Paul would refer repeatedly to this insight from *Gaudium et spes* to point to how man can choose to live in

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<sup>28</sup> Karol Wojtyla, “Participation or Alienation?” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, ed. Andrew N. Woznicki, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 197.

<sup>29</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, “Church in the Modern World,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, trans. Austin Flannery et al. (Collegeville, Minn.: 1984), no. 24, p. 925. “[T]he Lord Jesus...has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the sons of God in truth and love. It follows, then, that if man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.”

relationship/participation with another in marriage, within the culture, and in facing human suffering, or choose instead to live in isolation.

The human interaction within the experience of suffering is the foundation of medical care, and has the potential to initiate a communion of persons in its practice.<sup>30</sup> A look at how this interaction is often significantly lacking in contemporary attempts to cure disease will help both to express the need for a more developed theology of suffering and to see this interaction as the key for rebuilding a framework by which suffering may be more compassionately addressed.

In addition to the rich and relevant anthropology of Wojtyla/John Paul, his own personal history is itself a witness to faith in the facing of suffering:

When John Paul II writes about the meaning of suffering in Christian perspective, he is worth listening to. There is no avoidance here. For John Paul to avoid the realities of suffering would be to deny his own existence. Six weeks after meeting with his would-be assassin in a Roman prison cell, John Paul published an apostolic letter entitled *Salvifici Doloris* [Salvific Suffering]. The letter begins with the observation that suffering is a universal human experience. Suffering is an entire human world, and no one can avoid passing through it. Everyone suffers. There is no escape from the questions “Why?” and “What for?”<sup>31</sup>

Using the writings of a philosopher/theologian who became the universal pastor of the Church presents some challenges. Within the Catholic tradition, there is a significant difference in the weight given to a private philosopher/theologian, and to a

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<sup>30</sup> Seyfer and Travaline, “*The Theology of the Body and Modern Medicine*,” 24. “The communion of persons is fruitful when doctor and patient can give to one another...It is thus fruitful and helpful for both, even when the healer is perhaps unable to cure the patient of a malady. The kindness and trust on both sides remains as a palpable, spiritual healing, and generative action, despite possible continuation of disease or injury.”

<sup>31</sup> Weigel, *Truth of Catholicism*, 116. For an interesting insight into John Paul’s personal health struggles as described by his personal physician, see Renato Buzzonetti, “The Days of Suffering and Hope,” in *Let Me Go to My Father’s House: John Paul II’s Strength in Weakness*, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006), 45-75.

person whose writings have the binding authority of the universal magisterium.<sup>32</sup>

Obviously these two extremes are joined in the totality of the writings of Wojtyla/John Paul II. It is more complicated than simply declaring some writings as pre-papal and therefore not authoritative, and declaring that all writings after his election to the papacy now enjoy that doctrinal significance. The intention, form, and audience of each writing must be considered in giving the appropriate doctrinal weight to a text.<sup>33</sup> John Paul's *Motu proprio, Ad tuendam fidem*, reiterates the three levels of magisterial teaching, as they are expressed in the "Oath of Fidelity" taken by those who exercise office in the name of the Church.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly some of the writings of John Paul referenced here surrounding the issue of suffering enjoy the highest level of magisterial authority as divinely revealed.<sup>35</sup> Others,

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<sup>32</sup> See Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, "Dogmatic Constitution of the Church" in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, trans. Austin Flannery et al, (Collegeville, Minn.: 1984), no. 25.

<sup>33</sup> See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the *Professio Fidei*" Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1998), no. 11, *AAS* 90 (1998), 542-551.

<sup>34</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Moto Proprio Ad tuendam fidem*, "By Which Certain Norms are Inserted into the *Code of Canon Law* and into the *Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches*," Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1998), nos. 2-3, *AAS* 90 (1998) 542-551. The first level includes those teachings divinely revealed by Scripture and Tradition by either solemn judgment or through the ordinary exercise of the universal magisterium and require the assent of theological faith of the all faithful. The second level includes all definitively proposed teachings regarding faith and morals which may be given by the Supreme Pontiff *ex cathedra* or by the ordinary and universal magisterium and require definitive assent by virtue of the Holy Spirit's assistance to the Church. The third level includes all teachings on faith and morals, even if not expressed as solemn or definitive, which have an expression in the ordinary magisterium to bring about a deeper understanding of the faith and/or warn against erroneous opinions contrary to the faith and deserve religious submission of the will and intellect.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22-23. "The doctrine on the illicitness of euthanasia, taught in the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, can also be recalled. Confirming that euthanasia is 'a grave violation of the law of God,' the pope declares that 'this doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium' [*Evangelium vitae*, no. 65]. It could seem that there is only an assumed logical progression in the doctrine on euthanasia, since Scripture does not seem to be aware of the concept. In this case, however, the interrelationship between the orders of faith and reason becomes apparent: Scripture, in fact, clearly excludes every form of the kind of self-determination of human existence that is presupposed in the theory and practice of euthanasia."

such as the Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici doloris*, belong to the third level as they do not intend to add to the definitive teachings of the Church's dogma, but rather "...are set forth in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of revelation, or to recall the conformity of a teaching with the truths of faith."<sup>36</sup> Many of the works listed here, most notably, the "Theology of the Body Addresses" are not included within these three levels of doctrinal authority, because they are not given the expression fitting matters to be definitively held, and perhaps most significantly, the doctrinal elements they seek to uphold are already taught to be definitively held in existing declarations.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that the presentation below, seeking to develop a theology of suffering based on the thought of Wojtyla/John Paul II, similarly does not suggest the finding of new definitive doctrine in his thought on this matter, but rather seeks to serve as a theological and pastoral aide in addressing the mystery of human suffering.

In addition to clarifying the doctrinal weight of the cited texts, there is also the need to address the authorship of the texts chosen. When a theologian becomes the universal pastor of the Church, the responsibility of speaking as part of the ordinary universal magisterium entails the assistance of other theologians, pastors and scholars in preparing texts and statements. It would be impossible and unwise to work alone in the preparation of encyclicals, letters, and matters of significant theological importance for

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<sup>36</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Commentary," no. 10, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> See Michael Waldstein, "Introduction" in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 14-18. This is not to dismiss either the authority nor the intent of John Paul's "Theology of the Body" addresses to be an authentic catechesis for the universal Church, but rather to clarify that it does not set out to establish new doctrine. John Paul calls this work by various names throughout the catechesis, which point to his intention of this being a work which is meant to support Church teaching regarding sexuality and marriage, rather than offer a new declaration. He calls this work an analysis 269 times, a reflection 146 times, a meditation 21 times and a study 13 times.

such a large audience. Nevertheless, every indication is that John Paul was the initiating source and drafter of the works of great importance and highest profile, and the one whose input was essential and gave approval for lesser ones during the majority of his papacy.<sup>38</sup> Michael Waldstein makes note that the “Theology of the Body” addresses are entirely from John Paul’s own hand, written before his election to the papacy, and thus represent a pure insight into his theological anthropology.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the use of the majority of texts here, including those written after his election as pope, demonstrate a coherence of authorship and/or initiation, or at the very least in some others less often cited, of explicit approval consistent with his own thought.

The selection of one person for treatment of an issue such as the mystery of suffering, especially one with the platform of the universal Church at his disposal, runs the danger of isolating his teaching from the rest of the body of thought on the subject from other sources or eras. This work will seek to highlight what Wotytla/John Paul II contributes to a theology of suffering, but requires the understanding that it does not exist apart from or at odds with the larger body of the Church’s doctrine on the subject.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of John Paul II*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 274. “Here [time of day] was where he worked on his encyclicals, apostolic letters and exhortations, and audience addresses. In the most important cases, he wrote his own drafts and then sent them out to be reviewed by trusted colleagues. In other instances, he worked from a draft text prepared by the Curia or by other consultants.”

<sup>39</sup> Waldstein, “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>40</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, Vatican translation, *Origins* 39, no. 9 (July 16, 2009), no. 12, p. 134. On the continuity of doctrine while specifying one particular pontiff’s teaching: “It is one thing to draw attention to the particular characteristics of one encyclical or another, of the teaching of one Pope or another, but quite another to lose sight of the coherence of the overall doctrinal corpus. Coherence does not mean a closed system: on the contrary, it means dynamic faithfulness to a light received. The Church’s social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging. This safeguards the permanent and historical character of the doctrinal ‘patrimony’ which, with its specific characteristics, is part and parcel of the Church’s ever-living tradition.”

This examination of the mystery of suffering will make the point of a great cultural need to further examine the reality of suffering based upon how contemporary approaches in medicine and in popular religious thought often lack the foundations to adequately do so. The expression of this void will entail the criticism of various scientific and medical attitudes surrounding suffering. This is in no way an attempt to depict all who work in the field of medicine and the great work which is done to alleviate the suffering of individuals in a negative manner. As John Paul himself stated, there are many positive signs at work, and contemporary culture is filled with both lights and shadows in the struggle to be unconditionally on the side of human life.<sup>41</sup>

A study of the mystery of suffering has the potential for great impact in contemporary culture. The desire to flee from suffering is very often the moral reasoning used to justify interventions on behalf of the human person of a questionable moral nature. Part one will be an examination of the view of suffering in this culture. Chapter one will evaluate the cultural reality that even religious thought struggles to address in dealing with the undesirable dimensions of life and the expectations of health and well-being. Chapters two and three will show the growing influence of scientific and medical thought—the so-called scientific imperative, which suggests that there should be no limits to scientific research, regardless of objections about the inherent dignity of the

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<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no 26, p. 47. “In effect, signs which point to this victory [over death through Christ from 1 Cor. 15: 54] are not lacking in our societies and cultures, strongly marked though they are by the ‘culture of death.’ It would therefore be to give a one-sided picture, which would lead to sterile discouragement, if the condemnation of the threats to life were not accompanied by the presentation of the positive signs at work in humanity’s present situation.” See also no. 28, p. 50: “This situation [current cultural attitudes] with its lights and shadows, ought to make us all fully aware that we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life.’”

human person which may be threatened by some advances. Part one will conclude by illustrating that some attempts to eliminate suffering become attempts to exercise more complete control over the body, thus removing the theological imperatives for moral decision-making when faced with the potential of suffering. These attempts themselves leave the person without the proper context with which to deal with the mystery of suffering, such that it is not suffering which brings doubt about the reality of God, it is the faulty assumption of never having to suffer which fills man with a desire for everything except God.

In part two, an examination of Wojtyla/John Paul's philosophical and theological foundation will follow as chapters four and five, with a specific examination of his Theology of the Body catecheses in chapter six. Part three will advance Wojtyla/John Paul's contribution for the purpose of better understanding the reality of suffering. Chapter seven will point out the major themes of John Paul's *Salvifici doloris*, and chapters eight and nine will seek to integrate this teaching with the themes of the Theology of the Body catechesis to underscore lessons taught and learned in the experience of suffering which often go under-addressed in the contemporary scientific/medical treatment of suffering. The result will be an attempt to help those who face suffering and those who assist those who suffer to view their suffering in terms of active engagement rather than simply of passive acceptance. The conclusion will find ways in which an academic study such as this might have an effect in the Church's preaching and teaching.

Part I: The Potential for a Better Understanding of the Mystery of Suffering

CHAPTER 1

THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE  
FOR A GOSPEL OF SUFFERING

Pope John Paul II begins his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris* by noting that the mystery of human suffering, practically inseparable from man's very existence, constantly demands re-evaluation in every age.<sup>1</sup> He writes with the purpose of engaging contemporary man in a Christian understanding of the universal experience of suffering.

Assuming then that throughout his earthly life man walks in one manner or another on the long path of suffering, it is precisely on this path that the Church at all times...should meet man.<sup>2</sup>

The universal experience of suffering confronts man in the midst of significant differences between various historical periods and cultures. John Paul is keenly aware of the importance of man's culture in forming his spiritual and moral dimensions in a current response to the eternal truths of the gospel.

Culture is that by which man becomes more human, thereby achieving an increase, not necessarily of having, but of being. As a result of culture, man *is* to a greater degree. Culture is *of* man, since no other being has culture; it is *from* man, since man creates it; and it is *for* man, since its prime purpose is to develop man as man.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*: "On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering" Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 1984), no. 1, *AAS* 76, 1984, 201-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (New York: Herder and Herder, 2003), 155, (emphasis in original), citing John Paul II, "Address to Intellectuals and Scientists" at Coimbra, Portugal, May 15, 1982, no. 3, *Origins* 12 (May 27, 1982): 27-29 at 28.

A given culture may provide more or less encouragement for the living out of the gospel, and John Paul understood the need to evaluate and dialogue with the cultures that surround man's response in living out his faith.

Since the beginning of my pontificate I have considered the Church's dialogue with the cultures of our time to be a vital area, one in which the destiny of the world at the end of the twentieth century is at stake.<sup>4</sup>

Specifically in his 1990 constitution on Catholic universities, he states that a culture must be evaluated by the degree to which it contributes to the dignity and freedom of the human person, an openness to transcendence, and to a sense of personal responsibility and morality.<sup>5</sup>

Noting the significant technological progress of modern man, many of which have drastically reduced the amount of suffering he experiences, John Paul desires to focus the question of the situation of contemporary man within the context of, and indeed in the service of the eternal demands of the gospel. He asks of the progress which has become a part of the life of contemporary man:

Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth "more human" in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more "worthy of man"? There can be no doubt that in various aspects it does. But the question keeps coming back with regard to what is most essential—whether in the context of this progress man, as man, is becoming truly better, that is to say more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his humanity, more responsible, more open to others, especially the neediest and the weakest, and readier to give and to aid all.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, "Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli", May 20, 1982, *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Eng.), June 28, 1982, in which he established the Pontifical Council for Culture, 19.

<sup>5</sup> See Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 156, quoting John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde ecclesiae*, Origins 20, (October 4, 1990) no. 45.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, "The Redeemer of Man." Vatican Translation, (Washington, DC, United States Catholic Conference, 1979) no. 15, p. 47-8, *AAS* 71, (1979), 257-324.

The Christian understanding of the mystery of suffering demands an investigation into the eternal truths of man and his destiny while he is at the same time surrounded by a given culture which shapes his understanding and response to this mystery. As John Paul noted, and as this chapter will investigate, there are particular aspects of contemporary western culture which challenge a Christian anthropology and specifically complicate a Christian understanding of the mystery of suffering.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1 Consumerism's Effect on Christian Anthropology

Vincent Miller has traced the history of the development of the current consumer culture in the west in order to show its effects on Christianity. He describes the conflict between a Christian world view and that of contemporary consumer culture as lacking the drama of a head-on collision, offering instead the image of “a train switching tracks and going in a slightly different direction.”<sup>8</sup> The effects of the consumer culture are as deep

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<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 16, p. “The essential meaning of this [man’s dominion] over the visible world, which the creator himself gave man for his task, consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter. This is why all phases of present-day progress must be followed attentively. Each stage of that progress must, so to speak, be x-rayed from this point of view. What is in question is the advancement of persons, not just the multiplying of things that people can use. It is a matter—as a contemporary philosopher has said and as the Council has stated—not so much of ‘having more’ as of ‘being more’ [*Gaudium et spes*, no. 35]. Indeed there is already a real perceptible danger that, while man’s dominion over the world of things is making enormous advances, he should lose the essential threads of his dominion and in various ways let his humanity be subjected to the world and become himself something subject to manipulation in many ways—even if the manipulation is often not perceptible directly—through the whole of organization of community life, through the production system and through pressure from the means of social communication. Man cannot relinquish himself or the place in the visible world that belongs to him; he cannot become the slave of things, the slave of economic systems, the slave of production, the slave of his own products. A civilization purely materialistic in outline condemns man to such slavery, even if at times, no doubt, this occurs contrary to the intentions and the very premises of its pioneers.”

<sup>8</sup> Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 107-108.

as they are subtle in terms of their impact on Christian anthropology.<sup>9</sup> The change from the domination of familiar structures in the marketplace to anonymous manufacturing and marketing has created a new consumer culture which has flowed into other areas of man's ways of meeting his needs and heightening his life expectations.<sup>10</sup> The business of fulfilling needs, and the competition to do so, cannot but help create new ones.<sup>11</sup> Yet, not only for needs, but for nearly every want, the current consumer culture can supply a solution. Goods and services step in to fill almost all the desires one can imagine.

It is not simply a matter of judging the consumer-based society as an affront to Christianity, therefore dismissing the involvement in the culture which is so often driven by the fulfillment of desires, as if that were a possibility. Rather, the task is to evaluate the effects of consumerism to see that its creation new needs are a threat to authentic

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<sup>9</sup> This chapter is not intended to be a condemnation of contemporary culture in America. Rather, it seeks to point out how far-reaching the effects of the culture are in terms of shaping the expectations of religion in terms of one's personal gain and specifically in the avoidance of suffering. While Miller's observations on consumer culture will be used here, other authors have made similar arguments about the challenges such a culture poses to an authentic Christian anthropology. A very thorough introduction to the role of human culture as regards an understanding of ethics is James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), esp. pp. 3-23. Cf. Gary Dorrien, *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), esp., 361-367; Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald Luidens, "Mainline Churches" The Real Reason for Decline," *First Things* 31 (March 1993).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-116. Miller explains how the change from communal and familial structures of production and support to an anonymous consumer system has effects in the broader culture outside the marketplace. Labor with and dependence upon extended family has given way to the individual purchase and acquisition of goods. Traditional systems of class and ethnicity hold less power over people, and with the movement into the larger and more anonymous culture for support comes the increased value on the need for such things as individual personality and personal appearance. The increased marketing of goods and services exploited these new needs to a degree which preceding generations would no doubt find artificial for the type of existence they had known.

<sup>11</sup> See John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 16, where he notes the growing polarity between the increasing surplus for some and the dwindling resources of others. He states that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus continues not just to be true but to grow in gigantic measure.

response to the call of the gospel.<sup>12</sup> The historical transition from the filling of real human needs to better one's life to the creation of artificial desires to fill is difficult to detect. It is also difficult to evaluate the distinction in contemporary society as to which desires are genuine and which are created as a furthering of market competition. The effects of this difficulty pervade nearly every aspect of human life, including the evaluation not only of consumer goods, but also individuals' worth and beliefs.<sup>13</sup> The relationship between consumerism and values is not only one-sided however, as if human values have been victimized by those hocking goods to unsuspecting consumers. The image of one's self plays a significant role in the evaluation of desires, marketed either as needs or wants, which are constantly being refined by such consumption. Peter Sedgwick traces the creation of the concept of consumerism and its acceptance to the development of romanticism.<sup>14</sup> Display becomes an important aspect of social and self-identity. While this feeds a consumer desire, it is not to be confused unbridled desire of hedonism per se, because it is not solely based on consumption, but more on the self-innovation that consumption builds, the being able to choose from a myriad of goods

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<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, "New Things, One Hundred Years Later", Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 1991), no. 36, *AAS* 83, (1991), 793-867.

<sup>13</sup> John Kavanaugh, *Still Following Christ in A Consumer Society: The Spiritual Reality of Cultural Resistance*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991). "With consumerism functioning as a system of reality (a philosophy of what is most real and valuable) and a religion (a belief in what saves us and gives us ultimate meaning) it has occupied every piece of territory in our personal and social lives. Consumerism and its Commodity Form of life must be understood as an integrated unity that lives in and through, lives *off of*, our various experiences. One must comprehend it as a total world view, if one is to understand how it dwells in all the assorted parts of our lives. It does not just affect the way we shop. It affects the way we think and feel, the way we love and pray, the way we evaluate our enemies, the way we relate to our spouses and children. It is 'systematic.' It is 'dialectical.'", 31, (emphasis in original).

<sup>14</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*. 114. "Sedgwick traces the development of the emergence of feeling, sensibility, and aesthetics in ethics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What began with the Cambridge Platonists' accounts of pleasure that accompanied doing good developed within a century into an account of moral 'sensibility' that was coterminous with taste. Virtue was manifested in the display of good sensibility or taste. Here Sedgwick finds the roots of consumerism in this practice of imagining the self. In modern societies, the self is constituted in its display."

which slightly alter one's self image. Thus the consumer culture perpetuates itself in the offering of things at the service of innovation of self, the interplay of desire and identity.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.1 Seduction and Misdirection

Miller describes the effects of this interplay of consumer desire and self-identity as seduction and misdirection. According to Miller's sources, the concept of seduction means being drawn unknowingly or perhaps unwillingly into something to which one would not have initially consented. It is not a specific set of pleasures or gratifications, but a more general value *of* pleasure or pleasures dispersed through various experiences, a vague horizon of potentials. Consumer seduction is brought about through a dependence upon the market for individual fulfillment, that individuals cannot navigate the work of daily life without assistance in the form of consumption of goods. The vagueness of fulfillment in consumption comes from the perceived freedom to choose among those items which will best assist in creating the intended value for the individual agent.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of seduction also entails a changing horizon of consumption, for an agent will only enjoy a particular gratification for a limited amount of time. As capitalist societies produced ever greater standards of living, the members of those societies have sought continually greater comforts and gratifications. This has happened because the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 117. Miller notes how capitalism has been more successful than communism due to the types of needs they each filled. Communism was often more successful at providing for basic human needs, but capitalism is able to create a multiplication of needs to be fulfilled, an endless demand, as it were. "Seduction describes how this expansion of the market into all dimensions of human existence is experienced as pleasurable, as a manifold expansion of the modalities of fulfillment."

consumer market has multiplied desires at a rate which is faster than they can be fulfilled. Therefore, the objects purchased are replaced before consumers have the opportunity to become bored with their possession. This cycle illustrates that consumer happiness is not tied to simple (immediate) gratification by an object, which would end with its being acquired, but in the buildup of a “sustained state of desire and anticipation.”<sup>17</sup> A type of constant search for gratification develops whereby the longing for gratification (desire) becomes as enjoyable as the gratification itself. The seduction into one “need” feeds an ever widening desire not only for gratification, but also feeds an identification with desire beyond immediate gratification. “With each cycle, the subject is reinforced in the habit of endless consumption, formed in the joys of endless desire.”<sup>18</sup> This cycle of desire spills over from real commodities and products into the evaluation of other dimensions of the subject’s life, such that “the producing, purchasing, and consuming of objects provides the ultimate horizon of meaning for persons. Its ‘lived Gospel’, its ‘real world’ is the Commodity Form.”<sup>19</sup>

The seduction concept is complemented by the phenomenon of misdirection--the association of other needs and desires with the act of consumption. While seduction draws consumers to more and newer products in an effort to put off gratification indefinitely, misdirection complements this by substituting a tangible product for a deeper transcendent need or desire. Here, products become symbols of much deeper

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>19</sup> Kavanaugh, *Still Following Christ*, 32.

realities, realities which are not available for purchase.<sup>20</sup> Miller explains that there are three major factors which contribute to the misdirection of desire, the decline of traditional and cultural identity markers, the rise of advertising, and the complexity of marketed products.<sup>21</sup> The combination of these factors at work has brought about products that engage a perceived value, and substitute for it. Associating deeper needs of a social and psychological nature with commodities represents success for the marketing of goods, almost ensuring their “need”. It functions for the consumer as a fragmentation of values and needs, for it removes pleasure from the reality of imperfection, mortality or sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> The experience of seduction and misdirection do not affect just the purchasing of goods, but seep into judgment of value for other intangible goods. Concepts such as knowledge, trust, and quality become objectified in products which represent them, and therefore lose their intrinsic value, for they can be marketed in many different ways. Kavanaugh demonstrates the effect of the objectification of a transcendent value to a commodity:

Possessions which might otherwise serve as *expressions* of our humanity, and enhance us as persons, are transformed into ultimates. Our being is in having. Our happiness is said to be in possessing more. Our drive to

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<sup>20</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 120-21. “Consider how an attractive commodity such as a well-made watch appears. Luxury watches clearly serve as conspicuous displays of distinction, so let us focus on a less expensive, more ‘functional’ example. Its case is carefully cast and machined from an impressive material—stainless steel or titanium. The window on the front – is ‘hardened mineral glass’ or even a disk of synthetic sapphire, impervious to scratching by anything but a diamond. The case is waterproof to five hundred feet. The mechanism is accurate to within one-tenth of a second per day. Few of these features are necessary for the rigors of most daily lives. Arriving within a few minutes of the time of a scheduled appointment is well within social standards of punctuality. Still, the watch, like a host of other ‘professional’ quality appliances –from blow dryers to toasters – provides compensations far beyond its most literal use. The well-made thing is a fetish of competence, reliability, stability, and durability. When we wear and use such an item, we are reassured that we too are competent and capable. We are prepared to face not only daily life but extreme circumstances as well, where there exotic materials—titanium eyeglass frames, hard-anodized cookware—will prove their mettle, as will we.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 123.

consume, bolstered by an economics of infinite growth, becomes addictive: it moves from manipulated need, to the promise of joy in things, to broken promises and frustrated expectation, to guilt and greater need for buying. Property is no longer instrumental to our lives; it is the final judge of our merit.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.1.2 Desires: Parallels and Opposites in Consumerism and Christianity

On initial observation, the marketing of desire and the rapid growth in the consumption of goods in Western culture appears to be a severe threat to understanding the Christian gospel. At the least, it appears to be a distraction to the spiritual life for it wastes energy and time in the desiring/acquiring cycle of commodities. Even deeper however, it is a temptation to substitute the pursuit of goods for deeper and higher realities. As Augustine argues, it is easy to confuse those things which should be used at the service of some other good, with that which should be enjoyed for its own sake.<sup>24</sup> In the end, only God can fill the greatest desire of man, and therefore, that which distracts from or substitutes for God and is unable to be used in the genuine pursuit of God should be eliminated. The various applications of consumer desire would seem to imply a misappropriation of goods in society, and thus as such represents a disordered desire from the standpoint of Christian anthropology.<sup>25</sup>

Miller goes on to point out one of the greatest threats of consumer culture to Christianity. He develops the theme that although consumer culture and Christianity have opposite goals, they have tremendously similar means of accomplishing these goals, through channeling human desire. The fixation on consumption poses a threat to

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<sup>23</sup> Kavanaugh, *Still Following Christ*, 56, (emphasis in original).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 126-27.

Christianity as it competes with it in offering the fulfillment of desire which is not completely attainable in this life. As mentioned above, consumer culture uses seduction to continually lure consumers to a new product, knowing that the fulfillment of an individual desire will only satisfy for a limited period of time. This parallels a foundation of Christian spirituality, the mystical journey to God. In its various forms over the centuries of the life of the Church, this mystical ascent builds upon the human experience that man can never be fully satisfied with the finite, and thus is on a constant search for something more.<sup>26</sup> For Christianity, this human experience of growing desire is founded on the notion that ultimately, only God can satisfy the longing of the human soul. While this mystical path to holiness has always been difficult, the advance of materialism within consumer culture has made the choice to channel human desires to God and not for other intermediate substitutes all the more difficult.<sup>27</sup> This difficulty is two-fold. The first aspect is that in its appeal to the desires of man, consumer culture's seduction substitutes

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<sup>26</sup> The difficult search for the mystical presence of the transcendent God has produced many and various schools and masters over the history of Christianity. One of the most famous is the ancient work of St. John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Lazarus Moore, (London, Faber and Faber, 1959). In it, he describes the steps that lead to the presence of God as well as the pitfalls along such a quest in this world. The ascetical practices he describes are written to demonstrate the struggle and sacrifice which are necessary for the true contemplation of God. The contemporary reader may find the starkness in the saint's language too demanding to be possible in contemporary society. A more recent approach can be found in the contemplation of the similarities of struggle in life of various saints with the contemporary reader in James Martin's, *My Life with the Saints*, (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 128. Miller explains the connection between affluent consumer society and the practice of the faith. "The mystical path has always been a difficult one that involves sacrifice and renunciation. Little has changed in this regard, although rising standards of living seem to have been accompanied by a growing lack of interest in ascetic practices. As American Catholics have become more affluent and are less likely to have experienced involuntary hunger in their lives, the requirements for various liturgical and penitential fasting have been increasingly relaxed. The Catholic fast before the Eucharist has been reduced from midnight the night before, to one hour, and the definition of a 'fast day' for Lent and Good Friday has been reduced to one full meal and two partial meals. If physical privations have become paradoxically more difficult as the ease of lifestyle has increased, the psychological and intellectual challenges of the mystical ascent have either remained constant or, in light of the liquidity of culture and belief, actually grown easier. We are much more accustomed to changing beliefs and accepting their limitations than our patristic and medieval forebears. We are much more ready to let go of our concept of God."

and elicits ever new desires, such that the consuming subject is not aware that material goods cannot produce fulfillment of his deepest longing, but only that a particular product is insufficient in fulfillment, thus demonstrating the need for something better or newer. The second difficulty is that consumer culture has made the desiring itself a pleasure, not a restlessness which could be used to advance a conversion to more transcendental values.<sup>28</sup> This has come to form an anthropology which is distinct from Christianity, whereby one's self is defined by one's capacity for experiences.

The ultimate goal of the spiritual quest for union with God, where all desire and anticipation cease in their absolute fulfillment, seems strangely unattractive. It sounds, dare we say, boring.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.1.3 Morals and Values as Commodities

Endless desires generated in a consumer culture create a certain metaphysics by which human experiences not susceptible to commodification are nevertheless affected. The mimicking of the restlessness of the quest for God, which could empower the Christian to conversion and further union with the transcendent God, is instead absorbed into the continuity of the consumer cycle, for the desire of consumption does not require any self-evaluation on the part of the consumer, but only of the product to be consumed. The question is not whether the consumer is appropriate for the desired item, but rather if the item of desire is appropriate for the consumer.

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<sup>28</sup> Miller borrows from Thomas Aquinas' theory of the possession of temporal goods. "Before they are possessed, they are highly regarded and thought satisfying; but after they are possessed, they are found to be neither so great as thought nor sufficient to satisfy our desires, and so our desires are not satisfied but move on to something else." *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Albany, New York: Magi Books, 1980), 242.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 129.

There is a cognitive effect of a horizon formed by radical consumption. The effects of the consumer mode of thinking overflow into the overall establishment of other values—consumption of that which is dispensable has an impact on the evaluation of that which is not. The free market mentality of consumption, where the limiting force is financial capacity is easily translated into a moral theory whereby personal preference and freedom of choice are the primary limiting factors. John Kavanaugh succinctly notes, “Moral relativism is the ethical embodiment of *laissez faire* economics.”<sup>30</sup> Resistance to interference in marketing and consumption has bred a related resistance to qualitative assessment instead quantitative consumption-driven assessment. Kavanaugh continues:

“You do your thing and I do mine,” a phrase of self-styled cultural liberation, is in no way a challenge to capitalism or the traditions of the Commodity Form. It is merely the moral linguistic currency of the mythical free market...<sup>31</sup>

The results seem logical enough. The practice of nearly infinite consumption options flows over into the freedom from restriction in other areas of life. Values can reflect utility or novelty or both. Relationships, faith, and deep human experiences may be evaluated by their ability to satisfy individual desire. Such desire-based evaluation has no attachment or loyalty to particular values or persons, and as such, endangers participation in notions such as gratitude, sacrifice, or suffering.<sup>32</sup> Consumers are so shaped by the swift fulfillment of desires that commitment becomes logically tied to gain,

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<sup>30</sup> Kavanaugh, *Still Following Christ*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 123.

such that even areas independent of the economy are evaluated with this formula. Rowan Williams observes the effects of the consumer mentality:

And what economic subjects do is commit their capital, limit their options by so doing, take risks for profit or gratification. They make property or assets take on meanings, values, in a pattern of exchange: things become a kind of language. Which is why, as a few metaphysicians have observed, economics is indeed an inescapable part of human business, one of the things we “just do” as human beings, as makers of meanings. Good: but the rhetoric of consumerism (the arts of advertising) necessarily softens the elements of commitment and risk. It is important to suggest that gain may be had with the minimum of loss. All advertising tends to treat the public as children—tends, that is, to suggest that decisions can be made without cost or risk.<sup>33</sup>

## 1.2 Variations in Christianity

Consumerism has had an effect on Christianity as it has been practiced in the Western world, such that it has formed a view of God which is a departure from historical Christianity. In a world which is surrounded by the evaluation by choice, exchange, and acquisition, Christianity too has been evaluated for its ability to offer what consumers view to be valuable. Instead of being concerned with faithfulness to revelation, tradition, or encouraging a consistent anthropology, the practice of faith has yielded to the demands of utility.<sup>34</sup> This has significant ramifications for the pursuit of health and the absolute avoidance of suffering.

As consumers, the faithful in this culture are surrounded with the constant reevaluation of goods, tangible and otherwise, based upon their ability to offer the fulfillment of desires. Religion is often approached like anything else, free of

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<sup>33</sup> Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 23. Quoted in Joel Shuman and Keith Meador, *Heal Thyself: Spirituality, Medicine, and the Distortion of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>34</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 8-9.

independent value, susceptible to individual evaluation—truth being declared by personal preference. Images or versions of God are up for debate, based upon what type of ‘god’ one is in the market for having. The message of Christ in the Gospels is abundantly clear: goods and wealth are not only insufficient ways of experiencing God’s blessings, but they are also a potential obstacle to blessedness.<sup>35</sup> On a more profound level, consumerism has not just created a new challenge for the proper ordering of the things of the world, but of the view of God and the purpose of religion itself. The revealed God has been replaced with a notion of a god who can better deliver the remedy of desires. Harold Bloom calls this a new popular Gnostic Christianity, a Christianity which has maintained the person of Christ, but a false solitary and personal American Christ. This Christ is more resurrected than crucified, and most revered as an autonomous creator of the material world.<sup>36</sup> As such, God is valued as the giver of things, the generous

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<sup>35</sup> Among the many references warning against the accumulation of wealth, several are quite profound and stunningly clear. Matthew 6: 19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be.” Luke 6: 24: “Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.” Mark 10: 23-25: “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God...It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Luke 14: 33: “Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” For a treatment on the interpretation of Jesus’ challenging words in the Sermon on the Mount see Stephen Fowl, “Wealth, Prosperity and Theft” *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 456-57. “Jesus pronounces God’s blessing on a host of unlikely characters, the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecute, and so forth. In these verses Jesus is not directly commanding his followers to become these sorts of people. Rather, he is declaring that just these sorts of people are blessed because they are those whom God values highly, they are the premier citizens of God’s in-breaking kingdom. By indicating those whom God values highly, Jesus is primarily telling us something about God and God’s deepest desires for the way in which the Kingdom of God will be ordered. Christians come to understand these characters as blessed, we come to value them as God does, and we may seek to become like them, only to the extent that we come to understand these blessings as reflecting some of the deepest desires of God’s heart. Apart from understanding God as decisively displayed by the Son, by Immanuel, it will be impossible to understand the blessings pronounced in Sermon on the Mount.”

<sup>36</sup> Harold Bloom, *The American Religion : The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 32. Here Bloom admits that his use of Gnosticism is not consistent with

distributor of blessings. While obviously a distorted image of God and of the call of the Gospels, this notion of God is more easily reconciled to a consumer culture based style of living. Instead of an intimate loving God who is a guide to man's life, God becomes a giver of gifts, generous but fickle. The god of one's own choice or making—a generic power over those things which one does not already choose and control—becomes the recipient of superstitious appeasement. Prayers are no doubt sincere, but are often not directed to the revealed God. When faced with the frustration of not being able to purchase, exchange or create a solution to a difficulty, the choosing of God is an exercise of self-actualization.<sup>37</sup>

As one might expect in a culture where religiosity is at once ubiquitous, malleable, and radically individualized, the deity—or more frequently “faith” or simply “spirituality”—is often invoked as a means to achieve a variety of ends that are determined more by forces of the broader culture than by any one historic religious tradition. It should come as no surprise that, in a culture obsessed with youthfulness, self-empowerment, and individual health, religion is increasingly advocated as a means of achieving or maintaining mental and physical wellness. But such an account of religion, much less of health, has at best an ambiguous relationship to the Christian tradition.<sup>38</sup>

The history of the development of an American identity feeds this version of God and religion particularly well. The concepts of independence and self-reliance have formed a vision of the self which chokes off the notion of authentic relationship with God as an

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ancient Gnosticism, in its disdain for the material, but rather names it such for a new type of special knowledge that separates the individual believer from the demands of the congregation or community, and sets himself up as arbiter of the things of God. “The most Gnostic element in the American Religion is an astonishing reversal of ancient Gnosticism: we worship the Demiurge as God, more often than not under the name of manifest Necessity. As for the alien God of the Gnostics, he has vanished, except for his fragments of sparks scattered among our few elitists of the spirit, or for his shadow in the solitary figure of the American Jesus.”

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 225.

<sup>38</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 9.

interference of freedom, the notion of a real dependence upon God is seen as a crutch or as a sign of weakness.<sup>39</sup>

What has developed as the practice of religion in contemporary culture is theologically non-particular, doctrinally weak, and utilitarian, in the sense that it is primarily ordered toward external goods outside the spiritual realm.<sup>40</sup> The evaluation of these goods is highly individualized, and as such, the practice of faith has become very-experience oriented. Modern culture exalts the value of personal experience to the degree that religion too has become very much associated with having a good experience—a good experience of prayer, a good experience of self-value, and a good experience of God. Of course personal experience is beyond the scope of judgment, such that religions cannot be judged with respect to their content, or doctrine, but by the experience they provide. As such, faith is experienced much like the consumption of other commodities, so that individual private satisfaction becomes the ultimate judge of its value.<sup>41</sup> The confrontation between a tenet of faith of a particular religious tradition with an individual's personal opinion need not cause the believer great angst. For the consumer culture has formed the religiously disposed consumers of today into people who have no

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Paul Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans, 1994), 98. Vitz reflects upon the idea that many American Christians think that the expression “God helps those who help themselves” is found in the scriptures. On the particular type of religion fostered by contemporary culture, he observes: “Instead this expression summarizes America’s confidence in the isolated self, and the origin of this idea is purely secular. It has much to do with political rebellion, seeking independence from any form of external control, and it was pioneered by American political and social figures ranging from Jefferson and Franklin, to Emerson and Whitman, to John Dewey and Carl Rogers—none of whom, come to think of it, was ever especially known for his Christian faith.”

<sup>40</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 38. “Modernity’s egalitarian impulse and its broad suspicion of traditional authority, its recognition of an ascendant scientific reason and the only legitimate arbiter of public (i.e., ‘real’) truth, and its subsequent acceptance of the deep division between the public and private realms all combine to give rise to a general sense that religious belief is a private matter and that it cannot and should not be judged with respect to its content.”

qualms about choosing some religious teachings within a particular tradition while quietly refusing others.<sup>42</sup>

Divergent from traditional religious practice, this trend within modern religion is an expression of the preeminence of the self. Instead of a belief and worldview which shapes the self, the desires of the self begin to shape belief. Traditionally, beliefs, practices and rituals of Christianity have given context to the experiences of the self and demonstrate that personal individual religious experiences exist as an expression of a deeper faith community in relationship with the transcendent God. The newer phenomenon of religion based upon personal experience and separated from doctrine and traditional practice meets the needs of the follower as they are felt, but not always as they truly are before God. Contemporary beliefs have their origin in the individual, much like desires, and therefore the individual is understood to be the author of his own history.<sup>43</sup>

According to this account,

...the essential core of religiosity, the individual religious experience, is merely contained within some or another historically contingent, external form that is finally superfluous to the experience itself. The shape of the contingent form can (and does) change, and this without altering the essential core experience of belief or diminish its utility. And because all particular religious commitments are expressions of a singular core experience, then all particular religious commitments, when properly understood, finally the same, which is to say, they are insignificant.<sup>44</sup>

Hans Frei called religion in modernity the “great reversal.” For instead of having religion create the narrative in which the religious person participates, the religion becomes the apologetic for the way in which one desires to order his life. As such

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 212. This is a concept frequently described as “cafeteria-Christianity.”

<sup>43</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

religion is a means to an end.<sup>45</sup> Those revealed truths which have traditionally formed individual beliefs are instead now evaluated by those beliefs. “In the self-assured world of modernity, people seek to make sense of the scriptures, instead of hoping, with the aid of the scriptures, to make some sense of themselves.”<sup>46</sup>

Obviously these tendencies of religious practice are not a part of the spiritual life of all members of contemporary culture. But they do have an effect on the self-understanding of what it means to be religious. This utilitarian tendency toward religion exists in subtle ways in the discussion of the proper place of religion, particularly as cultural expectations of health continue to rise.

### 1.3 Cultural Influences on Health

As John Kavanaugh and Vincent Miller have explained the effects of modern consumer society in evaluating the escalation of individual needs and wants, Joel Shuman and Keith Meador have described an anthropological shift in religious belief in regard to the acquisition of such needs and wants. They theorize that religious practice has been largely relegated to the means by which a religious person receives that which he comes to believe is a need at the expense of having the religious faith form the person toward the authentic evaluation of those needs.<sup>47</sup> This subtle switch in the order of goods for the religious person can become extremely self-serving. Even when not focused on the acquisition of material goods, it is tempting to approach faith with the desire to present to

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<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and End of “Religion,”* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 148, as quoted by Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Lash, *The Beginning and End of “Religion,”* 148.

<sup>47</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 73.

God the order of needs and wants to be filled, as opposed to allowing God to form the order of those needs and wants within one's spiritual life. The blessing of bodily health is not immune to such a reversal of order in one's approach to being religious. The tremendous advances in medical practice, certainly a blessing for humanity, have also raised the expectations for health and longevity in contemporary society. John Paul notes a "profound crisis of culture" which casts doubt upon any foundation of faith or ethics to evaluate medical practice in the individual pursuit of health.<sup>48</sup>

Deborah Lupton traces many of the historical developments within medicine from a sociological viewpoint, comparing a social history of medicine in Western culture to the greater context of social expectations for health. Her historical examination which includes personal diaries of the members of societies of different times and classes show how an anthropological shift has occurred with the advancement of health care. As the practice of medicine became more effective in treating the ailments of its patients, it came to be perceived as a more objective work than a subjective art. In the midst of its blessed ability to alleviate the pain and misery which were part and parcel of daily life for the vast majority of persons who have ever lived, it took on a greater status in supplying meaning for human life.<sup>49</sup>

Traditional myths and stories about the causes of illness and the superstitions used to both avoid and cure the plagues which humanity faced were replaced with more rational explanations and controlled approaches to treatment. Moving from the assumption of illness as a fact of daily life not so long ago, the assumption of the human

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<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 11.

<sup>49</sup> See Deborah Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies*, (London: Sage Publication, 1994), 79-86.

condition today is that of health and wellness. In this development, the will of God, once experienced as the ultimate arbiter of life and its qualities is replaced with the advances of modern healthcare. The proper rejection of superstitious causes of illness and suffering has had a related far-reaching effect upon man's attitude toward his own mortality.

Medicine's tremendous accomplishments have given it the role of providing the solution to all of man's ills, a replacement, so to speak, of the greater power of God over the whole of the human condition. The medical tendency to quantify and define, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, has lead to a difficulty in its practice with actual patients. The privilege of scientific thinking assumes the ability to overcome uncertainty. Exercising control over illness is naturally desirable, but can never be universally predictable. The control over illness is tremendous in its successful exercise, but all the more discouraging in its futile moments:

Within the body/mind dualism predicated by scientific medicine is a series of essentialist binary oppositions: mind is contrasted with body, spirit with soul, active with passive, form with matter, rational with irrational, reason with emotion, free with determined, objective with subjective, voluntary with involuntary, master with slave, adult with child, male with female, immortal with mortal, right with left, culture with nature, purity with coarseness...[T]he healthy body parallels the mind, but when sickness strikes, the essential nature of the body is exposed. Sickness is a threat to rationality, for it threatens the social life and erodes self-control, and hence the ability of the rational biomedicine to deal with sickness is privileged.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 87.

The laudable effort of increasing health and alleviating suffering among the sick has influenced the way in which those who have access to such medical care view the limits and potentials of human life.<sup>51</sup>

Medicine's successes of explaining and treating illnesses have raised the expectations of personal health and have led to a commodification of what it means to have a healthy life. In a culture where the primary means of engagement is by consumption, then personal health, though not a material good, is also subject to the pursuit of ever increasing desire. Improvements upon the body, its health and beauty, has become an object of a never-fulfilled personal desire. Consumer goods as well as self-perfection through the pursuit of health and beauty combine in contemporary culture to enhance the concept of the self. The many and varied successes in health care establish an expectation of increased perfection, and this perfection is pursued as an ultimate goal, superseding traditional notions of spiritual or moral perfection.<sup>52</sup> Self-worth appears to be more easily and quickly found in the health, personal wellness and psychic security which contemporary consumer culture promises.<sup>53</sup> Closely connected to this commodification of the body's health is the increase of attention to the relentless pursuit

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. The author provides significant details which trace the improvements in medical care over several centuries in Western Societies. Not written with a religious perspective, the purpose is to make the reader aware of the various anthropological results of the success of medicine. Cf. 79-85.

<sup>52</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, describe the confluence of medical technology, consumer wealth and cultural individualism to raise health to the highest goal: "The market promises us the things we want, including happiness and health and freedom from suffering and anguish, and just to the extent we participate in its enticements it continues to form us to expect even more of the same," 11.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York: Abacus Press, 1980), 7.

of beauty. The body itself has become a fetishized commodity which can be attractively marketed and ever-improved.<sup>54</sup>

### 1.3.1 Therapeutic and Narcissistic Culture

Joel Shuman and Keith Meador outline two prevailing tendencies in contemporary consumer culture which involve expectations for health and wellness. They describe the culture as therapeutic and narcissistic, having an overly self-centered point of reference. The loss of traditional and religious morals to provide a framework, or communal history for guiding action combined with an ever more economically driven consumer culture which accelerates the fulfillment of desires has created an individual who now becomes the center of a personal universe. The concept of self-actualization combined with the surrounding successes in consumer goods and attainment of better health and wellness can feed a narcissism which Shuman and Meador describe as bordering on the pathological.<sup>55</sup>

A society that is stripped of teleological means of narrating a history, by religious or other unifying cultural traditions offers its members two unsatisfying options: either

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<sup>54</sup> Lupton, in *Medicine as Culture*, provides an interesting summary of the development of hedonistic and expressive “values” placed upon the attractive body. The increasing ability to perfect the human form has lead to a fetishized focus on physical beauty, whereby medical procedures have arisen which have little to do with health and wellness. The emphasis on youth and beauty feed an ever increasing desire to consume a myriad of products aimed at increasing one’s sexual attractiveness as a gauge of self-worth. In the midst of such attempts at bodily perfection for beauty rather than for health, the image of the aging, weak or disabled body becomes a source of great anxiety, 36-40.

<sup>55</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 78, as they quote Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 70: “As a character disorder, narcissism is a preoccupation with the self which prevents the individual from establishing valid boundaries between self and external worlds. Narcissism relates outside events to the needs and desires of the self, asking only “what this means to me.” Narcissism presumes a constant search for self-identity, but this is a search which remains frustrated, because the restless pursuit of “who I am” is an expression of narcissistic absorption rather than a realisable quest. Narcissism stands in opposition to the commitment required to sustain intimate relationships; commitment places restrictions on the opportunities the individual has to sample the many experiences demanded in the search for self-fulfillment.”

one can actively engage individually in the “obsessive cultivation of the self” or passively take on the struggles of human life as meaningless. To respond actively means using whatever means available for self-fulfillment. These means may be marriage, religion, or other relationships, not as goods themselves, only as a means to the end of personal fulfillment.<sup>56</sup>

The success of material capitalism in consumer culture further feeds narcissistic tendencies because the individual good, approachable by various means, trumps any notion of a common good. The meeting of individual wants in rapid succession spills over into non-materially ordered desires including the desire for health and wellness, or at least the absence of pain and suffering.

As such, sickness, aging, and death, all threats to the isolated self of modernity, become new kinds of enemies against which the considerable weapons of science and technology are aimed. The so-called medicalization of aging questionably extrapolates from the steady increases of life-expectancy since the beginning of the scientific age and assumes that medicine has the power to lengthen life still further and to abolish the horrors of old age. And this new twist on the ancient, nearly universal human dread of death is not simply a product of late modernity but a force that strengthens its grasp.<sup>57</sup>

The medical consequence to the presence of narcissism within contemporary culture is the tendency to increase therapeutic means for self-fulfillment. The ability to care for oneself with an ever greater degree of success has bred a common assumption that the greatest thing at stake in life is maintaining a positive sense of personal well-

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<sup>56</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 79.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., citing Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 208.

being. The assessment of personal feelings and the evaluation of other goods to be manipulated in the pursuit of positive feelings has become a trademark of everyday life.<sup>58</sup>

The presence of therapeutic and narcissistic qualities in society leads to the alienation of individuals and to the lack of community. Self-absorption breeds a distrust of others as well as a loss of the sense of community or group history or narrative.

To live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity. We are fast losing the sense of historical continuity, the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future. It is the waning of the sense of historical time—in particular, the erosion of any strong concern for posterity—that distinguishes the spiritual crisis of the seventies from earlier outbreaks of millenarianism religion, to which it bears a superficial resemblance.<sup>59</sup>

This sense of a loss of belonging and of a history deeper than the individual removes a source of wisdom of the significance of life, often found in cultural and religious narratives which are foundational for understanding true self-worth and identity. This encourages an ever spiraling need to substitute a disordered and inflated concept of the self. In a consumer-based culture, there is no shortage of substitutions which can distract from the lack of a concept of self worth. In fact, there can only be economic expansion when the consumer experiences dissatisfaction with the status quo. Market success depends upon the consumer finding that something necessary is missing from his life.<sup>60</sup> The commodification of life continually reintroduces products and concepts, concepts like health and happiness, (through the solicitation of the means to achieve them) to

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<sup>58</sup> Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 13.

<sup>59</sup> Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 82.

substitute for the lack of contentment which an isolated individual potentially experiences.

### 1.3.2 Superiority of the Tangible

Robert Spitzer calls this cultural substitution the entrenchment in superficiality. Describing contemporary culture's materialistic bent as an exercise in "metaphysical materialism," he observes that society has lost the value of the intangibles. An increase in material well-being causes an inflation in the value of tangibles, but a loss of the sense of the intangible. This loss leads to distorted assumptions concerning daily life that are subtle but real.<sup>61</sup> Gratification from material products and even the lived experience of more abstract realities such as success, health, and wellness are tangible goods of life. But more profound levels of meaning found in realities such as love, creativity, and pursuit of the common good require a delayed gratification and are not immediately tangible. In a society with a plethora of tangible goods, such higher concepts are more likely to be missed. Spitzer elaborates:

A culture that doubts the reality of intangibles will seriously underestimate the values of meaning and purpose in life for [the higher goods] because they are, by nature, more intangible (even though they are more pervasive, enduring and deep.) Hence, this kind of culture is likely to overlook love and the common good as possible meanings of life. This culture is more likely to see career accomplishment and an excellent golf game as indicative of "the good life." As people get older, their capacity for [the higher goods] increases quite markedly, but, unfortunately, their capacity for [the lower goods] decreases. For example, as a grandmother's capacity to love her grandchildren and to forgive her friends for their past offenses increases, her ambulatory ability and capacity for career advancement decrease. This is viewed as disastrous in a culture that has lost the reality of intangibles, because it seems like the elderly person is losing her real value while getting nothing in return....it should come to

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Spitzer, *Healing the Culture: A Commonsense Philosophy of Happiness, Freedom and the Life Issues*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 18-21.

no surprise if qualities like compassion, patience, forgiveness, altruism, commitment, community, and common cause should be severely undervalued. If we have erased from our minds the value of the practitioners of these qualities, we will do the same to the qualities themselves.<sup>62</sup>

Spitzer's evaluation points out what intangible qualities are missed when a sense of community and history are lost in the pursuit of self-fulfillment. Personal health in a therapeutic and narcissistic culture becomes the highest tangible goal. And the commodification of goods creates a distance between the consumer and the producer of goods such that the consumer becomes so far removed from the circumstances surrounding the creation of goods, that no moral relationship is possible. The pursuit of health then begins to also follow the pursuit of other goods, in that as long as it meets the needs of the consumer, its moral implications or relation to others is insignificant.<sup>63</sup>

When the concepts of health and wellness are addressed as goods to be sought and become commodified, they are often difficult to properly order with respect to other goods. They obviously exist at a deeper level than material goods. Yet they are tangible in many respects and do not represent the highest of goods according to traditional Christian theology. Shuman and Meador sum up the balance sought by the Christian in the ordering of the tangible goods of health with other transcendent goods:

Thus it is wrong neither to long nor strive for health, so long as both our longing and our striving are constrained by our being creatures who acknowledge that our lives are the good gifts of a gracious God who call us to be his friends...If some of our longings are inappropriate and some are persistent reminders that our perfection is to be attained only in the eschaton and some are possibly to be attained here and now, the we

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>63</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 83-4. "Satisfaction may be based on their [items] cost, performance, or appearance but is rarely based on their having been produced in a particular way or by particular persons or communities to whom we feel morally bound."

must—if we wish to remain faithful—be able to discriminate among our desires and make judgments about the proper means to satisfy them.<sup>64</sup>

#### 1.4 The Relationship between Medicine and Religion

The Christian tradition has always been concerned with the care of the sick and has played a tremendous role in shaping health care and promoting health and wellness in society. Illness is seen as a natural evil, and Christianity, as well as other religions, seeks to provide guidance in the balance of accepting the goodness and limitations of this world and longing for something more.

In contemporary consumer society, there has been a tendency to change the relationship between medicine and religion, much to the detriment of authentic religious practice. The first change is to diminish the role of religion's validity in matters of health, replacing its knowledge with medical knowledge alone. The second is to bring religion under the goals promised by medicine, a phenomenon called *rapprochement*, whereby religious practice is conceived together with medical treatment as a means to achieving better health.<sup>65</sup>

##### 1.4.1 Loss of Significance of Religion

The theologian and sociologist John Milbank observes that theology has often conceded its place as a real academic discipline and source of knowledge in the midst of the rationally driven quest for knowledge that has been building since the privatization and compartmentalization of the sacred, which he says began in late-medieval

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, "The New *Rapprochement* between Medicine and Religion," 22-24.

nominalism and in the Protestant reformation.<sup>66</sup> He argues that theology has been stripped of its legitimate voice in society, due in part to its concessions to the strengths of both scientific and humanist explanations of man and his surroundings. The threat of the sciences, including the social sciences has led to the accusation that religious knowledge is little more than a created narrative or “sacred canopy” under which social conventions have been created by means of symbolic interactions between deities and humanity.<sup>67</sup> Science looks at religion with suspicion, perhaps with outright condemnation as superstitious and as a patriarchal barricade to freedom, or perhaps in a patronizing tone which assumes itself to be the sociological observation of that which lives outside its rational domain, which Milbank calls “policing the sublime.” He describes the difference between a Christian understanding of history and a modern scientifically driven “historical” attitude as the order in which transcendent truths pass to successive generations. The modern attitude, containing as he calls it an all-consuming passion to arrive at what “really happened,” can see no more than a concurrence of human wills which manifests transcendent truths.<sup>68</sup> Obviously Christianity insists upon a more vertical revelation of specific narratives in the pursuit of truth.

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<sup>66</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1. “The pathos of modern theology is its false humility. For theology, this must be a fatal disease, because once theology surrenders its claim to be a meta-discourse, it cannot any longer articulate the word of the creator God, but is bound to turn into the oracular voice of some finite idol, such as historical scholarship, humanist psychology, or transcendental philosophy. If theology no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology: for the necessity of an ultimate organizing logic cannot be wished away. A theology ‘positioned’ by secular reason suffers two characteristic forms of confinement. Either it idolatrously connects knowledge of God with some particular immanent field of knowledge—‘ultimate’ cosmological causes, or ‘ultimate’ psychological and subjective needs. Or else it is confined to intimations of a sublimity beyond representation, so functioning to confirm negatively the questionable idea of an autonomous secular realm, completely transparent to rational understanding.”

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 139.

Curiously enough, theologians appear specifically eager to affirm both the 'scientific' and the 'humanist' discourses in modernity, although one can, perhaps, suggest reasons for this. First, the faith of humanism has become a substitute for a transcendent faith now only half-subscribed to. Second, there is a perceived need to discover precisely how to fulfill Christian precepts about charity and freedom in contemporary society in an uncontroversial manner, involving cooperation with the majority of non-Christian fellow citizens. Purportedly, scientific diagnoses and recommendations fulfill precisely this role.<sup>69</sup>

Milbank's explanation of the conflicting avenues for comprehending transcendent truths to guide human action demonstrates how religion and science are often at odds, particularly when it comes to deciphering the meaning of extreme human situations.<sup>70</sup> In such situations, the legitimate offerings of science have quieted the interjection of traditional faith-based narratives. Medicine has taken up ever increasing moral and social roles once held by religious traditions due to a shift in the perceived importance and ability to care for the body versus the more distant (or questionable) care of the soul.<sup>71</sup>

The notion that the scientific voice has replaced the religious voice in both the physical and spiritual realms is the theme of Philip Rieff's investigation on the role of modern science and therapy on faith. Focusing on the influence of Freud, he describes the growth of the hostility between therapy and religion. Freud refused to acknowledge the validity religious quests, claiming them to be a distraction to the goal of managing the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 140. "Religions *may* conceal historical contingency and the role of human invention, but just as often this is true of modern secular systems of thought, which are unable to admit their own choice of values with respect to the conjunction of an empty freedom with an instrumentalist reason. Such an admission requires on the part of secular thought a nihilist courage, whereas, it is much *easier* for religious societies to own up to the contingency and singularity of their fundamentalist choices, for religious themselves acknowledge that these are not fully explicable, but wrapped up in mystery and the requirements of 'faith'. Just at the point of their greatest obscurity, where they most seem to invite a scientific suspicion, religions are more realistic about the inexplicable character of cultural existence than science normally dares to be," (emphasis in original).

<sup>71</sup> Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 87, as quoted in Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 7.

miseries of human life. In fact, the goal of his therapy was to free mankind from the limits imposed by the hostilities of cultural and religious narratives.<sup>72</sup>

However, Rieff argues that a traditional culture which was accustomed to the presence of religious narratives was impoverished by the removal of credibility from traditional sources of wisdom. The growing acceptance of Freud's vision of analytical therapeutic assessment left a cultural void. That void was filled with a therapy that itself would become more "religious," in the sense that it sought to fill those human longings outside the realm of science. Borrowing the language of faith, modern therapy speaks in self-referential knowledge, providing narratives that are ordered to the satisfaction of needs without an ordering or critiquing of those needs. Rieff declares that this replacement of religion with "science" is a "cultural revolution fought to no other purpose than greater amplitude and richness of living itself."<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps the replacement of religion with analytical narratives was too much for a culture that prides itself on being religious to accept. An outright refusal of the validity of religious traditions would be an uncomfortable situation for members of a religious culture, that is, to choose *either* the promises of medicine and therapy *or* the wisdom and guidance of religious traditions. The difficulty is found in the proper ordering of the relationship between the goals of medicine and the goals of religion, a relationship that at best could be considered complementary (calling to mind the tremendous tradition of Catholic health care in this country founded by religious orders under the patronage of Christ the great physician) and at worst as contradictory situations of ethical dilemmas.

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<sup>72</sup> Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, 30-31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

Shuman and Meador note a slightly more subtle trend in the relationship between religion and medicine, that of rapprochement, whereby religion has lost its proper goal of subjecting all things toward a spiritual end, even seeing human life as a physical means to a greater reality, and has instead been used as a means to achieving the ultimate good as deemed by medical practice, the pursuit of health.

#### 1.4.2 Religion as Means for Health

Recent trends in medicine have begun to acknowledge a connection between health and religious faith. No longer dismissed as being anti-scientific, the practice of religion is becoming more and more lauded in the medical profession for the effects that it has on personal health. While there are some detractors on the health benefits of being religious, Shuman and Meador list considerable evidence that the medical community is increasingly aware of the connection.<sup>74</sup>

This instrumental side of religion, a utilitarian vision of God, is consistent with the therapeutic and narcissistic tendencies of contemporary consumer culture. The commodification of desire featuring unrestricted access to products and their rapid consumption has led to a competition for those scarce goods, leading to isolation from and suspicion of fellow consumers. As regards health, the culture that has distracted people away from the traditional goals of living and dying well together by promising the fulfillment of every other material desire, has left its members with the pursuit of

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<sup>74</sup> Shuman and Meador cite highlights of several hundred studies that take into account the differences in individual faith, regular worship, and personal attitudes toward God. Taking into account various denominations and socio-economic factors, large studies, which have been fairly widely publicized have demonstrated a correlation between those who are actively religious and those who are not. They mention several areas where religious belief, particularly of a more conservative nature brings positive physical results such as lower blood pressure, stronger immune system, quicker recovery time from illness and shorter hospital stays, as well as more dramatic suggestions of higher chances of surviving cancer and major surgery. See *Heal Thyself*, 23-24.

satisfaction in life instead of finding meaning in it. Medicine offers the means of acquiring the things that consumers have been taught to want. Religion, if not dismissed as competition for the more immediate promises of physical health, is now being legitimized as a means to acquire it.<sup>75</sup>

The possible connection between religious practice and the benefits of physical health is an interesting observation “about how an entire, complex way of life shared by a community of persons influences their health.”<sup>76</sup> The tremendously complex realm of understanding God’s interaction with and response to human prayer and lifestyles is not the focus of this dissertation. Instead, what is worth noting is that this contemporary rapprochement seeks to reverse the order of the traditional relationship between religion and medicine. This is done through the suggestion that persons who wish to relieve themselves from the burdens of sickness and suffering should for that reason adopt a religious faith for their health or recovery. Ironically, those who advocate a more religious view of medicine, on the grounds of its potential payoffs, are often those who would immediately renounce any type of religious proselytism within the empirical world of scientific medicine.<sup>77</sup>

The subtle difference must be noted between taking into account the influence of one’s religion on one’s health and the taking up of religion as a therapeutic endeavor.<sup>78</sup>

Of the latter, Shuman and Meador observe:

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> R.P. Sloan et al., Editorial in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 342(25), 2000, 1913-1916 cited in Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 26-27.

Religion so conceived is almost purely therapeutic, not in the sense that its purpose is the cure of the soul or the enabling of genuine flourishing—in which cases, “‘blessedness’ is always to be defined by the moral will of the Lord”—but in the sense of what it can provide with respect to the preexisting desires of the religionist. The therapeutic ethos is pervasive in American religion, and especially in its ostensibly Christian manifestations. “In taking the therapeutic option,” remarks Gary Dorien, “modern Christianity builds upon a considerable American tradition of building the world out of the self.”<sup>79</sup>

Similar to Philip Rieff’s observation that the therapeutic tendencies of contemporary society mimic religious needs, so the rapprochement of religion and medicine is a debasement of authentic religion. It represents a reversal in the ordering of desires.

The reversal is scarcely an innocent one. The religion of the new rapprochement requires the deity of experiential, subjective religion, a deity that fits neatly into in [sic] the modern world, a world that continues to embrace progress as its only real hope. Until recently, that hope was borne almost solely by science and its applications in technology—medical technology in particular. Medicine has—sometimes enthusiastically, sometimes grudgingly, sometimes kicking and screaming in protest—been made the foundation of the modern hope, a hope that subtly suggests that perhaps sickness, pain, and death are not inevitable after all. Now “religion” has been made an ally of medicine in supporting that hope.<sup>80</sup>

Wendell Berry observes that the promises of medicine have overtaken the promises of religion, in terms of what it offers to the consumer. Sickness and death are looked upon as curable, as abnormalities, as obstacles to be overcome.<sup>81</sup> While attention to health is a natural good, the rapprochement of religion and medicine furthers the lack of distinction between supernatural and physical goods. In fact, religion loses any bearing at all in its role in the ordering of goods.

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<sup>79</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 42-43, quoting Robert Jensen, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, *The Works of God*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 318, and Gary Dorien, *Soul in Society: The Making and Remaking of Social Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 339, respectively.

<sup>80</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 43.

<sup>81</sup> Wendell Berry, *Another Turn of the Crank*, (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint Press, 1995), 88.

In fact, it becomes questionable whether from the perspective of such a religion it even makes sense to speak any longer of idolatry. Religion cannot tell me whether I ought to want the things I want, or in what order I should want them, or whether there are things I should not do to attain them; it can only serve as a means to help me get them.<sup>82</sup>

The rapprochement of religion and medicine is a result of the complex influences of contemporary consumer culture. Shuman and Meador call it “the product and servant of the modern hope in unlimited progress and at the same time a corruption of the Christian eschatological promise.”<sup>83</sup> Even if that judgment is too severe, it cannot be ignored that this reshaping of the voice and purpose of religion for the sake of physical benefits breaks down in the evaluation of the mystery of human suffering. The reality of suffering cannot be ignored. But for Christians, the example of suffering cannot be excluded from the vision of salvation. Shuman and Meador sum up this idea:

The most significant *theological* question about the interrelationship of religion and health is not simply whether being more religious will result in better health but whether the religion in question, that is, the religion that ostensibly improves the health of some, teaches its adherents the sometimes difficult truth about God and God’s creation and helps them live well in and as part of that creation—whether they are sick or well. And this is not an empirical but a theological question. Theology is concerned with discovering and clarifying what constitutes the boundaries of an ultimately Good human life, while medicine is concerned to facilitate the achievement of some of the penultimate goods necessary to achieve such a life.<sup>84</sup>

The tremendous blessings of economic success and medical advancement have ironically left an inability to discriminate between wants and make proper judgments regarding their fulfillment. Christianity’s regulative purpose requires that its followers receive proper reference for the ordering of goods, that hearts be set on God and not something

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<sup>82</sup> Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 42.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

that is mistakenly substituted for him.<sup>85</sup> Faced with much medical progress, Christianity requires the believer to ponder the proper ordering of God's blessings and to ask: "If medicine someday could grant immortality...you, of course, still would be religious, but what about your neighbor?"<sup>86</sup>

Contemporary forms of religious practice represent in their attempt at validation (among the other more accepted forms of cultural influence) a disordered instrumentation of worldly means. Shuman and Meador's description of the variations on Christianity demonstrate the "nuancing" of the gospel to a culture which so highly values independence through the economic model of consumerism. Thus the goals of Christianity and its norms for guidance can be either subtly changed or altogether ignored. Often enough, there is no visible difficulty with the blending of the goals of medicine and religion when all goes well and healing is attained. But the disordering of the goals of religion and medicine greatly affects the ways in which a person comes to deal with the inevitable reality of human suffering.<sup>87</sup>

Pope John Paul observed how a culture which is occupied with superficial gratification, driven by consumerism, can damage an individual's physical and spiritual well-being.

A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption. It is here that the phenomenon of consumerism arises. In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones. If, on the contrary, a direct appeal is made to his

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<sup>85</sup> Lash, *The Beginning and the End of "Religion,"* 89.

<sup>86</sup> Bloom, *The American Religion,* 257.

<sup>87</sup> Gustafson, *Ethics,* 18-20.

instincts—while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free—then consumer attitudes and life-styles can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health. Of itself, an economic system does not possess criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from new artificial needs which hinder the formation of mature personality.<sup>88</sup>

It is not only the influence of contemporary culture which makes understanding the mystery of suffering more difficult, it is the combination of that reality with the influence which such culture has had on the place of religion which complicates the development of an adequate anthropological base with which to address it.

The above observations demonstrate a lack within contemporary culture, even when “open” to the teachings of Christianity, to adequately engage in finding meaning in the experience of suffering. The place of religion, when relegated to serving intermediate ends, is lost. Unfortunately, the procedures and goals of modern medicine fail to adequately deal with the issue of suffering and are without the vocabulary with which to address it. It is those procedures and goals of scientific knowledge manifested in the practice of medicine that will now be discussed.

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<sup>88</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, no. 36, p. 71.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ENDS AND MEANS OF MEDICINE

While the alleviation of suffering through medical advances has certainly advanced the quality of life and health in the world to a great degree, this advancement also affects a change on a level beyond that which is merely physical. Pope John Paul noted both the potential and actual use of scientific knowledge which often hinder rather than assist man's life.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will demonstrate how technological advances in medicine have had an influence on the very meaning of the value of human life and in the hierarchy of goods to be obtained in one's life. The experimental sciences of the modern era probe not only the observable natural world, seeking to understand and manipulate it for humanity's benefit, but also realign the values within that life which they intend to aid. The advancement of the sciences has ushered in a change in the relationship between man and the external forces he encounters, including the notion of God as one of those forces. Francis Bacon (d. 1626) heralded for ushering in the philosophy of modern science, describes the intended gains of scientific advances:

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, no. 39, p. 63. "Human ingenuity seems to be directed more towards limiting, suppressing or destroying the sources of life—including recourse to abortion, which unfortunately is so widespread in the world—than towards defending and opening up the possibilities of life. The Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* denounced systematic anti-childbearing campaigns which, on the basis of a distorted view of the demographic problem and in a climate of 'absolute lack of respect for the freedom of choice of the parties involved', often subject them 'to intolerable pressures...in order to force them to submit to this new form of oppression.' These policies are extending their field of action by the use of new technologies, to the point of poisoning the lives of millions of defenseless human beings, as if in a new form of 'chemical warfare.'"

We want to have all things as suits our fatuity, not as fits the Divine Wisdom, not as they are found in nature. We impose the seal of our image on the creatures and works of God, we do not diligently seek to discover the seal of God on things.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, René Descartes offers the optimism of a new rational mastery over what had previously been nature's mastery over man.<sup>3</sup> Scientific thought offers the possibility of replacing myths and superstitions regarding the imperfections of man's nature with the tools to improve upon and master nature.<sup>4</sup> This chapter will examine both the ends and the means of contemporary medicine and discover the challenges they bring in the midst of their great success, illustrating an anthropological need for contextualizing the reality of suffering.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 213 citing B. Farrington's quote of Bacon, *Francis Bacon*, New York: Lawrence and Wishart, 1962), 148-49.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 149.

<sup>4</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Donald A. Cress, trans., (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), VI, p. 33. "For these general notions [in physics] show me that it is possible to arrive at knowledge that is very useful in life and that in place of the speculative philosophy taught in the schools, one can find a practical one, by which, knowing the force and actions of fire, water, air, stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, just as we understand the various skills of our craftsmen, we could, in the same way, use these objects for all the purposes for which they are appropriate, and thus make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature. This is desirable not only for the invention of an infinity of devices that would enable us to enjoy without pain the fruits of the earth and all the goods one finds in it, but also principally for the maintenance of health, which unquestionably is the first good and the foundation of all the other goods in this life; for even the mind depends so greatly upon the temperament and on the disposition of the organs of the body that, were it possible to find some means to make men generally more wise and competent than they have been up until now, I believe that one should look to medicine to find this means. It is true that the medicine currently practiced contains little of such usefulness; but without trying to ridicule it, I am sure that there is no one, not even among those in the medical profession who would not admit that everything we know is almost nothing in comparison to what remains to be known, and that we might rid ourselves of an infinity of maladies, both of body and mind, and even perhaps also the enfeeblement brought on by old age, were one to have a sufficient knowledge of their causes and of all the remedies that nature has provided for us."

## 2.1 Historical Framework of the Ends of Modern Medicine

The positive aspects of the easing suffering as a result of medical advances cannot be questioned. However, such advances have had more than a physical effect on human life, for they have not only added a value, namely better health, to human life, they have also established a claim in the evaluation of what constitutes a “good life.”<sup>5</sup> Such advances have led to a questioning of the world order regarding the relationship between man and nature. As Charles Taylor explains, the advancement of the sciences to address human needs created a turn away from the traditional understanding of God’s role in human life. To a Christian in the era of the Enlightenment, the instrument of science became a way in which the technician participated in God’s arena. First, in wonder and gratitude, man furthers the cause of goodness found in creation. Taylor calls this the stepping away from a mysterious view of God’s relation with the world toward a more rationalized Christianity. But in the appearance of control over what had been a mystery, man’s reason is disengaged from the prior acknowledgment of a plan of God’s will in creation. A sense of “self-responsible autonomy” replaces teleology.<sup>6</sup> Noting Descartes’ preference for practical over theoretical knowledge, technological advancement is not simply an aid to nature, but an attempt at the manipulation and control of it.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Marsha Fowler, “Suffering,” in *Dignity and Dying: A Christian Appraisal*, eds. John Kilner, et. al., (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press, 1996), 45-46. She provides a description of various scenarios whereby procedure, i.e., medical treatments, are increasingly perceived by the attention they receive, as having more importance than the dignity of the patient. “The depiction of medical technology changed from simple to dark and ominous if not evil, and from recessive to dominant,” citation at 46.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 244-245.

<sup>7</sup> See citation no. 4 above.

Acknowledging the goodness of medical advancement, the Enlightenment bears the seeds of a quest for a science which is unconstrained from any overreaching principles to guide its course.<sup>8</sup> While science and medicine seek the admirable goal of improving the human condition, they demonstrate the inability to establish principles for their own governance.<sup>9</sup> The loss of the mystery of human nature and the appearance of being able to manipulate it breeds a rearrangement of the hierarchy of creation.<sup>10</sup> With the growing estimation of the power of the scientist, technician, and doctor; the temptation exists for the lessening importance for a greater good, or a place of God or related narrative tradition that seeks to guide what man can now accomplish. With the ability to affect the health of man, medicine is advancing toward the top of the hierarchy of goods and replaced a notion of human life at the service of any higher goods.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Freund and Meredith McGuire, *Health, Illness and the Social Body: A Critical Sociology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 131-133.

<sup>9</sup> Leon Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs*, (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 250. "Rejecting from the outset, all explanations in terms of ends or purposes, and also notions of the causal status and dignity of form, modern science began on its mechanistic and materialistic journey—and, one must all, with astonishing success. Indeed, its very successes in explaining how nature works and in thereby providing power to alter her workings have certainly justified—at least until now—sciences' antiteleological bent."

<sup>10</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 6. He sums up the discrepancy between the goals of the Enlightenment and the results. Speaking about the disintegration of moral philosophy, his argument is pertinent to the application of this knowledge for an understanding of the role of medical science's addressing of the limits of human nature. "It was a central aspiration of the Enlightenment, an aspiration the formation of which was itself a great achievement, to provide for debate in the public realm standards and methods of rational justification by which alternative courses of action in every sphere of life could be adjudged just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlightened. So, it was hoped, reason would displace authority and tradition. Rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers too to be the mere accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places. And that rational justification could be nothing other than what the thinkers of the Enlightenment had said that is was came to be accepted, at least by the vast majority of educated people, in post-Enlightenment cultural and social orders. Yet both the thinkers of the Enlightenment and their successors proved unable to agree as to what precisely those principles were which would be found undeniable by all rational persons."

<sup>11</sup> Gerald McKenny, "Bioethics, the Body and the Legacy of Bacon," in *On Moral Medicine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 311. See also

### 2.1.1 Rational Thought and the Body

In Book III of the *Republic*, Plato questions the role of medicine in society, arguing that it ought to assist and not hinder the higher pursuits, such as moral projects.<sup>12</sup> The acknowledgement of such higher pursuits provides a framework within which the advancement of medicine would continue to serve the goods of human life. Instead one sees today that when medical possibilities present moral quandaries, fewer objections inhibit their application.<sup>13</sup>

Francis Bacon's comment above prefigures the power unleashed in the Enlightenment, which furthered scientific thinking about the world and has made incalculable positive contributions to human life.<sup>14</sup> Bacon and René Descartes, icons of the Enlightenment and commonly referred to as fathers of scientific thought possessed a common objective for the development of this type of knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Descartes'

*Discourse on Method* states that the purpose of science is not mere abstract knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> Plato as quoted by McKenny in "Bioethics," 308.

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), x.

<sup>14</sup> A classic account of Francis Bacon's role in ushering in modern scientific thought can be found in Ferdinand Van Steenberghen's *Epistemology*, New York: Joseph Wagner, 1949, 62-65. "The progress made in scientific research gradually discredited the ancient physics, and caused a certain scepticism regarding the objective value of sensation. This progress was especially effective in sharpening men's curiosity to know the mysteries of nature, and in reinforcing the empiricist and positivist trends in the thirteenth century....The same currents of ideas continued in the sixteenth century. The scientific movement reached its high tide (Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo): scepticism appeared in the work of Montaigne, and in that of Charron; empiricism received its magna carta from Francis Bacon, and continues in various forms throughout all the modern period. We meet it again in the materialist nominalism of Hobbes, in the subtler nominalism of Locke, in the empiricist idealism of Berkeley, in the phenomenism of Hume. English philosophy in the eighteenth century showed sceptical trends which were only the natural consequences of empiricism," citation on 65.

<sup>15</sup> It is outside the scope of this dissertation to provide a complete account for the modern turn from a metaphysical to an empirical philosophy. Certainly other thinkers beyond Bacon and Descartes advanced the importance of the scientific method, particularly a mathematical and mechanical explanation of the cosmos and human nature. Most notably Isaac Newton, who carried on the work of Galileo and Descartes by giving a mechanical interpretation to the whole of the material cosmos, ushered in a new way of thinking about the world. For a synopsis of his impact, see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 5, *Hobbes to Hume*, (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1961), 143-156, especially 154-56.

nor frivolous invention, but is ordered principally toward the primary good of advancing health, a foundational good from which all other scientific aims take their place.<sup>16</sup>

Modern medicine is one of the most tangible manifestation of the gains of science. While science has granted many conveniences to modern daily life, perhaps none is more widely appreciated as the advances of health. It is medicine that makes the uses of science most relevant to the experiences of life and gives science the opportunity to contribute to the reason and thought process of man.<sup>17</sup>

Descartes plays a large part in the revolution within philosophy which demands rational vindication of philosophical principles.<sup>18</sup> With the raising of human reason to the level of the only absolute, and transferring mathematical criteria into philosophical reasoning, metaphysical and religious discourse are largely unable to meet the new “clear and distinct” demands of philosophical security.<sup>19</sup> Despite Descartes’ attempt to validate the pillars of faith, philosophy suffered a rupture with the lauding of quantitative over

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<sup>16</sup> Yuval Levin, “The Moral Challenge of Modern Science,” *The New Atlantis* 14, (Fall 2006), 34.

<sup>17</sup> A. E. Clark-Kennedy, *The Art of Medicine in Relation to the Progress of Thought: A Lecture in the History of Science Course in the University of Cambridge*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1945), 6, cited by Joel James Shuman, *The Body of Compassion: Ethics, Medicine and the Church*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Philosophical trends set in motion by Descartes would take a more formal shape in the work of the empiricists. David Hume’s desire to explain the principles of human nature upon a new foundation of the sciences helped solidify an empirical turn begun by Descartes. See Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), xx, as cited by Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. V, 261.

<sup>19</sup> Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, especially books II-III. A good summary is provided by Raymond Dennehy, “The Elimination of God,” in *Creative Love: The Ethics of Human Reproduction*, John F. Boyle, ed., (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1989), 32-33: “The rationalist construal of reason had such disastrous consequences for religion because it has such disastrous consequences for human reason itself. By making the clear and distinct the standards of knowledge, Descartes inadvertently ruptured concept and reality. Insofar as these are mathematical criteria, they necessarily turned the realities expressed by the concept into mathematical entities...these entities represent the abstraction of everything but quantity from the material world. Descartes’ project also left reason in an ambiguous state, for the sign of its knowledge, the concept, boasted an abstractness, universality, and necessity that shattered in the teeth of the material world, which is concrete, particular and contingent.”

qualitative reasoning. Descartes' thought led to a philosophical dualism which separated the dimensions of man into the body and the soul, in which they are related in a parallel way, but do not form a unified whole. That which is accessible to observation in man, and thus lending itself to cognitive analysis, takes precedence and places the body at the service of consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

While its means are certainly scientific, the results of medicine's practice are more far-reaching. Joel Shuman traces the growth of medical practice through the writings of James Browder, who characterizes modern medicine as being driven by two *a priori* philosophies, positivism and progressivism. These epistemological foundations insist that the way in which people attain knowledge and organize life by use of such knowledge evolves through various stages, from theological to metaphysical and finally to scientific classification, the latter being the only "trustworthy" inquiry. This scientific knowledge is the only type which can classify and order all phenomena through objective means, thus demonstrating invariable natural laws.<sup>21</sup> Science views man as having the capacity not just to understand these invariable natural laws, but to have the ability to use them to control the physical world. Such control would invariably lead to overcoming the limits of human life by eliminating threats to health and would progress to a type of utopia.<sup>22</sup> Instrumental scientific reasoning manifested in medical success then becomes,

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<sup>20</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism" in *Person and Community*, 169-70.

<sup>21</sup> For an explanation of the growth in the trust of empiricism as an extension from Descartes' work, see Reginald F. O'Neill, *Theories of Knowledge*, (New York: Irvington, 1980), 181-195.

<sup>22</sup> James Browder, *Elected Suffering: Toward a Theology for Medicine*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 1991), 30-33, as cited by Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 11-12.

“the single acceptable means of knowing and narrating the truth about the human body.”<sup>23</sup> Shuman observes:

Medicine has become more socially important than religion precisely to the extent that medicine has permitted itself to become associated with a particular kind of scientific reasoning—a kind of reasoning typically placed over against those types of enquiry, religious and otherwise, that are dismissed in contemporary culture as matters of freely chosen private beliefs, at best, or as primitive superstitions at worst.<sup>24</sup>

Charles Taylor describes the philosophical underpinnings of the Enlightenment’s development of scientific thinking. Through an evaluation of the modern moral understanding of the self, he examines the Enlightenment’s subtle effects on the evaluation and affirmation of ordinary life. As opposed to focusing on the reality of the hierarchy within social life—the aristocratic, the warrior, the nobility, or the scholarly alone—a transition of focus took place which saw life itself as the locus of goodness. “The full human life is now defined in terms of labor and production, on the one hand, and marriage and family life on the other. At the same time, the previous ‘higher’ activities come under vigorous criticism.”<sup>25</sup>

Metaphysical and theoretical contemplation of the human nature come under suspicion as escapes from the real tangible value of scientific discovery. What Taylor refers to as “Protestant Christianity” encourages the practical work of advancing the goodness of daily life. Since God alone is the giver of salvation, and human actions are fruitless in attaining it, moral and religious perfection are less fruitful than attending to the needs of one’s neighbors. Francis Bacon’s achievements represent a “transvaluation”

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<sup>23</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 213.

of values, in which the previously stigmatized labor supplants the contemplation of the philosopher. The affirmation of ordinary life becomes the new moral perfection, and those means by which daily life is rendered more satisfactory are deemed to be the worldly manifestation of God's will. Knowledge which bettered the human condition in a practical way became more revered than the metaphysical framework by which such human limitations are addressed.<sup>26</sup>

The growth of a so-called Protestant moral order by which man was entrusted with doing more and counting less upon divine providence was fueled by the nominalist critique of the philosophical certainty of God's continuing role in creation. The nominalism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries placed doubt on the necessity of the relationship between God's initial creation and his continuing governance of the order of the world.<sup>27</sup> The understanding of the world as a self-sufficient creation, lessening the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. See also Gerald McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition: Bioethics, Technology, and Body*, (Albany NY, State University of New York Press, 1997), 18. He makes the scientific and religious connection very well. "The roots of modern morality are in Protestant Christianity. But as [Charles] Taylor emphasizes, radical Enlightenment thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham were able to understand their secular agenda as a superior way of affirming ordinary life and expressing benevolence. According to them, the affirmation of ordinary life meant being true to the demands of ordinary human nature and so identifying good with pleasure and evil with pain. The Protestant commitment to meeting the needs of the neighbor now became a set of obligations to prevent and remove the causes of pain and to maximize the quantity of pleasure. As Taylor argues, this is made it possible for the first time to put the relief of suffering (and the avoidance of cruelty) at the center of the social agenda. The emphasis on the relief of suffering in turn resulted in a new standard for all remaining conceptions of religious, moral, and legal order: Do they lessen the amount of suffering in the world or contribute to it? From now on all these conceptions of order would have to present their credentials for relieving suffering to gain admission to the moral realm, credentials few such conceptions could produce."

<sup>27</sup> Julian Marias, *History of Philosophy*, trans. Stanley Appelbaum and Clarence Strowbridge, (New York: Dover Publication, 1967), 132, gives a succinct account of the philosophical implication of nominalism. "But a new question arises: the relationship of God to the world which has been created. The world is not sufficient into itself for its existence, it does not have sufficient reason for being. It is maintained in its existence by God so that it does not lapse into nothingness. Thus, aside from the Creation, there is need for preservation. God's action upon the world is constant; He must keep on causing it to exist at each moment. This is tantamount to a continuing creation. Thus, the world always has need of God and is constitutionally needy and insufficient. The early Scholastics believed it was so. The ontological basis of the world is

need for God's constant interaction, was a dominant contribution of nominalism during the historical bridge between medieval and modern thought.

Thus, one can speak of a replacement of the role of God with the role of the scientist or physician. This is not viewed as, nor originally intended to be an assault on God or upon religion, but rather as a moral imperative: to use the talents and knowledge willed by God for the betterment of humanity. Science's shift from the contemplation of human nature to the desire to control and improve upon it stems from a particular Protestant view of Christian stewardship of creation. Thus Francis Bacon and his successors saw a duty to improve upon a passive science toward an active application of scientific knowledge.

They God's work in laboring to complete and preserve the things of creation, and first of all themselves. We might say that where Protestant theology had made the circumspect and sober use of the things which surround us to the ends of our preservation and the glory of God, the spiritually correct way to be in the world, Bacon develops a view of the physical universe which makes this essential to the *epistemically* correct way as well. Science and circumspect, productive use are intrinsically connected, both because use is the proper test of science and because it requires science to be responsibly carried out. Our aim must be to use things in the way God intended, and this has yet to be (re)discovered in our fallen condition. Scientific probing is part of the pious man's efforts to use things according to God's purposes.<sup>28</sup>

Baconian science brings together the vocation of stewardship with the drive to improve upon what God had created—itsself a way of serving God. His is the motivation

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found in God, not only at the origin of the world, but also at the present time, at all times. But in the nominalism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this conviction wavers. The nominalists think that continuing creation is not necessary, that the world does not need to be maintained. The world is still understood to be an *ens ab alio* which is not self-sufficient and which has received its existence at the hands of the Creator, but the nominalists believe that the being which God gave the world when He created it is sufficient for its subsistence.”

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 231-32, (emphasis in original).

to move from simple scientific observation to scientific improvement. Whatever is lacking in the human condition is not proscribed as a lack in God's providence, but rather a call to act in assisting it as God would desire. In later centuries this world view became known as a deist view of the world.

Confidence in a providential order therefore gave way to a growing emphasis on the need to extract the preservation and enhancement of human life from an indifferent nature by means of technological labor. This has implications for the approach to suffering. While the loss of ideas of providence or a meaningful cosmic order removes the incentive to find any religious or cosmic meaning for suffering, the mechanization of nature means that suffering from natural causes is no longer an inevitable feature of the world, but is, to the extent that human beings are capable of controlling nature, an object of human responsibility. Hence the new worldview both requires the elimination of suffering and makes it possible.<sup>29</sup>

Gerald McKenny notes that several important observations can be made regarding a separation from traditional understanding about the relationship between God and creation which modern medicine facilitates. First of all, an understanding of bodily life, which once was judged by how well the body functions in its subjection to nature, is evaluated by how well it responds to intervention. Francis Bacon's refusal to admit the incurability of any human condition replaces an understanding of the limits of the human body's potential and underlying mortality. Secondly, the concern for the physical advancement of the body becomes an end in itself, instead of the traditional condition of and component of the totality of the human experience. The pursuit of virtue is replaced with the intermediate good of bodily health. Lastly, any attempts to contextualize

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<sup>29</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 19.

suffering or illness, placing limitations on what can or should be done to the body to alleviate suffering, will eventually lead to accusations of being insensitive or arbitrary.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.1.2 Romanticism and the Body

The modern moral understanding of the need to eliminate all conditions which portray man's mortality stem from what Charles Taylor calls "inwardness."<sup>31</sup>

Romanticism, an intellectual movement particularly within the arts and literature, challenged traditional norms and rationalism in favor of individual feeling and asceticism. Man alone can decipher inner feelings as an expression of judgment on his life. This exalted discernment of life through feelings is consistent with the growing concept of Deism.

The Deist providential order showed human life and its ordinary fulfillments to be marked as significant, so that both attaining these fulfillments for oneself and securing them for others took on a higher importance and were strongly valued as endorsed by the Divine plan. We come to appreciate this by seeing the order of things and inferring its divine origin. This in turn makes sense of and justifies our moral sentiments, if these figure in our theory.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. This is the climate surrounding recent debates around such moral issues as embryonic stem cell research—that the alleviation of suffering trumps any argument calling for further moral investigation. Cf. McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 20. "Traditional moral injunctions that limit or inhibit what medicine can do appear arbitrary, but there is no broader framework to evaluate and criticize the commitments of modern medicine."

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 368-90. He defines Romanticism as the "notion of an inner voice or impulse, the idea that we find the truth within us, and in particular in our feelings," citation on 368-69. The "expressivist" turn of modern philosophy is build upon more than just romanticism, but Taylor insists that the view of the beauty of nature as source was a crucial part of the modern mind. The turn at first was within the context of a greater providential order, similar to Deism, but even this acknowledgement of God in nature, begs for the removal of suffering as counter to the plan of nature, or begging that nature be changed or improved.

Cf. Ferdinand Van Steenberghen, *Epistemology*, trans. Martin Flynn, (New York: Joseph Wagner, 1949), 62-70. He explains the connection between empiricism and romanticism in the scientific movement in modern thought.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 369.

God's will is interpreted as parallel to the strivings found in nature: a Romantic notion of looking inward for direction, such that feelings become the source for the deepest moral and cosmic truths. This departure from a metaphysical framework is also a departure from orthodox theology and traditional ethical norms, for "it is through our feelings that we get to the deepest moral and, indeed cosmic truths."<sup>33</sup>

Suffering, as one of the strongest negative feelings, can easily be determined in romantic and Deist thought as the most immediate and crucial to eliminate. But even more, all things which increase satisfaction in the body should be utilized as a means of furthering self-determination, such that medicine should be able to advance whatever one's choice of life might happen to be.<sup>34</sup>

The coming together of the philosophical tendencies of the Enlightenment and Romanticism has influenced the practice of medicine through which it has been formed. Leon Kass bemoans the tendency of medicine to refuse to critically address many modern romanticized notions of what constitutes a healthy life. He notes the prevalence of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>34</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 20. Charles Taylor also connects more contemporary modern thought to its beginning in the Romantic movement. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 373. "If the good life is defined partly in terms of certain sentiments, then it can also slip its moorings and depart from the traditional ethical codes. At first, the appropriate sentiments are defined very much in congruence with the ethic of ordinary life and benevolence, following moral sense theory. Benevolence and sympathy are seen as natural, as were the traditional limits on sensual fulfillment... But the way is open for a redefinition. Renewed contact with the deep sources in nature can be seen as conferring a heightened, more vibrant quality to life. This can be interpreted in a way which abandons the usual restraints on sensual fulfillment. In partial attunement to the outlook of Enlightenment materialism, sensuality can itself be made significant. The good life comes to consist in a perfect fusion of the sensual and the spiritual, where our sensual fulfillments are experienced as having higher significance. The journey along this path takes us beyond the period now being discussed. We have perhaps come to the end of this road only in our own time, with the 'flower generation' of the 1960's."

medical resources devoted not to acts of medicine, but of indulgence or gratification of a pleasure or convenience other than health.<sup>35</sup>

The biomedical enterprise occupies the high moral ground of compassionate humanitarianism, upholding the supreme values of modern life—cure disease, prolong life, relieve suffering—in competition with which other moral goods rarely stand a chance. “What the public wants is not to be sick,” says Nobel laureate James Watson, “and if we help them not to be sick, they’ll be on our side.”<sup>36</sup>

Both scientific knowledge and asceticism combine to bring about a sense of progressivism, a sense of constantly improving the human condition. The greater sensitivity to and promise of eradication of the weaknesses of the human condition convinces contemporaries of a certain superiority over preceding generations. The bringing together of Enlightenment and Romanticist trends in the Victorian age, convinced those of the time that theirs was a morally superior era, free from the age of religious limitations. Such an attitude portrays a shift in the difference in the importance between modern knowledge and traditional wisdom. Therefore, as McKenny observes, “Medicine is based on practices and techniques of control over the body rather than on traditions of wisdom about the body.”<sup>37</sup>

Tracing the historical development of medicine as the manifestation of science concurrently with philosophical shifts resulting from its success demonstrates the implicit goals of medicine to not only provide relief for the various imperfections of the human condition, but also the tendency to seek to alter human condition nature. In doing so, medicine offers a replacement for the contextualization of the limitations of the body.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science*, 159.

<sup>36</sup> Kass, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 20.

The combination of technological control over nature (including the human body) and a moral commitment to relieve suffering by preventing the harms and eliminating all conditions and limitations that threaten bodily life accounts for a large part of the nature and task of modern medicine.<sup>38</sup>

The attempt at improving upon God's work, in the moral commitment to relieve suffering, has removed the traditional sounding of God's voice regarding the work he created. This opens up medicine to a failure on a large scale if suffering and mortality cannot be completely overcome, for the means by which they can be understood have been replaced.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.1.3 Contemporary Challenges

Eric Cohen uses contemporary ethical dilemmas to illustrate how contemporary medical research as scientific knowledge has overtaken philosophical and religious knowledge in contemporary ethical debates. In doing so, he points out significant ironies in the often unquestioned role of scientific knowledge in providing ethical meaning and direction in its improvement upon the human condition:

The methods of science cannot vindicate the ends of science, and the knowledge acquired by scientific methods cannot always justify the particular experiments used to acquire it. Yet, scientists desperately want such vindication in the eyes of their fellow citizens: Good science (meaning interesting, promising, exciting) needs to be seen as good (meaning virtuous, praiseworthy, compassionate) by everyone. And so scientists have invented a new method to defend the unfettered freedom of the old one: They claim the mantle of science while making ethical claims ("embryo research is good") that rest on no special scientific basis at all, and they portray their opponents as antiscience for raising ethical questions that are entirely consistent with scientific facts ("embryological development begins at conception").<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>39</sup> Kass, *Toward a Moral Natural Science*, 162-163.

<sup>40</sup> Eric Cohen, "The Ends of Science," *First Things*, (November 2006), 27.

Scientific knowledge, in his example, is used to make moral claims over which it has no jurisdiction. This is because scientific knowledge, lead by observation contradicts its own means when making assertions that cannot be scientifically proven.

Returning to the person of Francis Bacon, Cohen cites the scientist's desire to improve upon the human condition as well as his clear understanding that the attempt to do so may not be acceptable to those who subscribe to a religious world view. The stewardship of the scientist to overcome the limits of humanity confronts an understanding of the sacredness of creation.<sup>41</sup>

Since its beginning, science has fought a battle between what Cohen calls "democratic pity" and "aristocratic guile." The charity of helping raise the condition of the common man was in part a judgment of man's acceptance of the imperfections of the human condition through religion, often seen as perpetuating superstitions and taboos.

The modern scientist comes to heal the wretched bodies of those whose meager minds are always a threat to experimental knowledge. Solomon's House, where the elite of Bacon's scientific utopia would decide which inventions to publish and which to hide, existed both to protect men from science and science from men. It offers a new salvation and seeks to elude the oppressive trappings of the old one. It brings new compassion and a new contempt. This was true in the beginning, and it is true today.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 28: "The intelligent, in other words, have a duty to their fellow men: to seek knowledge in a way that ameliorates human misery. The trouble, Bacon knew, is that the beneficiaries of his charity might not always be so amenable to his methods—methods that require violating not only natural boundaries that exist between the species but also the divine boundaries that long divided the sacred from the profane. Where Leviticus ritually separates pure from impure with an eye to what is divine in man, Bacon's 'New Atlantis' vivisects and recombines everything for the sake of healing man's animal body. 'We have also parks and enclosures of all sorts of beasts and birds which we use not only for view or rareness, but likewise for dissections and trials; that thereby we may take light what may be wrought on the body of man.' On the isle of progress, the priest is replaced by the scientist, who conducts secret experiments to help his fellow citizens. This is the new charity."

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Religious narratives, which were unable to satisfactorily give explanation for the causes of suffering, are replaced by the scientific vocation to actively improve man's condition instead of passively observing it. In this replacement, and in taking on the role of giving meaning to its observations, science's limitations produce three great ironies, according to Cohen.

First, science demands the belief in charity while being ruthless. Current debates on medical research pit the weak against the weak. Experimentation to benefit one member of the human community may require the sacrificing of another. The laudable desire to assist the sick and suffering may require using the ill, the dying, or the embryonic. The distinction between being a human subject and an object which happens to be human becomes lost.

Secondly, science challenges man to focus only on human greatness and human smallness. Man's greatness is demonstrated in his ability to know and overcome limitations, perfecting the body for the sake of his will. But the understanding of his origins escapes him, for it is unscientific to profess belief in the Creator and Lawgiver through which he is made. Rather than being created in the image of God, man prefers being the active power (ironically God-like) in his experimentation and exploitation of his surroundings. Ironically, medical science aims at curing all that ails man, while at the same time professing evolution to be nature's way of improving itself through death.

Third and finally, science simultaneously demands faith in perpetual progress and nihilism. An underlying temptation in the belief in experimental research is that if science is left to do its work free from the obstruction of superstitious or irrational taboos,

human life and knowledge will progressively improve. But this requirement itself demands a type of blind acceptance, ironically similar to the superstitions scientific medicine has replaced, for science by itself is incapable of setting limits on its actions. The goodness of man is always open to being defined, and medicine's failure to provide freedom from all of man's limitations (though it has freed man from some) eventually demands a recognition that human (earthly) life always ends with (scientifically explained) failure. Its substantial progress is unable to completely satisfy. "Our faith in science eventually gives way to our need for faith. We choose the hope of perfection over endless progress and unfettered freedom, but only after trying for as long as possible to have everything without contradiction."<sup>43</sup>

## 2.2 A Shift in the Meaning of the Body in Modern Medicine

Leon Kass adds that the modern scientific approach to medicine has lead contemporary health care to have a reductive vision of the body and of health. To satisfy the desires of health, the nature of the human body has been reconceived. No longer is the body viewed within a larger purpose, as being animated for and striving toward an individual's overall betterment, but instead as "dead matter-in-motion."<sup>44</sup> The reduction of the body to parts to be studied and manipulated, a biological view of human life tremendously prevalent in the inter-workings of medical sub-specializations, has made the isolation and treatment of various ailments possible. But is has also lead to a loss of the vision of the body as a whole dignified integral part of the human being with any

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 31-32, quotation on 32.

<sup>44</sup> Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, 20.

particular purpose outside of optimal functioning defined as the operation of individual quantitative measures between certain parameters within a particular organism.

Peter Freund and Meredith McGuire point out some methodological assumptions regarding the acquisition of knowledge of the human body for the service of the practice of medicine which affects the care of patients and the vision of medicine and health. The purpose of their writing is to demonstrate how certain ways of acquiring and using medical knowledge are detrimental to the care of individual patients and the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship, but these methodological assumptions also have a bearing on the discussion of how current medical practice undermines a proper understanding of bodily integrity and the proper ordering of bodily health into a larger end.<sup>45</sup>

The first of these assumptions is a dualism in the relationship between the body and the mind. Medicine has come to assume that physical disease is isolated to and therefore treatable by actions solely upon the body. This may be exemplified in such actions as treating the physical symptoms of an ailment without delving into the reasons why the ailment is the result of other actions of the person and the causes for such actions. This shows that medicine has the tendency to react to problems manifested in the body, believing that the body can be understood and treated without reference to the larger issues of the person who is inhabiting it.<sup>46</sup> This has come about historically because of the success of treating the body with clinical observation. Such observation accentuates an external “objective” evaluation of the body, which replaced the manner in

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<sup>45</sup> Freund and McGuire, *Health, Illness and the Social Body*, 191-216.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

which physicians had previously investigated a malady by the indirect description of the illness by the patient.

Though successful in accurate physical diagnoses, in such an externally oriented evaluation the physician may lose the vision of the causal relationships between body and mind. Medical advancement promotes a dichotomization of the body and mind/soul which presumes the success of bodily manipulation and improvement. While not intentional, this mode of diagnoses and treatment separates “body” from the whole person. This leads to a dichotomization of the body and mind and to a second assumption—that of physical reductionism, which excludes from diagnoses other dimensions of illnesses that cannot be scientifically observed and isolated. Social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the body are seen as secondary to the physical dimension (if taken into consideration at all).<sup>47</sup>

An additional result is a mechanistic vision of the body. No doubt beneficial for the health of the person in diagnosing and treating illness, the primary tendency in scientific medicine to isolate abnormalities has the effect of identifying the body as a machine—parts which can be adjusted, replaced or repaired—running the risk of reducing the body to a sum of component parts.<sup>48</sup> Viewing the body with the metaphor of a machine allows for a greater tendency of seeing the body as something that can be controlled, and which has value only to the degree in which it is useful. The concept of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 215. “Accordingly, disease is the malfunctioning of some constituent mechanism (e.g., a ‘breakdown’ of the heart). Other cultures use other metaphors...Modern medicine has not only retained the metaphor of the machine but also extended it by developing specializations along the lines of machine parts, emphasizing individual systems or organs to the exclusion of an image of the totality of the body. The machine metaphor further encouraged an instrumentalist approach to the body. The physician could ‘repair’ one part in isolation from the rest.”

inherent bodily dignity is not consistent with the idea of the body as a machine, for a machine is ultimately at the disposal of those who benefit from its production and can repair or tune it to become more productive. Ironically, in this metaphor the physical body is a means to a greater end, (happiness, comfort, peace of mind, etc.) and yet is the dimension that receives nearly all the attention.

### 2.3 A Lack of Teleology Becomes a New Teleology

Historically speaking, the growing acceptance of scientific knowledge based upon observation has removed the language of teleology from scientific discourse. The keener sense of knowledge based upon observation, and not faith or myth was to bring to man a more real view of himself and the world, freed from ignorance and misinformation about what was not known. What was celebrated as “Enlightenment” from the “Dark Ages” was the removal of the fog that an Aristotelian system of thought had brought about in its archaic attempt at the classification of knowledge. Alasdair MacIntyre describes this attempt of getting to the ‘is’ and eliminating the ‘seems’ in scientific reasoning as the lauding of experiential knowledge to such a degree that teleological knowledge is, if not dismissed as unknowable, relegated to an inferior position as compared with scientific knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 80: “The natural scientific concepts of observation and experiment were intended to enlarge the distance between *seems* and *is*. The lenses of the telescope and the microscope are given priority over the lenses of the eye; in the measurement of temperature the effect of heat on spirits of alcohol or mercury is given priority over the effect of heat on sunburnt skin or parched throats. Natural science teaches us to attend to some experiences rather than to others and only to those when they have been cast into the proper form of scientific attention. It redraws the lines between *seems* and *is*; it creates new forms of distinction between both appearance and reality and illusion and reality. The meaning of ‘experiment’

The crucial difference in the replacement of teleological thought with modern scientific thought, as manifested in the practice of modern medicine, is the proper place of mechanisms within epistemology. Aristotelian-influenced philosophy and theology observes the mechanisms of life with regard to their proper end. By dismissing the objective nature of any proper end, modern science and medicine have made the mechanisms of bodily health a series of unsatisfactory ends. MacIntyre explains:

For the middle ages mechanisms were efficient causes in a world to be comprehended ultimately in terms of final causes. Every species has a natural end, and to explain the movements and changes in an individual is to explain how that individual moves toward the end appropriate to members of that particular species. The ends to which men as members of such a species move are conceived by them as goods, and their movement towards or away from various goods are to be explained with reference to the virtues and vices which they have learned or failed to learn and the forms of practical reasoning which they employ. Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* (together of course with the *De Anima*) are as much treatises concerned with how human action is to be explained and understood as with what acts are to be done. Indeed within the Aristotelian framework the one task cannot be discharged without discharging the other. The modern contrast between the sphere of morality on the one hand and the sphere of the human sciences on the other is quite alien to Aristotelianism because...the modern fact-value distinction is also alien to it.<sup>50</sup>

In modern culture, this scientific knowledge, often viewed as the only type of knowledge that has real significance is unable to speak about human teleology.<sup>51</sup> The extreme distance that Bacon charted for modern science as a liberation from Aristotelian thought prohibits science and medicine from acknowledging the need for speaking about human essence and potential. Man's health is its goal. The body is viewed as nothing

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and the meaning of 'experience' diverge more sharply than they had done for the seventeenth century," (emphasis in original).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>51</sup> For a helpful understanding of this tendency within contemporary arguments, see Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and other Essays*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

more than a vehicle, which hopefully can be made to run more efficiently. Properly speaking, medical goals, though valuable ones, cannot be more than mechanistic means if they are not at the service of a greater good.<sup>52</sup> By itself, scientific medicine, with Bacon's inspiration to place man as sovereign over all restrictions of creation, loses any sense of the proper ends of human life as a part of the greater order of creation. Trends in modern philosophy place scientific knowing and moral judgment on opposite tracks, so that true knowledge comes to be identified with that which comes from scientific observation, and moral precepts to guide and give meaning to such observations are relegated to a lower status, often given little more weight than personal preferences. With the lack of teleology in modern scientific thought, the applications of scientific progress, including the practice of medicine, lose the ability to guide their own actions or even engage in the discussion of what might be their proper exercise.<sup>53</sup>

As important and helpful as scientific knowledge is, in medical applications scientific knowledge makes a claim on knowing the reality of the embodied person. However, as the product of observation alone, it is fundamentally detached and therefore unable to speak to the whole of the embodied person. It can say nothing about the human essence or potential, or give meaning to the experiences which it objectively observes.<sup>54</sup> True enough, it is freed from myths, superstitions, beliefs and opinions, which before the development of scientific medicine, were all that were readily available to assist the sick. But its solutions, for all of their benefit, have encroached upon the realms of teleological

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<sup>52</sup> See McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 65-66.

<sup>53</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 26.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

thought.<sup>55</sup> In the attempt to be purely scientific, neutral from debates on the larger question of the meaning of human life, scientific medicine ends up implying its own goals, at least suggesting that its task of bodily health is the most important of all.

Michael Polanyi's criticism of the power wielded by scientific knowledge is worth noting. He states that it is problematic to attempt to explain beings, including persons, at the smallest level of organization possible (such as in medical experimentation, biology, and the increasing tendency in medical specialization and sub-specializations), because:

Nothing is relevant to biology, even at the lowest level of life, unless it bears on the achievements of living beings: achievements such as their perfection of form, their morphogenesis, or the proper functioning of their organs; and the very conception of such achievements implies a distinction between success and failure—a distinction unknown to physics and chemistry.<sup>56</sup>

It is impossible to speak with meaning about any being without reference to its end. What the ends of medicine advance is an inflation of the value of the proper function of particular parts of the person, the means of human health, without reference to the value of man's functioning as a whole for any specific purpose. As such, medical care advances with ever greater success and promise, but is unable to properly order those means in the service of real human fulfillment. It could be argued that it is not the goal of medicine to order human goods or advocate fulfillment. Yet, because of the

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<sup>55</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 65. "While freedom of the organism vis-à-vis its environment increases as one ascends the scale, the venture of life becomes increasingly perilous. This indicates that life strives for something more than assuredness of existence...that the survival standard [of Darwin] is inadequate."

<sup>56</sup> Michael Polanyi, "Scientific Outlook: Its Sickness and Cure," *Science* 125, (March, 1957), 482, as quoted in Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 27.

platform given to medical knowledge, the other voices with which these means could be evaluated in their service of individual and communal human fulfillment are often disregarded. The culture is offered an ever growing set of the means of greater promise of human health, but left with less of a context in which to order those means toward the fulfillment of human potential.

The goals of scientific knowledge are often set against those of religion, traditionally used as a framework to guide and contextualize the observation of creation. This dynamic spills over into the practice of medicine as well. Philosophically speaking, religion, among other cultural sources, provides a contextual narrative for the raw data of scientific observation. However, the scientific realm has taken over the power of more traditional narratives, replacing them with its own, a “purer” or more empirical understanding of human experience. From Bacon on, the transformation of human narratives by scientific thinking sought to forego ontological statements, replacing what cannot be proven through scientific means with a more “dependable” evaluation of what man actually is. A new scientific narrative, more keenly able to describe what “is” casts doubt over the traditional narratives of how what ‘is’ should be understood or to what ends it should be ordered.<sup>57</sup>

The birth of modern science and medicine ushered in a new hope of progress beyond what other narratives could offer. Progress in bodily health, breaking free from the commonly understood limits of human nature, initiates a promise of tangible results,

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<sup>57</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, points to what is lost in the adoption of the narrative of scientific thought, 270: “A certain narrative, a certain sequence of events, is a true one insofar as it has happened and goes on happening—but, however many times we light fires, drive cars or produce nuclear fission, we only know, with ‘scientific’ certainty, certain effects, not ultimate reasons, causes or natures.”

more immediately received than that of any religious teleology. The honorable goal of assisting in the health of the human condition can be sought with or without faith. The visible progress in assisting health can simultaneously cast doubt upon the traditional narratives used to explain the imperfection of the human condition.

The greatest obstacle to progress, wrote Bacon, lies “in the despair of mankind and in the supposition of its impossibility.” If Christian hope offends the scientist, so does the believer’s passive acceptance of misery and active obsession with sin. To live in a godless world means that we are just as innocent as nature is blind—free not to suffer, free to alter nature’s workings for our own purposes, free to challenge the cold decree of fate as best we can muster.<sup>58</sup>

The difference between scientific progress in advancing health and the ability to break free from any natural restraints, achieving a type of physical perfection, is a very significant one. As progress in advancing the health of man grew, so did the belief that nearly any boundary could be crossed which would overcome the limits of his nature.

Thus, Condorcet, the French prophet of man’s self-improvement, believed he was living in the “ninth stage” of mankind’s progress, when reason will “lift her chains, shake herself free from some of them, and, all the time regaining strength” from the effects of the Christian Dark Ages to “prepare for and advance the moment of her liberation.” As he proclaimed in his *Sketch for an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1775), “Nature has set no term to the perfection of human faculties; that she perfectibility of man is truly indefinite, and that the progress of this perfectibility, from now onwards independent of any power that might wish to halt it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has cast us.”<sup>59</sup>

Cohen calls this presumption of perfection the original sin of the Enlightenment. The temptation to cast off the tenets of religious faith when they are unable to bring healing and relief to the suffering is a tempting option when one sees the promise of more

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<sup>58</sup> Cohen, “The Ends of Science,” 29.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

immediate relief from scientific medical advancement. To the scientist, the person of faith is unrealistically optimistic, for fate, not faith, is a harsh reality.<sup>60</sup> But the real progress of medical advancement is always limited, for it is not the same as perfection. Infinite progress means a continual advancement of discontent, for if progress ends short of perfection, it will leave the sick ultimately with loss, regardless of the number of intermediate successes. Temporary success, but ultimate failure is the lived experience of the scientific world in the practice of medicine. As Cohen sums up:

Like everyone else, the scientist must decide which ends to pursue, which gods to serve, which demon will hold the very fibers of his life. And these are exactly the questions that the scientific method cannot answer. Divine salvation may be an illusion, but so is believing that science can tell us how to live in the world it dissects and describes, and how to live well in a world where scientific power is so readily, so seductively, so dangerously at our disposal.<sup>61</sup>

It should be noted that it would be incorrect, and indeed an oversimplification, to assume that the goals of medicine and the goals of religion cannot exist together. The aforementioned section does not attempt to portray the practice of medicine as incompatible with religious faith. It does suggest, however, that the goals of science depend upon other narratives, traditionally religious faith and reasoning, for their ordering and purpose. Without the influence of a teleological system, scientific medicine is unable to measure the purpose of its success, or judge the appropriateness of its contribution to man's existence.

The spread of the goals of medicine as an application of scientific reasoning are often traced, as they have been discussed above, to the work of Francis Bacon. It is an

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 30.

oversimplification to suggest that Bacon's goal was to strip religious faith of moral significance in an attempt to replace the voice of religion with the voice of science.

Though this very shift has occurred in Western culture, and its roots can be traced to the advancement of Bacon's admirable goal of improving upon the condition of man, Bacon himself respected religious faith, and his writings demonstrate a desire to keep faith as an important source of moral guidance. But the desire to retain the voice of religious faith required its being kept pure, i.e., not mixed together with the realm of the new knowledge attainable in scientific reasoning.<sup>62</sup> The effect of such purity was to allow both religious thought and scientific thought their own arenas in which to speak. Bacon saw the limitations of man's knowledge as an obstacle that could be overcome, not as a natural limit between the Creator and his creatures. This gives the voice of science an unlimited range of investigation into what God has created as a show of his glory and power.

While Bacon had reverence for theological discussions, he opened the way for the

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<sup>62</sup> For an view of Bacon's understanding of the roles of science and religion, see John Channing Briggs, "Bacon's Science and Religion," *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, Markku Peltonen, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172-173. Bacon argues that to confuse the realms of divinity and natural science is to confuse them both. Religious involvement in the study of the natural world will become atheistic, while science that delves into matters of divinity flirts with idolatry. He separates the role of divinity from reason insofar as defining the realms of reason as the contemplation and apprehension of the mysteries of God. But reason does not inquire into revelation. Scientific reason is outside the realm of God's will, that involves the theological discipline, reason is to investigate God's glory which is the world he made. Bacon sees the "vocation" of science as the removal of all the limitations that man has in properly understanding the intricacies of God's creation. Cf. Francis Bacon, "Advancement of Learning," *Essays, Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis, and Other Writings*, Richard Foster Jones, ed., (New York: Odyssey Press, 1937), 176: "God hath framed the mind of man as a mirror or glass capable of the image of the universal world, and joyful to receive the impression thereof, as the eye joyeth to receive light; and not only delighted in beholding the variety of things and vicissitude of times, but raised also to find out and discern the ordinances and decrees which throughout all those changes are infallibly observed. And although he doth insinuate that the supreme or summary law of nature, which he calleth *the work which God worketh from the beginning to the end*, is not possible to be found out by man; yet that doth not derogate from the capacity of the mind, but may be referred to the impediments, as of shortness of life, ill conjunction of labours, ill tradition of knowledge over from hand to hand, and many other inconveniences whereunto the condition of man is subject," (emphasis in original).

respectful dismissal of theology's relationship with scientific investigation.<sup>63</sup> Historically then, the new voice of scientific reasoning with its tremendous promises for improving the human condition gathered adherents, while the "unscientific" religious traditions lost a grasp on explaining the significance of what science had observed.<sup>64</sup>

Bacon's goals were based on the assumption that what man does not know and cannot address in human nature stems not from an ontological discrepancy between man and his Creator, but rather from a degree of knowledge which man can eventually reach. Bacon's desire demonstrates the utopian tendency of modern science. He believed that modern man would tackle the problems of creation, and that his benevolent efforts would ultimately be successful. The relationship between man and the natural world is lost, ushering in the notion that man inhabits a world void of any purpose of its own or concerned with the purpose of man.<sup>65</sup> The "vocation" of subduing and cultivating this world according to man's purposes eliminates concern for finding meaning in nature outside the advancement of man. It is not possible to look to the created world for ends or causes, for it becomes simply an extension of, or frustration to man's fulfillment. In and of itself, nature reveals no teleology of man, and therefore science concerned with

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<sup>63</sup> Bacon's desire to liberate man from the unscientific and insufficient explanations of theology for the imperfections of the human condition began a growth of philosophical critique of data which is not empirically based. This tendency grew as scientific advancement spread. As Gerald McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, states, "The conceptual analysis of motion made possible by Descartes' analytical geometry and later by the infinitesimal calculus of Newton and Leibniz reduced complex notions to their component simple parts, thus permitting the isolation and quantification of factors essential to the experimental method, which in turn became the means of knowledge," quote on 45.

<sup>64</sup> See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 1-6. In his introduction Milbank describes the loss of the voice of theology in contemporary culture.

<sup>65</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 43.

perfecting man's nature can place no limits on his activity. If nature is void of intrinsic meaning, Hans Jonas is correct in declaring:

If nature sanctions nothing, then it permits everything. Whatever man does to it, he does not violate an immanent integrity, to which it and all its works have lost title. In a nature that is its own perpetual accident, each thing can as well be other than it is without being any the less natural.<sup>66</sup>

This view of nature drives the concept of freedom to use any means to assist if not replace the boundaries man experiences in his nature. This nihilistic tendency stems from the loss of teleology, giving meaning and purpose to the very beings which scientific medicine seeks to assist. Scientific medicine does not readily acknowledge this nihilism, often claiming for itself the authority in the duty to research further ways of relieving the human condition. With no more legitimate authority than the unscientific narratives which Bacon and his followers found unacceptable, medicine is free to claim an unscientific authority for itself.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 70 as quoted by Gerald McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 45.

<sup>67</sup> Cohen, "The Ends of Science," 31, poses a strong challenge to this irony: "One can surely respect the integrity of the rationalist who doubts the existence of a heaven he cannot see and who is skeptical about theological claims that rest on dueling authorities rather than empirical evidence. But now imagine, say, a stem-cell biologist writing a letter to a ten-year-old girl in the cancer ward—a girl dying of the very disease the biologist cannot yet cure. The girl faces her demise with courage; she knows that God loves her, that the death of her body is not the end of her being. She prays every night, 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me,' and she still manages to smile every morning. What would the stem-cell biologist say to the girl he wants so desperately to rescue from the ravages of nature? Would he describe the miracle cures that will not come in time? Would he tell her that God's love is an illusion, that her prayers evaporate unheard and unanswered into the ether, that her brief transitory existence is all there is, that she is 'sucking the pacifier of faith in immortality'? Perhaps the rationalist can stomach a little bit of comforting illusion for a dying girl he cannot help. Or perhaps he believes her piety must be shattered for the greater good, since the lives of future children depend on destroying that fundamentalist faith ('embryos are sacred') that stands in the way of progress. Perhaps the young girl's courage will cause him to question his own rational certainty that the God she worships is simply an illusion, or to see her very desire for God as evidence of God's existence. Yet whatever the biologist writes, science cannot tell him what to say. Perhaps it would be better, at times, for the impotent scientist to say nothing."

Leon Kass describes contemporary medical goals which demonstrate that medicine is unable to guide its own actions, all the while resisting external guidance. Though not applying this criticism to all in the medical profession to be sure, he notes some popular tendencies which instead of assisting in patient health, cater to the satisfaction of individual whims. Convenience, vanity, or other desires drive medical practice to perform acts of indulgence rather than healing. Kass states that patient happiness is just one of many false goals that medicine currently seeks, adding that social adjustment, prevention of death, seeking bodily immortality and the altering of human nature are illegitimate, though prevalent activities in the health care profession.<sup>68</sup> Part of the reason for this distraction away from the concern for health for other motives is the lack of the acceptance of the transitory nature of health as an intermediate good for man. The nihilistic tendency in medicine is a natural consequence of Bacon's belief that man could subdue the earth and his own nature by way of new objective knowledge as well as Descartes' articulation of the human subject as the center and arbiter of goodness and flourishing. Bacon's goals become in a sense the new teleology of medicine: to assume control over the previously, and notably currently as well, limits on man's nature found in his body. With this end, the knowledge of scientific medicine becomes almost exclusively focused on technical mastery.

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See also, Charles Krauthammer, "Stem Cell Vindication," *Washington Post*, November 30, 2007, A23, where he notes the vilification of President George W. Bush from his August 2001 policy on embryonic stem cells, "He [Bush] invited unrelenting demagoguery by an unholy trinity of Democratic politicians, research scientists and patient advocates who insisted that anyone who would put any restriction on the destruction of human embryos could be acting only for cynical reasons rooted in dogmatic religiosity..."

<sup>68</sup> Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science*, 159-63.

## 2.4 Medicine as a Technological Quest

Inseparable from the growth of the scientific revolution are the advancement of technology and the influence that technology has on the evaluation of knowledge. Hans Jonas makes the point that although the boom in technology came hundreds of years after the development of modern science, a technological mindset was already in place within the mechanistic tendency of science, such that the connection between modern science and technology is inherent. The objective analysis in science which reduces complex systems into quantifiable parts, enabling isolation and experimentation, has come to be regarded as the most dependable form of knowledge.<sup>69</sup> The observation of objects is not the end of scientific reasoning, but rather this end is seen as the ability to manipulate the natures of objects so as to better suit the researcher. Technology, as the ability to instrumentalize and standardize man's manipulation of the nature of creation is implied by the very goals of modern medicine, creating a interdependent relationship between science and technology.<sup>70</sup> This growth of technology is not only present in raw scientific experimentation, but also and more especially in the application of science in modern medical practice. Technology is not simply an accidental component of medicine, therefore, but is influential in the whole realm of the evaluation of human nature, its limits and potentials.

Modern technology is utopian-dependant. Gerald McKenny succinctly explains the claims of Hans Jonas regarding the effects of technology on life.

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<sup>69</sup> Jonas, *Philosophical Essays*, 63.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

In short, a “mutual feedback” operates between science and technology, a feedback that involves mutual dependence and requires the endless progress of technology. More generally, modern technology is characterized by a fluidity of ends and a circular relation in which new technology designed as novel means to existing ends continually creates and imposes new ends. It follows that progress is “not at all a mere option” offered by modern technology “but an inherent drive” that belongs to its formal dynamics. Technology, whether by design or default, is utopian in form.<sup>71</sup>

The exercising of control over nature, made possible and predictable by technology, is inherently “endless,” both with regard to chronology but also with regard to teleology. The swiftness of medicine’s utopian promise does not allow for the evaluation of its ends, ends which are always changing. Progress, which began as the facilitation of means to assist human needs of health, has exploited greater human needs and expectations and threatens to re-evaluate man’s nature. To assist in human nature (in the case of medicine to diagnose and treat) is to engage in an art which imitates nature itself. But to change the patterns of nature with the success so as to expect its conquest runs the risk of reorienting man’s nature in a nihilistic utopianism which threatens the maker of technology himself.<sup>72</sup>

The very technology that began as the product of the subject’s control over the world now threatens to turn the subject himself into a product by means of behavior control, genetic engineering, and the elimination of aging. But if this kind of rational control is destined to recoil back on the controller himself, the impending final stage of the technological revolution urgently calls for an alternative conception of the human.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 46, quoting Jonas, “Toward a Philosophy of Technology,” *Hastings Center Report* 9, (1979, no. 1), 34-43.

<sup>72</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 46-47.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

This warning stems from the inability of scientific medicine to present a real image of what it means to be human, what the purpose and limits of health are: a narrative whose voice has been replaced by scientific and technological knowledge. The danger in placing technological or instrumental knowledge on such a high level is in its inability to control itself. Its success begins to supersede the value placed on the agents it is designed to help. Instead of being a means to a greater end, the value and dignity of man, it itself drives a reordering of value, and with great momentum begins to exercise power and control over that which would order its exercise.<sup>74</sup>

In his critique of the extent to which technology specifically drives the practice of modern medicine, Neil Postman describes the changes in the relationship between doctor and patient. Acknowledging that technological advances have greatly aided in the treatment of illness, he suggests that they also place an obstacle between the doctor and the patient. Being able to more objectively evaluate the condition of part of the patient's

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, footnote no. 7, 233-234. "Two distinct accounts of nihilism appear in Jonas's writings. One is instrumentalist or Baconian, the other is existentialist or Pascalian. According to the Baconian interpretation, modern science and technology render all objects neutral to whatever value human beings may now bestow upon them. Lacking intrinsic value, they are necessarily lower than that by which alone they receive value, namely, human willing, and are thus reduced to objects of use by human beings. One of Jonas's most poignant insights is that Baconian charity...confirms rather than alters this reduction to use. For Baconian charity...unlike the love of the good in ancient (and medieval) thought, is precisely concerned with rendering the world useful to one's fellow human being. Since it is rooted in the will and can not be derived from knowledge of the object, charity is for Jonas at best ephemeral and at worst nihilistic. The sole divine attribute the world of science exhibits is power. Hence the only possible stance of human beings toward an indifferent cosmos is to meet power with power. It was Jonas's extraordinary insight to connect this existentialist nihilism with a similar estrangement from the world that characterized Gnosticism. From this perspective, modern technology plays a role analogous to that of the Gnostic savior and his gnosis insofar as 'the countering of power with power is the sole relation to the totality of nature left for man in both cases' (Jonas, 1966, 221). Jonas recognizes an important difference between existentialism and Gnosticism: both saw the world as alien to human aspirations, but while the former views the world as indifferent to these aspirations the latter viewed the world as hostile to them. What Jonas does not seem to recognize is that the latter is not really nihilistic at all, since the world is charged with value, albeit negative value. There is for Gnosticism at least one objective moral truth about the world, namely that the world is evil."

anatomy, the physician has less direct contact to the subjective circumstances which surround the observable data. The “barrier” of technology in this way, creates a more clean causal relationship between observation (what is wrong) and health (fixing what is observed to be wrong). As successful as this often is, it comes with a price, and that is found in the indirect consequences of treating the person as a bearer of something to be fixed: medicine becomes more about disease and not about the patient, and what the patient experiences regarding an illness is deemed as either non-applicable or not dependable.<sup>75</sup> The result is a culture of medicine which treats significant experiences of people in a weakened state as factors of an equation, a more efficient and cost-effective way of dealing with patients.

The method for dealing with illness is to subject a patient to the analysis of non-personal equipment to the degree that “Medical competence is now defined by the quantity and variety of machinery brought to bear on disease.”<sup>76</sup>

So, without realizing what has happened, the physician in the last two centuries has gradually relinquished his unsatisfactory attachment to subjective evidence—what the patient says—only to substitute a devotion

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<sup>75</sup> Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 100.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 102-103. Postman makes a more anecdotal judgment on the effects of technology in medicine: “Three interrelated reasons conveyed to create this situation. The American character was biased toward an aggressive approach [to disease] and was well prepared to accommodate medical technology; the nineteenth-century technocracies, obsessed with invention and imbued with the idea of progress, initiated a series of remarkable and wondrous inventions; and the culture reoriented itself to ensure that technological aggressiveness became the basis of medical practice. The ideas promoted by this domination of technology can be summed up as follows: Nature is an implacable enemy that can be subdued only by technological means, the problems created by technological solutions (doctors call these ‘side effects’) can be solved only by the further application of technology (we all know the joke about the amazing new drug that cures nothing but has interesting side effects); medical practice must focus on disease, not on the patient (which is why is it possible to say that the operation or therapy was successful but the patient died); and information coming from the patient cannot be taken as seriously as information coming from a machine, from which it follows that a doctor’s judgment, based on insight and experience, is less worthwhile than the calculations of his machinery.”

to technological evidence—what the machine says. He has thus exchanged one partial view of disease for another. As the physician makes greater use of the technology of diagnosis, he perceives his patient more and more indirectly through a screen of machines and specialists; he also relinquishes control over more and more of the diagnostic process. These circumstances tend to estrange him from his patient and from his own judgment.<sup>77</sup>

Medicine, refusing teleologically based narratives, constructs its own self-narrative in the language of technology. This technology allows for the separation of the parts of the body from the person, forming a mechanistic vision of man, which is analogous to a narrative which speaks only in fragments instead of sentences. This substitutional narrative is dependent upon an instrumentalization of the body which cannot make a judgment on the value of the body as a whole, but only on the parts which are under its control. It is unable to speak in a language which understands the value of the person himself (the appropriateness of an action, i.e., research or treatment) but merely on the most productive way to carry it out. Means can be understood, but not to the degree in which they contribute to personal ends.

Leon Kass articulates how the technologically driven ends of medicine are particularly dangerous in contemporary culture. Its success has ironically created a void in the human experience, an expectation of success which eliminates man's ability to judge the good as well as one's self. It provides an "option" to both internal and external flaws, through which man attempts to avoid the issues of the limits of his nature. This traditional struggle within humanity to face the limits of the nature of the created world as well as within itself cannot be successfully avoided, but only delayed. The traditional

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<sup>77</sup> Stanley Joel Reiser, *Medicine and the Reign of Technology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 230.

argument has been advanced as such, and is important for understanding the various, but constant sources of a teleological basis for assisting the human condition:

Those who hold that the biggest obstacles to human happiness are material, arise from scarcity and the stinginess and violence of nature, from the indifference of the powers that be, or (within) from disease and death, look to the arts. In this view, the inventors and bringers of the arts are the true benefactors of mankind, and are revered like the gods; the supreme example is Prometheus (literally “forethought”), bringer of fire, with its warming and transforming power, and through fire, all the other arts. By contrast, those who hold that the biggest obstacles to human happiness are psychic and spiritual, and arise from the turbulences of the human soul itself, look instead to law (or to piety or its equivalent) to tame and moderate the unruly and self-destroying passions of men. In this view, the lawgivers, the statesmen and the prophets are the true benefactors of mankind—not Prometheus but Lycurgus, not the builders of Babel but Moses. The arts are suspect precisely because they serve comfort and safety, because they stimulate unnecessary desires, and because they pretend to self-sufficiency. Mistaking their crafted world for the whole [the allegory of Plato’s cave] men live ignorant of their true standing in the world and their absolute dependence on powers not of their own making and beyond their control. Only when the arts and men are ruled politically, and only when politics is governed by wisdom about the human soul and man’s place in the larger whole, can art contribute properly to human flourishing. The coming of the modern technological project added a new wrinkle to this dispute. What if technology, founded upon the new science, could address not only stingy nature without but also unruly nature within? What if science-based technology could be brought to bear on the human psyche (and human society) by means of a perfected psycho-physics (and scientific political science)? Might one then eventually secure human happiness by purely rational and technological means, without the need for law or force or fear of God? ...Medicine, that venerable and most humanitarian of arts, will, when it is properly transformed by the new science of nature and of human nature, provide at long last a solution for the human condition.<sup>78</sup>

Kass argues that these assumptions of the promise of technology and its geometric progression, advancing as if it could be assumed that “since it was possible...it was

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<sup>78</sup> Kass, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, 39-40.

necessary,”<sup>79</sup> promotes a power struggle over its use as well as who will decide what exactly in human nature should be mastered. He suggests that man’s power over nature is really always about one man’s power over another.

Even if Bacon did not seek to usurp the power of God, his ability to exercise rational control over what had been held in mystery ushered in a new view of human life and control. As Charles Taylor points out, the instrumentality of life has its origins in the Baconian revolution as a pious endeavor:

So conceived, Baconian science is the avenue not only to right service of God in our use of his creation but also to his greater glory, as we come to understand his purposes and can render him knowledgeable and fitting praise for the marvels of his design. Bacon devised a conception of the world which ensured that these two pious duties coincided.<sup>80</sup>

The rendering of God as knowable has as its logical end the rendering of God as impotent. To explain his creation in the mechanisms of the world with the instruments his creation has made is to some extent to be able to replace him. The same can be said for the technological assessment (in medicine) of his creatures. To objectify the mechanisms of man’s being is to lose a sense of what it means to be human.

Making the instrumental stance central could not but transform the understanding of the cosmos...whose unity lies in the relation to a meaningful whole, into an order of things producing reciprocal effects in each other, whose unity in God’s plan must be that of interlocking purposes.<sup>81</sup>

The loss of unity in creation at the largest level of thought continues in the practice of medicine as a microcosm of the replacement of God in the order of the whole.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., quoting Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson, (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 99.

<sup>80</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 232.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 233.

In the pursuit of applied science, the medical profession has largely ceased to strive towards the goals of an association of artisans who use tradition, experience, learning, and intuition, and has come to play a role reserved to ministers of religion, using scientific principles as its theology and technologists as acolytes. As an enterprise, medicine is now concerned less with the empirical art of healing the curable and much more with the rational approach to the salvation of mankind from attack by illness, from the shackles of impairment, and even from the necessity of death.<sup>82</sup>

Gerald McKenny explains that the power of medicine to enhance human life has tremendous implications for the approach to human suffering. The replacement of religious narratives with scientific ones means there is no longer any reasonable purpose for or significance in suffering. The mastery of nature means that the reality of suffering in the world need no longer be explained or accepted. Instead, man has the imperative to eliminate it wherever it is found. In contrast to traditional narratives, the scientific worldview grants value to the body insofar as its function is within certain objective parameters. The historical wisdom of medicine whereby the limits and mortality of the body were understood and addressed gives way to Bacon's call to never admit of incurability. Perhaps more importantly, the call to relieve suffering and enhance human nature has brought about a view of health as an end in itself, without reference to being a condition of the overall goodness or purpose of life.

Medical care will be devoted to relieving and eliminating suffering wherever it is found rather than to the management of health for the pursuit of virtue. Rules and prohibitions limiting what can be done to the body to relieve suffering will appear to be at best insufficiently concerned about suffering and at worst arbitrary and even cruelly insensitive.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*, (New York: Random House, 1976), 252-53.

<sup>83</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 19.

The cultural context of today has extended the notion of man's dominion and continued to challenge any restraint to medical technology. Today's particular combination of unbridled technological advances and a consumer driven culture exacerbate the struggle to place moral norms upon what is possible in the field of medicine. Raymond Dennehy names the current culture as one of "scientism."

It is so-called because it adulates scientific knowledge and thereby ascribes grandiose ambitions to science. This adulation transmutes science, tearing it away from its just position in the scheme of human knowledge, thereby demanding that it pronounce on things that far exceed its abilities.<sup>84</sup>

The challenges to any moral standard used to evaluate the practice of medicine posed by each of these characteristics of contemporary Western culture need some examination.

First, one must note the effects of how great advances in medical technology change man's view of the human person. An effect of technology is the real or perceived ability to manage or control what had previously been controlling to the individual. It creates a great momentum of expectation, demanding more and more for one's benefit. This creation of a lack of contentment presents a two-fold danger. Medical technology becomes utopian on the one hand, and nihilistic on the other.<sup>85</sup> The utopian danger is easy to see. With increased potential for the elimination of all things that hinder man comes the increased expectation for their removal. Such a momentous progress can hardly stop to evaluate, as Plato asked, if a particular form of progress advances or hinders a higher goal. In the consumption of such advanced technology, any

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<sup>84</sup> Dennehy, "The Elimination of God," 39.

<sup>85</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 43.

higher goal is almost impossible to notice. With success in the alleviation of some of the limits of the human condition, it seems that all eyes are focused on what else may be done, rather than on contemplation of the goods being accomplished. This is much deeper than suggesting a need to stop and evaluate progress, but rather the questioning of what real “progress” might be. For both Plato and the Christian, the perfect physical life is not the highest good. A temptation is that nearly that all things can be under man’s control, and with enough resources, he can master all that hinders his pleasure and health. The first chapter explained the danger in a consumer based concept of religious practice sought to bring about the most of one’s perceived needs. In such a culture, there is great hesitancy to place any limits on what medicine can accomplish, for its promises are too appealing.

The crisis results in the fundamental failure of this utopian promise. With more and more technological advances come more and more sobering questions about man’s ability to really control his own destiny. Despite an incredible amount of good for promoting health, more and more unanswered questions stem from medicine’s success. Gerald McKenny creates a short list of nagging ‘failures’ of utopian medicine: chronic diseases, the inability to affect genetic conditions once diagnosed, the growing resistance of mutating bacterial strains. It appears that this utopian promise of health is not just being delayed, but that it is fundamentally an illusion.<sup>86</sup> The moral question becomes all the more compelling when faced with the limits of medical technology. If technological

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<sup>86</sup> McKenny, “Bioethics, the Body, and the Legacy of Bacon,” 321.

medical advance is not the highest good, then to what must man turn for understanding his limitations, and to what must medicine turn for guidance in its?

Secondly, the failure of modern medicine has a nihilistic danger, in that it ultimately leaves the one whom it fails with no framework to deal with its failure. Put more succinctly, the replacement of some other (higher) good with the good of health leaves one with no framework when health fails. If one has abandoned traditional moral constraints placed by higher goods on the pursuit of health, then the eventual failure of medicine (in human suffering and death) leaves one empty for this final struggle. Stanley Hauerwas argues that the effort of modern medicine to cure every ailment finds terrible frustration in dealing with those who cannot be cured. He uses the example of mental retardation as the epitome of technological frustration. Those who cannot be cured become marginalized or are rejected. He concludes that modern medicine is not humane when it does not contain the “moral capacity” to care for those who cannot be cured.<sup>87</sup> The failure of modern medicine to properly engage the reality of suffering leads to nihilism in its failure.

The reality of the consumer-based attitude in our culture adds a new dimension to the challenge of properly assigning the value of health to the human patient. In a world where so much of life is an option for consumption, then healthcare becomes a commodity as well. In attempting to distinguish the various levels of values faced each day, the consumer of today values things out of context. Such a lack of context and consistency in the intrinsic value of objects leads the consumer from one neutral choice to

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<sup>87</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 18.

another based upon personal taste. When one means of satisfying a desire is not sufficient, one can simply move to another. Since desires are easily met, the value placed upon anything can easily be interpreted as to how it suits individual tastes at a particular time.<sup>88</sup> In matters of moral judgments regarding medicine, more discipline than what the contemporary culture desires and what scientific knowledge lacking teleology can address is required. The temptation for satisfaction at all costs may likely supersede the evaluation of the morality of a particular medical option. With so many resources, the lack of context in moral evaluation allows ever more control of the body in order to fulfill more and more arbitrary wishes.<sup>89</sup>

Pope John Paul noted that the increase of technology requires an adequate evaluation of its impact on the good of man.

The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics. For the present, this last development seems unfortunately to be always left behind. Accordingly, in spite of the marvel of progress, in which it is difficult not to see also authentic signs of man's greatness, signs that in their creative seeds were revealed to us in the pages of the Book of Genesis, as early as where it describes man's creation [Genesis 1-2], this progress cannot fail to give rise to disquiet on many counts. The first reason for disquiet concerns the essential and fundamental question: Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth "more human" in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more "worthy of man"? There can be no doubt that in various aspects it does. But the question keeps coming back with regard to what is most essential—whether in the context of this progress man, as man is becoming truly better, that is to say more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his humanity, more responsible, more open to others, especially the neediest and the weakest, and readier to give and to aid all.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion*, (New York: Continuum Press, 2005), 71-72.

<sup>89</sup> McKenny, "Bioethics, the Body, and the Legacy of Bacon," 316.

<sup>90</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 15, pp. 47-8.

What has been presented so far is a description of the present scene. The next chapter will investigate the challenges for modern medicine faced with potential failure, with the nagging presence of suffering, and with conflicting systems of ethics for making difficult moral decisions.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHALLENGE OF DEALING WITH SUFFERING

On multiple levels, both physically through the medical profession and existentially through philosophical and religious means, man addresses the reality of his suffering. He finds in his current condition and his understanding of it a struggle with illness, pain, and other manifestations of evil. In some cases, suffering can be avoided. In others it can be relieved. Sometimes it must be endured. But it must always be addressed. Addressing human suffering takes many forms, often a combination of physical and existential and spiritual means, and varies by different cultural expectations and customs which contextualize this reality of the human condition. This chapter will present the context and meaning given to the experience of suffering by the practice of medicine in contemporary Western culture. It will note the challenge which successful medicine brings, in struggling to acknowledging the limits of man's nature, and show in some examples how attempts to reduce suffering, actually eliminating the suffering person, when suffering itself cannot be tackled.

#### 3.1 Theological Reflection on Health and the Practice of Medicine

The criticisms of some tendencies of the practice of medicine in contemporary culture are in no way intended to undermine the dignity of the vocation of healing. In the scriptures God manifests his love through Christ's healings of physical and spiritual evil.

Without question the Bible witnesses both to the blessedness of life, health and bodily integrity and to the high esteem in which the physician is held. These goods are the worthiness of the healer who ministers to them,

unabashedly attested to in these passages from the Old Testament sage Sirach (c. 190 B.C.), are affirmed in the New Testament in the many miraculous healings performed by Jesus and his disciples.<sup>1</sup>

The goodness of health and God's desire for man to be healthy are without

question. But in the person of Christ, even health through miraculous healings is linked to a greater good—the manifestation of the kingdom of God for the sake of conversion and faith.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, His [Christ's] physical healings are more than simply astounding deeds but signs that sin and death have been conquered and that salvation has come in His person.<sup>3</sup>

This demonstrates two important realities for contextualizing the vocation to heal. First of all, as it was for Christ, health is a sign of the goodness of creation and of God's love for his creation. Secondly, just as in Christ, those who minister to the sick are to do so knowing that their power to do so comes from God.

In recalling us to our dignity, and restoring to us the hope of perfect happiness, which God intended when he created us, Jesus Christ worked miracles of healing (Mk 1:32-39) to encourage us to use God's gifts for the health care even of the most neglected and powerless members of society (Mk 26: 31-46).<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the actions of the medical profession are a noble ministry in which persons participate in the work of God.<sup>5</sup> However the key to interpreting this vocation of health

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<sup>1</sup> Mark S. Latkovic, "The Vocation to Heal: Health Care in the Light of the Catholic Faith: Scriptural, Theological, and Philosophical Reflections," *Linacre Quarterly*, 75 (1), February 2008, 40-55, citation on 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict Ashley and Kevin O'Rourke, *Ethics of Health Care: An Introductory Textbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 34.

<sup>5</sup> The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1995), no 4. "To serve life is to serve God in the person: it is to become a collaborator with God in restoring health to the sick body and to give praise and glory to God in the loving welcoming of life, especially if it be weak and ill."

care is that it collaborates with and does not replace God's work in assisting the frailty of the human condition.

The distinction between attending to the suffering and the attempt to replace aspects of the human condition which are manifest in the reality of suffering is a crucial concept in the evaluation of the proper role of medical intervention. Jacques Maritain suggests that from the sixteenth century on, secular humanism has made modern man overly confident of the potential within his own nature, a "self-completeness" of man, which can be demonstrated in his scientific advancement. Such a view of nature supposes man to be his own master, and therefore demands that he proceed to bring under his control without constraint the limitations of his condition, manifested in his own suffering.<sup>6</sup>

Acknowledging the duty of man for the bettering of himself, the question of the appropriateness of a particular medical intervention on the body requires a concrete theological anthropology. David Kelly examines two essays by Karl Rahner which underscore the difficult question of the appropriateness of action or manipulation of the human condition.<sup>7</sup>

On the issue of human genetic engineering, in his *Theological Investigations*, Rahner in "The Experiment with Man," argues that man should be open to the potential for genetic manipulation, while the next essay, "The problem of Genetic Manipulation"

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<sup>6</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, (New York: Scribners, 1952), 186.

<sup>7</sup> David F. Kelly, *Contemporary Catholic Health Care Ethics*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 264-69.

speaks out against artificial insemination by donor, suggesting that such a genetic manipulation is a closing off to the transcendent actions of God.<sup>8</sup>

Rahner's struggle here shows the delicate balance in the proper addressing of the imperfection of the human condition. He seems to point out both the "openness" of man to improve himself and the "closed" nature of man as determined by God.

And in this coming world man will be the one who, both as an individual and as a society, plans, controls and manipulates himself to a degree which was previously both undreamed of and impractical. He *must* do so; he can do no other...He must want to be operable man.<sup>9</sup>

And again:

To a larger, more comprehensive, radical and tangible extent, man has become what, according to the Christian understanding, he is: the free being who has been handed over to himself.<sup>10</sup>

Yet while acknowledging man's God-given dominion over the world, including himself, Rahner later opposes the type of manipulation he sees in artificial insemination by donor. "Man must freely accept his nature as being predetermined. For he has not called himself into existence."<sup>11</sup>

If man, when confronted with his child, saw only what he himself had planned, he would not be looking at his own nature, nor would he experience his true self with is both free *and* the object of external [divine] determination. Genetic manipulation is the embodiment of the fear of oneself, the fear of accepting one's self as the unknown quantity it is.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Experiment with Man: Theological Observations of man's self-manipulation," and "The Problem of Genetic Manipulation," trans. Graham Harrison, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 9, *Writings of 1965-1967*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 205-24, 225-52.

<sup>9</sup> Rahner, "The Experiment with Man," 211, (emphasis in original).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 214

<sup>11</sup> Rahner, "The Problem of Genetic Manipulation," 243.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 245, (emphasis in original).

Rahner demonstrates the anthropological tension in making moral judgments about the appropriateness of scientific and medical intervention in man, while holding on to the realm of God's design in creation.

The tensions between man's God given duty to assist in his own health and happiness and the respect for the limitations of his nature are perhaps most strongly realized when one faces suffering. The dignity which God gives to man in his vocation to care and to heal appears to be incomplete in the reality he experiences in suffering.<sup>13</sup>

Catholic health ministry sees care for the sick as a sacred ministry pursued in fidelity to the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is dedicated to the relief of suffering within the constraints of divine law. It gives primacy to man's spiritual destiny as well as his temporal well being. Contemporary culture for its part also seeks to relieve suffering and to improve the quality of human life, and it is primarily the quality of man's material life, without reference to divine law.<sup>14</sup>

It is the vocation of the medical professional to truly follow in the example of Christ and address the reality of suffering.<sup>15</sup> The way in which medicine addresses

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<sup>13</sup> See Edmund D. Pellegrino, "Catholic Health Care Ministry and Contemporary Culture," 27. "The ravages of serious, incurable, and protracted illness are an everyday threat to our perceptions of inherent human dignity. The bodily wasting, the loss of control of bodily functions, the sense of loneliness and despair are often interpreted as a loss of dignity. This can only be a loss of attributed dignity, however. From the Catholic perception, inherent dignity cannot be lost or diminished. Understandably, the suffering patient cannot often distinguish between attributed and inherent dignity. In the Catholic health care ministry, the physician has the duty to recognize when the patient's suffering causes him to see himself as without 'dignity' in his own eyes, and in those of others. An important aspect of the care of patients in this state is to reaffirm that there is no such thing as a death without dignity. God made man in his image, and no event, feeling, or misfortune can take man's intrinsic dignity away. God loves every man and will not abandon any human person in his moments of gravest suffering. The Church possesses a theology of dying and suffering which stands against the fears so many have of dying without 'dignity.' Only their attributed dignity can be lost, that attributed to them by others or themselves—not by God."

<sup>14</sup> Pellegrino, "Catholic Health Care Ministry and Contemporary Culture," 14.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret E. Mohrmann, "Care of Patients and Their Suffering," in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids, MI.: William Eerdmans, 1998), 353. "Specifically, much can be said about the primacy of the physician's obligation to relieve suffering: to do everything possible to alleviate the illness, to remove the impediment to health, to attend to the patient's physical well-being. One can find innumerable warrants for the doctor's

suffering can be problematic, in the temptation to view suffering only as a symptom of a problem which ought to be overcome.

### 3.2 Medicine's View of Suffering as Failure

The successes of modern medicine have paradoxically left man with a dilemma. For most of man's history, the answer to the question of why he should experience suffering and ultimately die was simple. He should experience these because he must. No other option exists. The experience of aging, decay, suffering and death are as necessary for man as for all of the rest of the visible creation, with the exception that man alone can ponder and understand his own mortality. He alone can reflect on his imperfection and bodily limitations.<sup>16</sup>

The power to lessen the experience of illness and suffering in man's life is an extension of the desire to promote his freedom and autonomy. Born of the Enlightenment, the modern imperative to free man from all that holds him bound created an implicit project in the practice of medicine. The promise of the power of medicine, from Bacon and Descartes on has fueled the desire to address suffering by taking more control over the human condition:

The main goal of these programs seems to be the domination of nature. But we must be precise. The desire to dominate does not just spring from a lust of power, from sheer human imperialism. It is from the start

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task in scripture, especially in the healing work of Jesus. Although Jesus asked some interesting questions of his patients, he never suggested to them that they would be better off just bearing their pain. Jesus' consistent willingness to relieve suffering adds a necessary qualifier and counterbalance to any discussion of the glorious endurance that suffering can produce."

<sup>16</sup> Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science*, 299.

connected with the aim of liberating humanity from disease, hunger, and toil, and of enriching life.<sup>17</sup>

However, the developments of scientific medicine have removed both simple and complex limitations in man's life and, to a great degree, have been able to alleviate his experiences of his limitations and suffering. They have extended his life-span to delay his mortality. These are tremendous successes for medicine and for mankind as a whole. But they come with a cost.<sup>18</sup> This chapter will examine the effects of medicine's power over suffering and illustrate its inability to deal with the inevitable suffering and death as essential elements of the human condition. It will portray the tremendous gains of medicine in assisting human life as a mixed blessing, for its postponement of suffering and death inadvertently leave a vacuum for the understanding of these universal elements of human life. It will serve to introduce the discussion of the need for a theology of suffering to better treat the reality of suffering as essential, not accidental as medicine would view it, to the human condition. The gains in medical treatment of illness and alleviation of suffering have been truly momentous—to such a degree that all limitations within human nature are viewed as evils to be overcome.

This progress leaves unanswered the questions regarding the proper significance of bodily life, that is, to what degree should the limitations of the body be accepted, for the body is a part of the manifestation of the person, but not the whole of the person's

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<sup>17</sup> Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Everyday Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 36, as quoted in Gerald McKenny, "Bioethics, the Body and the Legacy of Bacon," 314.

<sup>18</sup> Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 20-21. He notes the challenges of medical success when stem from great advances in medical science, namely that "the scientific basis of medicine does not recognize nor provide a methodology to deal with individual variations on the level of patient-doctor interactions. Such issues were relegated to the 'art' of medicine or to individual judgment," citation on 20.

life, or reason for existence.<sup>19</sup> The giving of the body over to technological assessment has provided to technology the role of deciding what kind of life man ought to have.

From this perspective, the most significant point about the Baconian project is not the alienation it involves, or the “dehumanized” medicine it causes. Rather, the significant points are, first that the body of the Other—the body in its susceptibility to disease, suffering, and death—is construed through attitudes and practices that find moral and spiritual significance precisely in the otherness of the body, and second, that this reduction of the body of the Other to technological control is connected with a vast range of norms, institutions, forms of knowledge, techniques of monitoring, etc. which increasingly form our bodies, in large part by already having been formed (and often formed by) our desires to eliminate suffering and our choices for what we have now come to regard as a good body. In short, a set of attitudes and practices grounded in one discourse of the body has been substituted for another.<sup>20</sup>

The prevailing set of attitudes in modern medicine rests on the notion that the imperative to relieve human suffering is absolute.<sup>21</sup> It also works with the assumption that this, in fact, can be done. Medicine then gains the authority to address the problem of man’s finitude, and judge health and wellness on equal level, if not above, larger questions of goodness and salvation.

### 3.2.1 The Relationship between Medicine and Power

Due in part to the success of the scientific revolution and its desire to master human nature, current medical practice holds a view of the body in which it becomes the object of control. In the practice of medicine, scientific knowledge replaces the power of

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<sup>19</sup> See Pellegrino, “Catholic Health Care Ministry and Contemporary Culture,” 26.

<sup>20</sup> McKenny, “Bioethics, the Body and the Legacy of Bacon,” 319.

<sup>21</sup> Throughout this chapter, “modern medicine” is used to reflect the tendencies of medical practice in the Western developed world.

the clinician, the “practicing” of medicine.<sup>22</sup> The modern metaphor of the body as a machine, including the success at fine tuning that machine has replaced a view of the body as a dimension of the whole person.<sup>23</sup> This leads to a significantly dualistic understanding of the person, for while the body can properly be thought of as under the control of the whole person, it would be a transgression of the modern virtue of freedom to view the whole person as being under the control of an external power. To unpack this dualism regarding power over the bodily dimension of man, it is necessary to examine the modern struggle between knowledge and power and the effect which this struggle has on the view of medical intervention on the body.

A significant characteristic of knowledge in the modern world is the development of the detached observer as the subject of knowledge. In prior centuries man was understood to be a part of a greater account of reality, a reality ruled and ordered by God. In modern philosophical thought as well as in scientific inquiry, man begins a new relationship, not only with (the concept of) God, but also in the concept of the self. Man becomes both the subject of his thought and the object of his investigation.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned earlier, with the work of Francis Bacon and the Cartesian understanding of rational thought as the hallmark of human worth, man begins to view himself as

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<sup>22</sup> Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Freund and McGuire, *Health, Illness and the Social Body*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> For a concise account of what he calls the “secularization of the Christian image of man,” see Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, 185-192.

“sovereign of the created realm,” but at the same time also holds a place within that realm of his own rule.<sup>25</sup>

Man’s progress of gaining understanding over the created world with the intent of the mastery of human nature, ironically demonstrates his inability to do so. Michael Foucault states that man is unable to escape being an object of his own nature.<sup>26</sup> The philosophical turn to the subject, which promotes knowledge as the unique method of overcoming his objectification to external powers, at the same time illustrates that he is himself “an object of nature, a face doomed to be erased in the course of history.”<sup>27</sup> Faced with the tension of the Cartesian *cogito*, man’s knowledge points constantly to a duality between his being and the limits of his being: his own death. The content of the thoughts of the limits of his nature constantly presume his non-being, for quite often ‘I think’ does not point to “I am.”<sup>28</sup> Those thoughts often lead man to the limits of his being—that he has the potential not to exist as he does. In earlier centuries, man was still left with his place within the realm of the created world, but modern skepticism of the larger order of the world, under the care and concern of the Creator, leaves man with a

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<sup>25</sup> Joel James Shuman, *The Body of Compassion: Ethics, Medicine, and the Church*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 29-30.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*, (New York: Random House, 1994), 313, 323-25.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 323-25. A reflection on Descartes’ affirmation can lead to an equally powerful vacuum as man reflects: “What must I be, I who think and am my thought, in order to be what I do not think, in order for my thought to be what I am not?...What is man’s being, and how can it be that that being could so easily be characterized by the fact that ‘it has thoughts’ and is possibly alone in having them, has an ineradicable and fundamental relation to the unthought? A form of reflection is established far removed from both Cartesian and Kantian analysis, a form that involves, for the first time, man’s being in that dimension where thought addresses the unthought and articulates itself upon it,” citation on 324-25.

<sup>28</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 31.

nagging doubt with regard to his own existence. The modern doubt which attempts to dispel mystery must replace man's place in the order of the world with something else.<sup>29</sup>

The resulting development becomes the imperative to know everything that can be known and to push to that which has not yet been mastered in an attempt to control what is not yet controllable. The presumption of knowledge within a culture has consequences, in which the concept of mystery of the unknowable becomes unacceptable.

Modern thinking is thus destined always to be 'plagued by an unthought residue,' a characteristic that gives it a relentless attachment to power; for although the object of thought never fully conforms to the efforts of the subject to conceptualize it, the subject nevertheless ceaselessly moves cognitively in that direction, 'towards that region where man's Other must become the same as himself.' Because it has been given that the *telos* of modern thought is mastery of the object, the modern subject cares nothing for the differences displayed in and by the body of the other, but strives constantly to force the other to fit into her own conceptual presumptions. The Cartesian/Baconian impulse becomes especially frenetic as human knowing in modernity becomes "in its very being...a type of power."<sup>30</sup>

The power gained in knowledge is at the same time real and illusory, for an object of thought can never fully be exhausted in the mind of another subject. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment has bred a presumption of knowledge which can never be actualized in human life, and, in its place, knowledge has become a power to confront man's lack of power.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The next chapter will speak in detail about John Paul's philosophical assessment of modernity's attempt to fill this void. See *Fides at ratio*: "Faith and Reason," Vatican Translation, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), nos. 24-35, pp. 39-53, *AAS* 91, (1999), 5-88.

<sup>30</sup> Romand Coles, *Self/Power/ Other: Political Theory and Dialogical Ethics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 70-71, 328.

<sup>31</sup> See Maritain, *Range of Reason*, 186-87.

Joel Shuman describes the effects of the modern relationship between knowledge and power within the practice of modern medicine in terms of the development of the concepts of expertise and normalization. The concept of expertise, so prevalent in modern medicine, is the result of the modern quest for knowledge and the rapid development of technology. An expert in a field, medical or otherwise, has the intellectual capacity to discover the “real” order of things, things hidden from the knowledge common to the rest of society.<sup>32</sup> The esoteric nature of the knowledge created by such experts leads to the acceptance of their authority and the creation of distinct bodies of knowledge, knowledge which has a controlling effect on subjects in its practice. Trusting the benevolent intentions of this exercise of power through knowledge, the quantitative nature of scientific medicine led to the creation of thresholds in which normalization is objectively defined. Being considered “normal,” medically or otherwise, is an essential, if not unintentional part of modern life. There is power inexplicitly exerted in the qualification of normality, causing the individual to reflect on himself as measured up to the standards of society.<sup>33</sup> This reflection on one’s own being and body challenges the individual to conform to the norm and to trust the experts to correct what is abnormal.<sup>34</sup>

Health is associated with normality and is seen as a necessary condition for belonging productively to society. A medical and societal commitment to eliminate

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<sup>32</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 35-37.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Romand Coles, *Self/Power/Other*, 60. “Self-reflection tends to normalize as it observes, both by impregnating the self with self-definitions constituted by hegemonic discourses and practices and by engendering certain ‘desirable’ characteristics while reducing those that are ‘undesirable’ or ‘other.’”

suffering is a way of producing a certain kind of standardized body, a good and healthy, properly functioning body, a promise which medicine often has the power to make and keep. But the reverse of this observation is also true—that illness and suffering represent abnormality in the person and failure on the part of the medical profession. Such failure forces a reassessment of what was supposed to be known, and what is not properly known demonstrates weakness.

The ways of thinking which have made medicine so successful in releasing man from his limitations, delaying his defeat to the enemies of illness and suffering, have demonstrated their power and effectiveness. The power of medicine and the medical profession is perhaps the most popular attribute of man's success.<sup>35</sup> But in their eventual failure in each individual, illness and suffering have become, by means of medicine's own success, inexplicable.<sup>36</sup> When the promised successes of medicine fail to deliver, the sick are often left with little to contextualize their condition. Pushing aside the more traditional ways of ordering life to a hierarchy of goods, of which bodily health is only

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<sup>35</sup> Lupton, *Medicine as Culture*, 53. "In popular media representations, medical technology, in particular is singled out as the apotheosis of medical magic. The trappings of technology: the complex machinery, the flashing lights, the 'blips' of the monitors, the graph measuring the strength and regularity of the pulse dwarf the figure of the patient, shown in medical dramas and news and documentary features as lying passively on the bed, connected to the machinery by various tubes and wires, rendered part-human, part-machine. In the news media, doctors are routinely presented as superhuman figures, the secular equivalent of clergy, and medicine is portrayed as the avenue by which miracles may be wrought."

<sup>36</sup> David Kuhl, *What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), xix, explains the inadequacy felt by healthcare professionals when the direction of their work is unable to bring about the desired results. "...[W]hen I saw patients in pain, I focused primarily on the physical components of pain. Many times I felt that I was doing the work of a detective, finding the cause of the pain and working to understand its every detail. I worked to identify the disease, ordering tests and prescribing appropriate medications or treatments to stop or reverse the disease process and enhance the quality of life. I had a vague sense that there must be more to what my patients were experiencing, but I was not certain how to address it. I wonder now whether my patients, during the course of my questioning, ever felt interrogated. I rarely asked questions about the impact of the disease on their life, their hopes and dreams, their relationships with others, or their belief system. Practically speaking, I wasn't even sure how I *could* ask those questions in the very limited amount of time I had during a scheduled appointment. But more important, what would I do with the answers?" (emphasis in original).

one, it leaves the ill with little on which to depend. Medicine's rejection of knowledge (religious and cultural narratives) that suggests that success and power are not found in quantifiable normalizations is self-defeating when medical attempts themselves fail.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2.2 Result of Medicine's Power Failure

Eric Cassell notes that medicine is not well suited for the discussion of suffering. Physicians and students of medicine are trained in the treatment of physical pain and the management of pain as a symptom of a greater physical abnormality which must be addressed. Suffering is seen all too often, Cassell notes, as just the manifestation of the real problem about which medicine must be concerned.<sup>38</sup>

Oliver O'Donovan is one of the most eloquent voices in describing how the success of medicine in contemporary culture has led to the presupposition that all suffering can and should be eliminated.<sup>39</sup> This elimination is a byproduct of the exalted status of individual freedom expressed in personal autonomy.<sup>40</sup> Current attitudes toward suffering are the result of both the technological abilities of medicine and the romantic notion of refusal to engage in what is unpleasant. Of the developments of modern liberal

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<sup>37</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 44. Earlier, Shuman established the kind of 'faith' that people have in scientific knowledge, such that, "...even when medicine falls short of the increasingly unrealistic expectations placed upon it by contemporary culture, that culture's significant and ever increasing faith in science as a savior is typically not considered as a possible cause of the disappointment. Rather, the scientific day of salvation is held up as a not-yet-arrived-at goal," citation on 7.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 30-32.

<sup>39</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1984), 8-12.

<sup>40</sup> The issue of the value of personal autonomy will be taken up below in the discussion of the relationship of contemporary bioethics and suffering. Shuman aptly notes that the desire for individual autonomy has been a constant driver in the advancement of medicine, *The Body of Compassion*, 44. "Modern biomedicine has to a significant extent been a discipline shaped by the thinking and practices of the Enlightenment, that way of thinking and living that according to Kant, would release women and men from their 'self-incurred tutelage' and free them to know and especially master their world."

society, O'Donovan proposes that the freedom not to be imposed upon is among the greatest. More often than not, this concept of freedom is not articulated as an active concept, the freedom *to* or *for* a human good, but rather as a passive freedom, the freedom *from* that which is perceived as undesirable. To exist individually in the private realm, without interference or threat, one should be able to exist without the influence of another person. As a freedom based on consumption rather than participation, the freedom not to suffer is an extension of that freedom.<sup>41</sup>

O'Donovan notes that society has come to expect the success of attaining this freedom not to suffer to the degree that if a technology or therapy is known to society and therefore to the patient, the doctor is expected to facilitate its use to a successful end. O'Donovan observes that modern medicine is practiced more and more as a retail trade whereby the concept of health is marketed to consumers. The imperative to alleviate suffering of any kind—medicine's promise to do it, and the patient's right to expect it—have changed the long-standing collaborative nature of the doctor-patient relationship. Where in the past, both the doctor and the patient had respective responsibilities and freedoms, O'Donovan notices that the responsibility has fallen entirely to the doctor and the freedom belongs only to the patient as a consumer. In such a relationship the only “virtue” which remains is a misguided compassion.<sup>42</sup>

Compassion is the virtue of being moved to action by the sight of suffering—that is to say, by the infringement of passive freedoms. It is a virtue that circumvents thought, since it prompts us immediately to action. It is a virtue that presupposes that an answer has already been found to the question ‘What needs to be done?’, a virtue of motivation rather than of

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<sup>41</sup> O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

reasoning. As such it is the appropriate virtue for a liberal revolution, which requires no independent thinking about the object of morality, only a very strong motivation to its practice.<sup>43</sup>

The practice of medicine moves largely unchallenged in any attempt to alleviate suffering. This is not to suggest that suffering should be ignored, but that several tendencies operating concurrently within medicine and society have created an unreasonable expectation of the avoidance of suffering. O'Donovan suggests that those within the medical profession are often the victims of unreasonable desires by patient-consumers for the removal of all suffering, while realizing that they have played a role in the creation of such a patient. With "compassion" as the only unanimously accepted virtue, the imperative to remove suffering becomes the greatest motivation for medical practice.

Ivan Illich traces the development of the absolute imperative of the removal of suffering to what he calls today's "anesthetic society."<sup>44</sup> Society is judged by its medical

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>44</sup> Illich, *Medical Nemesis*, 150-152. Illich provides a fascinating and compact historical account of the Enlightenment era's attempt to understand the proper place of pain in man's experience. Ironically, although today's medical imperative to eliminate pain and suffering stem from the success of Enlightenment thought, such an imperative was not initially seen as a potential result. "For Descartes pain became a signal with which the body reacts in self-defense to protect its mechanical integrity. These reactions to danger are transmitted to the soul, which recognizes them as painful. Pain was reduced to a useful learning device: it now taught the soul how to avoid further damage to the body. Leibnitz sums up this new perspective when he quotes with approval a sentence by Regis, who was in turn a pupil of Descartes: 'The great engineer of the universe as made man as perfectly as he could make him, and he could not have invented a better device for his maintenance than to provide him with a sense of pain.' Leibnitz's comment on this sentence is instructive. He says first that in principle it would have been even better if God had used positive rather than negative reinforcement, inspiring pleasure each time a man turned away from the fire that could destroy him. However, he concludes that God could have succeeded with this strategy only by working miracles, and since, as a matter of principle, God avoids miracles, 'pain is a necessary and brilliant device to ensure man's functioning.' Within two generations of Descartes' attempt at a scientific anthropology, pain has become useful. From being the experience of the precariousness of existence, it had turned into an indicator of specific breakdown. By the end of the last century, pain had become a regulator of bodily functions, subject to the laws of nature; it needed no more metaphysical explanation. It had ceased to deserve any mystical respect and could be subjected to

ability to reduce suffering. With the potential to do so, Illich concludes, as did O'Donovan, that the goal of freedom for and judgment of the success of a culture is no longer oriented actively toward a good, but rather as achieving passive freedom from discomfort. Suffering and pain are seen as passive inflictions on the helpless, not due in part to the examination of human goods and limits, but only because the tools of medicine are not being adequately used or distributed.<sup>45</sup> Contrasted with theologies and cultural narratives which incorporate existential significance to suffering and provide meaningful contexts as well as distractions for the sufferer, the modern success of dealing with pain and suffering has come by way of technique alone. With regard to the former:

The cultural setting not only provides the grammar and technique, the myths and examples used in its characteristic 'craft of suffering well,' but also the instructions on how to integrate this repertoire. The medicalization of pain, on the other hand, has fostered a hypertrophy of just one of these modes—management by technique—and reinforced the decay of the others. Above all, it has rendered either incomprehensible or shocking the idea that skill in the art of suffering might be the most effective and universally acceptable way of dealing with pain. Medicalization deprives any culture of the integration of its program for dealing with pain.<sup>46</sup>

George Khushf suggests that a lack of an understanding of the order of creation, in which the goodness of bodily health is a means to a greater good, has done a disservice to the sick. The rejection of a disorder in creation, positively expressed in the belief of the human potential to overcome the limitations of human nature, has led not only to seeing

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empirical study in order to do away with it. By 1853, barely a century and a half after pain was recognized as a mere physiological safeguard, a medicine labeled as a 'pain-killer' was marketed in La Crosse, Wisconsin. A new sensibility had developed which was dissatisfied with the world, not because it was dreary or sinful or lacking in enlightenment or threatened by barbarians, but because it was full of suffering and pain."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 145.

the presence of suffering as a failure of the medical project, but the body of the ill as an evil which must be overcome.<sup>47</sup> The result is the objectification and manipulation of the body and a dualist vision of the human subject, pitting the goodness of the body trying to regain health and wellness against the obvious potential for illness and death. The refusal to give meaning to that obvious potential within man, the rejection of a larger narrative (the disorder of creation through the sinfulness of humanity) while at the same time pursuing a limitless potentiality of medicine, leaves the sick person caught in a dual failure. The first is a failure to overcome the limits of his nature, which are all the while being denied, and the second is a failure to give explanation and meaning to suffering when it inevitably occurs.<sup>48</sup>

The power that medicine has developed in the lives of contemporary patients has encouraged an idolatry of health. Khushf recognizes the cultish dimensions of health where strength and youth are not only idealized, but become the norm such that aging itself is synonymous with weakness. Aging has become a type of disease to be treated and sickness rises to the level of the primary evil to be conquered.<sup>49</sup> This is not a new temptation to mankind, but the growth in medical technology makes the imperative all the stronger. Khushf notes:

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<sup>47</sup> George Khushf, "Illness, the Problem of Evil, and the Analogical Structure of Healing: The Difference Christianity Makes in Bioethics" in *Christian Bioethics*, 1995, vol. 1, no. 1, 103-04.

<sup>48</sup> See Edmund Pellegrino, "Toward a Richer Bioethics: A Conclusion" in *Health and Human Flourishing*, eds. Carol R. Taylor and Roberto Dell'Oro, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 247-269. Pellegrino traces the trajectories of two views of what it means to be human, the contemporary secular standard and a Catholic view. He states that each creates a bioethical standard and that this difference is most evident in debates around issues in which suffering seeks to be eliminated—the use of embryonic stem cells for research, for uses of biotechnology which surpass therapy and healing, for assisted suicide and euthanasia.

<sup>49</sup> George Khushf, "Illness, the Problem of Evil," 106.

In a masterful discussion of the relation of ancient philosophy to medicine, Ludwig Edelstein shows how philosophers like Plato and Aristotle confronted a similar cult. Physicians of the time set forth health as the *summum bonum*, and they laid out a full regimen of diet and exercise, along with rules—can we say ‘norms’—about what could and could not be done. In response, philosophers argued that medicine is unable to address which ends are the appropriate ones. Medicine begins with a relative end, health, and then determines what furthers or hinders the realization of this end. But it can say nothing about how its end is to be ranked relative to other important ends. The valuation of medicine and its ends thus depends on the supreme good of humanity, and this is determined independently of medicine.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps health has become the greatest cult, and suffering the greatest evil to be destroyed due to a fact of human nature that Aristotle recognized even before any of the technology which makes its pursuit obligatory in today’s culture could have been pondered. Commenting on the various intermediate goods man pursues, wealth, honor, pleasure etc., he notes that part of the human condition is to change one’s mind during one’s life as to which of these goods is highest. Noting his claim that it is often the absence of a good which brings about a greater longing for it, “since in sickness he thinks of health, in poverty wealth...”,<sup>51</sup> one notes the universality of the desire for health over the rest. In the pursuit of these intermediate goods, one can observe the various discrepancies in their distribution. While some individuals are obviously more physically well than others, of all the intermediate goods health is the most universally appreciated. That is to say, of the intermediate goods, health, though not equally dispersed, is still more equally dispersed than power, honor, wealth, etc. All suffer (granted, not in equal

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 106-07 citing Ludwig Edelstein, “The Relation of Ancient Philosophy to Medicine” in O. Temkin and C.L. Temkin (eds.), *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967).

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachian Ethics*, Terence Irwin, trans., (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 5.

measure) and die, but certainly not all receive an equal a distribution of the other intermediate goods.

In the recognition of its inability to have ultimate control over human nature, that death comes to all who live, medical science in conceding the reality of death, attempts to do so without suffering. The idea of “tolerable death” as advanced by Daniel Callahan in his study of setting limits for health care of the elderly, is symptomatic of the middle ground often held by medicine and medical ethics.<sup>52</sup> Aware of its inability to avoid death as a part of the human condition, yet unable to offer any substitute in its failure, medicine’s attempt at justification for the complete unobstructed exercise of its power is to move ahead in the battle to end suffering while denying the intrinsic disorder of its patient. He defines “tolerable death” as meeting three criteria, occurring at a time in which: one’s life potentials are sufficiently met, one’s moral obligations have been discharged, and death will not seem to survivors as an offense to sensibility or cause despair.<sup>53</sup>

While these seem like quite reasonable expectations of a good life (and death), Stanley Hauerwas rightly critiques them as characteristic of the cultural attitude toward life expectancies and as constituting a refusal to accept elements of life outside of human control. The concept of “life potential” is far too vague and formal to ever be met. Hauerwas argues that human beings will likely never admit of all potentials being fulfilled. Is there not always more to do? Similarly, life has obligations at every stage.

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<sup>52</sup> Daniel Callahan, *Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

Which ones should be objectified as reasonable or expected? What measure could be used to standardize such expectations? Finally, the criteria for one's death not offending the sensibilities of others places too much weight on the opinions of others instead of on the interpretation of the individual.<sup>54</sup> Life cannot be lived attempting to justify one's purpose by what others would judge to be successful. It is not how others view the death of someone which holds the most significance.

These criteria are the result of an attempt to control the uncontrollable within life, to set limits on life's limitations, and to overly objectify the "values" which make up one's life as seen by others. In the end, Callahan recognizes the individualism which undermines the attempt to see intergenerational communal value in the elderly and infirm. The addiction our society has to this individualism and the promises offered by medical progress lead him to a profound conclusion:

Yet the greatest obstacle may be our almost utter inability to find a meaningful place in public discourse for suffering and decline in life. They are recognized only as enemies to be fought: with science, with social programs, and with a supreme optimism that with sufficient energy and imagination they can be overcome. We have created a way of life that can only leave serious questions of limits, finitude, the proper ends of human life, of evil and suffering, in the realm of the private self or of religion; they are thus treated as incorrigibly subjective or merely pietistic.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3 The Results of Viewing Suffering as Weakness and Failure

Faced with the reality of suffering, and medicine's inability to eliminate it from its midst, the success of medicine ironically in some instances adds to the suffering of those

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<sup>54</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *God, Medicine and Suffering*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 108-09.

<sup>55</sup> Callahan, *Setting Limits*, 220.

who are ill. Without a doubt, medicine has certainly addressed the physical dimension of human suffering. But at the same time, its success undermines the human ability to deal with the inevitable suffering that man experiences, such that man may suffer less quantitatively, but likely qualitatively suffers more.

As George Khushf has argues, the removal of narratives which contextualize the experience of suffering has brought about an ignorance of the realities behind human suffering. The idolatry of health, with its immediate means, usurps the Christian view of bodily life, which orders physical needs within greater spiritual ones and strips the ill of the words which give meaning to the suffering he experiences.<sup>56</sup> Medicine inserts its own “answers” as standards and norms which, though necessary in evaluating physical manifestations of suffering, inadvertently create their own value system.<sup>57</sup> The assumption is that man can account for and overcome the limits he experiences by addressing the needs of the body as the fullness of man’s expression of himself. These efforts are self-defeating. Ironically:

Their efforts to perfect the body and bring it under the realm of choice do not restore the body to the willing and choosing subject but rather place it under the hegemony of a society that produces the subjects whose desires and choices enable it to accomplish its normalizing ambitions.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Khushf, “Illness,” 103-04. He notes the reversal of the preferential position of the sick in early Christianity. The care given to the ill, as well as the poor, widowed, and rejected from society was a practical manifestation of the church’s understanding of the human condition within the plan of man’s redemption. The care was a way to contextualize suffering and catechize the greater community about both the dignity of the person and the need for redemption.

<sup>57</sup> See Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 28, on the dangerous effects of overemphasizing the scientific dimension of medicine to the detriment of the dignity of the patient: “Science cannot be the dominant force in medicine because it is in the service of something larger than itself.”

<sup>58</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 222.

The results of this process of medical evaluation is to subject the body and person of man to the objectifications of normalization. The standards of medical observation are internalized in individuals, and the power created by scientific medical knowledge asserts itself in the evaluation of man's condition. The desire to make more individuals fit within the parameters of normalcy, leads to the production of the bodies of others which fit the established standards. "His [contemporary man's] compassion for the suffering of others is thus formed by and expressed in these normalizing processes."<sup>59</sup>

As noted by Oliver O'Donovan above, compassion as a reaction, and not a virtue, allows ill and suffering people to be viewed in terms of utility, often described as their potential to survive, contribute to society, and possess a certain quality of life. It must be stated that medicine does facilitate real compassion in establishing norms and measuring people according to these norms to evaluate their needs and advance their health, but the evaluation of the "normalcy" of a patient can have crippling existential effects.

Compassion may not simply be exercised in the care and treatment of the ill and suffering, but also can be illegitimately exercised by the elimination of one who suffers.

As [Stanley] Hauerwas argues, compassion for the sufferer results in elimination of the sufferer who will never approximate the standards. It is also not surprising that as Baconian medicine keeps increasing the standards for a "normal" body in a society that measures and calculates bodies according to these standards, the marginalization of those whose bodies cannot meet the standards is increased and their worth in the eyes of society is diminished.<sup>60</sup>

The elimination of the suffering patient comes at the hands of the technology by which human life is supposed to be enriched. Clearly, the view of suffering as failure

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 223.

within the medical project also influences the value of the individual who is the victim of the suffering. The technological means by which physical abnormalities are observed exercise an evaluative power over the individual to be helped. Historically, the eugenics movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century pointed to the dangerous potential of the evaluative purposes of medical technology and a misguided compassion, leading to its proper societal and legal condemnation.<sup>61</sup>

Contemporary medicine is filled with examples of this same attempt at compassion which undermines the inherent value of the individual. Barbara Katz Rothman examines the role of the diagnostic technology of amniocentesis, by chronicling pregnant women who feel the influence of the power of this type of medical technology, as well as those who administer it.<sup>62</sup> The prenatal diagnosis offered in amniocentesis is currently used to detect chromosomal abnormalities, most often Downs' Syndrome.<sup>63</sup> As very few treatment options are currently available for such genetic defects, the information gathered by amniocentesis is nearly exclusively used to persuade the parents in the aborting of the affected child:

Although some people have discussed the value of being forewarned of genetic or other diseases even in a pregnancy the woman intends to carry to term, abortion is an integral part of this new technology. Fetal treatments do not exist for these diseases. The overwhelming majority of people who are told of serious disease or damage in the fetus do abort.

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<sup>61</sup> See among others, Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). The irony regarding the elimination of persons as a means to better human life in general stands out in nearly every account of the eugenics movement.

<sup>62</sup> Barbara Katz Rothman, *The Tentative Pregnancy: How Amniocentesis Changes the Experience of Motherhood*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. Other genetic defects such as Tay Sachs disease and sickle-cell anemia, as well as other *in utero* defects such as spina bifida and hydrocephalus are the most commonly tested by amniocentesis.

These abortions, abortions to prevent the birth of a handicapped or disabled child, are among the most socially acceptable of abortions.<sup>64</sup>

Rothman is clearly unapologetic for the use of abortion to avoid bringing to term a child with genetic defects. Her book is a focus on the dilemmas that information gained through genetic testing *in utero* have on the “potential” mothers. What develops from her interviews with mothers and genetic counselors is the justification of the cultural expectation that women who have the potential to deliver children with birth defects detectable before birth should both undergo amniocentesis, and are justified in, if not more “responsible” when, aborting children who show signs of having significant birth defects.<sup>65</sup>

Even though the genetic counselors in her study claim not to direct their clients, Rothman not only rightly doubts their ability to be neutral in suggesting options for the mothers who are informed of the presence of genetic defects in their children, but also appears to think that such neutrality might not be appropriate.

If your [counselor’s] experience with genetic abnormalities is such that you can say, as one counselor did about why she went into prenatal counseling, “I’ve had enough freaky kids throw up on me. I want to get it before it happens”; if you can say about Downs Syndrome, as another counselor said to me, “Sure they can be sweet children. And they grow up to be ugly adults”, if this is how you see it, how can you *not* influence? If the counselor thinks this woman sitting across from her is going to do something she will deeply regret for the rest of her life, how can she *not*

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 46. The influence of the views of the genetic counselors cannot be emphasized enough. Rothman demonstrates that the counselors, who themselves in an overwhelming number would demand the test for themselves and their daughters even when there was no genetic history or risk for the mother’s age, have an enormous impact on the decisions of the mothers who are informed of risks and/or positive results for genetic defects. “The counselors shape the [meeting] session, and thus the decision-making process, by directing the woman’s attention toward some questions and away from others. The counselors themselves, as one might imagine, mostly think that amnio and selective abortion is a good thing, something that expands women’s control of their lives.”

influence her? Just what kind of person would she be is she saw someone heading off a cliff and sat back “nondirectively”?<sup>66</sup>

Rothman presents the stories of both the women who must make the difficult decision about whether or not to continue to carry a baby with genetic defects to term as well as the challenge of counselors who are frustrated when women choose not to abort. After all, these counselors “try to help people for their own good.”<sup>67</sup> While not downplaying the difficulty of the choice to abort a child with genetic abnormalities, it is clear that within significant parts of the medical community, the outright removal of the child in the womb is considered to be the both the responsible choice and in the end the kindest choice for all involved.<sup>68</sup>

Technology has introduced the concept of control into situations which were not possible to control in previous times. Perhaps more than in any other specialization of the medical field, genetic counseling demonstrates the power of technology, a power intended to give more choices in dealing with medical abnormalities, a power often exercised over individuals. On multiple occasions, Rothman admits the irony of the development of amniocentesis. The women with whom she spoke felt so often as if there were no good choice to make, despite the new option that amniocentesis brings.<sup>69</sup> It is

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 47, (emphasis in original).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> William E. May, *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Life*, (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 225, “Today, in our secular society, many think that if genetic testing shows that a couple is at high risk of conceiving a child affected by a serious genetically based malady, that the couple ought to take effective steps to prevent either the conception or birth of such a child...by effective steps for preventing birth should tests *in utero* show that the child is, or may well be, afflicted by such a malady, they mean abortion.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 14. “On an individual level they [amniocentesis and selective abortion] certainly solve some very grave troubles. People who have successfully used the technologies have had their choices expand, have gained control over their lives. In just the same way, contraception and abortion provide us with the very

hauntingly apparent here that the highest use of medical science is not so much to treat illness as to offer control of the circumstances which surround the illnesses, by eliminating suffering persons who are significantly abnormal. Other possible, non-medical reasons for elective abortion are becoming more and more socially acceptable.

In societies in which the number of children is very tightly limited, with China's one-child policy as the extreme, then a patriarchal influence shows itself in boy preference and the abortion of females. This is part of the whole "perfect child" syndrome. We want to cut down on the numbers of children we have by eliminating or "weeding out" the "undesirable" children, which includes not only the physically and mentally damaged, but also the "excess" by sex. In most modern countries, the demand is for not one child, but for two, allowing a "one-each" balance.<sup>70</sup>

The medical presumption for selective abortion when faced with genetic abnormalities demonstrates the lack of medicine to deal with its failure. The "compassion" offered here for the mother is in no way ordered to the increase of the health of any individual. It is instead, an application of the potential for medical technology to exercise power over individuals who do not measure up to the standards of health.

The elimination of the suffering person is an illustration of medicine's inability to address suffering in any other way than to eliminate those who remind society of its presence, if it cannot be eliminated in a person. Obviously medicine should be concerned about abnormalities for children *in utero*. Obviously, for both the sake of the individual

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real and very true experience of controlling our fertility. Choices open and choices close. For those whose choices meet the social expectations, for those who want what the society wants them to want, the experience of choice is very real....Amniocentesis and selective abortion, like embryo transplants, surrogate motherhood, and other new reproductive technologies, are all being used to give *the illusion of choice*," (emphasis added).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 140.

child and the family, no one would desire or wish upon someone else the struggle and suffering entailed with the birth of a genetically abnormal child. In addition, there are extremely difficult situations in which children are born so ill and suffering, without significant chances of survival, that decisions about the treatments to be offered to them could be debated. But the attitudes surrounding the practice of genetic counseling illustrate a failure of medicine to properly order its resources to caring for suffering in an individual, opting instead to eliminate the presence of the sufferer. Technological power provides an illusion of choice and a pressure to flee from suffering rather than to address it.<sup>71</sup>

Responding to this apparent assumption within at least one specialization of the medical profession that children who have birth defects should be aborted for their own sake and for the sake of those who will have to live with and care for them, Patricia Bauer has written on the impact of prenatal testing and abortion on society's understanding of health and suffering.<sup>72</sup> As a mother of child with Downs Syndrome and a former reporter and bureau chief for the *Washington Post*, she has a unique ability to diagnose the jaundiced nature of society's view of illness and suffering. She relates conversations with fellow professionals who assume that she is the victim of circumstance, perhaps not having had access to proper pre-natal care. She describes her daughter's physician who relates that society sees fewer and fewer children with

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<sup>71</sup> Maritain, *Range of Reason*, 187. "Modern man placed his hope in machinism, in technique, and in mechanical or industrial civilization—without wisdom to dominate them and put them at the service of human good and freedom; for he expected freedom from the development of external techniques themselves, not from an ascetic effort toward the internal possession of the self."

<sup>72</sup> Patricia Bauer, "The Abortion Debate No One Wants to Have," *Washington Post*, A25, October 18, 2005

significant disabilities simply because they are not being allowed to be born. She was surprised by the reactions of “normal” people who meet a successful woman and her daughter in public:

Whenever I am out with Margaret, I’m conscious that she represents a group whose ranks are shrinking because of the wide availability of prenatal testing and abortion. I don’t know how many pregnancies are terminated because of prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome, but some studies estimate 80 to 90 percent. Imagine. As Margaret bounces through life, especially out here in the land of the perfect body, I see the way people look at her: curious, surprised, sometimes wary, occasionally disapproving or alarmed. I know that most women of childbearing age that we may encounter have judged her and her cohort, and have found their lives to be not worth living. To them, Margaret falls into the category of avoidable human suffering. At best, a tragic mistake. At worst, a living embodiment of the pro-life movement. Less than human. A drain on society. That someone I love is regarded this way is unspeakably painful to me.<sup>73</sup>

Not able to distinguish the difference between the desire for fewer genetic abnormalities in persons and fewer actual persons who embody these abnormalities, medical progress has created a sense of control over life in which the people whose lives are supposed to benefit from its technology and growth are instead eliminated as a reminder of its failure. What has happened simultaneously as those with significant disabilities quietly disappear from among our culture is the disappearance of our culture’s ability to deal with suffering, to have it for oneself or see it in another.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. other sources regarding the anthropological impact of genetic counseling and abortion, including William E. May, *Catholic Bioethics*, 220-223, and magisterial texts which confirm that there is nothing immoral *per se* in prenatal diagnosis, so long as the life and integrity of both the embryo and mother are respected. This would obviously exclude tests aimed at inducing abortion if genetic abnormalities are detected or if the tests themselves subject the embryo or mother to disproportionate health risks. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (Washington, DC: USCCB Publication, 2002), no. 50, and Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, nos. 59-61.

Euthanasia is another example of the desire to exercise control over suffering.

In the attempt to give patients who are suffering from terminal illnesses control over their own deaths, the right to determine the end of one's life is advanced as the one controllable dimension of what is uncontrollable in suffering. Eric Pavlat examines the current movement of what he sees as a culture that is leaning more and more to the acceptance of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. He rightly suggests that this debate is more likely to touch individuals personally than other morally controversial issues, for although people may hold fast to certain moral principles which are not likely to personally affect them, they are more likely to face the challenge of end-of-life decisions for themselves or for loved ones with the inevitability of suffering.<sup>75</sup> While the United States culture has traditionally been seen as a hostile environment for euthanasia, recent legal and cultural phenomena seem to point to a change in the tide.

Shai Lavi traces the roots of the movements to legitimize the practice of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in the United States. He contrasts the current wave of debate in American culture with the debates that took place in the 1930's. At that time the issue of euthanasia had a more eugenic and social Darwinian tone. Euthanasia was viewed as an option that would benefit not so much the suffering patient, but more so the society that was forced to carry the burden of the dying.<sup>76</sup> Now however, with a lack of clarity in popular culture in recognizing the difference between active euthanasia and the allowance of death for those who have exhausted normal and

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<sup>75</sup> Eric Pavlat "Pulling the Plug" in *Crisis*, Vol. 24 No. 3, (April 2006) 14.

<sup>76</sup> Shai Lavi, *The Modern Art of Dying: A History of Euthanasia in the United States*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University), 2005, 164.

proportionate means to cure illness, the momentum of movements who favor what they term a “right to die” appears to be growing.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.4 Patient Autonomy and Suffering

Many see the growing acceptance of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide as a response to what has been perceived as a paternalistic approach to medicine.

Paternalism signifies a mindset where decisions about the medical care of a patient are made without knowledge of or even against the preferences and consent of the patient.<sup>78</sup>

In the arena of the treatment of the terminally ill, the effects of paternalist medicine have led to the overzealous futile treatment of patients, and point to the failure of medicine to relinquish its perceived power over the human condition.<sup>79</sup> Often a rejection of the inevitable impending death of a patient leads to unnecessarily burdensome treatments to patients in their final moments. Terminally ill patients who would much prefer dying

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<sup>77</sup> Arthur Dyck, “Contemporary Attitudes Toward Death and Dying,” *Communicating the Catholic Vision of Life: Proceedings from the Twelfth Bishops Workshop*, Russel Smith, ed., Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center, 1993, 138-145. He traces the divergent attitudes on facing suffering before death and the legal precedents established by these attitudes. He notes a growth of perspective based on the thought of John Stuart Mill, that life is a calculated right, and that in the Paul Brophy case of 1986, a truly ‘American’ ideal that one should not interfere with the wishes of others (Brophy’s wish to cease the reception of food and water) shows an prevailing attitude of protecting the wishes of a patient to any end. The dissenting opinion in the Brophy case cited Thomas Hobbes who would justify external power to protect life. Dyck notes that although the Hobbesian argument retains a right to life, because of an overreaching social contract, it fails to address “the natural proclivities and inhibitions which actualize cooperative, communal behavior.” Because the current legal argumentation around euthanasia is based upon human life as a right to which someone must articulate the highest claim, there can be nothing more than a jockeying for position with regard to who deserves the right to make decisions regarding the suffering faced. “Small wonder, then, that those who accept, implicitly or explicitly, the perspective on human nature found in Hobbes and Mill find the meaning of life ambiguous: When that right is justified because it is based on our egoistic desires to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, what can we expect from others driven by similar egoist desires is unclear, to say the least. What we claim, and what we receive, if driven by egoistic desires, may be good or it may be evil,” (citations on 145).

<sup>78</sup> William F. May, *The Patient’s Ordeal*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 28-35.

<sup>79</sup> For a thorough description of the challenges of defining medical futility, see Kelly, *Contemporary Catholic Health Care Ethics*, 209-219.

peacefully at home, have been subjected to a prolonged death in hospitals in an effort to do anything to fight off the inevitable. The interest in euthanasia is largely a reaction against fears of such paternalistic medicine.<sup>80</sup>

Richard McCormick sees the increase in the discussion of patient autonomy as an understandable reaction to the former prevalence of a paternalistic attitude in the medical profession. But he notes that frequently reactions have a way of becoming over-reactions.<sup>81</sup> This certainly seems to be the case with some applications of the principle of autonomy, which risk what McCormick calls the “absolutization” of autonomy.

Euthanasia is perhaps the best example of medicine’s desire to give patients power over suffering, when it can give nothing else. Autonomy becomes the last bastion of control over the human condition.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Christakis, *Death Foretold: Prophecy and Prognosis in Medical Care*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xiv.

<sup>81</sup> Richard McCormick, “Physician-Assisted Suicide: Flight from Compassion,” in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 668.

<sup>82</sup> Callahan, *Setting Limits*, 242-43. “The movement to legalize euthanasia rests upon precisely the same assumptions about human need, health, and the role of medicine that have created our present crisis—the right to, and necessity of, full control over our fate. Legally available active euthanasia would worsen, not help, that crisis. By assuming that, in the face of a failure of medicine to cure our illness or stop our dying, we should have the right to be killed, the euthanasia movement gives to the value of control over self and nature too high a place at too high a social cost. The contemporary medical enterprise has increasingly become one that considers the triumph of illness and the persistence of death both a human failure and a supreme challenge still to be overcome. It is an enterprise that feeds on hope, that constantly tells itself how much farther it has to go, that takes all progress to date as simply a prologue to the further progress that can be achieved. Nothing less than total control of human nature, the banishment of its illnesses and diseases, seems to be the implicit ultimate goal. The argument for euthanasia seems to be agreeing about the centrality and validity of control as a goal: if medicine cannot now give us the health and continued life we want, it can and should at least give us a total control over the timing and circumstances of our death, bringing its skills to bear to achieve that end. There is a clear consequence of this view: our slavery to our power over nature is now complete. Euthanasia is, in that respect, the other side of the coin of unlimited medical progress. The compassion it seeks is not just in response to pain and suffering. It is more deeply a response to our failure to achieve final control over our destiny. That is why we cannot be rid of pain.”

Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in their *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, have developed an often cited secular bioethical standard. Their four principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice, are a foundation for attempting to find binding ethical guidelines in a pluralistic setting of religious and moral beliefs.<sup>83</sup> In its five editions since 1979, it has become one of the most popular sources for the foundations upon which more specific bioethical principles are built.<sup>84</sup>

Legal scholar Richard Dworkin argues that the principle of autonomy, or self responsibility, has always been at the heart of the American legal tradition. More importantly, the special responsibility for one's own life fulfillment is woven into the morals of our culture. Ethical decisions based upon this principle of autonomy have been made in order to protect individuals from impositions of another's or society's collective will. Personally-defining or life-defining decisions belong in principle to the one whose life is affected.<sup>85</sup>

The construction of these four principles, with autonomy taking the lead, has its own internal flaws. These four principles are built upon a lowest common denominator of morality, a morality that is pieced together in a medical community of strangers. Gilbert Meilaender points out that an obvious difficulty with the heralding of these four foundational principles is that they are idle, that not a single one of them carries more

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<sup>83</sup> Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>84</sup> See also James Childress, "Rights and Responsibilities of Patients," *Changing Values in Medicine*, ed. Eric Cassell and Mark Siegler, (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1985), as cited by Eric Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 26. "Freedom and self-determination represent values more important than recovery from illness."

<sup>85</sup> Richard Dworkin, "Euthanasia, Morality and Law," Fritz B. Burns Lecture, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles CA, November 22, 1996 in *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, vol. 31:1123, 1149.

weight than the other. This allows for no lack of difficulty in situations where principles may appear to be in conflict. He notes the particular difficulty in tensions between respect for autonomy and beneficence. This is in fact, the real difficulty in the issue of paternalistic medicine. Nothing in the popular theory contextualizes difficult situations in which autonomy and beneficence are at odds. In a moral theory led by a utilitarian framework, one could appeal to beneficence over patient autonomy. In a deontological theory, it would appear as if patient autonomy would have the upper hand.<sup>86</sup> In the development of medicine in this highly pluralistic setting, the principle of autonomy appears to have taken the lead.

Major changes in health care have rendered problematic a conception of medicine in terms of friendship. Pluralism in values; the decline of close, intimate contact over time between professionals and patients; the rise of specialists who treat only part of the whole person; and the growth of large, impersonal, and bureaucratic institutions of health care have all contributed to the loss of intimacy and community...In the absence of community, then, principles, rules, and procedures become increasingly important.<sup>87</sup>

Meilaender observes that the secular approach to bioethics has, in many circumstances, turned out primarily to be a defense of the principle of autonomy. Any method which seeks to shape public policy on a level that can be agreed upon in a pluralistic setting will avoid finding meaning and guidance in goals that not all of its citizens share. The weight placed upon the principle of autonomy becomes the approach upon which at least everyone can agree, that individuals and society ought certainly to

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<sup>86</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Body, Soul and Bioethics*, (Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 14.

<sup>87</sup> Edwin DuBose, Ronald Hamel, and Lawrence O'Connell, eds., *A Matter of Principles? Ferment in U.S. Bioethics*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 88.

respect the privacy and wishes of the patient. And while the principle of caution for patient autonomy is certainly crucial in treating patients with the respect that they need, it does not offer substantial guidance for difficult moral circumstances. This respect against an over-paternalistic approach to medical care is required, but primarily as a means to a particular good end, not an end in and of itself.<sup>88</sup> The theory of respect for autonomy as a foundational principle is unable to address any crucial disagreements on key biomedical issues such as suffering, death and the dignity afforded to all persons.<sup>89</sup>

Certainly an abuse of the principle of autonomy is possible. Several authors examining trends in contemporary moral culture believe that has in fact happened:

It is important to note that Beauchamp and Childress are clearer than many others have been about the meaning of their commitment to autonomy. They distinguish between the ideal of the autonomous person and the principle of respect for personal autonomy. They are committed to the latter, not the former. And, in fact, they question whether we ought even share the ideal of the autonomous person. Still, their failure to provide a more substantial account of the ‘self’ presupposed by their principle of respect for autonomy or ‘self’-determination means that the ideal of the autonomous person (as one who chooses his life plan and acts independently of any external authority) is likely to govern most uses of their theory.<sup>90</sup>

This overreaching principle of autonomy, in part a reaction to overly paternalistic and futile care, is in part responsible for the effort to legitimize euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. Unlike other difficult moral issues, it appears that the principle of autonomy alone can substantiate a patient’s request for assistance for euthanasia. After

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<sup>88</sup> See Maritain, *Range of Reason*, 187. “Modern man claimed human rights and dignity—without God, for his ideology grounded human rights and human dignity on a godlike, infinite autonomy of human will, which any rule or measurement received from Another World offend and destroy.”

<sup>89</sup> Meilaender, *Body Soul and Bioethics*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 118, footnote 34.

all, no one besides the patient himself appears to be harmed by the practice. If not the patient, then who better has the right to make a decision about the alleviation of his suffering? In a sense, if a patient believes that this choice is just, then since no one else is harmed, euthanasia, if requested, must be a legitimate moral option. In fact, euthanasia might be the paradigm for carrying the principle of autonomy to its rational end. As can be seen in the Netherlands, even during the time when all euthanasia was illegal, the courts failed to find any competing interests or principles sufficient to override a patient's request for it based upon the understood respect for his own autonomy.<sup>91</sup>

Stanley Hauerwas indicates that the overemphasis on autonomy has led to the understanding that suicide may not only be viewed as understandable in certain circumstances, but has in many circles, come to be understood as a right. This right can be understood up against other more fundamental rights when one, in a pluralistic setting, sees nothing as having intrinsic value. Suicide moves from what is normally considered irrational in a healthy person, to quite rational when the threat of losing the quality of life (desired by a particular autonomous agent) is weighed against the less intrinsically stable dignity of human life.<sup>92</sup>

The popular ideal of autonomy involves an unrealistic concept of self-sufficiency, independent of, or even in opposition to community. Taken to its extreme, any social authority is seen as a necessary evil, required to limit social conflict. John Finnis and

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<sup>91</sup> Gomez, *Regulating Death: Euthanasia and the Case of the Netherlands*, New York: Macmillan, 1991, 16.

<sup>92</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, "Rational Suicide and Reasons for Living," in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 671.

Anthony Fisher discuss the difference between legitimate autonomy, such as conformed consent in medical care, confidentiality and trust, and that conception of autonomy which is an expression of the dignity of the patient, and that autonomy which places all other goods at the disposal of a particular patient's desires. Such a false principle of autonomy is a vehicle for a radical reinterpreting of every other principle and good, even at the trumping of justice and beneficence.<sup>93</sup>

As Gerald McKinney observes, the intensity of the principle of autonomy has driven medical pursuits to the irrational goals of self-determination and of an artificial control over illness and death. The emphasis on the four fundamental principles of Beauchamp and Childress, with autonomy as the trump card over and against the other three, is not simply a reconciliation of common goods in a pluralistic society, but rather a displacement of any types of traditional norms whatsoever.<sup>94</sup>

Richard McCormick in describing an "absolutization" of autonomy sees two dangerous offshoots of its growing prevalence. First, there is little discussion about the larger values in play in an ethical decision, and in such a vacuum, the simple fact that the choice is a patient's can be looked upon as the uniquely appropriate means for reaching a decision. He compares this to the frequently used conversation-stopper regarding the "pro-choice" position in abortion: "it's my body." An absolutization of autonomy evaporates the fact that some choices are good and some choices are bad. Secondly, McCormick sees a dangerous trend in that what autonomy is fundamentally doing is

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<sup>93</sup> John Finnis and Anthony Fisher, "Theology and the Four Principles of Bioethics: A Roman Catholic View" in *Principles of Health Care Ethics*, Raanan Gillon, ed., (Chichester: John Wiley, 1993), 38.

<sup>94</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 31-32.

rejecting any dependence upon others. It is an exercise in alienation in many ways, seeking not to be interdependent upon others, but completely free of the need to be in a relationship requiring others. Yet at its core, this attitude is not what medical care has always been about.<sup>95</sup>

Fundamentally, the principle of autonomy fails to grant to human life any objective status. As a principle, it is limited toward the service of what is good, in that one ought to be free to choose, but that choice is ordered to what is life-giving and fulfilling. Gilbert Meilaender predicts what our culture will find in the growing lauding of personal autonomy. At first, all the choices of autonomous patients will be honored, the patients deciding when their own definition of fulfillment has been met and the quality of life has waned to a point they no longer want. One's advance directives and living wills will be honored to spare us a life that we would not want. But what of the one who could desire that all possible means of support be used to keep him alive at all costs? In principle, this application of autonomy would have to be honored. In situations where this has not been the case, it is hard to say that there is not something less virtuous than a desire for personal autonomy of the patient present. It is in this forbidden paternalistic external declaration that a life is no longer worth living.<sup>96</sup> This example points out that although personal autonomy is the popularly cited, virtuous, and externally bias-free

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<sup>95</sup> McCormick, "Physician-Assisted Suicide", 668.

<sup>96</sup> Meilaender, *Body, Soul and Bioethics*, 52.

reason why euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide is understood as legitimate, often the forbidden judgment of someone else's worth is lurking in the shadows.<sup>97</sup>

In the end, the principle of autonomy has gained strength proportionately to the loss of the contemplation of the mystery of suffering. Medicine's success in reducing suffering has reduced the ethical evaluation of how to deal with it to a question of power. Instead of the debate of what should or should not be done in caring for the sick, the relevant question instead is reduced to who should have the power to make the decision, regardless of its goodness.<sup>98</sup>

In an attempt to address the insufficiency of medicine to relieve the entire imperfection of the human condition, i.e., the reality of human suffering, the study of bioethics has emerged as a solution to a control struggle between patient autonomy and traditional moral norms regarding the intentional ending of human life.<sup>99</sup> What it

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<sup>97</sup> See Edmund Pellegrino, "Catholic Health Care Ministry," 27. He notes the discussion of rights from autonomy as impossible without an understanding of their basis. "The difference between a God-given inherent dignity possessed equally by all humans and a man-attributed dignity could not be greater. It is a difference of kind and not degree. The most crucial decisions pivot on that difference: we justify decisions to destroy or preserve, respect or abhor, love or demean the very young, the very old, the sick and the poor, the disabled and the outcast. The way we define dignity shapes what we think we owe to others simply as fellow humans. It is the root of the moral obligations which generate our notions of the rights of other human beings. *Dignity confers rights; rights to not confer dignity*," (emphasis added).

<sup>98</sup> John Evans, *Playing God?: Human Genetic Engineering and Rationalization of Public Bioethical Debate*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 11-22. Evans describes the legal advancement of the "thinning of debate" about moral issues which he defines as setting the arguments about a particular issue around the formal and not substantive aspects. This means that instead of debating whether or not an ethically questionable experiment or procedure should be carried out, the debate is centered instead around how and by whom it should be carried out. The details and "success" of an act are more likely to be discussed than its appropriateness. This is the legal version of the temptation within medicine to rationalize the technological aspects, and their perfection than the substantive qualities of medical treatment.

<sup>99</sup> McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition*, 32. He comments on the contemporary state of secular bioethics, particularly with regard to the intentional ending of human life of those who are suffering, that the self-determination promised by the autonomy of patients is not in fact reachable. "Standard bioethics does not simply argue for self-determination as a necessary side constraint that disavows all moral content. Rather it represents itself as rendering a traditional norm obsolete, and it participates in an ongoing effort to gain control over death. Hence the self-determination it promises is inadequate at best, illusory at worst."

produces however, is not an answer for the question of the limits of medicine and reality of suffering, but rather an alienation of the sufferer, under the pseudo virtue of autonomy, who cannot be given an understanding of the meaning of his suffering, but only a (hopefully compassionate) person who will carry out his wishes and refuse any (further) invasions of his autonomy (isolation). This is both a product of and contributor to what Alasdair MacIntyre calls a “culture of bureaucratic individualism.”<sup>100</sup>

The irony becomes profound in that the success of scientific medicine, set forth and practiced as a way to eliminate within man what he cannot control and explain, has been unable to realize any greater guide to its proper practice.<sup>101</sup> Leon Kass sums up what medical advancement cannot address in the human condition:

1. Man longs not so much for deathlessness as for wholeness, wisdom and goodness.
2. This longing cannot be satisfied fully in our embodied earthly life—the only life by natural reason, we know we have. Hence the attractiveness of any prospect or promise of a different and thereby fulfilling life hereafter. We are in principle unfulfilled and unfulfillable in earthly life, though human happiness—that semblance of complete happiness of which we are capable—lies in pursuing that completion to the full extent of our powers.
3. Death itself, mortality, is not the defect, but a mark of that defect. From these facts, the decisive inference is this: This longing—any of these longings—cannot be answered by prolonging earthly life. No amount of ‘more of the same’ will satisfy our own deepest aspirations.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 71.

<sup>101</sup> Shuman, *The Body of Compassion*, 76-77. “The moral practice of medicine derives neither from the application of a set of reasoned principles nor from the technically competent practice of medicine itself, nor even from a common intuition of human finitude and fragility. It derives rather from the politics of particular communities whose members share the same stories, practices, and same (at least) provisional accounts of what constitutes a good life. In order to develop a sufficiently thick account of medical practice, such communities must show how the good practice of medicine contributes to and is subordinate to other established goods and practices. Specifically, these communities must show how the practice of medicine can and does contribute to their particular accounts of what constitutes a good life and a good death.”

<sup>102</sup> Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science*, 313-14.

Despite medicine's benevolent assistance, Dorothee Solle's observation is all the clearer:

"Freedom from suffering is only a blindness that fails to perceive suffering."<sup>103</sup>

### 3.5 Addressing the Problem of Suffering

As witnessed above, medicine alone is insufficient in dealing with the issue of human suffering. While it is able to improve the condition of many people, it is not able to relieve all the suffering of the human condition. Without the proper narrative to explain its failure, its many and blessed successes often postpone the addressing of the reality of suffering as a part of the human condition. Unfortunately, this delay in dealing with the reality of suffering itself claims the lives of many who remind humanity of the imperfect condition of its nature. The examples above of prenatal genetic testing with selective abortion and euthanasia exhibit the difficulty in making a moral distinction between the elimination of suffering and the elimination of those who suffer. A false compassion and an absolutization of the principle of individual autonomy combine to put those who suffer at risk of being marginalized with regard to their value as human beings.

The eternal difficulty in facing the reality of suffering is an expression of the larger question of the presence of evil in the world. Theodicy is the attempt to reconcile the existence of God with the existence of the presence of evil. The resolution of the problem of evil is an ancient philosophical undertaking, said to be formulated by the time

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<sup>103</sup> As cited by Margaret Mohrmann, "Stories and Suffering," 347

of Epicurus.<sup>104</sup> Certainly the problem of evil has always occupied the thought of those who pondered the goodness and power of God coexisting with the very real and multiple examples of evil. The reality of this problem has been the inspiration for charitable work throughout man's history, including the care of the sick. But until the philosophical developments of the seventeenth century, the problems of evil and suffering, though equally real and acknowledged, did not constitute the grounds for abandoning faith in God as they have in the centuries since. Alasdair MacIntyre raises the question:

...why do the same intellectual difficulties at one time appear as difficulties but no more, an incentive to enquiry but not a ground for disbelief, while at another time they appear as a final and sufficient ground for skepticism and for the abandonment of Christianity?<sup>105</sup>

His answer suggests that human progress has eroded the foundation of belief of those who remain Christians:

...the apparent incoherence of Christian concepts was taken to be tolerable (and treated as apparent and not real) because the concepts were part of a set of concepts which were indispensable to the forms of description used in social and intellectual life.<sup>106</sup>

In short, MacIntyre identifies the presence of evil as a "problem" which emerged with the disappearance within society of the narrative with which to explain its relevance.

With the Enlightenment and the Baconian revolution, the necessity of God to relieve

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<sup>104</sup> Kenneth Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 2. He cites David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. H.D. Aiken, (New York: Harper, 1948), Part X, p. 66, in summing up the classical theodicy problem as formulated by David Hume's question of God: "Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"

<sup>105</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing?", in Bryan R. Wilson, ed. *Rationality*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 73, as cited by Kenneth Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, 9.

<sup>106</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre and Paul Ricour, *The Religious Significance of Atheism*, (New York: Columbia University, 1969), 74, as cited by Kenneth Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, 9.

humanity from its ailments was replaced with the imperative for man to do so himself. Removal of the place of God and religion within the explanation of life did more than shatter superstitious beliefs in favor of scientific and rational ones. It in fact created a new god, a god who did not appear to be willing to save man from the (fewer) effects of evil and suffering which man could not fix on his own: "...the God in whom the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to disbelieve had been invented only in the seventeenth century."<sup>107</sup>

This created God of philosophical reason is at work behind the imperatives of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution. A deistic God is consistent with the growing understanding of the need for mankind to take over its own destiny. The need for theodicy is thus a need to rationally excuse the created impotent God for what is left incomplete in his creation.<sup>108</sup>

The question of theodicy, either the formal philosophical venture or the more common routine doubts when facing evil in the form of suffering, says much more about man's relationship with God than about the suffering which man faces. Stanley Hauerwas argues that the fact that Christians find existential difficulty in experiencing suffering and believing in God "...indicates that they are now determined by ways of life

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>108</sup> See Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, (London: SCM, 1984), 294. "For one thing, if we imagine God as the other-worldly counterpart of man, then despite all the personal categories we use we will ultimately think of him in objectivist terms as a being who is superior to other beings. When this happens, God is being conceived as a finite entity who comes in conflict with finite reality and the modern understanding of it. Then we must either conceive God at the expense of man and the world, or conceive the world at the expense of God, thus limiting God in deistic fashion and finally eliminating him entirely with the atheists. This conversion of theism to atheism also takes place for another reason: theism almost necessarily falls under the suspicion voiced by the critics of religion, that the theistic God is a projection of the human ego and a hypostatized idol, or that theism is ultimately a form of idolatry."

that are at odds with their fundamental convictions.”<sup>109</sup> The means of scientific reasoning choke off a Christian understanding of suffering in two profound ways.

First of all, the Christian’s thinking in the world has taken on a new metaphysics which prefers mechanistic to narrative thinking and replaces the latter with the former. Even the devout Christian loses the notion of the brokenness of the world and the reality of sin. Instead he sees parts of the machinery, when ill or facing evil in another way, which should be addressed and fixed. The temptation within medicine is symptomatic of the temptation of the rest of life, to see symptoms, and to treat them without a vision of the overall problem, and to see all of these symptoms not only as having the potential to be fixed, but to expect that they will be. This mindset is a development of the Enlightenment assumption that man is most fully himself when free from religious narratives and when he obtains the most possible autonomy.

Stanley Hauerwas suggests that the Enlightenment thinkers often worked toward a parallel goal of Christianity, a kind of commitment to benevolence, by substituting it for faith in God as the motivation for action. The need to retain God’s power in the world demanded such an account. Here there is a parallel between Enlightenment thinkers and those who first practiced the Christian faith without persecution in the early days of the Church. Christian beliefs reflect an understanding of the way things are. Though centuries apart, the Enlightenment thinkers and the early Christians who wanted to be politically successful faced similar challenges with their own understanding of their faith and their goals of progress:

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<sup>109</sup> Hauerwas, *God, Medicine and Suffering*, 49.

Rather than being a set of convictions about God's work in Jesus Christ requiring conversion and membership in a community, Christianity became that set of beliefs which explains why the way things are is the way things were meant to be for any right-thinking person, converted or not.<sup>110</sup>

Suffering as a form of evil represents that which has not yet come under man's control. To bring about good over evil, and thus to retain order, both universal and social, the problem of evil is placed in its proper context:

...the problem of evil is—to put it crudely, but I think accurately—the challenge to show why those with right beliefs do not always win in worldly terms. Theodicy in the theoretical mode, which is acutely criticized by [Kenneth] Surin, is but the metaphysical expression of this deep-seated presumption that our belief in God is irrational if it does not put us on the winning side of history.<sup>111</sup>

Secondly, scientific thought has reduced theology to a sentimental exercise of understanding God. As in pagan thought, the gods are judged by how well they bring about success in human projects. God's "failure" to relieve man of his limitations must be addressed. This failure came about because the narratives of Christianity lost credibility in the common pursuit of the rewards which those narratives promised but had not delivered. God is eliminated both from the explanatory principles of science and from the ontological base of man's understanding of himself. When the promises of science and medicine cannot be delivered, what remains of relationship with God is relegated back to a faith perhaps previously discredited.<sup>112</sup> Ironically, science and medicine promised to deliver man from just such a superstitious relationship with God.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>112</sup> Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An exercise in the Theology of the Cross*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 40. "We are a society which still attempts to build a world in which the tragic is

The practical application of this theodicy is present in contemporary culture in its inability to suffer. Even within those who profess to be religious, the experience of suffering, though quantitatively less due to the many successes of medicine, is qualitatively bothersome.<sup>113</sup> It is unrealistic to deny the presence of suffering. A small group will give up on the existence of God. The remainder are influenced by what Douglas John Hall calls the repression of suffering. The social consequences of this repression of suffering are significant and are three-fold.

First, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to accept or articulate the experience of suffering. Hall suggests that this is a reality of contemporary culture that is beyond the need to explain. While man's human condition has been greatly advanced, his ability to deal with death, terminal illness and personal loss has disproportionately decreased.<sup>114</sup> Secondly, the incapacity to suffer has led to the failure of the ability to enter into the suffering of others. It becomes difficult to even face or absorb the suffering of others, the less one experiences suffering himself. The separation of the elderly and infirm from the

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obsolete. We want to believe that with appropriate 'faith,' a positive outlook, and technical know-how everything that negates can itself be negated."

<sup>113</sup> Bradley Hanson, "School of Suffering," in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 334. "My tendency is to assume that it is my right to be healthy, to be able to run, to have good eyesight and hearing, to have the normal functioning of all my limbs and organs. I believe it is my right to be happy, and I become enraged at any violation of these rights. Thus I deny my creatureliness, for I assume that God (or 'life') owes me happiness as though the cosmic order were established by some social compact like a club or nation. I do not want to admit that as a creature, whatever I have has been given to me."

<sup>114</sup> See Stanley Hauerwas, "Salvation and Health: Why Medicine Needs the Church," in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 79ff. He describes the situation of contemporary man who faces the reality of suffering in a world in which such a condition leads to isolation. "Exactly because pain is so alienating, we are hesitant to admit that we are in pain. To be in pain means we need help, that we are vulnerable to the interests of others, that we are not in control of our own destiny. Thus we seek to deny our pain in the hope that we will be able to handle it within ourselves. But the attempt to deal with our pain by ourselves or to deny its existence has the odd effect of only increasing our loneliness."

homes of the young and the strong present a reminder that is better off ignored—the healthy share the same condition as the weak. Thirdly, having to eventually face evil and suffering without the “practice” of doing so often results in the blaming of others, the need to create a cause or an enemy.<sup>115</sup> The dismissal of the suffering is easier than facing the reality of their existence. The growing practice of prenatal genetic testing with selective abortion (described above) demonstrates the potential to dehumanize those whom society would rather not experience. One can only wonder if the tremendous growth in medical malpractice is a consequence of the need to blame another for the suffering human beings endure.<sup>116</sup>

As demonstrated, there is a need within contemporary culture, as influenced by medical practice, to evaluate the meaning of human suffering. Suffering has not been overcome by medicine, and in fact, is often exacerbated by medicine’s benevolent desire to alleviate it. The power exercised in medical standardizations and the multiplicity of technological options for dealing with unwanted situations of suffering have created a greater illusion of control at the same time in which medical standards have deemed some lives not worth living. As Hauerwas sums up:

In a way, modern medicine exemplifies the predicament of the Enlightenment project, which hopes to make society a collection of individuals free from the bonds of necessity other than those we choose. In many ways that project has been accomplished, only now we have discovered that the very freedom we sought has, ironically, become a kind of bondage. Put in the language of theodicy, we now suffer from the means we tried to use to eliminate suffering.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 43-45.

<sup>116</sup> Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering*, 27.

<sup>117</sup> Hauerwas, *God, Medicine and Suffering*, 108.

From this evaluation, there exists a need within contemporary culture for a new context regarding the reality of suffering, a renewal within Christian thought which not only reclaims a voice in the narratives used to explain the reality of suffering, but also uses that voice to assist in the alleviation of the suffering of individuals, while finding value in them, not in spite of, but because of their suffering.<sup>118</sup> It must seek to answer the question of what can be learned from the experience of suffering itself in order to answer why and how it is to be addressed.

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<sup>118</sup> Khushf, "Illness," 103. He states that the Christian bioethics, as described by Richard McCormick, and others can be articulated as following: Bioethics should "take seriously the order of creation...accounting for the disorder of creation introduced by sin and reordering that disorder to it can prepare for redemption." To do that, Khushf argues, requires "a more radical transformation of medicine" than most admit.

PART II: The Anthropology of Wojtyla/John Paul II as a Framework for Human Experience

CHAPTER 4

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK OF WOJTYLA/JOHN PAUL II  
FOR THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

This chapter will examine the framework of Wojtyla/John Paul's thought from a philosophical background. His rich theological contributions cannot be adequately understood without appreciating the background on which they rest, the perennial questions that man ponders regarding the possibilities and limits of his own existence. In order to understand the relationship between God and man, one must understand the complexities of man himself. Karol Wojtyla's philosophical work began early in his life, as he began to tackle the difficult issues of the struggles and dramas inherent in the human condition with his work in theater at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. The first of his plays were developments of scriptural themes within the context of the current cultural struggles of Poland.<sup>1</sup> Not long after the beginning of his formal studies, the Polish nation found itself occupied by Nazi forces and in a very similar situation to the themes of suffering in the Old Testament. Wojtyla and his contemporaries took various public jobs, while secretly continuing theological studies under dangerous conditions. He

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will find a collection of his plays in Karol Wojtyla, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

continued to write, produce and even perform these plays from 1941 to 1944 as a member of the Rhapsodic Theater Company.<sup>2</sup>

The years between the end of the Second World War and Wojtyla's being named auxiliary bishop of Cracow in 1958 were a time of deep study of philosophy and the formation of his own philosophical observations. These years include his preparation for ordination to the priesthood, his immediate departure for the Angelicum University in Rome to acquire his doctorate in theology, study time spent in France, and his return to Poland first for the completion of a doctorate in philosophy and then as a professor of ethics at the University of Lublin.<sup>3</sup> Within these different roles and backdrops, Wojtyla's philosophical thought developed and he sought an answer to man's deepest questions, as posed in his time. This chapter will examine how Wojtyla's developing thought brought about a unique philosophical framework which will provide a basis for his understanding of the mystery of human suffering.

#### 4.1 Between Philosophical Worlds

Wojtyla's studies would provide him with a knowledge and deep respect for the history of European philosophy as well as classical Christian philosophy. He also came to know the influence of the work of contemporary philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham, David Hume, Edmund Husserl, Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler. His study of philosophy was not for the knowledge of various philosophical systems for their own

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Schmitz, *At The Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became John Paul II*, trans. Paulo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 34-5.

sake, but for deepening an understanding of the human person in relationship with God, particularly in ethics, as worked out in the context of man's nature and destiny. For Wojtyla, his fascination with anthropology and ethics came together, as each study illuminates the other in a reciprocal fashion.<sup>4</sup> The work of processing the contribution which one sees as beneficial in each of these various schools of thought is no small task, yet that was exactly the task that Wojtyla began.<sup>5</sup>

A kind of pragmatic ethics had developed in academic circles throughout Europe in the century before Wojtyla's studies. Skeptical of the ability to construct ethical principles on anything but that which is observable and rationally practical, theologically relevant ethical claims based upon an anthropology dependent upon divine revelation lost influence. Additionally, the influence of Immanuel Kant's thought in German theology demonstrates a slipping of Christian influence in the field of ethics.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of the Human Drama*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community*, 220. Writing in 1976: "The present age... is a time of great controversy about the human being, controversy about the very meaning of human existence, and thus about the nature and significance of the human being. This is not the first time that Christian philosophy has been faced with a materialistic interpretation, but it is the first time that such an interpretation has had so many means at its disposal and has expressed itself in so many currents. We know that such situations in history have frequently led to a deeper reflection on Christian truth as a whole, as well as on particular aspects of it. That is also the case today. The truth about the human being, in turn, has a distinctly privileged place in this whole process. After nearly twenty years of ideological debate in Poland, it has become clear that at the center of this debate is not cosmology or philosophy of nature but philosophical anthropology and ethics: the great and fundamental controversy about the human being."

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Ashley provides a brief summary of the influence of Kant's turn emphasis on the subject (following Descartes) in *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (Braintree, Mass.: Pope John Center, 1985), 215-16. "The direct confrontation of Christianity with Humanism, however, took place in terms of the new notion of truth which Kant introduced in what he called his 'Copernican revolution.' Although Descartes' rationalism had already tended to replace the medieval correspondence theory of truth with a consistency theory, yet this consistency theory depended on the notion of innate ideas which the British empiricists had discredited... According to Kant what we naively believe to be the truth about the objective world apprehended by us through our senses... is in fact constructed by us mentally by a kind of hermeneutic process out of the intrinsically unordered data of sensation."

Wojtyla noticed a chasm in the history of Western philosophy which began in the period of Descartes between a focus on the philosophy of being, typically characteristic of the ancient and medieval philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, and a philosophy of consciousness, demonstrated in modern history.<sup>7</sup> This chasm is more than historical, it is thematic—for the Aristotelian tradition, the cosmological tradition, views man as a part of a greater whole, a natural being alongside others.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, Descartes introduces the subjectivity and inwardness of man, less focused on the cosmological.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.1.1. Authentic Interpretation of Thomas Aquinas

Wojtyla's introduction to the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas proved to be a pivotal point in his studies. In 1942 he experienced a type of revolution of thought in reconciling a working epistemology up to that point in his life with the formal training of the scholastics.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Simpson, *Karol Wojtyla*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 9. See Karol Wojtyla, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being," in *Person and Community*, 209-10.

<sup>8</sup> For an explanation of modern thought as a reaction not so much against Thomistic and Aristotelian thought, but from the results of a problematic nominalism, see Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism*, (Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2007), 12-16.

<sup>9</sup> Wojtyla, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible," in *Person and Community*, 210-213. See also Peter Simpson, *Karol Wojtyla*, 10. "Wojtyla regards this turn towards the person, and to the subjectivity and inwardness of the person as a fundamentally positive and necessary development that must be embraced and pursued. He regards it moreover as fundamentally compatible with, and supplementary to, the older and more objective approach of the philosophy of being. Both this latter approach and that of the modern philosophy of consciousness are needed to develop a comprehensive philosophical anthropology and ethics, and therefore to confront and answer the question of the human being that contemporary life so insistently poses."

<sup>10</sup> Jaroslaw Kupczak, O.P., *Destined for Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 49. He quotes a conversation forty years later about this experience and the impact it had on his intellectual life. "Straightaway I found myself up against an obstacle. My literary training, centered around the humanities, had not prepared me at all for the scholastic theses and formulas with which the manual [*Ontologia czyli Metafizyka*] was filled. I had to cut a path through a thick undergrowth of concepts, analysis and axioms without even being able to identify the ground over which I was moving. After two months of hacking through this vegetation I came to a clearing, to the discovery of the deep reasons for what until then I had only lived and felt. When I passed the examination I told the examiner that in my view the new vision of the world which I had acquired in my struggle with that metaphysical manual was more valuable than the

From 1946 to 1948, Wojtyla had the opportunity to go even more in depth into the study of Thomistic thought. While at the Angelicum University in Rome, he encountered among the Thomistic scholars various interpretations of the vast writings of this doctor of the Church. Alasdair MacIntyre recounts the various interpretation of Thomas' thought which were prevalent in the decades leading up to Wojtyla's study in Rome. Citing Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris*, the Church directed scholars toward a "practical reform of philosophy" by returning to the teachings of Thomas Aquinas as a foundation for the Church's addressing the religiously skeptical tendencies of modern philosophy.<sup>11</sup> One unintended result was a misrepresentation of Thomas' thought to be more of a complete or closed philosophy which confronted the challenges of modern philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Certainly Wojtyla observed the need for a clear Catholic response to the address contemporary issues in his homeland, and he also knew of the debate within the Angelicum University of the proper interpretation of Thomas during his doctrinal studies, but would not formulate his own preference among these interpretations until he reached his teaching post at the Catholic University in Lublin.<sup>13</sup>

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mark which I had obtained. I was not exaggerating. What intuition and sensibility until then taught me about the world found solid confirmation."

<sup>11</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Too Many Thomisms," in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedic, Genealogy, and Tradition*, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1990), 58-81, especially 72-76.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 75. "So by this creative multiplication of misrepresentations Aquinas was presented as the author of one more system confronting the questions of Cartesian and post-Cartesian epistemology, advancing...sounder answers than either Descartes or Kant."

<sup>13</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 51-22. Andrew Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtla's Existential Personalism*, (New Britain CT: Mariel Publications, 1980), viii describes the atmosphere of the university. "The difficult task of incorporating into the socialist movement, Christian beliefs which, in turn dominate Poland as a nation, fell upon the so-called Thomistic School of KUL (The Catholic University of Lublin). The impact of the Thomistic philosophy of the KUL School can be seen in many areas. It is especially evident in its highly original interpretation of St. Thomas' philosophy of being and its elaboration of a unique philosophical methodology, which could satisfy the demands of the contemporary scientific mode of thinking."

While teaching in Lublin, his focus on Aquinas's ethics in the evaluation of the good helped form his overall interpretation of St. Thomas's works.<sup>14</sup> Wojtyla developed a concept of "personalism" based on the philosophy of Thomas, whereby Thomas' observations of human nature provide a foundation for a Christian anthropology.<sup>15</sup> In 1976, he explained why this concept is important:

We maintain the principal of personalism against that of individualism and totalitarianism. Both of these concepts destroy in the human person the possibility and even the ability of participation. They deprive man of his rights to participation.<sup>16</sup>

Wojtyla builds upon the hylomorphism of Aristotle as St. Thomas has interpreted it.<sup>17</sup> In his work, *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla acknowledges his dependence on the teachings of St. Thomas.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, he builds upon the Thomistic composition of soul and body,<sup>19</sup> the dynamic unity of potentiality and actuality in man,<sup>20</sup> the notion of *esse et fieri*, of man both as being and becoming, as explained in the concept of causality,<sup>21</sup> the priority of being over that of action in man,<sup>22</sup> and the concept of man as

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<sup>14</sup> Woznicki, *Christian Humanism*, ix-x.

<sup>15</sup> See Karol Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism," 165. Wojtyla speaks of the concept of "personalism" as a philosophical study of a practical nature, not a theoretical one, such that one's philosophical system must be one that engages man's ethical quest. "And so I will draw largely upon the practical philosophy and ethics of St. Thomas and also of those students of his who extracted the doctrine of personalism from St. Thomas' works and formulated it into an independent whole."

<sup>16</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "Address at Harvard University," 1976, as cited by Andrew Woznicki, *Christian Humanism*, x.

<sup>17</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*. trans. Andrzej Potocki. (Boston: Reidel Publishing Co., 1979), xiii-xiv, 203ff.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 81-83, 201ff. See also Woznicki, *Dignity of Man as A Person: Essays on the Christian Humanism of His Holiness John Paul II*, (San Francisco: Society of Christ Publications, 1987), 142, for an outline of the Thomistic presumptions of Wojtyla.

<sup>19</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 201-202.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 85-87.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 63-64, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

*suppositum*, an ontological locus in relation to how St. Thomas understands the man as a being.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout Wojtyla's philosophical writings and study, St. Thomas's works were to greatly influence him in developing a sound ontology, a trust of human experience and the human intellect's ability to reach truth, to balance a reverence of tradition with an openness to contemporary challenges, and to reverence each human person's complex richness as a blessed participation in his Creator.<sup>24</sup>

With the Aristotelian concepts which help explain the development man by an actualization of his potentials, and the Thomistic notion of participation in the good, one can see the development of Christian philosophy whereby a person's goodness is in fact an actualization of his being. Add to this the human will as the master of human activity, and its potential toward good, and one sees the good human action as the fulfillment of the struggle to be what one is meant to become.<sup>25</sup>

While at Lublin, Wojtyla investigated and participated in the development of a type of Thomism known as "Lublin Thomism"—a hybrid of Thomism and phenomenology, whose influence will be discussed below.<sup>26</sup> Crucial to this philosophical

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 81. The English translation fails to consistently use the term *suppositum*. Woznicki, *Dignity of Man as A Person*, 145-6, offers his own translation into English of Wojtyla's original, *Ozoba I czyn*, (Krakow: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1985), 95. *Suppositum* describes the ontological structure of man as a dynamic being, as it signifying man as a receptacle in need of being filled. "In the first and fundamental approach the man/person has to be somewhat identified with *suppositum*. The person is a concrete man, the *individua substantia* of the classical Boethian definition. The concrete is in a way tantamount of the unique, or at any rate, to the individualized. The concept of the 'person' is broader and more comprehensive than the concept of the 'individual,' just as the person is more than individualized nature. The person would be an individual whose nature is rational—according to Boethius's full definition *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia*."

<sup>24</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 52-3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., the section, "At the Lublin Workshop" 30-57.

development of St. Thomas is the understanding of persons in relation to each other. A lateral participation, and not simply the Thomistic notion of participation of the creature with the Creator is required. A lateral participation involves the acting together of members of a community to bring about the common good. The external results of such actions are not the greatest focus of attention, though they certainly are included, but the intentional actions of the moral agents, as free persons in society are of great concern for Wojtyla.<sup>27</sup> Relatedness and personal autonomy exist together in a balance of striving for the common good.<sup>28</sup>

The historical context for the development of this version of Thomism is important. Driving this interpretation of Thomas in Polish academic circles at the University of Lublin was the commitment to defend basic human rights against those systems of thought or government influences which sought to limit them. Defending the unique dignity of human beings became the meeting place for the influences of various schools of thought, which sought to draw from both Christian theology and that which can be known by human reason. A personalist philosophy grew from Thomistic roots at Lublin which sought dialogue with other schools of thought intending to advance the rights and dignity of the human person.<sup>29</sup> Against what Wojtyla saw as dangerous in

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<sup>27</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 267-68, describes the necessity for a more comprehensive view of the concept of participation than what traditional philosophy supplied.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Harvanek, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II" in *The Thought of John Paul II*, ed. John McDermott, S.J., (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1993), 17-18.

<sup>29</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 38. See Andrew Woznicki, *Christian Humanism*, ix, for the setting of the stage for a development of a theological response to various totalitarian ideologies. Cardinal Wojtyla was very involved in the encouragement of Christian philosophy to dialogue with the official Marxist philosophy of Poland. "He foresaw that the ideological confrontation between Christian and Marxist philosophers would lead not so much to a cosmological but to an anthropological debate."

modern philosophy, a proper reading of Thomistic philosophy guarded against the dualistic and overly subjectivist tendencies which developed since Descartes.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Phenomenology

It is uncertain exactly how Karol Wojtyla became interested the work of the philosopher Max Scheler, but Scheler's influence on him through the phenomenological method is profound.<sup>31</sup> Scheler is credited with a revival of interest in the study of philosophical anthropology in Germany at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his version of what is known as phenomenology.<sup>32</sup> While Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is credited as the founder of the philosophical movement of phenomenology, it was Scheler who used phenomenological analysis in the field of values.<sup>33</sup> Phenomenology relies on the description-based analysis of ideal structures, or essences—requiring an analysis of how

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<sup>30</sup> Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism" 170. "And this is perhaps the most characteristic feature of such [modern] philosophy: it's subjectivism, its absolutizing of the subjective element, namely, lived experience, together with consciousness as a permanent component of such experience. The person is not a substance, an objective being with its own proper subsistence—subsistence in a rational nature. The person is merely a certain property of lived experiences and can be distinguished by means of those experiences, for they are conscious and self-conscious experiences; hence, consciousness and self-consciousness constitute the essence of the person. This is a completely different treatment from the one we find in St. Thomas. According to St. Thomas, consciousness and self-consciousness are something derivative, a kind of fruit of the rational nature that subsists in the person, a nature crystallized in a unitary rational free being, and not something subsistent in themselves. If consciousness and self-consciousness characterize the person, then they do so only in the accidental order, as derived from the rational nature on the basis of which are personal acts. The person acts consciously because the person is rational. Self-consciousness, in turn, is connected with freedom, which is actualized in the activity of the will. Through the will, the human being is the master of his or her actions, and self-consciousness in a special way reflects this master of actions."

<sup>31</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 54, provides an interesting theory as to how Wojtyla may have been introduced to the phenomenology of Max Scheler. "It is difficult to say exactly how Wojtyla came by his interest in Scheler. One can conjecture that his interest in St. John of the Cross and in Carmelite spirituality led to his discovery of the philosophical work of St. Benedicta of the Cross, more commonly known as Edith Stein. Edith Stein, who was Husserl's friend and assistant, came through the philosophical study within the phenomenological method to a recognition of the truth of Catholicism and, after her conversion, entered the Carmelite Order. She died in Auschwitz, sharing in this way the fate of the chosen people to whom she belonged in the flesh."

<sup>32</sup> Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. VII, 432.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 432-35.

things are present to the intentional mind.<sup>34</sup> In this method of inquiry, the experience of reality is itself an existentially significant reality that is never neutral. Experiencing an object is always connected with a value that expresses itself either as an attraction or repulsion. For Scheler, it is this experience of the experiencing subject which permits the understanding of values, thus making the discussion of ethics possible, allowing the analysis of common experience to play the most significant role in moral choosing.<sup>35</sup>

George Huntston Williams explains the differing thought of Scheler and Kant in the field of the experience of ethics: Kant's ethics was based on obligation, an approach which Scheler found to be too rigid and formal, a type of "pharisaical striving" for what is good because it is prescribed as such.<sup>36</sup> Instead, Scheler found the source of ethics to be within the "logic of the heart," meaning that one comes to know an objective order of goodness based on the experiencing of love and hate.<sup>37</sup>

Wojtyla found in Scheler's writings a system sympathetic to the interests of Catholicism. Scheler's discussion of the themes of the importance of love and its effects on the person, as well as his emphasis on the need for imitation in the ethical life, led

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<sup>34</sup> Harvanek, "The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II," 8. Wojtyla tells of his own understanding of the term in "The Problem of Ethics in Experience" in *Person and Community*, 114. "The term 'phenomenon' signifies something that 'manifests itself' to us, something that affects our cognitive powers in a perceptible way. I would be inclined to regard this perception of an object as the very heart of experience."

<sup>35</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 55.

<sup>36</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), 18. Kant is often described as making a complete separation between duty and one's own inclination, such that the universality of the law demands one's adherence, such that he can say that first form of the categorical imperative is: "that I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should become a universal law."

<sup>37</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 125.

Wojtyla to want to show how this phenomenological system was related to the goals of Catholic ethics.<sup>38</sup>

The reason for Wojtyla's interest was more than merely academic—it was also pastoral. Kenneth Schmitz explains Wojtyla's attraction to Scheler's phenomenology:

Wojtyla's ultimate interest is practical, in the sense of moral. But that interest is in no way narrowly defined. He seeks to penetrate to the very essence of the moral act and of ethical consciousness. To do this he realizes that he must take seriously the dramatic shift that has taken place in Western thought since the Middle Ages. For there has been a deep fascination with and cultivation of the inner character of human consciousness in modern times, quite unlike the religious journey within the soul. The innerdirectedness of much of modern thought is not to be confused with the interior movement of transcendence that has always animated and still animates the religious thought and prayer of Christians. Perhaps it is not too much to call the modern movement inward the "secularization of interiority." The religious journey within seeks to lay the prayerful soul before God, whereas the modern journey within seeks to find and test the self as the human foundation for certitude and the basis for evaluation.<sup>39</sup>

Wojtyla observed what is lacking within a modern philosophical mindset—that secular introspection can so often lead to idealism, and there needs to be a vehicle to introduce his contemporaries to the experience that comes from interiority. The experiencing of goodness creates the conscious value of a particular object of choice.<sup>40</sup> Phenomenology allows for the discussion of the value of this interiority, which for the believer leads

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<sup>38</sup> Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>40</sup> See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 141-2. "It is the truth about this or that object which crystallizes this or that moment of good. When for instance we experience the nutritive value of food, we at once come to know what is the good of the object, which serves us as food...it is because of a definite value that we decide on an object of willing or choose among possible objects of willing. The cognitive experience of value is always an underlying factor in motivation."

toward God and not merely a modern secular introspection, which may not contain any acknowledgment of God.<sup>41</sup>

The introduction of phenomenology has a clear epistemological importance. Wojtyla's work with the theology of St. John of the Cross led to an appreciation of the potential that phenomenological thought could have in rooting the eternal truths of the Catholic faith in real experience.<sup>42</sup> As Rocco Buttiglione explains:

From a Catholic point of view, which cannot accept the absolute formalism of Kantian ethics, Scheler... represents a powerful ally. And besides its merely theoretical aspect, the novel way in which Scheler developed the phenomenological method gave it a very good pastoral and apostolic application. For it allows us to return to values through the analysis of common experience and to go on from there. It takes from ethics the rigidity inherent in a system of absolute commands which have not been engendered by subjective experience and makes, instead, the individuality of values the essential point of reference of personal experience. Further, Scheler identified and suggestively described the role of "following" in the process in apprehending values. It is by appropriating another man's ethos that one can identify with the values and qualities to which his life testifies. These are not transmitted by intellectual teaching. This principle of "following," which offers a great and decisive pedagogical lesson, at the same time recalls the fundamental Christian idea of "following Christ."<sup>43</sup>

In Wojtyla's work *The Acting Person*, which will be described in greater detail below, he states the influence of Scheler's phenomenology in his own thought.

Granted the author's acquaintance with traditional Aristotelian thought, it is however the work of Max Scheler that has been a major influence upon his reflection. In my overall conception of the person envisaged through the mechanisms of his operative systems and their variations, as presented

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 38, see footnote 18.

<sup>42</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 58.

<sup>43</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 55-56.

here, may indeed be seen the Schelerian foundation studied in my previous work.<sup>44</sup>

The essence of morality in this phenomenological framework provides another parallel with Catholic moral thinking. Scheler's thought involves the "drama of the will" in the struggle to correctly interpret from one's experiences the presence or lack of love, and thus the presence or lack of value.<sup>45</sup> This interior struggle is reminiscent of the Christian's struggle for goodness and virtue; together with the effects of sin and concupiscence within that struggle.

Wojtyla would begin to forge a path between the validity of experience for moral thought as found in Kant and Scheler. He would demonstrate in his Lublin lectures, particularly in "Ethical Act and Ethical Experience" and in *The Acting Person*, a philosophical method of his own.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, a phenomenological evaluation on a topic such as suffering is helpful though not sufficient in getting to the heart of its significance in man's life.

#### 4.2. A Developing Philosophy

Wojtya's criticism of both Kant and Scheler serve to create a unique philosophical system of thought. Kant's formalism was due to a distrust of human experience, in reaction to David Hume, as overly dependent upon man's volatile passions and

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<sup>44</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, viii. "Granted the author's acquaintance with traditional Aristotelian thought, it is however the work of Max Scheler that has been a major influence upon his reflection. In my overall conception of the person envisaged through the mechanisms of his operative systems and their variations, as presented here, may indeed be seen the Schelerian foundation studied in my previous work."

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 126.

<sup>46</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 61.

emotions.<sup>47</sup> The phenomena which human experience interprets are always singular and thus unable to adequately portray goodness. Kant does not believe that phenomenal realm is able to yield adequate knowledge of man.<sup>48</sup> Scheler's phenomenology, on the other hand, begins the analysis of morality within human experience, but it cannot provide a framework with which to interpret the phenomena experienced since he rejects any type of metaphysical system.<sup>49</sup> Wojtyla notes that both Kant and Scheler have left out necessary factors for the interpretation of moral action.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Inadequacy of Kant and Scheler

Kant's ethics are based upon the principle of the performance of duty in the moral life.<sup>51</sup> In his system, he places a great deal of emphasis on the human will's need to respect the primacy of an autonomous moral law.<sup>52</sup> The whole of the ethical realm is placed in the will's action, as a response to the universal authority of the moral law. This will is free when it is in accordance with the moral law, regardless of the understanding

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<sup>47</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 67-8. "Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are derived from something antecedently present to the mind, it follows that it is impossible for us so much as to conceive or form any idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible; let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions which have appeared in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produced."

<sup>48</sup> Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler," in *Person and Community*, 29-30.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>50</sup> The basis for this next section is Karol Wojtyla's essay "The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act," in *Person and Community*, 23ff.

<sup>51</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), Part I, "Critique of the Aesthetical Judgment," especially the first book, "Analytic of the Beautiful," 27-57, for the background of his mistrust of the senses as a guide for making judgments.

<sup>52</sup> Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Separation," 29.

of human experience. The only proper place for emotion in the conversation on the moral law is the reverence one should have for the law's importance.<sup>53</sup>

Wojtyla perceived that duty and law-based ethics, while retaining a motivation for achieving the good, are less persuasive in contemporary society. A suspicion of ethical claims had not begun to gain popularity in the more traditional Polish Church, but Wojtyla's reflection on the brief time that he spent in France before returning to Poland to teach shed light upon the need for moving beyond the duty-based ethics as supplied by Kant. Though Wojtyla held a deep respect for the academic history of Catholicism in France, he was disturbed by the fact that the practice of the faith in France was significantly less enthusiastic than it was in Poland. Biographer Rocco Buttiglione explains:

What was most needful, Wojtyla reasoned, was for the riches of faith to become an attitude of life, shaping the fundamental disposition toward existence. The rock upon which the French Church risked shipwreck was the unity between culture and life. A new style of priestly and laical presence in the world would therefore be necessary. In Poland such a presence would keep the masses from apostasy; in France it would have to bring people back to the faith.<sup>54</sup>

The transformation away from a traditional society's respect for an ethics based on duty would mean upheaval for the Church and modern culture. A rising suspicion of traditional values demands more than reference to one's duty to obey moral laws.<sup>55</sup> If the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 31, citing Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis: Bobbs, 1956), 78

<sup>54</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 35.

<sup>55</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of the Human Drama*, 31-32. "The question that stimulates Karol Wojtyla throughout these two works [*Lublin Lectures* and *The Acting Person*] on the foundations of ethics is nothing less than the hoary question: Why be moral? Why should I do what I should, rather than what I would? Why ought I to do what is right? There are many quick answers to that question, of course. Among them are: 'Because I'll get caught if I don't'; this arises from the fear of punishment and is one of the external

Church is not convincing in the arena of ethics, then the principles of Kant, which reject the validity of lived sensory experience, will be insufficient to address the questions of a non-traditional culture.<sup>56</sup>

Resisting Kant's emphasis on the will's duty to the moral law, Scheler's system of thought subordinates the will to the point of insisting that ethics should be free of the insistence on duty. For in Scheler, no objective unity of experiences exists within the person.<sup>57</sup> Scheler is, in fact, unable to create any system of ethics, because he exaggerates experience, and the emotional dimension of sensing value to the detriment of the will.<sup>58</sup>

Wojtyla criticizes Scheler for being both too impractical and insufficiently metaphysical.<sup>59</sup> For while Kant endangers the rightful emphasis on goodness as it relates to human experience, Scheler's lack of any framework for moral truth robs human experience from being able to be understood at all. Because of its summary of Wojtyla's working out of a balance between Kant and Scheler, this text deserves to be quoted at length:

I must admit that the picture of ethical life that Scheler has painted using only his phenomenological method is very suggestive and in many points agrees beautifully with what we know from inner experience. The suggestiveness of the picture, however, does not make it immune [to]

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bonds of which the plays speak. Or again: 'Because I was brought up that way'; this arises out of fidelity to custom. Or yet again: 'Because I have a sense that it is good to do what is good'; and this is the insight that comes with sound character. In a relatively stable and traditional society we might get by with such answers, but today we do not live in a traditional society."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 31-32

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>58</sup> Wojtyla, "The Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics," 38-39.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 35. "The emotional experience is of values is still a cognitive experience, but it is not one in the first place. Fundamentally, emotional experience is simply either love or hate, which, says Scheler, does not arise from knowledge but just the opposite: knowledge arises from it."

criticism. The content of this experience is simply value, and if the element of duty should happen to get mixed in one should try to expunge it. Value is only experienced emotionally, and so ethical experience is an emotional experience from beginning to end. Emotion determines the inner unity, the cohesion and continuity, of ethical experience. Ethical experience arises from emotion and returns to it. Emotion is the authentic ground of personal life, since through it the person comes in contact with what is most important and most fundamental in objective reality—value. It is precisely this notion of Scheler's regarding the essence—and even the phenomenological essence—of ethical experience with which I take issue. The structure of ethical experience, that whole what we all know from our own inner experience, does not consist primarily in emotion, even though I am willing to concede that an emotional cofactor plays a significant role in it. The central structural element of ethical experience is the element of willing. Scheler is aware of this element, but he proceeds true to his emotionalistic views, probably with the aim of distancing himself from Kant's ethics, whose main error Scheler took to be the supremacy of duty taken to the point of the total rejection of value and the feelings through which we come in living contact with value.<sup>60</sup>

The conclusion for Wojtyla is that a proper analysis of morality must be connected to a larger than individual context of human goods when interpreting individual human experience; such that phenomenology can be a great tool in benefiting discussions of the moral law, but in utilizing it he cannot in the end become an unqualified phenomenologist.<sup>61</sup>

In the end, Wojtyla rejects Scheler's thought as it stands, while acknowledging the need for increasing the examination of human experience to the discussion of ethics and duty. Kenneth Schmitz crystallizes the reason for Wojtyla's dissatisfaction with contemporary philosophical trends:

Nevertheless, both Scheler and Kant miss the proper domain of ethics. Scheler's ethics of value stems from his conception of the person as the passive subject of the feelings describable in the terms of his

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>61</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 61.

phenomenology, whereas Kant's ethics of duty is the product of his denial of a realistic metaphysics. Karol Wojtyla insists however, that in reality both value and duty are parts of the total ethical experience. What is more, we are conscious of being moral agents; we actually experience our moral efficacy... Yet, each [Kant and Scheler] has failed to incorporate their privileged element into the totality of the concrete ethical act. Instead, duty and value are each made to claim the whole of the act, and so construed they must exclude one another; in truth they are essential but partial aspects of an indivisible unity of ethical experience and action.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Wojtyla's answer

Wojtyla's philosophy of the person, not satisfied with the extremes he saw in either Kant's or Scheler's basis for ethics, was grounded in the metaphysics of St. Thomas. His 1961 lecture "Thomist Personalism" at the Catholic University in Lublin sheds light on the foundations that he uses in establishing his framework of thought.<sup>63</sup> This lecture points out that Thomas the philosopher describes God's personal relationship with his creation as something that can be known by reason alone. But Thomas the theologian also speaks of the mystery of God as three persons, known by revelation, and who maintains a mystical relationship with man.<sup>64</sup> Wojtyla goes on to describe the ability of Thomist Personalism to provide a basis for knowing man by incorporating both traditional Aristotelian hylomorphism and more modern forms of observation of man, such as anthropology, and psychiatry. Being able to take in modern insights without falling into the skewed version of man in the totalitarian society which surrounded him was crucial as both an intellectual and pastoral tool. Wojtyla knew that both the officially

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<sup>62</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of The Human Drama*, 47-48.

<sup>63</sup> See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 148. St. Thomas uses the term person infrequently to describe man, but reserves it for God and for the God-man Christ, the second person of the Trinity. However, Thomas' thought implies a dynamic personhood for man in that since the God-man was a person, and every man is created in the image of God and in the new image of the God-man, every human being is a person.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

atheist Marxist society as well as the skeptics in a more open society would not respond to conversations about man which began with arguments based on the proof of the existence of God or metaphysical or cosmological points. Rather, his incorporation of anthropology and ethics into a grounded Christian framework would open doors for discussion even within a Communist society.<sup>65</sup>

In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla lays out a Catholic anthropology based upon the understanding of man and an analysis of his actions. In response to Descartes' identity of man within his cognitive function, Wojtyla decides to move in a different direction—suggesting that an analysis of man dependent upon knowledge of himself alone and without an evaluation of his actions is incomplete.<sup>66</sup> He sought to explain that man reveals the truth of himself most fully in his actions. The book traces an ancient relationship of anthropology and ethics.<sup>67</sup>

In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyla brings together the normally unacquainted philosophical methods of phenomenology and metaphysics.<sup>68</sup> In bringing together these

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>66</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, vii-viii. "Our approach runs counter to another trend in modern philosophy. Since Descartes, knowledge about man and his world has been identified with the cognitive function—as if only in cognition, and especially through knowledge of himself, could man manifest his nature and his prerogative. And yet, in reality, does man reveal himself in thinking or, rather, in the actual enacting of his existence?—in observing, interpreting, speculating, or reasoning (which are changeable, even flexible insofar as they are acts, and often futile when confronted with the facts of reality) or in the confrontation itself when he has to take an active stand upon issues requiring vital decisions and having vital consequences and repercussions? In fact, it is in reversing the post-Cartesian attitude toward man that we undertake our study: by approaching him through action."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., "This is why the history of philosophy is the tale of the age-old encounter of anthropology and ethics. That branch of learning which has as its aim the comprehensive study of moral goodness and evil--and such are the claims of ethics—can never evade the state of affairs that good and evil manifest themselves in actions, and by actions they become a part of man" 11.

<sup>68</sup> Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 188-89, uses the profound analogy: "Beneath the ice on which Wojtyla, like a figure skater, displays his phenomenological configurations, lie the deep waters of Thomism, recently refreshed by a neopatristic anthropology, that like Aristotelian anthropology, can

varied approaches, he gives a more adequate account of the fully human act, for they both refer to the same foundation, a real experience of the moral life.<sup>69</sup> Throughout the text, Wojtyla's phenomenological evaluation of human action is based upon the metaphysics of being.<sup>70</sup> The way in which he sees St. Thomas's understanding of the human act is the engagement of both the intelligence and freedom of the person, the most unique element of man.<sup>71</sup> The book's purpose is not to make an evaluation of the value of individual human acts, but to better understand how one's acts manifest the person. Without providing an exhaustive summary of the contents of *The Acting Person*, some important points from the text will be presented as pertinent to this discussion on Wojtyla's understanding of the lessons learned from human experience, and as a development of a unique philosophical framework.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4.2.2.1 Anthropology of the Dynamic Act

In Wojtyla's analysis, the fact that man experiences his moral agency demonstrates the dynamic nature of human action. In his descriptions of the relationship

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presuppose that what is said about the Christian man can, for Christian reasons, be said about man in general."

<sup>69</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of The Human Drama*, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>71</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 119, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, qq. 6ff. A 'human act' is distinguished from any 'act of man' in that in that the former engages his intelligence and will, whereas the latter does not require his full engagement.

<sup>72</sup> Wojtyla, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community*, 260, notation 6. He summarizes the purpose of *The Acting Person*. "In its basic conception, the whole of *The Acting Person* is grounded on the premise that *operari sequitur esse*: the act of personal existence has its direct consequences in the activity of the person (i.e., in action). And so action, in turn, is the basis for disclosing and understanding the person." Peter Simpson, *Karol Wojtyla*, 23 observes: "This scholastic adage [*operari sequitur esse*] quoted by Wojtyla is usually taken in its metaphysical sense to refer to the fact that the activity of a thing (*operari*) depends on and follows the being or existence of that thing (*esse*), or that a thing acts according to the way it is. Wojtyla takes it, by contrast, in its epistemological sense. For if, he says, a thing's acting does depend on its being, then, by the same token, a thing's acting must be the way to know its being, or the way it acts must be the clue to understanding the way it is."

between man's potentiality and consciousness, as well as the role of freedom in action, the reader witnesses Wojtyla's development of the dynamism of the person. The distinction between what man freely does and what merely happens to him shows the importance of the will as unique to the human experience.<sup>73</sup> That one is able to analyze human action is a demonstration of the fact that ethical norms are the result of the truth presented to the will by practical reason.<sup>74</sup> Wojtyla is concerned with how man's analysis of his actions serves as a motivation for subsequent actions. Rocco Buttiglione again succinctly describes this process:

All of the contents of the Thomistic anthropology are taken into Wojtyla's conception, but aligned with a different methodology. Whereas the scholastic analysis of the human act simply presupposes the metaphysical concepts of potency and act, and the philosophical point of departure is the concept of being in general, Wojtyla attempts to grasp man in action and to approach his ontological structure through action. Action is considered insofar as it is given immediately in experience and in conscience, and the person is seen not only as the subject of the action, which carries the responsibility for it, but as the conscious subject of the action who becomes actual and knows that he is doing it.<sup>75</sup>

Here it is apparent that Wojtyla's familiarity with the phenomenological method helps uncover one's inner life, and place it within a framework for evaluation. One's actions bring together his physical, social, and psychological dimensions as a free and responsible human agent.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 100.

<sup>74</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of The Human Drama*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 129.

<sup>76</sup> Schmitz, *At The Center of the Human Drama*, 65.

#### 4.2.2.2 The Three Dimensional Acting Person: Transcendence, Integration, Participation/Intersubjectivity

A major portion of *The Acting Person* is divided into three observations drawn from the careful analysis of man's actions. Wojtyla explains that human action illuminates these dimensions of man, which point to the uniqueness of his being.

While the concept of transcendence means going out beyond a boundary, Wojtyla notes that in the analysis of human action, transcendence has a double significance, both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal transcendence refers to the subject's movement toward an object, an intentional perceiving or volition toward an external object. But a vertical transcendence is the result of self-determination, the true understanding of the self and motivation for action based upon how man understands himself.<sup>77</sup> It is this type of transcendence with which Wojtyla is most concerned. It is a dynamic quality—an exercise in freedom of going beyond one's own limits.<sup>78</sup> Indeed this freedom not only makes vertical transcendence possible, it is what makes a person the subject of an action. Such self-determination in freedom brings about this transcendence—that the person is at the same time both the subject of his action and also the object of his action, for he both modifies himself by his free act, and also affects his own self-realization.<sup>79</sup>

Wojtyla's discussion of transcendence nuances both the contribution of Scheler's phenomenology and Thomas's metaphysics. Scheler diminished the revelatory nature of

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<sup>77</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 119.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 113. "Then the person...experiences the awareness that *he is the one who is determined by himself* and that *his decisions make him become somebody*, who may be good or bad—which includes at its basis the awareness of the very fact of his being somebody," (emphasis in original).

<sup>79</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 142.

human acts as a manifestation of man's essence, such that the subject's striving for perfection is not an actualization of something greater than himself.<sup>80</sup> But for Wojtyla, it is not simply the actualization of a rational being that takes place in human action, but rather the self-determination of a unique being whose objective becoming is achieved in his lived personal experience.<sup>81</sup>

Vertical transcendence affirms that the person is not only the place of the manifestation of values, but also an autonomous subject who is the source of the action, freely giving assent to some values, and freely denying others. He is both changed by them, and aware of, and active in bringing about this self-changing. This self-knowledge is at the root of freedom, the human form of self-determinism—not freedom from objects or values, but for them.<sup>82</sup>

Vertical transcendence is most fully manifested in the person's relation to truth, goodness, and beauty, as an exercise of conscience. As the "person's inner normative reality," the exercise of conscience is not merely intellectual, but also spiritual.<sup>83</sup> While retaining conscience's sense of duty, it is best described as an internal criterion for the evaluation of one's experience of the truth, and all other values in relation to the truth. In

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<sup>80</sup> Wojtyla, "The Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics," 39, speaking of Scheler's view: "Consequently, the person cannot attain acts of an efficient character, acts that have the person as their efficient cause. And yet the experience of this efficacy of the person stands at the basis of our every ethical act. We experience 'good' or 'evil' because we experience ourselves as the efficient cause of our own acts."

<sup>81</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 143. He adds "One of the metaphysical presuppositions of Aristotelian and Thomist thought is the double effect of action, according to which the action has a transitive effect which passes into the object and an intransitive one which remains in the subject itself."

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 145, 147.

<sup>83</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 155-56.

this fidelity to truth one experiences both logical and aesthetic elements.<sup>84</sup> Here again,

Wojtyla grounds phenomenological thinking in a metaphysical foundation. Rocco

Buttiglione summarizes:

From a phenomenological point of view, transcendence is the direction of intentionality beyond the limits of subjectivity. From a metaphysical point of view, those objects which cannot be defined in the usual way “through a proximate genus and a specific difference” are called transcendent because they transcend all genera and species. The vertical transcendence of the person which is the keystone of all Wojtyla’s thought moves beyond subjectivity, toward the interior, rather than toward the exterior. It moves toward the irreducible kernel of man who is also transcendent in the metaphysical sense. In action man reveals himself to be “someone” through the capacity for self-government and self-possession, which in turn enables him to experience himself as a free being. This experience of freedom leads us to admit the efficient causality of man toward action and therefore his responsibility for it. Freedom rests on the person’s relationship with the truth, enabling him not to be determined by circumstances. The relationship of freedom to truth is finally the decisive element of the transcendence of the person in his action.<sup>85</sup>

Unifying man’s bodily and spiritual experience, the soul is the principle of man’s being. The soul, understood metaphysically with the aid of phenomenological data, is never reached directly, but rather grasped through experiences in need of adequate explanation. This observation is crucial in the explanation of the transcendence man experiences as both subject and object of his actions.<sup>86</sup> Through his self-government and self-possession in being faithful to truth, goodness and beauty, the acting person transcends those limiting factors which simply happen within him. Both an activity and a passivity come into play in which man both governs and allows for government. He is not just changed in gravitating toward an object of desire, but witnesses and activates a

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>85</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 154.

<sup>86</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 186.

potential within himself toward truth, goodness, and beauty. In doing so, he becomes all the more an integral, or whole person.<sup>87</sup>

Wojtyla next investigates the unity within the person manifested in his actions. He is certainly aware of a tendency among contemporary philosophy to look at the human person from a dualistic perspective, so he includes the need for an explanation of the human body as unified in all its components, those observable physically, psychologically, and spiritually.<sup>88</sup> He had already spoken of integration as a philosophical concept in *Love and Responsibility*, where he analyzed how successive layers and dimensions of the subject are integrated in personal acts of love. He explained the relatedness of sense impressions and emotions; that although distinct, they are linked together to create an intensity in experience.<sup>89</sup> Using the example of how psychological and physiological disciplines work together to integrate health in the person, Wojtyla observes that disintegration is the proper understanding of what one observes when the body either departs from or fails to achieve ordinary human standards.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Jeffrey Tranzillo, *The Silent Language of a Profound Sharing of Affection: The Agency of the Vulnerable in Selected Writings of Pope John Paul II*, Ph.D. diss., (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 120. He explains Wojtyla/John Paul's understanding of the unity of the person and the remaining fundamental dignity of the person even when he fails to act correctly and responsibly: "Man does not achieve his proper unity and fulfillment as an acting person when he willfully refuses to subject his freedom of self-determination to the cognitively apprehended truth about some value, or when a defect on the psychosomatic plane impedes or prevents the actualization of his personal structure of self-possession and self-governance. Such conditions either result in the formation of a distorted psycho-moral personality or, in extreme cases, render impossible any psycho-moral formation at all. Yet in each instance, man still remains essentially a spiritual or rational being, a person who is ontologically constituted as such by the union of the human soul and body."

<sup>88</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 103.

<sup>90</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 192-93.

Parallel to the concept of transcendence in action, the concept of integration in the person is not to be understood as simply a mixing together of diverse constitutive elements of man, but rather the real working out of their proper place as structures and faculties for one's unification. The person's intellect and will are the means by which the person realizes the psychosomatic unity of himself, that is, the ordering of the physical and psychical experiences of being a person. The proper ordering of the interdependence of the psyche from the soma is crucial in understanding the relationship between man's interior and exterior experiences.<sup>91</sup> The interdependence of psyche and soma reveal the means of man's experience of his unity as a person.

The psychosomatic unity of the person depends upon the proper ordering of each of the elements. The psyche not only depends upon the body to carry our activity, but also in turn conditions the body. The body becomes the object of one's self-government, that is, it either submits to or refuses the control of the psyche. The dominion over the body is the exercise of freedom in the person.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 196-97. Wojtyla suggests that this expression of psychosomatic unity is substantially more than the scientific explanation of the dynamic dimensions of the makeup of man, but rather requires a metaphysical understanding as well. "Very often man is defined as a psycho-physical unity and it is then assumed that this notion is sufficient to define and express adequately his essence. But in fact the notion expresses only everything that is accessible to the particular empirical sciences; all that makes man to be a person and allows him to realize himself as the person in the action undergoes, in this approach, a specific reduction." Man's subjective ego is subordinate to his transcendent ego for what Wojtyla calls true "self-possession." "An analysis of integration imposes, on the one hand, the necessity of assuming the existence of these personal structures—this we have already done—but on the other hand, it also makes absolutely necessary an insight into the psychosomatic complexity of man. This complexity has here a special importance because ultimately man owes his psychosomatic unity to the integration as well as the transcendence of the person in the action. This insight does not receive adequate or sufficient prominence in interpretations conducted solely along the lines of inductive thinking characteristic of the empirical sciences."

<sup>92</sup> An understanding of habits and virtue illustrate the interdependence of the unified soma and psyche. "The habitual integration of the person is a virtue. Once this habit solidifies, the perception of the efficient causality of the person can attenuate until it almost disappears, because the body spontaneously moves according to an indication of the will, almost anticipating it. The virtue can become a second nature. In

This proper dominion over the body depends upon a proper understanding of the way which the psyche is formed and given stimuli from the body. Wojtyla orders the stimuli in a range from excitement to emotion. Excitement represents the more raw and explosive stimuli that man receives. Emotions are less directly linked to the senses than excitement is, and serve to draw him toward that which is true, beautiful and good. These emotions make perceptible the good toward which one gravitates.

Emotions are, however, not always stable, for they can come and go easily.<sup>93</sup> Excitement moves from superficiality to more profound levels which refer to values. When one converts excitement to emotion, and grounds emotions in the search for the good object, then the will leads to the true good, having begun within the initial attraction or repulsion in the emotions and continually guiding them.<sup>94</sup> Morally speaking, this integration is the work of one's whole life. The analysis of this complex process shows a unity in purpose of the various dynamisms of the whole person.<sup>95</sup> Wojtyla uses this psychosomatic unity as an example of the parallel understanding of the metaphysical unity of body and soul.<sup>96</sup> He concludes his discussion on integration with a treatment of the need for a principle of both the transcendence and integration of man. Furthermore,

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this concealment the transcendence of the person affirms itself in its utmost force," Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 160

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 164. See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 241.

<sup>94</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*. He argues that the content of our emotions refer to values, though the emotions themselves are not always stable. They are in need of direction as an indication of something greater outside themselves to which they point, 248.

<sup>95</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 166.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., "The phenomenological analysis brings us in a certain way to the threshold of the relationship between body and soul, allowing us to grasp the continuity of the metaphysical doctrine of the soul with the data of experience."

he reaches the concept of the soul indirectly by the inability of either empirical or phenomenological inquiry to further illuminate this metaphysical expression.<sup>97</sup>

Crucial to an understanding of human action is its social dimension. It is important not to fall into two extremes in analyzing the social aspect of human actions. To identify individual human acts primarily as a result of social conditioning is to overlook the individuality and transcendence of the human person. This is an error into which those who support a theory of sociological determinism, like Marxism, fall. To deny the reality of both social influence upon man and man's influence upon the social sphere is to deny the reality of lived experience. Wojtyla desires to bring together the individual rational nature of man with the experience of his social nature.<sup>98</sup> His answer is developing a theory of participation whereby man's integration and transcendence benefit the society in which he lives as well facilitates his self-determination.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 258.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 270. "Participation corresponds to the person's transcendence and integration in the action because, as we have already emphasized, it allows man, when he acts together with other men, to realize thereby and at once the *authentic personalistic value*—the performance of the action and the fulfillment of himself in the action. Acting "together with others" thus corresponds to the person's transcendence and integration in the action, when man chooses what is chosen by others or even *because* it is chosen by others—he then identifies the object of his choice with a value that he sees as in one way or another homogeneous and his own. This is connected with self-determination, for self-determination in the case of acting 'together with others' contains and expresses participation" (italics in original). It is helpful to note Wojtyla's own notion of the term "participation" and the reason for entering into a discussion of its usefulness for anthropology. He sought to use it as a helpful description of proper human acting, not to build upon a philosophical system of participation. See *The Acting Person*, 316, note 77: "We cannot be too emphatic in stressing the specific sense in which we are here speaking of participation. This is all the more necessary in view of the different meanings, or rather shades of meanings, that this term has had for different traditional and contemporary philosophical schools. In this study participation may be said to emerge at the very beginning of the analysis of man's acting 'together with others' as that fundamental experience whereby we are trying to grasp man as the person. The person—as that 'man who acts together with others'—is in a certain manner constituted through participation in his own being itself. Thus participation is seen as a specific constituent of the person."

Wojtyla examines the authenticity of various attitudes towards a life within society. Conformism is never an authentic attitude because even when it leads to positive results, that is, choosing what is objectively good, its choice is not based upon mature freedom, and the sense of self is lost in an attitude of servility. Noninvolvement is also not authentic because it is ultimately a choice not to act; it is a removal from the concept of participation. Just as conformity flees from opposition, so noninvolvement displays a pessimism about one's potential in society. Both attitudes cause man to "abandon his striving for fulfillment in action" as one among others.<sup>100</sup> Opposition is an attitude that can be authentic in man's life in society when he is faced with injustice. It differs from noninvolvement, because man is not withdrawing a readiness to work for good, but is unwilling to work for what furthers oppression or undermines the fulfillment of himself or others.<sup>101</sup>

It is the concept of solidarity which allows Wojtyla to describe the proper relationship between the individual and the community. Solidarity as proper participation within the communal pursuit of the common good is the philosophical equivalent of the theological commandment to love. Wojtyla claims that the proper point of reference for understanding the concept of solidarity is the neighbor. The commandment of love of neighbor, which will be treated in much greater depth below as it applies to the engagement with the suffering person, entails the philosophical juxtaposition of another with one's self, placing equal value upon the subject and object of the action of loving

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>101</sup> These observations made of forming a just society and culture are pertinent to the discussion of the facing of human suffering and the attitudes that a society has about addressing or fleeing from the reality of suffering.

one's neighbor. The reference point of neighbor shows both the mutual relation and willing subordination of all people to each other in a relationship which is itself transcendent.<sup>102</sup> The commandment of love of neighbor shows how the concept of solidarity allows man to both fulfill himself while complementing others.<sup>103</sup>

In his discussion of human solidarity, Wojtyla forges a path between the extremes of individualism and totalitarianism, stating that the action of the individual and the community imply one another.<sup>104</sup> Various levels of communities, from families to nations, exist as proper communities to the extent that they foster the common good of both the community and the individual. This construction depends upon the subject's willingness to sacrifice himself for the greater good, not because the common good is superior to individual good, but because self-realization in a community oriented toward goodness through individual sacrifice is greater than achieving one's own interests at the expense of the good of the others in the community. This principle protects the individual from being used as merely a means to a totalitarian end, and the common good being sacrificed for individual gain.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*., 296.

<sup>103</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 176, aptly notes: "He could not have known, when he first wrote about it in *Person and Act*, [his translation of the title *The Acting Person*] that 'solidarity' would become the banner under which the history of the twentieth century would be dramatically changed."

<sup>104</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 171. Agreeing that community is the place of man's action and the subject of common action, Wojtyla retains the Thomistic understanding that the community can only be a quasi-subject by analogy, for the subject of an action can only properly be the person.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 172. See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 271, as to how this balance is struck within a community: "For if in acting "together with others" man can fulfill himself according to this principle [of participation], then, on the one hand, everyone ought to strive for that kind of participation which would allow him in acting together with others to realize the personalistic value of his own action. On the other hand, any community of acting, or any human cooperation, should be conducted so as to allow the person remaining with its orbit to realize himself through participation."

The cultural issues surrounding the development of a “Lublin Thomism” serve to formulate a philosophy and anthropology on which Wojtyla would build a system of thought which he would later use as pope in various cultures to defend the dignity of each human person. Keenly aware early on in his philosophical studies that the formal ethics of Kant would be insufficient to convince contemporary society of the importance of the moral life, he incorporated the phenomenological method to widen the audience of those who likewise seek to demonstrate the unique and eternal dignity of the human person, to dialogue with men of good will who sought human fulfillment and freedom.

The three dimensions found in human acts, transcendence, integration, and participation/intersubjectivity will play an important part in analyzing the experience of suffering for Wojtyla/John Paul, in opening up the potential in suffering for the experience of good and not simply of evil.

Wojtyla’s philosophical insights forge a path toward framing the contemplation of theological issues he would address as universal pastor. His philosophical anthropology gives perspective to understand his massive theological writings. This framework is both new in methodology in combining phenomenological input into the traditional metaphysical understanding of man, and traditional in its subjugation of all things to the pursuit of truth.<sup>106</sup> He develops a framework to tackle the mysteries manifest in the human person. Those mysteries are known in the lived bodily human experience, and are the promptings that move man to seek a deeper understanding of himself and of the relationships in which he participates. Neither the subjective or objective dimension of

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<sup>106</sup> See Robert Harvanek, “The Philosophical Foundations of the Thought of John Paul II,” 19-21, for a summary of the uniqueness of Wojtyla’s thought and the place it would have in his papacy.

man can be overlooked or allowed to overtake the other. In 1998, in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul included an appeal for a renewal of metaphysical grounding in the study of theology. He wrote of the need to unify fragmented theological reflections in a metaphysics that is not opposed to anthropological study, but one that grounds personal dignity in man's spiritual nature.<sup>107</sup> This attempt at a multifaceted anthropology illustrates John Paul's own integrity of thought as both philosopher and theologian. A reader of *The Acting Person* immediately after its original publication would not only have been pleased in the depth and breadth of thought, but also amazed to know the multiplicity of ways in which it would be manifested again in the future writings of its author as Pope John Paul II.

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<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 83, p. 128. He continues: "We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent. We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises. Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation" (emphasis in original).

## CHAPTER 5

### THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF KAROL WOJTYLA/ JOHN PAUL II FOR THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

This chapter will briefly examine the theological vision of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II. While remaining a sharp student of philosophy, his love for that discipline served as a springboard for his theological investigations. As a priest, bishop, and ultimately universal pastor of the Church, his love for knowledge had the illumination of souls and their salvation as its goal.<sup>1</sup> For no matter how advanced one's philosophical system might be, without the illumination of God in revelation, it fails to bring man fully to the truth.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Wojtyla commented on the unfortunate turn of modern philosophy away from God in its desire to focus on man.<sup>3</sup> A type of philosophical skepticism climaxed in the early years of Wojtyla's episcopacy in Europe, judging philosophy to be more sophisticated if it were independent of the necessity of God.<sup>4</sup> But Wojtyla noted that this marked an imbalance with regard to philosophy's real aim, that to overemphasize the horizontal dimension without due attention to philosophy's vertical dimension strips the discipline of its duty to present God as the only satisfaction of man's

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<sup>1</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See among others, John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 8, p. 23-24, in which he writes, alluding to the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et spes*, that in reference to Christ alone can man begin to understand himself.

<sup>3</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, trans. St. Paul Publications, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 35. He quotes Ludwig Feuerbach: "In place of love of God we ought to acknowledge love of man as the only true religion; in place of belief in God we ought to expand man's belief in himself, in his own strength, the belief that humanity's destiny is dependent not on a being higher than humanity but on humanity itself, that man's only demon is man himself—primitive man, superstitious, egotistic, evil—but that similarly man's only god is man himself."

<sup>4</sup> Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, "The Post-War Intellectual Movement," 31-34.

ultimate longings.<sup>5</sup> The present chapter will seek to present general theological themes which John Paul highlighted in his pontificate. It will not be an exhaustive study, but rather will continue to set up the relevant theological foundations for addressing the mystery of suffering.

Issues of human sexuality will not be mentioned, as this will be taken up below in the discussion on his “Theology of the Body” nor will many other issues which were a hallmark of John Paul’s thought, such as ecumenical issues, matters of social justice, his profound Marian devotion, or the causes of saints, all of which are worthy matters for a different theological evaluation. The theological issues described below demonstrate a foundation for Wojtyla/John Paul’s phenomenological treatment of the mystery of human suffering.

### 5.1 Knowledge of God: Two Levels of Faith and “Knowing Bodily”

Manifested in his dissertation on St. John of the Cross, Wojtyla demonstrated a desire to investigate the phenomenon of faith in man.<sup>6</sup> In that dissertation he began a discussion on two levels of faith, a discussion which he would continue many years later in his Catecheses on the Creed, a series of reflections delivered at the weekly general audiences in the Vatican. His dissertation distinguished between faith as an intellectual

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<sup>5</sup> Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 13, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 45-46. “Wojtyla’s doctrinal work on the literature of the problem of faith in St. John of the Cross had two intellectual touchstones...the relation between dogmatic and mystical faith. He strongly emphasized the personal character of the encounter between God and man which engenders faith. Declarations of faith are oriented toward the proper object of faith, which transcends them. Mystical experience is a God-given experience in which creaturely boundaries transcend themselves toward God. Faith in a dogmatic sense and faith in a mystical sense are two aspects of a unitary process by which creaturely limits are transcended; in a certain sense, they represent a single faculty of theological transcendence.” Cf. George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 106ff.

response of assent to God as Truth, the dogmatic dimension, and faith actuated in relationship with God, the mystical dimension.<sup>7</sup> This distinction identifies an objective body of truth contained in revelation, shared in common with the whole church, as well as a subjective personal lived response to God, unique to each person.

In the intellectual dimension, one can come to know of God through the natural light of human reason. The first chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Romans outlines the knowledge of the uncreated One made possible in the creation he has made.<sup>8</sup> Tracing the development of what is often called "natural theology" through the five ways of St. Thomas Aquinas, and discussions in both Vatican Councils, John Paul affirms that "according to the Church, all our thinking about God, based on faith, also has a 'rational' and 'intellective' character."<sup>9</sup> Divine revelation is required for this rational faith to be known to all with certitude.<sup>10</sup> His affirmation of this rational character of faith is crucial in maintaining what the Church objectively believes together as dogma. His Catecheses on the Creed, given in his Wednesday audiences are sandwiched among his Trinitarian encyclicals as an attempt to build up in the Church an understanding of revealed truths which had been diminished by a period of catechetical weakness. He systematically began to rearticulate the truths of the faith in preparation for the millennium year, which he would usher in as pope.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> See Romans 1:18ff. John Paul provides an Old Testament parallel in Wisdom 13: 1-9, in *God, Father and Creator, Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. 1, Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1996), audience of March 20, 1985, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., March 27, 1985, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Aidan Nichols, OP "Pastor and Doctor: The Encyclicals of John Paul II" in *John Paul the Great: Maker of the Post-Conciliar Church.*, ed. William Oddie, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 169.

The objective content of faith, known both rationally and as mediated by revelation, requires a response of faith in man, an assent to its truth. Faith is not only about content, but built upon a personal act of believing. God's making himself known directly is not just knowledge about God, but personal knowledge of God himself. Wojtyla saw the Second Vatican Council charge the Church with the building up of this two-fold understanding of faith. Commenting upon *Dei Verbum* and *Dignitatis Humanae*, he describes man as the subject of a personal encounter with God and faith as the fruit and object of that encounter.<sup>12</sup>

While an objective universal content of faith makes demands of the Christian, it is not a relationship of servitude with God as master of man. It was this notion of servitude to God which many saw as a rationale for seeking to free man from the grasp of a so-called theological oppression in favor of a humanist, secular philosophy which liberated man and advanced man's dignity. For John Paul however, a biblical view of the relationship between God and man proposes the paradigm of a loving Father, that the more the Church's mission is centered on the human person, the more it must be directed toward God.<sup>13</sup>

While it is true that there are many commands issued by God, the whole context of revelation shows that these are means by which man freely fulfills the higher potentials of his life, and thus shares in the life of the Father who is the origin of goodness.<sup>14</sup> The biblical paradigm of the father/son relationship both respects the substantial difference

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<sup>12</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, trans. P.S. Falla, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 19.

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 1, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 31.

between Creator and creation, and bridges that gap with the concept of relationship in the act of faith. God's desire is that man would have access to him and share in his own divine life, and through revelation, makes possible what natural theology alone cannot grasp. This experience involves both content and relationship between God and man, a phenomenological aspect of faith. Revelation comes in the form of an invitation which draws man into fellowship with God.<sup>15</sup> In this relationship "Fear of the Lord" is not a servile fear, but a "loving reverence" which motivates man to fulfill his vocation of fidelity in relationship with the Father. Only love can cast out this fear, and God's command is therefore not only possible, but also made real by his own coming forth to man in the invitation and rallying call that John Paul used so often, "Be not Afraid!"<sup>16</sup>

John Paul illustrates this new paradigm of relationship with the Father as revealed by the Son in his second encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, wherein he expounds upon the parable of the Prodigal Son. In discussing the significance of both justice and mercy for the Christian, he goes more deeply into how this parable speaks to the questions of man's dignity. Man comes not only to know about the love of God in the parable, but in fact learns a great deal about his own dignity as an extension of that love.<sup>17</sup>

John Paul discusses the deposit of divine revelation and its transmission within the life of the Church, stating that from the time of the apostles and the first generation of Christians, the content of Christ's revelation as the way to know the Father has been

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<sup>15</sup> John Paul II. *God, Father and Creator*, March 27, 1985, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives et misericordia*, "Rich in Mercy" Vatican Translation, (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1980), nos. 5-6, pp. 18-22, *AAS* 72, (1980), 1177-1232.

guarded and passed down through the generations.<sup>18</sup> This handing over of the deposit of faith, in Sacred Scripture and Tradition which complete and support each other, represents direct revelation through the grace of the Holy Spirit of the truths that God wants people of every time and place to come to know.<sup>19</sup> The Church draws again and again upon the original deposit of faith, through what John Paul calls a “vivifying process” in successful interpretation of eternal truths in every time.<sup>20</sup> This is not to suggest that the objective truths of divine revelation are changeable, but that their contemporary assent is itself the work of the Holy Spirit. These eternal truths received in revelation represent a direct and objective knowledge of God. They are the insights into God’s life that cannot be known by human reason alone. They open up the way of salvation to man’s natural inclination toward God.<sup>21</sup> To believe includes accepting truths revealed by God as they are taught by the Church.<sup>22</sup>

#### 5.1.1 The Personalistic Dimension of Faith

As mentioned above, the reception of the truths taught by the Church as revealed by God point to a personalistic or existential dimension of the faith. If the content of revelation is God’s self-communication, then the personal response to this

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<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 24, 1985, 58-9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 61, quoting *Dei Verbum*, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation”, *Vatican Council II; The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, no. 8, p. 754: “Thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the bride of his beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them.”

<sup>21</sup> *Dei Verbum*, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” no. 3, p. 751.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 24, 1985, 61.

communication is an opening up to relationship, an experience of God, in fact, an abandonment to the persons of God.<sup>23</sup>

John Paul quotes from *Dei Verbum* on the movement from the objective content of faith to perfect relationship with God:

For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.<sup>24</sup>

Human experience, therefore, illuminates the mysteries of the faith and become a means by which one contemplates both the realities of God and the realities of self.<sup>25</sup> This contemplation can lead either toward longing for or rejecting the presence of God. The longing for God, as St. Augustine experienced, draws one more and more to the realization of the depth of God's presence in one's innermost being, a presence calling out for a personal relationship, not just as recorded in the history of God's revelation, but placed before each and every person.<sup>26</sup> It is to this God that St. Paul referred in the Areopagus in the Acts of the Apostles, and not to "an unknown God" when he spoke of God's desire for man to search and know him, to experience and find him.<sup>27</sup>

This personal relationship with God includes also includes a recognition of mystery, for although God has made himself so close to man in the mystery of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., March 27, 1985, 44-45.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., April 24, 1985, 59

<sup>25</sup> See *Gaudium et spes*, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," in *Vatican Council II*, no. 22, p. 922.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1, [www.newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm), October 1, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Acts 17: 23-28; John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, July 24, 1985, 112.

Incarnation, he also remains a hidden and beckoning God. To mere logically ordered objective thinking, the concept of mystery represents inadequacy at best, or failure at worst. But in a relationship built upon experience, mystery is an invitation to a light in the midst of darkness, says John Paul quoting St. John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.<sup>28</sup> God remains for man both something to be experienced and to some degree known, but also an unknown who draws man to leave behind his own standard of thinking and acting for something beyond him. This sense of the beyond is what is both challenging and appealing to man, through which man must navigate to reach the presence of God.<sup>29</sup>

Paradoxically, the foundation of objective faith entrusted to the Church (what is known of God) takes on its greatest meaning in the personal confrontation with the Other who is far beyond what can be known in words or definitions. In various places, Wojtyla/John Paul uses the words of the saints to describe this interaction with what is known of God and experienced as God juxtaposed with what is completely beyond the human person's ability to articulate.<sup>30</sup> The inadequacy of human knowledge has the potential to either isolate man in himself, or draw him into relationship with the

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<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, August 28, 1985, 125, citing St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, ed. Henry L. Carrigan, Jr., (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2002), 2 S 9, 3).

<sup>29</sup> See John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I, 5, 1-8, pp 23, for the necessity of the soul struggle through the dark night.

<sup>30</sup> See Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 15-17. For example, in the spiritual exercises in which he led the Papal household in 1976, Cardinal Wojtyla mentioned the experience of silence and awe before the majesty of God as an affirmation of this personalistic dimension of faith. He refers to St. John of the Cross, and points to the silence of those who live the monastic life, as well as his own personal confrontation with those who wanted to know God more from their personal experiences even though they had been indoctrinated in an atheistic background. See also, John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, August 7, 1985, 120. He also mentions in his audience of August 7, 1985 St. Thomas Aquinas's acknowledgement that in the end our concepts and words for God only serve to tell us what he is not, (*ST* I, 12, 12) and God's words spoken to St. Catherine of Sienna, that in the midst of all that she was *not*, God *was*, (St. Catherine, *Legenda major*, 1, 10).

completeness of the Other, who is God. Noting the observation of Henri de Lubac, Wojtyla observes that the tragedy of the growing rise of atheistic humanism is that:

It strips man of his transcendental character, destroying his ultimate significance as a person. Man goes beyond himself by reaching out towards God, and thus progresses beyond limits imposed by created things, by space and time, by his own contingency. The transcendence of the person is closely bound up with responsiveness to the one who himself is the touchstone for all our judgments concerning being, goodness, truth and beauty. It is bound up with responsiveness to the one who is nevertheless totally Other, because he is infinite.<sup>31</sup>

As theologian and universal pastor, John Paul saw within the larger society, the acceptance of the need for transcendence within the human person as a springboard to discuss the absolute necessity of a relationship with God. He had written on the transcendent character of human action in *The Acting Person*. He pointed out various philosophical and political theories which excluded the role of God in man's advancement, clarifying that man's own experience of himself in fact, calls out for the acknowledgment of God. Beginning with his doctoral dissertation on St. John of the Cross, Wojtyla emphasized the deeply personal dimension of an encounter with God.<sup>32</sup> In such a relationship, the believer becomes more truly himself by transcending in relationship with God the limits of his being. God perfects man by bringing out of him what he could not do on his own. In later catecheses, John Paul explains that it is the

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<sup>31</sup> Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 16, referring to Henri de Lubac, *Atheisme et sens de l'homme*, (Paris, 1969).

<sup>32</sup> See Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 47-48. "The young Wojtyla's main preoccupation was to read the writings of St. John of the Cross as a phenomenology of mystical experience... We can see that the latter, [Wojtyla] as a matter of principle tended to develop the subjective side of the problem [of faith], while seeing it not as autonomous but as tightly bound to the objective side," citation on 47.

grace of the Holy Spirit that perfects man's personality without destroying it.<sup>33</sup> Man's limits are not insignificant, nor overlooked in his relationship with God, but instead are the means of his recognition of God initiating a transcendent movement toward himself.<sup>34</sup>

Both his academic experience as a student and teacher and his pastoral experience as a parish priest had taught Wojtyla to view the world in the context of a theology which was both academic and mystical. Faith as knowledge of God was both a rigorous academic task as well as a deeply personal quest. The mystical experience of God in prayer and contemplation served as a fleshing out of the conceptual science that is theology. This interrelated experience of God in the mind and soul was not simply an emotional reaction to God, but a real revelation of God to man. Contemplative knowledge of God was not merely conceptual, but rose above an intellectual experience of God to more firmly adhere to the substance of revelation, God himself. At the same time, this mystical experience of God never trumped the historical revelation of God, but instead made it more personal in its lived experience.<sup>35</sup> Instead of competing, these two dimensions of faith—objective truth and subjective relationship—would foster a unity of man in his experience of God analogous to the soul animating a human body.

Experiencing the divine in human life is not only the very definition of divine revelation

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<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, *The Spirit, Giver of Life and Love: A Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. 3, Vatican Translation (Boston: Pauline Books, 1996), audience of April 10, 1991, 386.

<sup>34</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 51. The human need to present oneself open before God, as mystical spirituality, was lived out in both the public and private life of the Pope. His oft described mystical prayer life is well documented as the significant beginning, rest, and conclusion of each day. In 1993 his desire to have a house of contemplative prayer within the Vatican was realized. See George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 274, 727.

<sup>35</sup> Gerald McCool, "The Theology of John Paul II," in *The Thought of John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott, (Rome, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1993), 34-35.

for man, for John Paul it becomes the bridge between a humanist anthropology and a Christian anthropology.

### 5.1.2 The Bodily Dimension of Faith

Since suffering is very often a physical experience, a proper understanding of how the human body has the potential to reveal the truths of the Creator's will for man is crucial for understanding what significance suffering might have in his life. John Paul notes that while much attention has been paid to the dignity of the person with regard to his soul and his spiritual life, too often this has been at the expense of speaking about the dignity of the body.

The conviction that man is the “image of God” because of his soul has frequently been expressed. But traditional doctrine does not lack the conviction that the body also participates in the dignity of the “image of God” in its own way, just as it participates in the dignity of the person.<sup>36</sup>

The most compelling evidence of the dignity of the human body stems also from the action of man's redemption, the mystery of the Incarnation. John Paul speaks of the mystery of the incarnation as the revelation of the eternal God pervading time with the life of Christ. Assuming all of man except sin, Christ is the bodily manifestation of the immense love of God.<sup>37</sup> The Incarnation provides a fundamental change in the potential of man's body, wedded now to the divine life of God. Jesus reveals the Father's love by lifting the veil which keeps us from experiencing the presence of God and invites his followers to appreciate the sense of what they see. The bodily revelation of God in Christ is the reference point for Christian faith. Christ called his contemporaries to perceive the

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<sup>36</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 16, 1986, 228.

<sup>37</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis on Salvation History, The Trinity's Embrace: God's Saving Plan*, Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2002), audience of December 10, 1997, 13.

mystery of God, asking them to take what they see and hear, using the senses as a vehicle to understand what his bodily manifestation demonstrates—nothing less than the fidelity and eternal love of the God of all creation.<sup>38</sup> The transformation of the human condition in the mystery of the Incarnation was not only realized by those who were blessed enough to experience what the prophets longed for in Christ, but is also realized in the life of every man. Particularly in the Eucharist, Christ continues to offer the redemption possible in sharing his own life, by the sharing of his own body.<sup>39</sup>

John Paul's first encyclical was centered on what the redemption of man in time by Christ signifies for the life of man today. The revealed truth of Genesis, whereby the creation of man is said to be good, is expounded in a more wonderful fulfillment in the life of Christ. The Incarnation reforges the link of God and man and demonstrates the eternal love of God.

Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the one who penetrated in a unique unrepeatable way into the mystery of man and entered his "heart." Rightly therefore does the Second Vatican Council teach: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come (Rom 5:14), Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, *fully reveals man to himself* and brings to light his most high calling". And the Council continues: "He who is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, *in a certain way united Himself with each man*. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., December 17, 1997, 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., December 10, 1997, 14.

he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin”(GS 22), he the Redeemer of man.<sup>40</sup>

Beginning his papacy with a reflection on the mystery of the redemption, John Paul reminds man of his dignity, as united to the body of Christ himself, and also uses this as an opportunity to remind man that no other source of meaning for evaluating his actions, of forming an anthropology or ethical standard, is valid apart from the mysteries of man’s redemption in Christ.<sup>41</sup>

John Paul includes in his catechesis on the Holy Spirit a commentary on St. Paul’s teaching on the dignity of the human body. Discussing St. Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6: 19), John Paul reminds his listeners that they should be well aware of the dignity of their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the human person is a dwelling place of God, body and soul. Using the image of a temple, a place where one is reminded of God’s presence, the body takes on the duty of calling one to God. The body is the means of sanctification, analogous to the temple, by which the believer comes to experience relationship with God. Far from taking St. Paul’s words in his letter to the Romans, “You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the Spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8: 9) to signify a body soul dualism which sets the body against the Spirit, John Paul interprets these words as the promise of the resurrection for those who invite the Spirit into their living body. He takes care to mention that the sanctification of the Spirit is not the kind of sanctification which

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<sup>40</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 8, p. 24-25, (emphasis in original).

<sup>41</sup> Aidan Nichols, “Pastor and Doctor: The Encyclicals of John Paul II,” 171.

removes the experiences of the body from the realm of Godly expression, but instead calls upon the bodily dimension of man to be sanctified in all its relations.<sup>42</sup>

John Paul goes on to interpret St. Paul's juxtaposition of 'life according to the flesh' and "life according to the Spirit" as opposites in virtue of their origin and goal, not according to their (diametrically opposed) dignity. He does not set body against soul, but instead sets apart what can be known by the body alone (carnal promptings) versus what can be known and experienced by the body and soul united with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, John Paul mentions the physical images which Christ used to manifest the reality of sanctification by the Holy Spirit within the believer, life giving water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4: 14), being the only satisfaction for those who thirst (Jn 7:2) and the baptism with fire and Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11).<sup>44</sup> All of the sacraments in the Church is based upon the notion of bodily experience of the divine, of God transforming creation which man offers to him, of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling a share of his promised salvation. Since God cannot be fully experienced directly by man in this life,

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<sup>42</sup> John Paul II, *The Spirit, Giver of Life and Love*, March 20, 1991, 377.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., April 10, 1991, 384-85. "Knowledge of this divine source of the spiritual life, which spreads from within the soul into all areas of life, even those exterior and social, is a fundamental and sublime aspect of Christian anthropology." Further, in his Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantum*, "Lord and Giver of Life" Vatican Translation, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference), no. 55, pp. 106-107, *AAS* 78, 1986, 809-900), John Paul clarifies St. Paul's emphasis: "From the context it is clear that for the Apostle it is not a question of discriminating against and condemning the body, with which the spiritual soul constitutes man's nature and personal subjectivity. Rather, he is concerned with the morally *good or bad works*, or better the permanent dispositions—virtues and vices—which are the *fruit of submission to* (in the first case) [spirit] or of *resistance to* (in the second case) [flesh] the saving action of the Holy Spirit," (emphasis in original).

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, *The Spirit, Giver of Life and Love*, April 10, 1991, 386.

the sacramental life through the experience of the bodily senses mediates man's experience of God.<sup>45</sup>

## 5.2 Human Dignity and Proper Autonomy

Discussing the anthropological revelation found in the book of Genesis, John Paul describes the self-understanding of man as a human journey of creation, rebellion and promise.<sup>46</sup> Man, who is created out of nothing, struggles to understand the relationship with his Creator. Endowed with many gifts and the uniqueness of being created in God's image and likeness, he is given dominion over all things which surround him. The inherent dignity of man comes not only from man's superiority over the rest of creation, but also from his reception of this status from his Creator and his participating with the help of grace in the life of the divine. It is here that a Christian anthropology differs from a purely naturalistic humanism, which often criticizes Christian doctrine for depriving man of ultimate dignity due to the fact that he is dependent upon God.<sup>47</sup> However, instead of this being a sign of weakness for the Christian, John Paul reminds the believer that a proper understanding of man's relationship with God leads not only to a more glorified adoration of his Creator, but also to an ever deeper wonder of ourselves.<sup>48</sup>

Again, John Paul's reflections on the creation account illustrate important lessons for man. Principal among them are the unique capacity of man for self-knowledge, the experience of his being as one with relation to the world which surrounds him, the need

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Schmaus, *Dogma 5 The Church as Sacrament*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 3.

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, January 8, 1986, 196.

<sup>47</sup> Woznicki, *The Dignity of Man as Person*, 113.

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10, p. 29.

to fill his solitude, and his being dependent upon God.<sup>49</sup> The freedom bestowed upon man, along with his command to subdue the earth, represents an exercise in the struggle to maintain the right relationship between man's freedom and his pursuit of truth.<sup>50</sup> These ancient lessons from the scriptures are paralleled with the earthly reminders of man's situation, lessons knowable also from man's experience such that the truths of creation are known not only by faith, but by the lives of the creatures.

Revelation is crucial for finding legitimacy in man's autonomy, that is, the proper mode in which it is exercised. *Gaudium et spes* articulated the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate autonomy.

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their being created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws, and order.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand:

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<sup>49</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 9, 1986, 223.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Woznicki, *Dignity of Man as Person*, 128-29, summarizes Wojtyla/John Paul's understanding of this most human of exercises. Citing the Weekly Audience of John Paul II, (*L'Osservatore Romano*, July 18, 1983). "Christian humanism as viewed by the then Karol Wojtyla and the present John Paul II is based on two sets of human values: a synthesis of existence and love, and a connection between truth and freedom. Based on these two sets of human values, our author lays down a new foundation for Christian ethics. On the one hand, Christian ethics, based on Wojtyla's existential personalism, is fulfilling the requirements of the "naturalistic" humanism, because it takes into account both the individual experience and personal freedom of man. In the words of John Paul II: "to speak of 'ethos' means to recall an experience that every man, not only the Christian, lives daily: it is at the same time simple and complex, profound and elementary. This experience is always connected with that of his own freedom, that is the fact that each one of us is truly and really the cause of his/her own acts." On the other hand, an ethical system which stems from Wojtyla's existential personalism is grounded in one's own experience of *divinum*: "In the ethical experience, therefore, there is established a connection between truth and freedom, thanks to which the person becomes evermore himself, in obedience to the creative will of God."

<sup>51</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36, p. 935.

That autonomy would be illegitimate (that is, not in conformity with the truth of revelation) which proclaims the independence of created things from God the Creator, and which maintains “that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator.” (GS 36) Such a way of understanding and behaving denies and rejects the truth about creation. In most cases, if not indeed in principle, this position is maintained precisely in the name of the “autonomy” of the world, and of man in the world, and of human knowledge and action.<sup>52</sup>

The proper understanding of man’s autonomy is that it is balanced as a responsibility and dependence upon the source of his being, the Creator. While man is an autonomous subject, and the source of his own actions, he is ontologically contingent upon God. Particularly in his exercise of his intelligence and free will, he reflects the creative power of God. Such an understanding of man’s vocation as cooperator with God reminds him that his power, as endowed by his Creator, is a share in the dominion of God, not a competition in power. The basis for the value of human life is that the exercise of man’s life is the glory of the Creator.<sup>53</sup>

An example of the proper understanding of human work in John Paul’s thought helps to clarify the proper understanding of man’s autonomy. The theology of the human act is articulated in his third encyclical *Laborem exercens*. In it, John Paul states that despite the vast changes in the world, the basic meaning of man’s activity continues today: confirming his dominion in the world, man builds up by his activity, and

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<sup>52</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 2, 1986, 218.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, April 9, 1986, 223-24. See also John Paul II *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 36. While John Paul applauds the ability of moral theology to enter into dialogue with modern culture and benefit from emphasis on the rational character of the natural law, universally knowable—he nevertheless warns against the abandonment of moral theology’s dependence on divine revelation for the knowledge of moral truths in favor of a sovereignty of the rational.

participates in the creative power of God.<sup>54</sup> This is not only a universal process by which man has an effect on the world around him, but this activity also has an effect on the one who labors to affect the change.<sup>55</sup>

Here, John Paul's distinction between transitive and intransitive aspects of human action sheds light on his theological anthropology. The transitive aspect of action is that which ends in the production, where man's labor makes or improves a product. In the use of such labor, man improves the world as it becomes through his productive labor, a place more suitable for his fulfillment. But also necessary for man's improvement is the intransitive nature of labor. The world is not just meant to be used and manipulated, but also contemplated. The products created by work do not exist without relationship to the actions by which they are created. The intransitive aspect of action is that which remains in the agent. The laborer is changed through his action, for human actions shape the agent who performs them. For John Paul, this intransitive aspect is more important than the transitive dimension—for the acting agent is of more value than the product of his labor.<sup>56</sup> Human activity is to be judged by how it leads both transitively and intransitively to goodness, truth and beauty. Work is to benefit not only those who consume what is produced, but also those who produce what is consumed. The dignity afforded to workers is a microcosm of the dignity given to all who share freely in the creative action of God.

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<sup>54</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, "On Human Work," Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 1981, no. 4, p. 12, *AAS* 73, (1981), 577-647)

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 15, p 38.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles' explanation of *Laborem exercens* no. 13 in *The Splendor of Faith*, 173-74. Ironically, contemporary consumer society has a dangerous similarity to Marxist and socialist thought. Both tend to give primacy to goods on the basis of their utility or superficial appearance over the inherent dignity of persons.

The evaluation of work in its transitive and intransitive aspects can be extended to all human actions. Man's creativity in work does not exist separately, or autonomously, from the situations around which it takes place. Therefore, extended to all of man's actions, both the transitive and intransitive dimensions can be evaluated, and in doing so, man's sense of legitimate autonomy requires an evaluation of the effects that his actions have on himself, others, and on the greater community around him. This is especially true in attempting to understand the experience suffering.

In *Redemptor hominis*, John Paul points out the need for man to balance a proper understanding of his actions and work to assure that he remains more concerned about "being more" than simply "having more." This implies an understanding of his autonomy which appreciates not only the role of the Creator, whose power man shares, but also the effects of his actions in the world around him.<sup>57</sup>

The intransitive aspect of work in human action is the separating distinction of man from all other creatures. Man's dignity is carried out from his free exercise of choosing. In this, he completes the work of the Creator in himself and in the world. His actions and work form an experience of knowing God and of being changed in the process of acting and experiencing. His proper autonomy is not a freedom for its own sake, but a choosing to use that freedom in the pursuit of goodness, of goodness both for the self and those with whom he interacts.<sup>58</sup> In *Redemptor hominis* John Paul traces the roots of the challenges of contemporary societies to an illegitimate concept of autonomy,

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<sup>57</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* no. 16, p. John Paul connects the issues of proper stewardship and man's autonomy with the example of proper care for the natural environment versus exploitation of nature. See also *Redemptor hominis* no. 15, p. and *God, Father and Creator*, April 2, 1986, 219.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 21.

of freedom from any restraint which too often leads to alienation, whereby freedoms of one group or nation infringe upon the freedoms of another.<sup>59</sup> These societal challenges point to a mode of thinking whereby man's sense of autonomy is not that he be the subject of his actions, but that, as subject, he be free from any greater guide or ethical control.<sup>60</sup>

In the end, John Paul's concept of human dignity does not stem primarily from the fact that man is free and autonomous, but that it is God who has blessed him with these gifts, and revealed them as such, in order to pursue relationship with Him in solidarity with each other. His theological observations of society and labor are consistent with his philosophical understanding of the human act; that philosophically and theologically free human action ought to be ordered to bring humanity together in solidarity.<sup>61</sup> Though man is charged with his own proper stability, goodness and autonomy, the purpose of these is in pursuit of the ultimate autonomous One, God himself, with whom man's will is called to harmonize.<sup>62</sup>

### 5.3 Divine Providence and Human Freedom

Having initiated his theological anthropology on the dignity of the human person by recounting the lessons from creation in the book of Genesis, John Paul moves to include a contemporary question about the nature of Divine Providence in light of human

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., no. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, "Rally with Young People and Seminarians," *Origins*, Washington, DC: Catholic News Service, vol. 37 (2008), no. 46, p. 757 regarding the proper use of the value of freedom.

<sup>61</sup> Observation by Avery Cardinal Dulles in *The Splendor of Faith*, 185, regarding the continuity of John Paul's thought in the social, economic and philosophical realms.

<sup>62</sup> *Gaudium et spes* 36, as quoted by John Paul II, *God Father and Creator*, May 14, 1986, 252.

freedom. Noting that the goodness of creation is not simply an event of the past, set in motion without the constant care and concern of the Creator, John Paul notes that God continues in the active creation of the world.<sup>63</sup> Creation, he states, is constant—for what came forth from nothing would return to nothing if the Creator were to cease his direction of what he has created. This implies a constant relationship of care for the deepest details of all that exists, continuing with the same love which He declared to be good. God's will, eternally directed to bring about truth, beauty and goodness, never ceases to be active in the role of creation and care.<sup>64</sup> God's presence and action in the world are necessary extensions of the love he revealed in creating the world and man, who can come to know and be in loving relationship with him.

John Paul saw a contemporary reason for reiterating this constant teaching of the Church. In every age, man questions the reality of divine providence, either because he is afraid or unsure of the need to abandon himself to the will of God, or because, seeing the presence of evil in the world, he comes to doubt the power and love united in a providential God. These two extremes are related doubts that come from a reflection of the extraordinary goodness of creation, side by side with plentiful evidence of its imperfection.<sup>65</sup> These observations lead to some unfortunate solutions to understanding the mystery of God's action in the world.

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<sup>63</sup> Human suffering is a thorny challenge to an initial acceptance of Divine Providence. One way out of the apparent contraction is to describe the God of creation as good, but distant, as the One who has set the world in motion, but is no longer involved in it. See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, San Francisco: Harper, (1977), 3-12. John Paul utterly rejects this dismissal of the mystery of suffering.

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 9, 1986, 244-45.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, April 30, 1986, 240.

One possibility is to view humanity as bound to destiny or fate, unable to exercise human freedom to a degree which has any real meaning for man. In this view there is no belief in a superior power nor rational purpose for human action, since one's situation and surroundings appear random. Man faces many situations in which desired action on God's behalf is lacking, making the idea of random destiny appealing. But this is unable to account for any explanation to the order that obviously surrounds creation and humanity. In reacting to this denial of God, another faulty explanation is the reduction of man's freedom for an affirmation of God's (often random) power. This appeals to the obvious goodness and power of God to be used over and above man, removing his freedom from the equation. In this analysis, man is more the object of the actions of a superior power than a self-determining subject. Even those who profess faith in God can fall victim to the influence of this kind of thinking, by seeing their relationship with God in a superstitious manner, whereby prayer becomes more a type of appeasement than communication.<sup>66</sup> Another temptation is to exaggerate man's freedom to the denial of God's power or even existence, to distance God from the discussion of human events, as was mentioned above in the concept of a proper understanding of man's autonomy.<sup>67</sup>

John Paul observes a common thread in each of these three erroneous understandings of the relationship of man to God's providence: each is a failure to incorporate the promptings of the heart and God's historical and personal self-revelation into this intellectual struggle. God has revealed himself to be both the providential

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<sup>66</sup> This is especially true when the believer is faced with making sense of the mystery of human suffering, which will be seen in Part Three.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, April 30, 1986, 240.

Creator of the world as well as the one who invites man to share in his creation as a coworker. God's creation is revealed as providential. The plan of creation precedes God's action in it, and, as an expression of his power, he presides over all that comes to be. God's providence is both transcendent and simultaneously immanent. God's providence and man's freedom share a meeting point in the created world.<sup>68</sup> Man's gift, his "existential equipment," leads him to write down his experience with God.<sup>69</sup> Man's recording of the experience of this providence in scripture and each man's personal reflection show a historical dimension of the reality of God's action.

The most profound revelation of God's providence comes from the words of Christ himself. John Paul describes these words as "touching" as they reach out to the heart of the believer. Both Matthew and Luke's Gospels remind the listener that God's care is a fatherly, gentle, and persistent care, a care for man even when he is unaware of it, and a knowledge and interest in the life of each man. Christ has entered into the realm of human hearts in a unique way. "He entered more deeply into the subject [of divine providence] as regards humanity, every single person, treated by God with the exquisite delicacy of a father."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., May 21, 1986, 256.

<sup>69</sup> *God, Father and Creator*, May 21, 1986, 258. Here in his reflections, John Paul quotes several sections from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> chapters of Sirach which show man's reflection upon this mystery of divine providence.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1986, 253. See Mt. 10: 29-31, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Cf. Luke 12: 29-31: "Therefore do not be anxious saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his heavenly kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

Divine providence is shown here not as an exercise of God's power at random moments, but in definite order. Christ's words reveal in the mystery of divine providence two important observations regarding the providential order of creation. Not only does God have dominion and intimate knowledge of even the smallest detail of the created world, but God delights even more in the knowledge of his creation. Secondly, and even more importantly, God not only desires of his creation the comfort of knowing of his paternal love and care; but also desires man to freely order himself into relationship with Him in a proper ordering of his actions. "Seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" demonstrates Christ's revelation of the Father's providence both as care and invitation.

Moreover, Jesus insistently proclaimed that man, so privileged by his Creator, is duty-bound to cooperate with the gift received from Providence. He cannot be satisfied with the values of sense, of matter, and of utility. He must seek above all "the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" because "all these things (namely, earthly goods) shall be yours as well" (cf. Mt 6:33).<sup>71</sup>

The often apparent contradiction between human freedom and divine providence is exactly the greatest mystery of the contemplation of human action. John Paul calls this the "meeting point" of human freedom and God's plan. God's plan is not over and above man, acting separately from or against man's freedom, but instead is a paternally guiding and solicitous love.<sup>72</sup> Man's duty to follow Divine Providence joins at the confluence of his being ordered toward self-determination and progression. This progression brings together the will of the finite creature with the infinite love of the Creator, without

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1986, 254.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., May 21, 1986, 256.

diminishing the dignity of either, for man is perfected, and more ‘himself’ in the will of God. God’s love and respect for man is so great that he permits human sin, a frustration in God’s plan and man’s progression. Again, in *Redemptor hominis* John Paul reiterates a truth about the mystery of man as meeting place of God’s providence and his own freedom, such that man’s orientation to the truth is the successful exercise of freedom, for the call to truth contains:

...both a fundamental requirement and a warning: the requirement of an honest relationship with regard to truth as a condition for authentic freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world.<sup>73</sup>

*Redemptor hominis* reiterates what *Gaudium et spes* observed about a danger in contemporary society, to seek freedom for its own sake, in a radical disconnect with the created world, autonomous in the sense of independent from God which instead leads to isolation.<sup>74</sup> Karol Wojtyla had contemplated this temptation in humanity years earlier in his play, “Radiation of Fatherhood.” In it the character Adam (who represents the tendencies within all people) suffers from loneliness and isolation because he thinks that being more Godlike means needing no one—being free from the burden of depending upon relationship with others. In fact, he finds that his view of God not only cannot be imitated by man, who certainly needs God as well as others, but also that God himself is not properly understood as the God of power and autonomy, but the God of relatedness and radiating love.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 12, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., no. 16, pp. 50-58, and *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36, p. 935.

<sup>75</sup> See Jozef Tischner’s commentary on the text: Karol Wojtyla, *Radiation of Fatherhood*, in *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 327.

The providence of the creating and active God is not a threat to man's freedom in John Paul's thought, but rather a guide toward its proper exercise in goodness. The proper integration of personal freedom with God's providential guidance is that "meeting point" which depends on the openness to God's grace to lead man away from simple immersion in the self or the objects of the world.<sup>76</sup>

#### 5.4 Mercy as the Link to Theology from Philosophy

In the movement from his first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* to his second, *Dives in misericordia*, John Paul develops the theme of God's mercy as a key to understanding of his anthropology. Having examined his excursus on creation as a sign of God's goodness, John Paul's discussion of the role of God's mercy is another crucial anthropological insight. His first two encyclicals show the mystery of God's mercy to be a primary means of experiencing His goodness. They demonstrate John Paul's phenomenology by which the Christian can come to understand the goodness of God by reflecting on the mystery of redemption which man experiences. Together, these two encyclicals form a reflection on the reality of God's love, most clearly articulated in the characteristic of his infinite mercy, as well as man's response as an incorporation into God's own life. In fact, the issue of mercy becomes the meeting place of anthropology and theology. In analyzing the connection in John Paul's first two encyclicals, Gerald

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<sup>76</sup> Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 76.

Beigel develops three themes which demonstrate the primacy of mercy in John Paul's thought, shown below.<sup>77</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Mercy is the Bilateral Link between God and Man

John Paul places the Paschal Mystery as the center and culmination of the revelation of God's love and mercy for man. But as the center, it is intrinsically connected to all of God's self-revelation, such that the cross and resurrection of Christ is consistent with God's covenantal relationship with man. Creation itself is a sign of merciful love—that man would be so greatly endowed with the gifts of creation. God follows up with creation in his offering of the covenants expressed in the Old Testament.

The cross and resurrection of Christ reestablish the link which God desires with man, but which has been lost in man's preference for sin.<sup>78</sup> Man's redemption in the cross reveals the kind of God that always has been, and reveals, in a radical way, the kind of person that man was always intended to be: so loved by God, so important to him, so uniquely desired, that God would act so definitively in showing mercy to man by a self-offering for sin, an offering which man was incapable of making himself. Shedding new light on all of creation, the cross and resurrection of Christ as the means of man's redemption and the epitome of God's mercy, is a means of reevaluating all of history. It is in this light that the words of the Exultet, proclaimed at the Easter Vigil liturgy, judge original sin to be a "happy fault" and a "necessary sin of Adam" for, on its account, Christ came to offer his life as a gift beyond comparison and the ultimate act of love

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<sup>77</sup> Gerald Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action: A Framework for Understanding How Social Justice is an Essential Part of the Gospel in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, S.T.D. diss., (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1994), see especially 140-45.

<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 7, pp. 24-25.

shown to man. This love manifests a truer understanding of God revealed throughout all of history. It shows:

the depth of that love which does not recoil before the extraordinary sacrifice of the Son, in order to satisfy the fidelity of the Creator and Father towards human beings, created in His image and chosen from “the beginning” in this Son, for grace and glory.<sup>79</sup>

This revelation demonstrates an order of redemption eternally at work, but revealed in an even greater way than in original creation, for it opens up a bond which grants participation in God’s own life.<sup>80</sup> This participation is a theological manifestation of Wojtyla’s concept of human action and fulfillment shown in *The Acting Person*, whereby man is capable by his free choices to act in a way that deepens his union with God and manifests the presence of God in the world.<sup>81</sup>

This bilateral link, brought about by God’s definitive act of salvation and man’s acceptance and action shows God’s initiative, but by no means insinuates man’s passivity. God deals fully and completely with human sin on the cross, and in doing so, establishes a new concept of justice, a justice in which Christ is both cause and exemplar for man. In turn, man is called to participate in this, the new order of justice and mercy. Beigel uncovers a theologically compact kernel of all of John Paul’s anthropology when he writes that the restoration of the order of redemption of the cross enables every person of every place and time to participate in the very life of God, “by giving himself to God, and like an adopted son to become a sharer in the truth and love which is in God and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 147.

proceeds from God.”<sup>82</sup> Here, man becomes fully realized in the acknowledgment of truth, the participation in it through his own loving acts, manifesting freedom of self-determination in the gift of self. The cross alone reveals the totality of truth about man, his destiny for participation as an adopted son in God’s life, the mercy given that makes that participation possible, and the fact that freedom is properly realized in the return of one’s self to God.<sup>83</sup>

#### 5.4.2 God’s Mercy as Constitutive in Anthropology

In both *Redemptor hominis* and *Dives in misericordia*, John Paul uses the image of the human heart as the object and symbol of the penetration of God’s mercy.<sup>84</sup> The heart represents the inner depths of men, those pleading for mercy, as well as the capacity to receive and reflect God’s mercy. Christ’s redemption has “penetrated in a unique, unrepeatable way into the mystery of man and entered his heart.”<sup>85</sup> The heart is the recipient of both the power and the content of God’s mercy. As capacity, the heart is what makes man the being he is, and the heart symbolizes the depths of the person’s being which can be filled with grace in relationship with God, or void of that grace. In his play *Radiation of Fatherhood*, the young Wojtyla speaks of a capacity which, when not filled by God, is called loneliness, and his cry yearning to be filled is reminiscent of St. Augustine’s longing for God.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 7, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Gerald Biegel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 149-50.

<sup>84</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 7, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no.8, p. 24.

<sup>86</sup> Gerald Beigel draws attention to quotes from *Radiation of Fatherhood*, mentioned above, pertinent to the understanding of the relationship of mercy and man’s capacity fulfilled only by God, 154. See *Radiation of Fatherhood*, in Karol Wojtyla, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, 338: “Because You execute your plan. You are determined and Your plans are irreversible. The strangest thing always

Identifying the heart as the symbol of God's mercy, mercy is to now become a unifying and elevating force through which man's concept of justice is now transformed, and he is bound to be guided by the mercy revealed in Christ.<sup>87</sup> This experience of mercy needed, generously granted, and then extended becomes for John Paul a constitutive element of the human experience in Christ. In fact, man reaches fulfillment only when the heart unifies and elevates his thought and action, allowing his true imitation of Christ. The philosophical concept of perfection as self-fulfillment is possible theologically only with the "correction" of God's divine mercy.<sup>88</sup>

Using the parable of the Prodigal Son, John Paul argues that instead of mercy being a sign of weakness or a belittling of the one to whom mercy is extended, it in fact raises the dignity of both the recipient and the giver. The extension of mercy shown by the father demonstrates the uniquely human ability, with God's grace, to look beyond (but not overlook) evil in the pursuit of goodness. This is the freedom exercised in faith

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transpires in the end: that You are never against me. You enter into what I call loneliness, and You overcome my resistance. Can one say that You force Your way in or only that You enter through a door that is open anyway? You did not make me closed; You did not quite close me. Loneliness is not at the bottom of my being at all; it grows at a certain point. The fissure through which You enter is far deeper. You enter—and slowly begin to shape me. You shape and develop me in spite of what I imagine about my ego and about other people, yet You do it in harmony with what I am. This I cannot deny. Yet can I wonder that You are stronger in my than myself?" John Paul quotes Augustine's *Confessions*, III, 6, 11 in *Dominum et vivificantem* no. 54, p. 103, in describing God's penetration into the human heart.

<sup>87</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 3, p. 12. Perhaps most cutting of all of Christ's parables about mercy is the story of the merciless servant in Matthew 18. Some of Christ's most condemning words refer to this man who refused to show mercy in a very small matter after having been shown mercy on a much greater scale.

<sup>88</sup> Gerald Biegel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 156. "The revelation of God's mercy within the human heart ultimately places Jesus Christ as the exemplar of mercy within the person's heart, moving him to imitate Christ in his actions. The 'correction' of the philosophical view of the person presented in *The Acting Person* by this Christocentric experience of the content and power of God's mercy has profound consequences in the whole realm of ethics. The reference of mercy to the 'heart' of the person brings into view the normative position which mercy acquires in human life through the mission of Jesus."

to pursue goodness rather to be mired in evil.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, within the recipient of mercy demonstrated by the son, there is a renewed dignity from conversion which properly reorders ones actions with one's potential. Mercy becomes the work of the restoration of man's dignity, an elevation of both the recipient and the giver, such that both are built up and transformed by mercy given, each receiving, for mercy is never just a unilateral act.<sup>90</sup>

#### 5.4.3 Normative Significance of Mercy

The concept of mercy in John Paul's anthropology takes on a normative function in guiding the actions of man. Having received God's mercy, as a "source of a life different from the life which can be built by man"<sup>91</sup> – mercy experienced in the heart of the person is a divine gift which enables man to more fully participate in the life of God as well as in the lives of others, and is the means of self-fulfillment. This normative function of mercy is the commandment of Christ himself, demanded from man who himself has received through Christ.<sup>92</sup> But more than just a commandment to be fulfilled, mercy becomes a means for God's revelation of himself in the world. God is manifested in the practice of extending and receiving mercy.<sup>93</sup>

The concept of mercy is actualized in the relationship of the pursuit of the virtue of justice. Often enough, mercy appears to exist in an antagonistic relationship with the

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<sup>89</sup> See Rom 12: 21.

<sup>90</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, nos. 6, 14. pp. 23, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., no. 14, p. 45.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., no. 14. pp. 42-43.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., nos. 3, and 14, pp. 11-12, 42: "Man attains to the merciful love of God, His mercy, to the extent that he himself is interiorly transformed in the spirit of that love towards his neighbor."

concept of justice, whereby only one can be said to be present, that is, one can deal with another with either mercy or justice. In fact, this is not the way in which John Paul sees divine mercy at work. Mercy and justice have a mutual dependence in John Paul's thought, such that true justice is informed by mercy without loss of the good to be sought. Christ's parables teach of a new "measure," as God's standard for justice.<sup>94</sup> This requires both a critique and a transformation of the purely human concept of justice. This is not a simple lowering of the standards for what can be expected or demanded of man as just in the sight of God, Whom man continually fails.<sup>95</sup> True mercy and true justice meet in the redemption of man by Christ's cross. Christ's cross is the just atonement for human sinfulness, and human suffering is man's participation in this act of redemption.<sup>96</sup> The cross is the standard for man's experience of God's merciful action and His new standard of judgment. The original bond between God and man in creation is renewed in the cross, and man is not only delivered from sin, but his dignity is renewed in a new ability to live in God's justice, in the extension of mercy through his own life. The manifestation of mercy in man's life constitutes a new relationship with God and the world in response to the gift he has received.

Mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and *draws good from all the forms of evil* existing in the world and in man. Understood in this way, mercy constitutes the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of His mission.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Among Jesus' parables, there are several which particularly challenge a popular concept of justice with God's concept of justice and mercy working together. See the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18: 9-14; the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20: 1-16; the two debtors in Luke 7: 41-43; and the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-25.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., no. 14, pp. 42-44.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., no. 7, p 24-25.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., no. 6, p. 23, (emphasis in original).

This bilateral living out of God's merciful justice in the world is the key hermeneutic for John Paul's Christocentric anthropology. His encyclicals *Redemptor hominis* and *Dives in misericordia* do not just happen to be chronologically foundational for his theological anthropology. They are also the thematic centering of his teachings.<sup>98</sup> Beginning with the centrality of the mystery of human redemption, noting the dignity which is man's because of this great act of God's love, John Paul continues moving toward man's contemplation of this generous love and the extension of God's mercy as the living expression of man's dignity.<sup>99</sup> In the analogy of the Prodigal Son in *Dives in misericordia*, John Paul comments that Christ reveals man's dignity is not found in the possessions he has (or has squandered in the story) but in his reception of relationship with the Father, and the Father's mercy.<sup>100</sup>

God's extension of mercy is the most profound manifestation of the dignity of man, for the best human justice can do for man points to an objective and extrinsic value, while the extension of divine mercy illuminates man's intrinsic dignity.<sup>101</sup> John Paul's

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<sup>98</sup> Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 176. See Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 134, in which he describes the various theological works of John Paul as all revolving around the concept of God's promise of mercy to man. "The themes of sin, suffering, and penance are central to the theology of John Paul II...both sin and suffering, in the theology of the pope, are taken up into the redemptive work of God, who shows himself as the 'Father of Mercies' in the gift of his own Son. By conducting [Christ's] ministry of preaching and sanctification, the Church becomes for the world a true sacrament of salvation."

<sup>99</sup> *Redemptor hominis*, no. 1, p. 5, begins with the understanding of the unity in the mystery of the incarnation and redemption which bring to man a dimension unique to him which God desired him to have from the beginning. *Dives in misericordia*, no. 15, p. 49 concludes with the statement that *Redemptor hominis* demonstrated man's "incomparable dignity."

<sup>100</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 5, p. 19.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., no. 14, p. 43: "Mercy that is truly Christian is also, in a certain sense, the most perfect incarnation of "equality" between people, and therefore also the most perfect incarnation of justice as well, insofar as justice aims at the result in its own sphere. However, the equality brought by justice is limited to the realm of objective and extrinsic goods, while love and mercy bring it about that people meet one another in that value which is man himself, with the dignity that is proper to him."

further theological exhortations, many and varied, build upon the foundation of the Christian's vocation as adopted through God's mercy and active in his extension of mercy from what man has received. Indeed, in John Paul's anthropology, often described as personalism, John Paul's statements about human dignity refer back to the foundation on which man participates in God's life through his mercy, and in the lives of others in community and solidarity. This solidarity is an extension of the mercy of God for man to other men. Just as for Wojtyla metaphysics is personalized with his phenomenological insights, so the truth of theology is made personal in contemplating God's mercy. Mercy is a subjective experience of a truth (God's love) which cannot be fully experienced merely on an objective intellectual level.

In conclusion, this attempt at an overview of John Paul's theology is intended to paint a picture of his thought. The themes of the knowledge of God and man's bodily experience of faith, of man's proper autonomy in relation to God's providence, and the understanding of God's mercy and man's vocation to extend mercy, are all foundational elements for understanding the mystery of human suffering. John Paul witnessed the need to explore both theologically and philosophically the depths of man's being in order to address the contemporary challenges man faces. Shortly after becoming a cardinal, he wrote to Henri de Lubac:

I devote my very rare free moments to a work that is close to my heart and devoted to the metaphysical sense and mystery of the PERSON. It seems to me that the debate today is being played on that level. The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person. This evil is even much more of the metaphysical order than of the moral order. To this disintegration, planned at times by atheistic ideologies, we must

oppose, rather than sterile polemics, a kind of “recapitulation” of the inviolable mystery of the human person.<sup>102</sup>

Shortly after becoming pope he wrote to the whole world that the Church’s mission is certainly to rely on revelation as its guide, but that it also must reflect on the “premises given by man’s own experience” and “his reason, and his sense of human dignity.”<sup>103</sup> The experience of being changed by our actions, the intransitive dimension of action, becomes for man a primary way of sensing God’s providence in conjunction with his personal autonomy. Wojtyla’s theology of man carries him beyond the classic Thomistic metaphysics of man’s faculties in justifying man’s claim to be called the image of the Trinity, just as his philosophy of man carried him beyond the classic Thomistic metaphysics of universal “nature” in his account of man as a conscious acting person. As the phenomenological dimension of human experience fleshed out his Thomistic metaphysics, so his articulation of God’s mercy illuminates the basis of his theology.

Gerald Beigel summarizes well:

The pope’s first two encyclicals consider the distinctive theological characteristics of the human act under the themes of the exemplarity of Christ and the normative significance of mercy. These two themes are at the heart of the ‘gospel ethos’ which constitutes the human response to the mystery of the redemption.<sup>104</sup>

As the starting point of God’s revelation to man and also the goal of man’s actions toward others, the theological experience of mercy becomes the foundation in John Paul’s thought for a better understanding the working out of salvation in the mystery of

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<sup>102</sup> Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 71-72, (emphasis in original).

<sup>103</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 17, p. 64.

<sup>104</sup> Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 176.

human suffering. The keystone for his theological foundation regarding the experience of God is his articulation of what has been called the “Theology of the Body”.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOHN PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Pope Pius IX began the practice of a weekly audience in the Vatican in the 1870's. Since that time, the popes have used this opportunity of peoples' closeness with the pontiff to address hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in person, using it as a catechetical and pastoral tool. However, none of the popes had taken to using the audience as a systematic means of furthering a particular catechesis on a single topic to the degree that John Paul II used them to articulate what is now called the "Theology of the Body." Over five years from September 1979 to November 1984, he addressed the pastoral need of catechizing the faithful on the mystery of marriage and human sexuality.<sup>1</sup>

Having been a member of the Pontifical Study Commission on Family Planning and Birth Problems, Cardinal Wojtyla was as aware as anyone else that the Church's teaching on human sexuality needed to be better and more fully communicated.<sup>2</sup> His

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<sup>1</sup> Various papal trips, John Paul's assassination attempt, and the Holy Year of 1983, whereby John Paul took up other matter for his audiences, caused this catechesis to be broken up from time to time. Originally these addresses were published each week in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper. They were subsequently published in English in three volumes by the Daughters of St. Paul, but these volumes are out of print. In 1997, the addresses were published in one larger volume, again by the Daughters of St. Paul, entitled, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media), but these collected talks often revealed inconsistent translations from the official Italian texts and awkward English phrasing. Michael Waldstein edited and retranslated a new collection of John Paul's audiences. Including even some talks which were not given in audiences, this work entitled, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, is the original title given by John Paul himself (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). Waldstein provides a history of the titles and various versions, see pp. 4-23. For reference here, the audiences will be marked by the date they were given and their page appearance in this one volume, hereafter abbreviated *Man and Woman*.

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth review of the varied and highly charged responses surrounding Paul VI's issuing of *Humanae Vitae*, see William Shannon, *The Lively Debate: Responses to Humanae Vitae*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970), esp. 56ff.

earlier work, *Love and Responsibility*, had brought the insights of a new philosophical framework to the contemporary difficulty of accepting the Church's teachings on matters of sexual morals.<sup>3</sup> He stressed that a growing tendency to view man solely in scientific and positivist terms was in danger of extinguishing man's spiritual order.<sup>4</sup>

John Paul's dedication of five years of his pontificate to the theology of the body catechesis demonstrates how deeply he understood the need for such theological illumination, as well as his conviction of the degree to which the wisdom and plan of God for man's actions could be understood by a philosophical and theological evaluation of the human body. In other words, instead of relying simply on the repetition of traditional teaching regarding the issues that relate to moral issues of the body, John Paul took up a systematic contemplation of the body itself as a means of God's revelation. This, of course, has direct application for matters of sexual morality, but has broader significance for understanding how the body contains God's revelation to man in all moral issues in which it is involved. The examination of "bodily knowing" is consistent with his philosophical appreciation of what phenomenology adds to traditional metaphysical anthropology, discussed in the proceeding chapters.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John S. Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue: An Introduction to Sexual Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando*, series I (*Antepreparatoria*), vol. 2, pt. 2 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanum, 1960): no. 32, 741-42, as cited by Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 73. "Materialismo crescente, qui diversas obtinet species (materialismus scientisimi, positivismi, dialectus), transcendentalem oportet ordinem spiritualem exponere, et satis quidem fortiter. Qui in Deo, Prima omnium Causa...initium habet, ordo ille spiritualis invenitur etiam in homine ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei creato."

<sup>5</sup> To be sure, there are many theologians who take a different approach than John Paul in the discipline of moral theology, specifically with regard to the purpose of the Theology of the Body addresses which seek to explain, among other matters, the church's prohibition of artificial contraception. Regarding the pope's approach, cf. Bernard Häring, "A Distrust That Wounds," in *Readings in Moral Theology no. 10: John Paul II and Moral Theology*, Charles Curran and Richard McCormick, eds., (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press,

Together with John Paul's first two encyclicals, the Theology of the Body catechesis constitutes a manifestation of the meeting place of anthropology and theology. The Second Vatican Council, of which Cardinal Wojtyla was an active member, sought among its most important goals, the elimination of the opposition between anthropocentrism and theocentrism.<sup>6</sup> The theology of the body sets out most clearly in John Paul's teaching to unify these foci in the study of the subject of the person.<sup>7</sup> This chapter's description of Wojtyla/John Paul's phenomenological understanding of the revelatory nature of the human body, written for a greater understanding of the Church's teaching on matters of sexual morality, will demonstrate parallel lessons with regard to the mystery of human suffering.

Behind the Church's teaching on sexual morality is a basic understanding of man's relationship with God and his relationships with others, which have a great impact on his self-awareness. Better understanding the mystery of human suffering also depends upon these basic relational needs of man. Both man's sexuality and his experience of suffering present raw sensual stimuli that need to be founded on revealed truths, so that

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1998), 42-46. Regarding the importance of the pope's exhortations, cf. Charles Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, no. 1, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> See the Commission on Birth Control, "Majority Report," in *The Catholic Case for Contraception*, ed. Daniel Callahan, (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 50. "The story of God and of man, therefore, should be seen as a shared work. And it should be seen that man's tremendous progress in control of matter by technical means and the universal and total 'intercommunication' that has been achieved, correspond entirely to the divine decrees." This document, leaked to the press in 1967 displays an agreement with the aforementioned Baconian project, in which the mastery of human nature by technical means is assumed to be the divine will. This is a significantly different way of viewing the body than what is found in John Paul's anthropology. Michael Waldstein, "Introduction," in *Man and Woman*, 100, points out the danger that John Paul noticed in the tendency to view nature in the matter of the body as something to be controlled. See John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 22, p. 41. "Nature itself, from being 'mater' (mother), is now reduced to being 'matter,' and is subjected to every kind of manipulation. This is the direction in which a certain technical and scientific ways of thinking, prevalent in present-day culture, appear to be leading when it rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected."

what the body senses, either sexually or in suffering, can be contextualized, and therefore more completely understood. The lessons in John Paul's Theology of the Body will present themes which will help better address the mystery of suffering.

### 6.1 The Human Body Understood

In John Paul's analysis of the Theology of the Body, the body comes to signify the meeting place and living out of one's interior life. In contrast to a concept of the body which would signify only an exterior dimension of man, where body would be juxtaposed with the spiritual realm, the body in John Paul's catechesis takes on the unity of man's being.<sup>8</sup> "When we speak of the meaning of the body, we refer first to the full awareness of the human being."<sup>9</sup> The concept of "body" comes to signify a totality of the person's experience which is attentive to and informed by the physical body. The physical dimension of the person is not subordinated in importance or dignity to the spiritual realm, but rather serves as a locus of experience for the unity of the person.<sup>10</sup> The significance of the body referring to the embodied person is assumed in John Paul's reference to "body."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 99.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, June 25, 1980, 255-56.

<sup>10</sup> See Christoph Schönborn, "Foreword," *Man and Woman*, xxiv. "It may seem strange to some, but it is a fact that in his theology of the body the Bishop of Rome upholds the dignity and truth of the bridegroom's cry of joy against scientific rationalism. The beauty of the body, which is the cause of this cry of joy, is not a mere veil, a deceptive mask behind which one must see the prosaic scientific truth of a mere chance mechanism that has no intrinsic meaning. The beauty is real and tangible. Its light can be traced back to God's original guiding intention for man and woman. Human reason can apprehend this light and see the deep reasonableness of God's design."

<sup>11</sup> See John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, no. 48, p. 66: "The person...is completely entrusted to himself, and it is in the unity of body and soul that the person is the subject of his own moral acts. The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator."

John Paul addresses the discrepancy between the man of innocence, before the effects original sin, and the body of concupiscence, all who come after. While in the man of today the physical body carries within in it the resistance to the spirit, the body is not in itself subordinated to the spirit. John Paul adds that in the Genesis account of shame entering human history through original sin, the shame that man has is not due to his having a body so much as it is of the potentials of the body owing to lust.<sup>12</sup> The body, while good, “conceals the germ” of original sin, and manifests this fallen nature, making clear the contradiction of human bodily life to which St. Paul refers, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind (Rom 7: 22-23).”<sup>13</sup> While the body is the battleground for the effects of sin, it is also for man an opportunity for the manifestation of goodness. The effects of sin bring confusion and disunity to the body and threaten the mastery of temptation and control, but they do not undermine the dignity of the body.

Following this distinction, the Theology of the Body can be described as the experience man has of himself within the work of redemption. The body represents the method and grounds for understanding the mystery of the human person. For the body is the expression of what it means to be human. While man is more than what is simply physically tangible, the body is man’s method of knowing and experiencing the working out of salvation.<sup>14</sup> The influence of phenomenology in John Paul’s thought becomes quite clear in his assessment of the body as a revelation in itself for man. The study of man’s ordinary experiences of his body, bodily phenomena, demonstrate a literal

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., May 28, 1980, 244.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 244-45.

<sup>14</sup> Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 180-81.

theological “fleshing-out” of the mysteries of man’s life in and through his body.

This way of theological investigation will form his catechesis on traditional issues regarding morality and the body. His catechesis reveals many powerful images which further develop a phenomenological means of illumination of the mystery of the body experienced from the .

### 6.1.1 Triptych as image of Man

Situated in the center of John Paul’s catechesis on the body is his use of the image of a triptych.<sup>15</sup> On the three panels of the triptych are three historical-salvific realities of man’s life which John Paul uses to frame the complete story of redemption. The first panel represents pre-lapsarian man, the second depicts historical man redeemed in his fallen nature, and the third represents man in the sphere of redemption, encompassing both the present state of man today, as well as the promise of man after the resurrection of the body. Together, these images display a chronological totality of man’s existence.<sup>16</sup>

The believer today knows the fuller context of his existence through divine revelation. John Paul describes the original innocence of man before the fall in the first panel as God’s intention in creation known from the revelation in Genesis. Even though contemporary man exists after the fall, his experiences of innocence contrasted with his current lack of the experience of innocence because of sin, help to fill in this panel of the triptych with his knowledge of revealed creation. Being created in God’s image and

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<sup>15</sup> John Paul uses the symbol of a triptych, a three-paneled painting or carving, often as an altarpiece, which tell a complete story in three scenes.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, November 11, 1981, 380. It should be noted that the three panels are not *merely* chronological, such that they depict historical innocence, sinfulness, and then resurrection as independent from each other, but that the overlapping shows three identifiable realities, or as John Paul suggests, revealing the dimensions of the mystery of man.

likeness reveals a plan at work before original sin. The original innocence of man reveals a reality which requires his contemplation. While experiencing the effects of sin, man is called to seek an eternal meaning in God's original plan for man's body. For this reason, John Paul begins his entire catechesis with the gospel account of Christ being questioned by the Pharisees.<sup>17</sup>

Their questioning of the legitimacy of divorce, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark prompted Christ to answer their question with the challenge of their knowledge of the Creator's original plan that man must not divide what God has joined. Christ answered the challenge with an affirmation that although man no longer lived in the state of original innocence, man was called to seek something better than satisfaction with his current fallen nature. The point is not that man can somehow return to the state of complete innocence, that he can somehow pretend that the reality of sin has no effect on him, but rather this first panel of the triptych places man at the boundary between innocence and redemption, in the midst of knowing his limitations, but refusing to be satisfied with his current situation—an active longing for more. All of humanity stands with Christ and his questioners at this moment between sin and redemption. Man can only look from his vantage point in the present, but knowing his history affords him an

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., September 5, 1979, 132. John Paul sees Christ's confrontation of the Pharisees as having great epistemological importance, as a way of getting to the heart of their lack of understanding. One could argue that John Paul's choice in beginning his audiences with this questioning of Christ is a parallel approach in addressing the lack of understanding at the heart of contemporary culture's rejection of the Church's teaching on issues of sexual morality. "Christ does not accept the discussion on the level on which his interlocutors try to introduce it; in a sense, he does not approve the dimension they try to give to the problem. He avoids entangling himself in juridical or casuistic controversies; instead, he appeals twice to the beginning. By doing so, he clearly refers to the relevant words of Genesis, which his interlocutors also know by heart."

insight with which to address the present.<sup>18</sup> John Paul writes that every man in the state of sin finds his roots in a theological prehistory of original innocence.

It is impossible to understand the state of “historical” sinfulness without referring or appealing to the state of original innocence (and in some sense “prehistoric”) and fundamental innocence (and in fact Christ appeals to it). The emergence of sinfulness as a state, as a dimension of human existence, has thus from the beginning been linked with man’s real innocence as an original and fundamental state, as a dimension of being created “in the image of God.”<sup>19</sup>

Dwelling on the threshold between the first and second panel of the triptych uncovers a reality present in every person. All peoples who share in human sinfulness also share in the promise of redemption. The questioners of Christ, as well as each contemporary person, hear Christ recalling the beginning, not just as a reminder of innocence lost, but as an invitation to look to the redemption possible in him.

...[H]istorical man—both Christ’s interlocutors then, about whom Matthew 19 speaks, and human beings today—participates in this perspective. He participates not only *in the history of human sinfulness*, as a hereditary, and at the same time personal and unrepeatable, subject of this history, but he also participates *in the history of salvation*, here too as its subject and co-creator. He is thus not merely shut out from original innocence due to his sinfulness, but also at the same time open to the mystery of redemption realized in Christ and through Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The movement from the second to the third panels of the triptych affords man a hope of the future. While living with the promise of redemption that Christ’s questioners could not fully understand, the Christian today, standing in the same place as all peoples, has an eye toward the promise of resurrection which broadens his view of present reality. John Paul quotes St. Paul’s letter to the Romans in the perspective of the believer, “We

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<sup>18</sup> As will be discussed in the following chapter, suffering is also very often a type of boundary experience.

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, September 26, 1979, 143.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 144, (emphasis in original).

ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for...the redemption of our bodies.”<sup>21</sup> Christ’s calling to see the image of the original plan of creation in the first triptych includes an eye toward the third panel even as he stands firmly in the second. John Paul refers to these thresholds between the triptychs as indispensable points of reference for man as he uses both revelation and human experience to contemplate the reality of his existence. The examination of the body in theology has a parallel significance to the image of the triptych: an analysis of the body requires man to evaluate his movement from the present historical reality to the future promise of resurrection.

The words of John Paul in the theology of the body catechesis are specifically focused on man’s sexual embodiment, but in the larger context for all of theology, the image of the triptych provides an anthropological tool as literally a “three-dimensional” view of humanity. In the larger field of Christian theology and morality, the three dimensional triptych provides a context for evaluation of human action in relationship to God. It demands an inquiry into the larger situation in which a person finds himself in moral issues, seeking to place a particular situation within God’s plan. It implies a progression in man’s life, the bodily working out of his salvation by the evaluation of past and future realities which shape him in the present. Facing the reality of suffering, man finds himself in a similar experience to that of the boundary between his lived experience and that for which he hopes, similar to the triptych John Paul utilizes. The body is man’s witness of God’s creation and promise, a context which is the embodiment of the mysteries of God’s goodness and relation to man.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Romans 8:23.

### 6.1.2. The Subjective and Objective Dimension of Man Highlighted in the Body

The second major section of John Paul's catechesis on the body, entitled, "Blessed are the Pure of Heart," focuses on Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>22</sup> Just as Christ had challenged his questioners who seek permission for divorce by pointing to the original unity of man and woman before original sin as the manifestation of God's wisdom for their relations with one another, so Christ raises the expectations of the law for man to find its purpose.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.<sup>23</sup>

John Paul uses Christ's locution to demonstrate his appeal to a fuller concept of participating in God's plan for man. Christ's challenge to man is in man's right relationship with the law. He states in the same passage that he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. John Paul interprets this as Christ's invitation for man to participate in the intention of God who is revealed in the law, in a more profound way. By understanding and desiring the will of the legislator in the desire for purity in his creation, man approaches the holiness of God more perfectly than by simply not manifesting a particular type of impurity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See the reflection on John Paul's discourse of the Sermon on the Mount in "Redemption of the Body," by Mary Durkin, *Feast of Love: Pope John Paul II on Human Intimacy*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983), 181-83.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul frames this section with Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount (5:27-28).

<sup>24</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, April 16, 1980, 227. "It is a question, on the one hand, of *adhering to the meaning that God, the Legislator, put in the commandment, 'You shall not commit adultery,'* and, on the other hand, of fulfilling the justice that should 'superabound' in man himself, that is, that should reach its specific fullness in him." John Paul gives an historical overview of the understanding of the content of the commandment as understood by those who heard Christ's challenge, *Man and Woman*, August 13, 1980ff, 267ff, (emphasis in original).

John Paul notes that Christ's calling awareness to an interior reality, the disposition of purity in man, and abandoning an Old Testament casuistry, is a radical revelation of the focal point of God's desire for man.

A living morality in the existential sense is not formed only by the norms that clothe themselves in the form of commandments, precepts and prohibitions, as in the case of "You shall not commit adultery." The morality in which the very meaning of being human is realized—which is, at the same time, the fulfillment of the law by the "superabounding" of justice through subjective vitality—is formed in the interior perception of values, from which duty is born as an expression of conscience, as an answer of one's own personal "I." Ethos [from the Greek ἦθος, signifying custom or character] makes us, at one and the same time, enter the depth *of the norm itself and descend into the interior of man, the subject of morality*. Moral value is connected with the dynamic process of man's innermost [being]. To reach it, it is not enough to stop "on the surface" of human actions, but one must penetrate precisely the interior.<sup>25</sup>

Besides the obvious moral significance of Christ's challenge, John Paul highlights the anthropological significance of this teaching. Christ seeks to bring into harmony the objective and subjective realities of man with the will of God. Man's ability to unify his subjective experiences with objective reality has been wounded in sin. As such, this imbalance causes the man of every time and place to struggle with the unity in relationship between his own desires and the objective good. The command to avoid adultery points to the tendency for man to misuse the desires within him, a prohibition given from God's providential concern for man based upon the experience of a need for it in man. Christ's challenge is to every man who experiences the wounded relationship between subjective and objective goodness.

Both the man of the past and also the man of the future can be the one who knows the positive commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" as

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, April 16, 1980, 227-28, (emphasis in original).

“the content of the law” (see Rom 2:22-23), but he can just as well be the one who, according to the [Letter to the] Romans, has this commandment only “written on his heart” (Rom 2:15). In the light of the foregoing reflections, he is the man who from his ‘beginning’ gained a precise sense of the meaning of the body already, before crossing “the threshold” of historical experiences, in the mystery of creation, given that he emerged from it as “man and woman” (Gn 1;27). He is historical man, who at the “beginning” of earthly drama found himself “inside” the knowledge of good and evil, breaking the covenant with his Creator. He is the man who “knew (the woman) his wife” and “knew” her several times, and she “conceived and gave birth” (see Gn 4:1-2) according to the Creator’s plan, which went back to the state of original innocence (see Gn 1:28; 2:24).<sup>26</sup>

The loss of harmony between subjective and objective reality has understandably caused a distrust of the physical body, as a personal subjective experience, in contrast to the objective good of the ordered commandment. Historically, this has been manifested in looking at the subjective dimension of man with suspicion. More recently, the reverse has been the case—the elevation of subjective desire over objective good prescribed in moral norms, leading to a subjectivism, particularly with the realm of sexual morality.<sup>27</sup>

John Paul sees Christ’s teaching regarding the relationship between subjective and objective reality not in antagonistic terms, but as mutually revelatory. Neither a relativistic morality which over-exaggerates subjective desires at the expense of objective good, nor a distrust of the bodily desires of the subject, leading to an abstraction of commandments, is a proper understanding of Christ’s challenge to purity. John Paul sees the modern turn to the subject offering the potential of a stagnation of anthropology,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., April 23, 1980, 230-31.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., October 29, 1980, 312. For a helpful summary in the historical changes in the view of the body, see Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, “The Body in Christian History.” See also Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

which should always be informed with relationship with Christ.<sup>28</sup> But at the same time, “Man cannot stop at casting the heart in a state of continual and irreversible suspicion” because his subjective desires often lead to temptation.<sup>29</sup> Thus one hears a call in the theology of the body for a balance in the relationship of man’s objective and subjective dimensions. Man is called to a rediscovery of the meaning of the body, an expression of the original intention of the Creator within man’s heart. Man feels the call to express an interior freedom of the gift given to him that pertains to “that spiritual state and that spiritual power that derive from mastery over the concupiscence of the flesh.”<sup>30</sup>

The proper balance of his subjective dimension and objective goodness ends in a new ethic for man. John Paul notes that Christ’s challenge for purity involves man’s response to the gospel from both the “outside” and the “inside.” It is in the person of Christ himself that man meets the proper approach to the subjective-objective challenge. John Paul’s is a Christ-centered theological anthropology which allows for the contemporary desire to start anthropology with man himself and ultimately end in relationship with God.

The meeting place of man’s subjectivity and objective reality is the person of Christ. John Paul began his papacy by calling on anthropology to be rooted in the person of Christ.<sup>31</sup> He continued that foundation in the theology of the body catechesis, noting that the words spoken from Christ from the outside have an interior dimension:

The words of Christ, who in the Sermon on the Mount appealed to the “heart,” lead the listener in some way to such an inner call. If he allows

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<sup>28</sup> See John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, no. 29, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 29, 1980, 312

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no.10, p. 27-28.

them to work in him he can at the same time hear in his innermost [being] the echo, as it were, of that “beginning,” of that good “beginning” to which Christ referred on another occasion to remind his listeners who man is, who woman is, and who they are reciprocally: one for the other in the work of creation.<sup>32</sup>

Christ’s appeal to the interior man raises a new ethic, an ethic which cannot be contained in external laws which allow for “loopholes,” but instead appeals to the very heart of man. Christ’s turn to the subject in his challenge for purity does not diminish the objective content of ethics; but instead demands more, what John Paul refers to as the superabundance of interior justice in the heart.<sup>33</sup>

This new ethic of Christ demands more than the Old Testament precepts of the law. It is an all-encompassing positive value, not a restricting prohibition. But in addition to making demands, the ethic lived in Christ is also provides the means for man to live this new call, the new justice of the heart. Christ’s redemption is through and for the redemption of the body, and as such can only be understood as consistent with the original intention of God in creation. Now the body finds fulfillment in the person of Christ. What was lost in the self-subjectivism of the body (both in original and personal sin) a departure from God’s plan, is redeemed in Christ’s offering of himself. Man is offered not only understanding (in Christ’s challenge) but also participation (in his offering) in the body’s resurrection. Therefore, the body reveals both subjectively and objectively the fullness of God’s creative intention when the offering of Christ and the experience of man unite in a life of grace.

The objective “theology of the body,” representing the scale of values according to God’s creative intention, is recovered and acquires a

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<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 29, 1980, 313.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1980, 228.

subjective form, a human ethos, through the revelation and redemptive work of Christ. John Paul's explanation of how ethos is transformed by Christ covers both the objective roots of the new ethos in the creative intention of God and the subjective appropriation of the values constitutive of the theology of the body. The structure of this relationship between the objective theology of the body and the subjective new ethos clearly represents another instance of the union between theocentrism and anthropocentrism in John Paul's thought.<sup>34</sup>

The basis for the new ethic is Christ's knowledge both of the subjectivity of the human condition and of the original intention of the Creator. Christ does not teach a return to original innocence in his challenge to be pure of heart, but rather gives man the power to overcome sin in the promise of the resurrection of the body, a promise that he himself initiates. The body becomes the place for the individual subjective living out of the objective good for man through the objective offering of the redeemer.<sup>35</sup>

John Paul's insights regarding the subjective understanding of the body of the objective truths revealed by God summarize his whole vision of theology and ethics. Already in *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla had forged a path in understanding Catholic dogma about issues of sexual morality that was both more than a repetition of traditional dogma as well as demanding that it be given more background than what science and medicine could offer. What Wojtyla came to offer was a reflection on the personal level, as insight into man's lived experience, which upholds God's objective revealed reality.<sup>36</sup> A casuistry like that which addressed adultery in the Old Testament would be as insufficient in contemporary society as it was for Christ.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 192.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 193-94.

<sup>36</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, April 16, 1980, 228.

### 6.1.3 Christ's New Ethic and John Paul's Personalism

John Paul's reflection upon the new ethic revealed in Christ illustrates an essential aspect of his overall anthropology. The context of bodily morality provides a perfect backdrop to contextualize a key theme of his thought. In his earlier work *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla set the stage for evaluating moral norms regarding the human body through Christ's commandment to love. Commonly called Wojtyla's "personalism," his understanding of man's call to love God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself is a rejection of the growing trend of utilitarianism.<sup>38</sup> This utilitarianism erodes the call to love, to love any person at all, except for how he might be useful or desired.<sup>39</sup> Christ's call to love is unintelligible in the presence of utilitarianism, the interpretation of the value of another person contingent upon any other qualifications. In the face of such threats, a new norm is required to convey the depth of Christ's call.<sup>40</sup>

John Paul calls the underlying backdrop to Christ's commandment to love the personalistic norm. This term epitomizes his understanding of the gospel ethic. In fact, John Paul's personalism, as a way of describing the intrinsic and distinctive value of the human person, becomes a contemporary lens through which the radical call to love found in the gospel can be appreciated.<sup>41</sup> There is quality within the human person for which

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism*, 36, citing and translating, Karol Wojtyla, "On the Meaning of Betrothed Love," *Roczniki Filozoficzne*, 22 (1974), fasc. 2, 166. "Since a person is conceived as an ontological entity, 'self-giving love,' is also 'written in the very being of a person.' This ontological structure of mutual self-giving love enables a person to experience his own life in a way which unifies it with the life of another person and establishes an inner bond between their individual selves."

<sup>39</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 27-28. "Whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only a 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."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 41, provides an explanation for what this personalistic norm entails: "Strictly speaking the commandment to love is only based upon the personalistic norm, as a principle with a negative and a

Christ has demanded love, which demands a radical love that is demonstrated in the body, which, when faithfully lived, brings about the good of the person loved as well as the one who loves. This dignity which commands love is not created by man, but instead reflects the intentions of his Creator, from whom he had received his life as gift.<sup>42</sup>

## 6.2 The Bodily Dimension of Man as Gift

John Paul's reflection on finding meaning in the experience of the human body for man begins with his understanding of its source. As mentioned above, his entire catechesis opens with Christ's interpretation of the Creator's plan, a plan which excludes divorce because it is not in accord with God's design for man from his beginning. John Paul uses a reflection on man's original nakedness to reiterate the truth of man's creation

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positive content, and is not itself the personalistic norm. It only derives from this norm which, unlike the utilitarian principle, *does* provide an appropriate foundation for the commandment to love. This foundation for the commandment to love should also be sought in a system of values other than the utilitarian system—it must be a personalistic axiology, within whose framework the value of the person is always greater than the value of pleasure (which is why a person cannot be subordinated to this lesser end, cannot be the means to an end, in this case pleasure). So while the commandment to love is not, strictly speaking, identical with the personalistic norm but only presupposes it, as it applies also a personalistic system of values, we can, taking a broader view, say that the commandment to love *is* the personalistic norm. Strictly speaking the commandment says: 'Love persons', and the personalistic norm says: 'A person is an entity of a sort to which the only proper and adequate way to relate is love.' The personalistic norm does, as we have seen, provide a justification for the New Testament commandment. And so, if we take the commandment together with this justification, we can say that it is the same as the personalistic norm," emphasis in original. Michael Waldstein's introductory remarks in *Man and Woman*, 55-56, articulate a key observation: This personalistic norm of Wojtyla/John Paul follows two principles of sexual ethics articulated by Immanuel Kant. The first is that one may not use another as a means for sexual pleasure, for that reduces another to an object. The second is that sexual union entails the giving one person to another. However, while John Paul builds upon these points in great detail, he and Kant part ways in their understanding of the legitimate dignity of sexual union. Kant sees sexual union as a degradation of the value of the person, for each partner unavoidably becomes an object to the other. Marriage is a remedy for the mutual using of another for sexual enjoyment, a periodic owning of another being. For John Paul, marriage and sexual union are not mere remedies or legitimatization of some type of personal flaw, but the means by which the Creator's plan for man's life is actualized.

<sup>42</sup> Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism*, 37-38.

by God and man's goodness. He refers to the realization of the created world as a fundamental and original gift.

### 6.2.1 Goodness of the Body

When the book of Genesis reveals that man and woman were naked but not ashamed, John Paul observes that this points to their original understanding of the beauty of their creation. Not only do they perceive the created world around them as good and pleasing, but their vision demonstrates an interior perception that they are participating in the beauty which is God's plan. Many times in the initial chapter of Genesis the goodness of all of creation is explicitly mentioned, but man's entrance into creation signifies a particular original goodness of God's creation found uniquely in man.<sup>43</sup> The vision of creation by man and woman, (unaware what nakedness is, for it just is their mode of being) demonstrates both their simplicity and depth of connection to God's creative goodness. There is no discord in man between what is spiritual and what is sensual, for all things man experiences relate to him as God has created them.<sup>44</sup>

From the brevity of divine revelation describing pre-lapsarian man, one gains a profound insight into all anthropology. Not only is creation expressed as goodness, but God claims man to be created in His own image. The divine image is revealed in the two ways in which human beings have a body, male and female. This itself shows the depth of God's goodness in creation, that man would experience the imprint of God within

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<sup>43</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, September 2, 1980, 135ff, speaks of the separation of man from the rest of creation in the first account, Genesis 1: "Although man is so strictly tied to the visible world, nevertheless the biblical narrative does not speak of his likeness with the rest of creatures, but only with God ('God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him,' (Gen. 1:27). In the cycle of the seven days of creation, a precise step-by-step progression is evident; man, by contrast, is not created according to a natural succession, but the Creator seems to halt before calling him to existence, as if he entered back into himself to make a decision, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness' (Gen. 1:27)."

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., January 2, 1980, 177.

himself. Man who is made by and through God's loving motivation receives his being as complete gift. But in addition to the radical nature of man's creation itself is the intention that God reveals in man as unique to all his creation. Only man receives creation as a gift.<sup>45</sup> While all things are created and exist only because of God's loving creation, only man is said to have had creation conferred as this gift. The visible world was created for him; only he can understand the created gift as such. Only man's experiences allow for the understanding that he is gift to himself, that the world is a gift to him, and he to it.<sup>46</sup> The capacity of understanding creation as this radically good gift is the foundation from which Christ calls his questioners to contemplate God's original plan for them.

The beauty surrounding man's original innocence demonstrates the radical nature of giving from God—radical in both the depth and originality of love from God. At man's very root, this love is expressed as God's gift. Regarding the concept of the gift:

The first verses of the Bible speak of it so much that they remove all doubt. They speak not only about the creation of the world and about man in the world, but also about grace, that is, about the self-communication of holiness, about the irradiation of the Holy Spirit, which produces a special state of "spiritualization" in that first man. In biblical language, that is, in the language of revelation, the qualification "first" means precisely "of God," "Adam, son of God" (Lk. 3:38).<sup>47</sup>

The beauty and dignity of man as a creature is most powerfully expressed in his freedom of the body before original sin. Without shame from sin, John Paul describes a freedom which the Creator imprinted upon man's being:

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., January 30, 1980, 190.

One can say that, created by Love, that is, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, both are ‘naked,’ because they are free with the very freedom of the gift. This freedom lies exactly at the basis of the spousal meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains ‘from the beginning’ the ‘spousal’ attribute, that is, the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.<sup>48</sup>

John Paul introduces with the “spousal character” of the body an understanding of the goodness of the experience of the body. The mystery of creation revealed in man’s finding of woman and of woman’s finding of man, finding themselves without shame, demonstrates the depth of the beauty that is the gift of God.<sup>49</sup>

John Paul’s reflection on Genesis shows the beauty and goodness of the body in the Creator’s plan, but is not restricted to evaluating the bodily dimension of man as good only as it is revealed before original sin. Reflection on man’s body with the struggles of human experience and the revelation of the scriptures after original sin can overwhelm the contemplation of the body’s goodness.<sup>50</sup> There is plentiful evidence within the Church’s tradition of falling into the temptation of seeing the body as an unfortunate weight that accompanies the soul. This is due in part to the development of Christian

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., January 16, 1980, 185-86.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>50</sup> Benedict Ashley provides a concise theme present in the Old Testament witnessing to the struggles of man’s bodily life in *Theologies of the Body*, 107-08. “From this negative angle the Bible is the shocking history of human failure, beginning with the folly of Adam and Eve, through the account of the decay of the human race before the flood, the wanderings of the patriarchs whose lives are clouded by various morally dubious acts of survival, the enslavement in Egypt, the bloody conquest of the promised land, the apostasy of the kings of Judah and Israel, the near extinction of the exile, the disappointments of the return and restoration, the oppression by the Greeks and Romans leading to a new nationalism and a more rigid piety, and ending in the rejection of the way of peace offered by Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. It seems to confirm the sad, wise words of Qoheleth (1:2), ‘Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!’”

theology under the influence of dualistic tendencies present in Platonic philosophy, which saw the body as a tomb for man's true self as a spiritual soul.<sup>51</sup> There are many commonalities between Plato's thought of submission of the physical dimension of man and the Christian notion of the transcendence of the spiritual life from man's bodily life, but the Church fundamentally upholds the value the physical body.<sup>52</sup>

The Church is not constrained by a dualistic notion of the body in only recognizing goodness in the body before original sin, a type of idealization of the theoretical body. Indeed, John Paul addresses what he calls the "echoes" of the true gospel message which undermine the goodness of the body and lead to a condemnation of body as the source of evil for man. This condemnation of the body, found in Manichaeism, has surfaced in various times and theories. John Paul specifically warns of its temptations:

To an unaccustomed ear, the evident strictness of that system might seem to harmonize with the strict words of Matthew 5:29-30 in which Christ speaks about "tearing out your eye" and cutting off your hand" if these members are the cause of scandal. By a purely "material" interpretation of these expressions it is even possible to reach a Manichean view of Christ's statement about the man who has "committed adultery in his heart...by looking at a woman to desire her." In this case as well, the Manichean interpretation tends to condemn the body as the true source of evil, because in it, according to Manichaeism, the "ontological" principle of evil both conceals and manifests itself. People thus tried to discover, and at times they saw, such a *condemnation in the Gospel, finding it where, on the contrary, the only thing expressed is a particular demand addressed to the human spirit.*<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Christian Tradition; Studies in Clement, Justin, and Origen*, (New York: Oxford University Press 1966), 113. "The Platonic idea of the relation between spirit and matter was capable of being interpreted either in an optimistic or a pessimistic way. It could be construed to mean that the visible world mirrors the glory of the supra-sensible world. It could also be taken (as by the Gnostics) to justify a radical rejection of the material order as an accidental smudge, resulting from a mistake."

<sup>52</sup> Ashley, *Theologies of the Body*, 103.

<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 5, 1980, 305, (emphasis in original).

In fact, in opposition to the condemnation of the body, John Paul reiterates the goodness of the body not as in opposition to the spirit, but to be the locus of the manifestation of the spirit. In fact, as a sign of bodily dignity, the unification of masculinity and femininity becomes a sacramental sign of God's presence for husband and wife who share in the work of creation. The conjugal union of man and woman illustrate God's desire of bodily participation in the work of his creation. Even though man no longer lives within the first panel of the triptych of original innocence (from which man receives revelation about the goodness of the body) man and woman still participate in the original plan of the Creator in their role as spouses and parents, which reaffirm the dignity of the body (despite plentiful experience of the body's incompleteness).<sup>54</sup> In fact, it is particularly from the revelation of Christ, the realm of the second part of the triptych, which addresses the incompleteness of the body—that the new vision of the redeemed body reiterates its potential.

#### 6.2.2. Incompleteness of Body

An understanding of a Christian anthropology of the body not only depends on appreciating the dignity of the body as demonstrated above, but also demands the explanation of the effects of original sin on the body. Reflecting on the initial chapters of Genesis have illustrated man's worth and his body as a gift of the Creator. But such reflections also reveal the incompleteness of man due to the effects of sin. John Paul

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., October 22, 1980, 309.

describes how the “man of original innocence” became the “man of concupiscence” with original sin.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to the sense of familiarity with nakedness which man and woman experience in their original state of innocence, John Paul reflects upon the shame that covers them after original sin. Coming not from the mystery of creation, but rather as a fruit of the tree containing the knowledge of good and evil; man’s new concupiscence changes his relationship with himself, with God and with all others. In its threefold form, described as concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes and of the pride of life, concupiscence describes man’s new “outlook” on creation as affected by sin.<sup>56</sup> To see himself as naked describes a changed vision for man at the boundary between innocence and sin.<sup>57</sup> Man’s and woman’s reaction in the shame of nakedness and the fear of God portrayed in their hiding, demonstrates the crossing of a threshold in their relationships stemming from the choice to disobey the Creator’s intention for the gift they have received in creation.

John Paul describes the act of sin in Genesis 3:1-5 as casting doubt on the gift of man’s creation by God.

The man who picks the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil makes at the same time a fundamental choice and carries it through against the will of the Creator, God—Yahweh, by accepting the motivation suggested by the tempter, “You will not die at all. Rather, God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.”....This motivation clearly implies casting

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., April 30, 1980, 242.

<sup>56</sup> 1 John 2:16-17, “All that is in the world, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world passes away with its concupiscence; but the one who does the will of God will remain in eternity.”

<sup>57</sup> John Paul mentions the places of boundary in the anthropology of Genesis, that they are naked but unashamed in Genesis 2:25, before original sin, but Genesis 3:6 explicitly reveals the connection between sin and the “birth of shame.” Cf. *Man and Woman*, April 30, 1980, 238.

doubt on the Gift and on Love, from which creation takes its origin as gift.<sup>58</sup>

The effects of this act, having its origins in the heart of man and his doubt of God's profound goodness in creation is represented in the shame that man discovers in knowing his nakedness. He knows of a changed relation between himself and his surroundings. Nakedness has not only a literal significance—that is, only a bodily realization—but also that this bodily realization represents a larger alienation from the participation in the gift of creation. Man's new reality is explained in terms of a deprivation of original gifts that were to be his. He suffers a loss of the fullness of being in God's image and likeness. The threefold concupiscence corresponds to the deficiency of man's now fallen nature.<sup>59</sup>

The results of original sin are revealed as bodily changes within man. He faces a new reality which had only been conditionally revealed to man by the Creator in the warning against committing the sin. Hearing that "You shall die" as a consequence of an act not yet committed is an unfamiliar reality to man since he knows nothing of this experience in his innocence. He can only compare it to what he knows of life. God reveals even before the sin that man is a limited being, capable of nonexistence.<sup>60</sup> The shame realized after sin "reveals a specific difficulty in sensing the human essentiality of one's own body, a difficulty man had not experienced in the state of original innocence."<sup>61</sup> The perfected unity of body and soul is now broken, and the body becomes the mediator of man's imperfection. Sin and death now enter the realm of the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 236-37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1980, 239-40.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., October 31, 1979, 155.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., May 18, 1980, 243.

man of concupiscence, witnessing to the lack of bodily and spiritual integrity compared to the man of innocence.<sup>62</sup>

John Paul weaves an important theme through his discourse on original sin, referring in multiple places to the concept of alienation and discord. Describing the effects of sin as a lack of participation in God's plan, concupiscence as disunity between the body and the spirit, and shame as disquiet in the human condition, the body becomes a principle manifestation of sinfulness for man. He echoes St. Paul's words, "I joyfully agree with the law of God in my innermost [being], but see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind."<sup>63</sup>

The effects of sin on the physical body and on the order and relationship of man and woman are immediately revealed. Instead of harmony, man now faces antagonistic relationships within the created world, and indeed, in his own order of relationship in procreation. Genesis reveals the pain of childbirth, the struggle for power and dominion

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 244. John Paul succinctly connects the bodily and spiritual dimensions of the effects of sin. Shame is immanent. "It contains such cognitive sharpness that it creates a fundamental disquiet in the whole of human existence, not only in the face of the perspective of death, but also in the face of the perspective on which the very value and dignity of the person depend in their ethical meaning. In this sense, the original shame of the body ('I am naked') is already fear ('I was afraid') and pre-announces the unrest of conscience connected with concupiscence. The body is not subject to the spirit as in the state of original innocence, but carries within itself a constant hotbed of resistance against the spirit and threatens in some way man's unity as a person, that is the unity of the moral nature that plunges its roots firmly into the very constitution of the person. The concupiscence of the body is a specific threat to the structure of self-possession and self-dominion, through which the human person forms itself. And it also constitutes a specific challenge for the person. In any case, *the man of concupiscence does not rule his own body in the same way, with the same simplicity and 'naturalness' as the man of original innocence,*" (emphasis in original).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., quoting Rom 7:22-23. It is crucial here to note that Paul does not equate the notion of 'sinful flesh' with the body of man. 'Flesh' and 'members' are better understood as both the physical and psychical element of man, of his personality, which are manifestation of the self in the exterior life, considered the lower levels of experience that the interior life. The physical body is not evil, as thought by the Greeks and the remnants of the Manichean heresy, but rather bears the weight of being the external manifestation of evil. Cf. *Man and Woman*, December 17, 1980, 330. Further, Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the Body*, 593 clarifies, "As is well known, for St. Paul the term 'spiritual' is not the opposite of 'bodily' or 'material,' but is used as Jesus uses the term 'Reign of God', to indicate that order of things which is in accordance with the will of God in contrast to the disorder of things alienated from God by sin."

between man and woman, and the disorder of the created world for man immediately after the introduction of sin.<sup>64</sup>

John Paul takes the opportunity to critique both ancient and more contemporary methods of explaining the reality that Christians understand in the doctrine of original sin.<sup>65</sup> Manichaeism, as mentioned above, is a condemnation of the body as the source of evil. John Paul calls it a loophole to the ethic of Christ, in that in condemning the body, one can easily see only the material side of human sin, ignoring the interior command of Christ, an ethic requiring not simply material obedience of the body, but also seeking interior conversion and integration of the spiritual and bodily dimensions of man.<sup>66</sup> A Manichaean attitude toward the body would negate the value of human sexuality, and merely tolerate sexual union, restraining its expression on some external grounds that do not take into consideration its part of the Creator's plan for man. Christ's new ethic does not call for a negation of the body but rather a "transformation of the human person's conscience and attitudes" for the realization "of the value of the body and of sex."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Genesis 3: 14-19. John Paul sees in this reading of Genesis (especially 3: 16) an explanation for the struggle for power and domination between men and women visible in the historical fact of the discrimination of women throughout the ages. It demonstrates the effect of sinfulness on man's relationships and the continual struggle for harmony in a body affected by sin. See Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue* 104, and John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," Vatican Translation, found in John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), no. 10, p. 456-57; *AAS* 80, 1988, 1653-1729.

<sup>65</sup> For a contemporary reflection on the doctrine of original sin, see Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ*, 244. "The original sin—a sort of preemptive strike against a threatening God—resulted in a deeply distorted conception of the human relationship with God, so that friendship devolved into fear and resentment of an alien divinity. The whole of the biblical revelation—culminating in Jesus—could be construed as the story of God's attempt to restore friendship with the human race. Adam and Eve—and all of their descendants—decided, to one degree or another, that the safest and best-defended mode of being is egocentric.

<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 15, 1980, 305.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, October 22, 1980, 307.

For the Manichean external condemnation of the body, the norms of human sexuality represent a tolerance of “anti-value,” whereas for Christianity they represent “a value not sufficiently appreciated.”<sup>68</sup> Certainly this attitude represents the call and challenge of Christ to love entirely and from the heart. More recent secular anthropologies, or hermeneutics of man, as John Paul refers to them, also threaten a genuine Christian concept of man’s sinful nature. The overemphasis on sinfulness, under any name, leads to a distorted vision of ethics and of man himself. John Paul names three “masters of suspicion” in Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, whose systems misrepresent the human condition.<sup>69</sup>

Noting the effects of sin on the person manifested in the body, a return to Christ’s instruction in the Sermon on the Mount is an appeal to the historical man of concupiscence toward a new ethic. It is not one that man can gain for himself by obedience to the law or by the chastisement of the prophets. It is not such a chastisement that Christ offers in his call to go beyond the law and its loopholes. Christ does not call man to the state of original innocence, because man has left that irrevocably in his past. Instead, Christ beckons with a new ethic—a participation in the act of redemption he would offer.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. See also John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility*, 59.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., October 29, 1980, 311. “In Nietzschean hermeneutics, the judgment and the accusation of the human heart correspond in some way to what biblical language calls ‘pride of life’; in Marxist hermeneutics to what it calls ‘concupiscence of the eyes’, in Freudian hermeneutics, by contrast, to what it calls ‘concupiscence of the flesh.’ The convergence of these conceptions with the hermeneutics of man based on the Bible consist in the fact that when we uncover the threefold concupiscence in the heart, we too could have limited ourselves to putting this heart in a state of continual suspicion. Yet the Bible does not allow us to stop here. Although Christ’s words in Matthew 5:27-28 show the whole reality of desire and concupiscence, they do not allow us to turn such concupiscence into the absolute principle of anthropology and ethics or into the very nucleus of the hermeneutics of man. *In the Bible the threefold concupiscence does not constitute the fundamental* and certainly not the only and absolute *criterion* of anthropology and ethics, although it is without a doubt *an important coefficient for understanding man, his actions, and their moral value,*” (emphasis in original).

### 6.2.3. Redemption of Body

An examination of human redemption in the Paschal Mystery of Christ reveals two distinct interactions revealed in the body in the relationship between Christ and man. John Paul speaks at length about the didactic element of the bodily redemption of man by Christ. His reflections upon Christ's response to the question of divorce, the call to purity of heart which surpasses the simple avoidance of adultery, and the challenge to the possibility of resurrection lead to opportunities to ponder the manner of correct living with regards to the body based on Christ's teaching. Even superior to Christ's didactic significance for the Christian is the objective realization of redemption through Christ's bodily offering. John Paul acknowledges this realization as fundamental, "*The redemption of the body* brings with it the establishment in Christ and for Christ of a new *measure of the holiness of the body*."<sup>70</sup> The establishment precedes the new measure. The mysteries of Christ's life, particularly the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are efficacious accomplishments for every man.<sup>71</sup> These mysteries bring to man a new bodily dignity as a gift from God: "Christ inscribed in the human body—in the body of every man and of every woman—a new dignity, because he himself has taken up the human body together with the soul into union with the person of the Son-Word."<sup>72</sup>

Christ's redemptive offering for man took place through the human body. The mystery of the incarnation elevates the dignity of every man, for he shares the same kind

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., February 11, 1981, 351, (emphasis in original).

<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 9, p. 25-26.

<sup>72</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, February 11, 1981, 350.

of body which Christ assumed.<sup>73</sup> The offering made for sin is the perfect offering of the human body in the divine person of Christ. Man shares the body of the offering which was made for him, the offering made with “great price” (1 Cor. 6:20). The resurrection is the promise and purpose of man’s life, the third panel of the triptych which Christ reveals in his discussion with the Sadducees (Mt 22:23).<sup>74</sup> The state of man’s current body is the potential for the resurrected body. That future “eschatological man” is free from the corruption of sin and its effects, most notably the disunity between the realms of body and spirit. Contemporary man’s historical reality is described as *status naturae lapsae simul ac redemptae*, the state of fallen and at the same time redeemed nature.<sup>75</sup> John Paul is clear to make mention that the “spiritualization” of the person does not mean a reduction of the bodily dimension of man, but rather that, “...the powers of the spirit will permeate the energies of the body.”<sup>76</sup>

John Paul builds upon the foundation of the fact of bodily redemption to call the Christian to bodily awareness in his present life. The mysteries of Christ’s redemption

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., April 2, 1980, 221. In an earlier catechesis John Paul reflected upon the importance of the mystery of the incarnation for the theology of the body. “The fact that *theology also includes the body should not* astonish or surprise anyone who is conscious of mystery and reality of the Incarnation. Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology—that is, the science that has divinity for its object—I would say, through the main door,” emphasis in original.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. John Paul’s reflection on Christ’s dialogue with the Sadducees, *Man and Woman*, 379-86, particularly at 385. “The full meaning of this testimony, to which Jesus appeals in his dialogue with the Sadducees, could be gathered (still in the light of the Old Testament alone) in the following way. He who is—he lives and is Life—constitutes the inexhaustible fountain of existence and of life, just as he revealed himself at the ‘beginning’ in Genesis (see Gen 1-3). Although, due to sin, bodily death has become man’s lot and access to the tree of Life (this great symbol of Genesis) was denied to him (see Genesis 3:22), nevertheless, *when the living God enters his covenant with man* (Abraham, the patriarchs, Moses, Israel), *he continually renews* in this covenant the *very reality of Life*, reveals again its prospects, and in some way opens up again the access to the tree of Life. Together with the covenant, a share in this life, whose fountain is God himself, is given to the same human beings who, as a consequence of breaking the first covenant, had lost access to the tree of Life and, in the dimensions of their earthly history, were subjected to death,” (emphasis in original).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., October 22, 1980, 308

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., December 9, 1981, 391.

call for man's contemplation in understanding the meaning of his own body. Man's living out of bodily purity is a response to Christ's living out of our redemption, the acknowledgement of the divine gift and the response in the human will of each man.

The fact that we "were bought at a great price" (1 Cor 6:20), the price of Christ's redemption, makes precisely a new special commitment spring forth, namely, the duty of "keeping one's own body with holiness and reverence." The awareness of the redemption of the body is at work in the human will in favor of abstaining from "unchastity;" in fact, it acts for the end of letting the person gain and appropriate ability or capacity called the virtue of purity.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore a proper understanding of the redemption of the body entails a proper ordering of the mysteries of Christ to man. The unique perfect bodily offering of Christ is the source for man's realization of redemption in the lived body. Man receives the gift of redemption from the one who instructs him in his own bodily offering of self. The whole of theology of the body is intelligible only in the sense that it is related to, and is dependent upon, the bodily offering of Christ for the salvation of the world.<sup>78</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Gift Given and Received: "Nuptial Meaning" of the Body

Man is not only the recipient of the gift of the body, but is called to offer his body as a reciprocal gift. John Paul reflects upon the experiences of man and woman in their original innocence to explain the Creator's intention for them to offer the gift received from him to each other. The lack of shame which they experienced in their nakedness

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, February 11, 1981, 351-52.

<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10, p. 27-28. "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself; his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer fully reveals man to himself. ... The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly—and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being—he must start with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and redemption in order to find himself."

demonstrates man's inner innocence and longing to respond to the given nature of his body in reciprocal exchange with the woman.

We can say that this inner innocence (that is, the rightness of intention) in the exchange of the gift consists in a reciprocal "acceptance" of the other in such a way that it corresponds to the very essence of the gift; in this way, the mutual gift creates the communion of persons. It is a question, therefore, of "welcoming" the other human being and accepting him or her precisely because in this mutual relationship, about which Genesis 2:23-25 speaks, the man and the woman become a gift, each one for the other, through the whole truth and evidence of their own body in its masculinity and femininity. It is a question, therefore, of such "acceptance" or "welcome" in the reciprocal nakedness that it expresses and sustains the meaning of the gift and thus deepens its reciprocal dignity. This dignity corresponds deeply to the fact that the Creator has willed (and continually wills) man, male and female, "for his own sake" [*Gaudium et spes*, 24:3]. Innocence "of the heart"—and, as a consequence, innocence of experience—signifies a moral participation in the eternal and permanent act of God's will.<sup>79</sup>

As revealed in Genesis, the discovery of one's own body in innocence, led to the discovery and acceptance of the other. Even now, with the proper unity of body and soul, this leads to the offering of one's body to the other, the first donation. Such a donation is received as a gift from the other, and the mutual gift leads to an even truer discovery of self. This could be described as the phenomenology of giving.<sup>80</sup>

We add that this finding of oneself in one's own gift becomes the source of a new gift of self that grows by the power of the inner disposition to the exchange of gift and in the measure in which it encounters the same and even deeper acceptance and welcome as the fruit of an ever more intense consciousness of the gift itself.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., February 6, 1980, 195.

<sup>80</sup> Baron, *The Priority of Christ*, 230ff provides a complimentary notion entitled "The Loop of Grace," in which Christians participate in prayer and self-giving to God in their lives as an act of gratitude to the free love of God, and thus further extend the gifts they receive from God by their very giving them away. Contrast this with the dilemma posed in questioning the existence of real freedom in receiving a gift, taken the alleged expectation of a reply. See Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

<sup>81</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, February 6, 1980, 197.

This mutual giving of man and woman furthers their own understanding and gratitude for themselves, such that each subsequent act of giving is an act of receiving, of enrichment, and of self-possession. Such mutual giving and receiving is what John Paul terms the “nuptial meaning” of the body. This understanding of self and of other is less simple in the man of concupiscence. Now, man experiences this reality through the “veil of shame” but yet it is not without the ability to affect his relationships. John Paul witnesses to the reality of experiencing the nuptial meaning of the body even in the realm of sin, for it remains, “a task given to man by the ethos of the gift, inscribed in the depth of the human heart as a distant echo.”<sup>82</sup>

That this echo remains audible for man illustrates the potential of the body to be a witness in itself of the Creator’s will. The effects of sin on the body and man’s interpretation of his bodily life are painfully real, but as John Paul argues, the human body in its present state retains the imprint and spirit of the Creator, such that man can still contemplate the power and love of God for him as revealed in his body.<sup>83</sup>

### 6.3 The Human Body as Means of Contemplation of God and a Paradigm of Reality

A phenomenology of the body implies various levels of the communicative potential of the human body. John Paul’s catecheses are rich with images and examples of the significance of man’s bodily dimensions serving a larger purpose which manifests an anthropology seeking to find the will of the Creator within man’s experience.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., February 20, 1980, 202.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., October 10, 1984, 642. “While the powers of concupiscence tend to detach the ‘language of the body’ from the truth, that is, try to falsify it, the power of love, by contrast, strengthens it anew in that truth, so that the mystery of the redemption of the body can bear fruit in it.”

### 6.3.1 Pedagogical Purpose: The Language of the Body

John Paul calls his reflections on the theology of the body an anthropology as well as a pedagogy, that is, an education in the ways in which God reveals his plans for man's life and actions. "The Creator has assigned the body to man as a task."<sup>84</sup> John Paul sees this task as the fuller understanding of a self-education about the human body, an education of a more metaphysical nature. Although scientific knowledge about the body is beneficial, it alone cannot point to man's lived bodily experience as having any purpose or meaning outside itself.

But in and of itself, such science does not yet develop the consciousness of the body as sign of the person, as a manifestation of the spirit. The whole development of contemporary science of the body as organism has rather the character of biological knowledge, because it is based on the disjunction between what is bodily and what is spiritual in man.<sup>85</sup>

The body is a teacher or witness of the totality of man's being and, as an analogy to his experience, the body contains what John Paul terms its own language. The language of the body must communicate the integral vision of itself as a unified being with a purpose greater than itself. As a sign of the whole person, the body must speak a language that witnesses to its sanctity and purpose as created with God's love, and redeemed by its archetype, Christ.

As a whole, the body speaks as a witness to something greater than itself. John Paul describes it as the body speaking the language of man, which is given by God. He recalls the Old Testament prophets who use bodily analogies to describe the struggle of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., April 8, 1981, 360.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 361.

faithfulness and truth amidst the temptations of idolatry and adultery.<sup>86</sup> In human action, the body is the manifestation of the person. It reveals what lies beneath the surface. Hence, the need for the law in the Old Testament: to order and often restrain the communication of something negative in the world through one's bodily actions. It is possible to miss Christ's insistence to the good of the purpose of the law by his further interpretation of it, but he does not call for an abolition of the external law, but rather an interior reflection on its purpose.<sup>87</sup>

The body also speaks in three distinct episodes, referring to the three paneled triptych which John Paul uses to demonstrate the reality of man. As a witness to the original innocence of man, the body speaks of the Creator's plan. It reveals to man the complementary nature of his creation as male and female, and superiority to all that surrounds him. At a most basic level, the body reveals a purpose in the innate desire that man has for companionship as a call to contemplate his relational nature, such that these desires manifest themselves as man's need to be properly related to the other and to God.<sup>88</sup>

In the language of redemption, the body witnesses to a unity of the physical realities of man and the promptings of the heart. Instead of being in conflict with each other, each dimension assists in interpreting the other. Certainly, John Paul refers to this mutual understanding in Christ's reinterpretation of the moral code of the Old Testament when he calls for more than obedience to the prohibition of adultery. These words call the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., January 12, 1983, 534-35.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., October 8, 1980, 300.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., October 10, 1979, 146-149.

body to become “the mouthpiece of a pure heart.”<sup>89</sup> Only the body can truly reveal the redeemed nature of man, particularly as it is communicated between man and woman.

In the midst of a world affected by sin, the mutual gift of the body witnesses to the creative power retained by man after original sin, and truly communicates what it means to love as God loves. As this mouthpiece of a pure heart, the body speaking the language of redemption undertakes the role of spokesman of hope, in that despite significant evidence to the contrary, the body and the heart can be united in the struggle to communicate love.<sup>90</sup>

In the realm of the resurrection, the body will take on a new form and while it will continue to communicate in its differentiation as male and female, it will no longer do so in the sexual unity required in man’s earthly life. While the mutual self-giving in marriage mirrors the love of God here on earth, the resurrected life will require no such mirror, as our bodies will communicate in their perfected state, no longer needing the sign of marriage and love as revelation in God’s divine plan in this kingdom.<sup>91</sup> With this understanding of the role of sexual union in the three triptychs, a more complete view of the purpose of the body becomes clear.

From John Paul’s discourse, the body is the mediator of revelation for man in his specific relation to the reality of God. It provides the subjective realm, matter, and means

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<sup>89</sup> Agneta Sutton, “Facing the Sexual Revolution: John Paul’s Language of the Body” in *John Paul the Great: Maker of the Post-Conciliar Church*. Ed William Odie, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 142.

<sup>90</sup> Durkin, *Feast of Love*, 116-17.

<sup>91</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, 144, See also *Man and Woman*, December 2, 1981, 387-88. “Marriage and procreation do not constitute man’s eschatological future. In the resurrection they lose, so to speak, their *raison d’être*. That ‘other world’ about which Luke speaks (Lk 20:35) means the definitive fulfillment of the human race, the quantitative closure of that circle of beings created in the image and likeness of God in order that, multiplying through the conjugal ‘unity of the body’ of men and women, they would subdue the earth to themselves. That ‘other world’ is not the world of the earth, but the world of God, who, as we know from 1 Corinthians, will completely fill it, becoming ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28).

for the contemplation of God and the understanding of his plan. God, who is unchanging in the three panels of the triptych, has endowed man with that which he needs to cooperate in his plan, which is man's holiness. It is in this understanding that even after original sin, man's spousal relations remain a grace, and though more difficult to attain under the influence of his concupiscence, man retains the dignity of being a co-creator with God. His sexual self-giving provides the means for human love and life. But man's love will not be of a sexual nature in the triptych panel of the resurrection, for his being made for union and communion with God will be clearly evident. It is in understanding these proper modes of relation in the various historical states of man where the role of the body becomes a consistent means of revelation to man of God's plan for him.<sup>92</sup>

Just as speaking a language requires listening as well as speaking, the analogy of the human body speaking a language underscores the importance of the contemplation of human experience for man. It progresses as does the spoken language of man to communicate his changing reality. What is spoken in each panel of the triptych represents what is known of man's state in relation to the rest of reality. Just as in the reality of human speech, it is relatively clear in man's experience that one's speaking does not necessarily entail another's listening. Therefore, while John Paul can freely use the analogy of the body speaking a language to further man's understanding of himself in

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<sup>92</sup> See Ibid, July 21, 1982, 460-61. John Paul notes the various significances of the body as revelatory in man's experience with regard to the visible world, its needing redemption, and its hope of eschatological victory over death.

relation to others and to God, it does not imply that this message is always readily received.<sup>93</sup>

### 6.3.2 Understanding Man's Solitude

In order to interpret the language which the body speaks, it is important to return to the accounts of creation in book of Genesis. The revelation of man's original solitude becomes a thematic reflection for understanding what Christ meant in returning his questioners' thoughts back to "the beginning" to contemplate the Creator's intention for man. The concept of this original solitude is found only in the second account in Genesis (2:18), for both male and female are created at the same time in the first account. John Paul sees this second (Yahwist) account of creation, in which God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone and that a suitable partner should be made for him, as significant to understanding man's nature.<sup>94</sup> This solitude has dual significance for man, in a reflection about man's natural status, as well as his relational status. Solitude is more than being alone, the temporal reality of creation for the man before the arrival of Eve, it speaks of a present reality of historical man, a dynamic of his being created to be open to another in relationship, with God and with another.<sup>95</sup>

Particularly for the purpose of applying John Paul's Theology of the Body to an investigation of the mystery of human suffering, this lesson on man's solitude is crucial.

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<sup>93</sup> Examples abound of the disinterest in listening to the language of the body in the sexual norms of contemporary society. John Paul offers his last catecheses on the proper understanding of Pope Paul VI's 1968 Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*. Paul VI prophetically warned of the effects of dismissing meditation on the Creator's plan in human sexual relations in favor of artificial contraception. Cf. Encyclical Letter, *Humane Vitae*, "Of Human Life," Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline, 1968), especially paragraph 17, pp 8-9, *AAS* 60, (1968), 483-490.

<sup>94</sup> *Man and Woman*, October 10, 1979, 147. John Paul insists that there is ample reason to suggest that the observation by God of man's solitude requires that it implies both men and woman, that is, it corresponds to his nature, not his sex.

<sup>95</sup> José Granados, "Toward a Theology of the Suffering Body" *Communio* 33, no. 4, (Winter 2006), 541

Suffering is perhaps the human experience which most offers (or forces) solitude. As will be discussed in the next chapter, suffering is inherently individualized, such that in most cases it cannot be equally shared with another. As mentioned above, man's contemporary situation makes the solitude of suffering particularly challenging.

With regard to man's natural status, that is, his unique place in the world in the order of creation, John Paul sees a tremendous existential significance in the revelation offered in Genesis. God has placed him within the context of his created world and demands of man the naming of the animals, demonstrating man's consciousness and ability, and in a sense demanding that man reflect on this ability which differentiates him from everything else. It is a task of man's self-understanding, placed by God before him, to gain knowledge of what is around him as well as of himself. Self-knowledge comes with the knowledge of the world.

With this knowledge, which makes him go in some way outside of his own being, man at the same time reveals himself to himself in all the distinctiveness of his being. He is not only essentially and subjectively alone. In fact, solitude also signifies man's subjectivity, which constitutes itself through self-knowledge. Man is alone because he is "different" from the visible world, from the world of living beings.<sup>96</sup>

The experience of solitude enables, or perhaps even forces man, to go outside of himself in order to understand himself. The knowledge of the bodily differences between himself and all other things facilitates a deeper existential understanding of the differences in what God has created. God gives dominion to man, that things are classified and known by the manner in which man names them, but this knowledge gained by man comes by way of a task, not as a simple gift to man from God. This

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<sup>96</sup> *Man and Woman*, October 10, 1979, 150.

knowledge comes as a process revealed in Genesis whereby God accompanies man's decisions, and man understands by way of experience the unique role that he plays between God and the created world.

The body itself plays a significant role in man's existential understanding of his uniqueness. This applies not just to man in comparison to the other creatures, but also in historical man to being one different from all other men. John Paul contends that man could have reflected on the awareness of his body among the other bodies of God's creation and found himself to be substantially similar to other animals. The fact is that he did not arrive at such a conclusion, instead discovering that he was alone. Thus, man's bodily experience assists his existential understanding of himself. It comes through the task of classifying his experiences with the experiences of those things which surround him.<sup>97</sup> The makeup of man's body is created such that he becomes a subject and author of truly human free activity.<sup>98</sup>

When the fundamental meaning of his body had thus already been established through distinction from the rest of creatures, when it had become evident thereby that the "invisible" determines man more than the "visible," then the alternative presented itself before him, strictly and directly linked by God-Yahweh to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>99</sup>

As an extension of his self-understanding, man is presented with the knowledge of the struggle between mortality and immortality. He is presented by his Creator with further knowledge, an original covenant. Man is placed before a mystery, at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). God's gracious creation brings man to

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., October 24, 1979, 152.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 155-56.

the further reflection of the limits of his being. That he is not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil points to a limitation of his being, as well as a horizon which holds the possibility that he may not exist as he does at this particular moment. The existential knowledge here is of a substantial difference between himself and God, and a dependence on God for his being. Now, as subject of human action, his future being depends upon his free choices.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the existential knowledge brought by the awareness of his original solitude, the revelation about his nature as a created being, the account in Genesis 2 extends the reflection to his duality as male and female. God's declaration from the midst of man's solitude that it is not good for him to be alone (Gen 2:18) reveals the dimension of his nature which requires a relationship of a different type than he has with himself, God, or the rest of the created world.<sup>101</sup> The man's joy in finding woman is based upon his ability to share his life with a being equal to himself. He sees in her difference and complementarity a new hope for his own existence. This reveals, as a solution to the problematic sphere of man's solitude, man's need for union with others as a part of the Creator's intention.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., November 7, 1979, 157. "Bodiliness and sexuality are not simply identical. Although in its normal constitution, the human body carries within itself the signs of sex and is by its nature male or female, *the fact that man is a 'body' belongs more deeply to the structure of the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female.* For this reason, the meaning of original solitude, which can be referred simply to 'man,' is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity; the latter is based on masculinity and femininity, which are, as it were, two different 'incarnations,' that is, two ways in which the same human being, created 'in the image of God' (Gen 1:27), 'is a body'" (emphasis in original). In stating this, John Paul is making a distinction between the two accounts of creation, for in Genesis 1, there is no mention of man's solitude, for man is male and female from the beginning. In Genesis 2, the reader is led to ponder man as such (not male and female). Two realities are thus revealed from the two creation accounts: man (human) is unique, and man and woman are complimentary in their being unique.

### 6.3.3 Man's Need for Union

Both philosophically and theologically, John Paul's understanding of man's need for unity with another is the foundation for his ethical framework. The evaluation of the relationship between man and woman, the relationship of God as Trinity, as well as the relationship between God and man, all point to man's need for authentic relationships within his life. It is that authenticity which Christ references in his discussion with those who question the legitimacy of divorce. John Paul uses the revealed lessons of the body to describe the unity of man and woman as a nuptial gift. In his audiences on the theology of the body, he describes the unique satisfaction and fulfillment that come from man finding woman in the order of creation. It is an understanding of man's capacity to love, as well as the discovery of the meaning of man's life found primarily through love.<sup>102</sup> The mutual giving and receiving of love demonstrates the beauty of the relationship between man and woman.<sup>103</sup> This understanding of the unity of spouses both reaffirms man's dignity, and demonstrates that his true fulfillment comes through the gift of one's self to another.<sup>104</sup>

Analogous to the mystery of the Trinity, where the communion of persons is the manifestation God's being from all eternity, man's creation as male and female grants

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<sup>102</sup> This is the theme which John Paul uses to begin his reflection on God's plan for marriage and the family in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio* "The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World," Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 1981), no. 11, p. 22, *AAS* 74, (1982), 81-191.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 2, 1980; Sutton, "Facing the Sexual Revolution," 139; as well as *Man and Woman*, October 22, 1980, 306. "The body in its masculinity and femininity has been called 'from the beginning' to become the manifestation of the spirit. It becomes such a manifestation also through the conjugal union of man and woman when they unite with each other so as to form 'one flesh.'"

<sup>104</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 16, 1980, 187.

him a participation in God's life.<sup>105</sup> The reflection on God's intention in creation and in Christ's call to a new ethic point to the beauty and purpose of man's bodily life, a life that is wounded by sin, and yet at the same time is called to be sanctified with his own body:

On the basis of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, the Christian ethos is characterized by a transformation of the human person's conscience and attitudes, both the man's and the woman's, such as to express and realize the value of the body and of sex according the Creator's original plan, placed as they are at the service of the "communion of persons," which is the deepest substratum of human ethics and culture.<sup>106</sup>

Realized in bodily relations, the revelatory language of the body underscores its need for unity and community. John Paul's theme of demonstrating how the body calls man to unity underscores the anthropological and ethical understanding of human actions, and demonstrates the role that the body plays in his sacramental life. Man knows by meditating on the promptings of his body of the call to love and have unity with another. He can decipher in the language of the body the ethical significance of his actions, but he also participates in his sanctification through his rightly ordered bodily actions.<sup>107</sup>

That the body "speaks a language" is crucial for the contemplation of the mystery of human suffering. If there is any positive dimension to suffering, then there must be a purpose, a lesson, or a revelation—which requires (bodily) communication. Clearly, this

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<sup>105</sup> See Michael Waldstein, "Introduction" in *Man and Woman*, 23-24. He offers an insight into Wojtyla/John Paul's consistent theme of the "Personalistic Norm" (displayed also in *Gaudium et spes* no. 24) in that man's love illuminates the love of the Trinity. Christ's prayer in John 17:21-22 that "all may be one...as we are one" offers "vistas closed to human reason" which demonstrate the parallel nature of the Trinity's love and man's love. This is characteristic of Wojtyla/John Paul's phenomenology, that there are (bodily) experiences which are likewise beyond human reason, or the empirical sciences, which reveal how man is to reflect the love of God in the Trinity.

<sup>106</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 22, 1980, 307.

<sup>107</sup> See Gerald Beigel, *The Person Revealed in Action*, 187.

communication can be missed, particularly in the contemporary drive to eradicate all suffering, but only an investigation into exactly what is communicated in the experience of suffering, will give a positive dimension to the facing of this mystery.

#### 6.3.4 The Double Significance of the Body's Sacramental Character

John Paul's theology of the body provides an anthropological tool for the wedding of man's corporeal and spiritual life. He describes marriage, that is, the correct living out of conjugal union of man and woman, as a primordial sacrament. By doing so, John Paul defines the body as matter to be transformed by the promptings of the spirit. This is necessary because man has lost the clear sense of the nuptial meaning of the body with original sin, where there is now discord in the interior dominion of body and spirit.<sup>108</sup> But the body also becomes the offering to accomplish this transformation. The bodily living out of the sacrament of marriage becomes a means of man's transformation of his body. What is offered is transformed. As in every sacrament, the dimension of the grace received and the sign offered are a parallel duality.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, in this dimension, a primordial sacrament is constituted, understood as a *sign that efficaciously transmits in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from eternity*. And this is the mystery of Truth and Love, the mystery of divine life, in which man really participates. In the history of man, it is original innocence that begins this participation and is also the source of original happiness. The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, inasmuch as he is a "body," through his "visible" masculinity and femininity. The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus be a sign of it.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 22, 1980, 307.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28, 1984, 660.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1980, 203, (emphasis in original).

Not only does the body possess sacramental character by indicating and expressing the grace received by God, it is a means of grace in man's lived experience: All of the sacraments provide the receiver with a transforming grace by engaging his bodily senses. They offer a newness of spirit as a result of the transformation of matter. This takes place literally through the death of one type of matter in its transformation into another.<sup>111</sup> The Eucharist most clearly represents this change. Bread and wine cease to be their original essence in order to become something more. Christ's words regarding the death of the grain of wheat being the beginning of new life emphasize the radical transformation present in the sacramental life of the Church.<sup>112</sup> This is profoundly articulated in the sacrament of marriage, whereby the union of man and woman communicate a new life to each other and enable them to become "one flesh," and as John Paul argues, man and woman become the primordial sacrament in the new economy of salvation.<sup>113</sup>

As demonstrated in the sacrament of marriage, there is an anthropological and ethical significance to the revelation of the body. John Paul's immense catechesis in these weekly audiences highlights several theological themes while reflecting on the issues of sexual morality. Above them all, John Paul's vision of the dignity of the human person, created and redeemed by God, shines through as the need calling for, and means

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<sup>111</sup> Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the Body*, 570-71. "Sacrifice in this first sense is a gift, an offering of self in exchange for God's prior offering of Himself to us, and the immolation involved is essentially not destructive, but unitive, although as a physical sign it involved a destruction. Such a sacrifice, which is fundamental, is a confirmation of the Covenant and it is also a 'sacrifice of praise' (Heb 13:15), a *berakah*, or *eucharist*, i.e. a *thanksgiving*, since thanksgiving is simply the acknowledgement of a gift and praise is the acknowledgement of the giver. It is also a 'blessing', because to bless someone means both to give a gift (as God's blessings to us), or to acknowledge a gift (as we "bless God" for His gifts)."

<sup>112</sup> See John 12:24.

<sup>113</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 6, 1982, 503.

of experiencing, a better understanding of the redeeming grace offered through Christ. The body mediates this for man, and is transformed in the process of its mediation. It is both the revelation and sanctification of man himself. This is indeed consistent with the Christian experience of redemption from which all the sacraments receive their origin. Christ's offering of his body for the forgiveness of sins is the beginning of the redemption of man as well as of the sacramental life of the Church. Man's participation in this salvation takes on in his earthly experience the same bodily dimension. In the theology of the body, the reciprocal gift of man and woman mirror the gift of Christ for the world, and are the way in which his followers, finding themselves in this second panel of the triptych of historical man, journey toward man's destiny of resurrection.<sup>114</sup> In the meantime, the perpetual offering of the body is man's share in the promise of this redemption.

That the human body is a means of the contemplation of God and a paradigm of the reality of man's condition in relationship to God and others is the foundation for a Christian understanding of the mystery of suffering. John Paul's anthropology teaches that holiness is sought and found by listening to and attending to the lessons one learns from the language of the body's goodness as well as its struggles.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> It is important to note that celibates and single persons are not excluded in this self-donation. See Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 88. "Rather, their sexuality is given as a gift (in nongenital ways) in the service of God and members of the Christian community. Conjugal chastity is ordered to fidelity and the totality of the bodily gift of self within the marriage covenant—to the full articulation of the 'language of the body' when it is spoken in the life of the couple. The chastity lived by unmarried or widowed persons resembles that of those vowed to celibacy in that it requires continence...All three forms of the virtue involve renunciation and asceticism in developing the capacity to give oneself in love in ways appropriate to the person's state of life."

<sup>115</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 91. She describes one of several common themes between a theology of the body and an understanding of human suffering is that without a proper reflection on the

John Paul is well aware of the difficulties that couples face when they embrace the Church's teaching on marital chastity, and in fact, the struggle itself to be faithful to the Church's teaching is a form of love.<sup>116</sup> The couple who seeks conjugal intimacy in accord with the Church's teaching of openness to procreation in each act of intercourse harmonize their wills and grow in patient acceptance of each other. In this experience they further reveal the love of God to each other, and experience an interior wisdom revealed through the medium of the human body, no doubt embracing the reality of the cross, but at the same time, experiencing its promise of salvation.<sup>117</sup> This is just as true in the reality of suffering as it is in contemplating sexual ethics taught in the *Theology of the Body*.<sup>118</sup>

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revelatory nature of the body, cultural taboos often prohibit healthy open discussion about these issues, which have a negative and isolating effect.

<sup>116</sup> Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 207.

<sup>117</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, nos. 33-34, pp. 54-56.

<sup>118</sup> See John Paul's final audience on this topic, *Man and Woman*, November 28, 1984, 660. "One must immediately observe, in fact, that the term 'theology of the body' goes far beyond the content of the reflections represented here. These reflections do not include many problems belonging, with regard to their object, to the theology of the body—for example, the problem of suffering and death, so important in the biblical message.

## CHAPTER 7

### NEW REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

John Paul entered into a unique communication with an Italian journalist on the occasion of his fifteenth anniversary as pope. After having agreed to being interviewed, a radically humble offering from the pastor of the universal Church—an interview that did not to come to pass, he instead responded to each of the interviewer’s questions, answers which were compiled into the 1994 best-selling book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. John Paul’s substantial replies were also quite candid, as he not only answered questions of theological importance on the present state of the Church, but also added reflection on his personal experiences and motivations for his faith and ministry.<sup>1</sup> In his answer to a question about human rights and the Church’s social teaching, John Paul placed his answers in the context of his personal vocation as a priest, teacher and shepherd. He stated that his works *The Acting Person* and *Love and Responsibility* sprang from the same source: the questions that people asked about man’s existence and the difficulty of knowing and doing God’s will. John Paul said that his response to these questions, stemming from the eternal question asked of Christ “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”<sup>2</sup> are what brought him to “translate the commandment of love into the

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Introduction: “How This Book Came to Be,” Vittorio Messori, ed., (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994), v-ix.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 10:17.

language of philosophical ethics.”<sup>3</sup> He calls this his personalistic principle, to affirm the person as a person, to love him without reducing him to an object.<sup>4</sup>

This personalistic principle, articulated in *Love and Responsibility* and the Theology of the Body addresses brought to light in the realm of sexual ethics what the Second Vatican Council interpreted as Christ’s commandment to love.<sup>5</sup> John Paul insists that from what the Council stated, man is the only creature on earth desired by God for his (man’s) own sake and can only truly discover who he is by making a sincere gift of himself. This gift demonstrates that an act of love is the truest and deepest realization of the self.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible to overlook the level at which John Paul’s theological anthropology addresses the issue of human suffering. As the first section of this dissertation addressed, the practice of medicine has greatly limited the quantity of physical suffering, especially in Western cultures. But even as life expectancy and general health and wellness have increased, the human struggle with suffering cannot be completely overcome. In fact, as man’s suffering is quantitatively reduced, it can be argued that his qualitative experience of suffering, the existential connection to physical manifestations of illness and death have increased.<sup>7</sup> That is to say, as man has eliminated many experiences of suffering in his experience of life, those which remain potentially cause him even greater difficulty

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 200-01.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., see also Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, “Introduction,” 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24, p. 925.

<sup>6</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 202, in reference to *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24, p. 925.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations into Christian Ethics*, (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 201.

and threaten his faith in an omnipotent God.<sup>8</sup> This paradoxical reality, paired with the notable attempts to relieve human suffering which, in fact, only remove the suffering human from the midst of society, illustrate the call of the Second Vatican Council to address the dichotomy of the modern world—whereby the temptation to find answers to man’s deepest existential questions through human effort alone will inevitably end in an unsatisfactory answer.<sup>9</sup>

For John Paul, the reality of suffering was omnipresent. Any biographical sketch of his life demonstrates his own experience of suffering. Personal sufferings in the early experience of the death of family members, his own illnesses, facing the ravages of war and the brutality of political occupation served to teach him the harshness of life. Instead of being content with the bleakness of the human condition, or finding in the reality of suffering and evil an argument against the existence of an omnipotent God, all too common in his contemporaries,<sup>10</sup> John Paul found instead a call to examine the reality of suffering in man as it relates to God’s call for man to know him and to better know himself. After having been hospitalized for a broken hip in 1994, John Paul reflected on facing his own suffering:

I meditated on all this and thought it over again during my hospital stay...I understood that I have to lead Christ’s Church into this third millennium by prayer, by various programs, but I saw that this is not enough: she must be led by suffering, by the attack thirteen years ago [i.e., Agca’s assassination attempt in 1981] and by this new sacrifice. Why now, why this, why in this Year of the Family? Precisely because the family is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>9</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 10, 910.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 61, where he acknowledges the contribution of literature and drama to conceptualize the reality of suffering, but that these are ultimately insufficient attempts to give meaning to them.

under attack. The Pope has to be attacked, the Pope has to suffer, so that every family and the world may see that there is... a higher Gospel: the Gospel of suffering, by which the future is prepared, the third millennium of families, of every family and of all families.<sup>11</sup>

These words unite the personal dimension of John Paul's understanding of suffering with the responsibility as universal pastor of preaching and reaching out to those who suffer.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to point out John Paul's unique insights into the nature of suffering as an opportunity afforded to man and not simply a burden to be endured.

### 7.1 *Salvifici doloris* and a Gospel of Suffering

John Paul's contribution specifically devoted to the issue of suffering was his 1984 Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici doloris*. Acknowledging that suffering is a reality for every man, John Paul's letter specifically sought to address the concept of suffering for Christians in the extraordinary Holy Year of Redemption. It issued the challenge for man to view suffering not primarily as a problem, but as a mystery into which he enters, and for the Church to meet man on the path of suffering.<sup>13</sup> Calling for a deeper meditation on the meaning that the Christian finds in the reality of human suffering plots a very different course from a more general cultural to medically specific attitude of suffering whereby it is relegated to an evil reality and negative entity to be eliminated. John Paul's call to delve into the mystery of suffering is a stark contrast which requires an openness

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<sup>11</sup> John Paul's reflection after his release from the Gemelli hospital after a fall and hip surgery, given at the Sunday audience in St. Peter's Square, May 29, 1994, as cited by George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 721.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 14, in which his answers to questions about the dignity and duty of the papacy ended with his understanding that a supreme duty was to render present to the whole world the truth that Christ is with his people, and that as pope he not only is bishop for the world, but he is a Christian with all others.

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 4.

to the radical call of the gospel of Christ to not be conformed to the present age, an age whose positive success in eliminating suffering has left society with existential difficulties in the circumstances in which it cannot be avoided.<sup>14</sup>

It is crucial in the attempt to contextualize the topic of human suffering to focus the question as widely as John Paul has done. The concept of suffering must be explained with regard to its many dimensions. Man suffers in a variety of ways, physically in the pain associated with illness, disease and injury; and what John Paul calls “morally” in fear, grief, guilt, doubt, misfortune and the experience of any kind of evil.<sup>15</sup>

John Paul’s use of suffering is at the same more far reaching and specific than commonly found in a definition of suffering. “Moral suffering” which is broader and more inclusive, may or may not include physical pain, but does depend upon a reflective existential dimension. “It can be said that man suffers whenever he experiences any kind of evil.”<sup>16</sup> So while John Paul widens the experiences of what can lead man to suffer, suffering implies the realization of the deprivation of goodness. A cognitive dimension is present. Physical pain may or may not lead man to experience suffering, and at the same time, many of the experiences of suffering contain no physical dimension.

Suffering is something which is still wider than sickness, more complex and at the same time still more deeply rooted in humanity itself. A certain idea of this problem comes to us from the distinction between physical suffering and moral suffering. This distinction is based upon the double dimension of the human being and indicates the bodily and spiritual

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jn 15:18-21. Christ exhorts his disciples to be prepared for the judgment of the world for both their connection to him as his disciples, as well as for their belief and teaching in his name. See *Salvifici doloris*, no. 4, from the very outset of the letter, John Paul calls the reader to meditate on the mystery of suffering with the need of the heart to be open to “the deep imperative of faith.”

<sup>15</sup> See John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, nos. 6-7, p. 8-11, where he provides an Old Testament concordance of how various non-physical situations are adequately described as suffering.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, no 7, p. 10.

element as the immediate or direct subject of suffering. Insofar as the words “suffering” and “pain” can, up to a certain degree, be used as synonyms, physical suffering is present when “the body is hurting” in some way, whereas moral suffering is “the pain of the soul.” In fact, it is a question of pain of a spiritual nature, and not only of the “psychological” dimension of pain which accompanies both moral and physical suffering. The vastness and the many forms of moral suffering are certainly no less in number than the forms of physical suffering. But at the same time, moral suffering seems, as it were, less identified and less reachable by therapy.<sup>17</sup>

John Paul’s understanding of suffering requires the criteria of the moral or spiritual dimension of suffering—that the conscious realization of the suffering is the factor which separates true suffering from simply the experience of pain. It is as if man must be existentially and not merely physically challenged to experience suffering, that the painful experience may be either physically and/or emotionally initiated, but the consciousness of the lack of goodness, the experience of lacking, is required. Suffering combines subjective and objective realities (physical pain and/or emotional anxiety) with the subjective experience of loss and existential questioning.<sup>18</sup>

Man alone experiences true suffering in the above sense, for suffering reaches the dimension proper to the spiritual faculties a being possesses. It can be said that human

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, no. 5, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *God Father and Creator*, June 4, 1986, 270-71. It is important here to distinguish between two parallel uses of the terms “physical” and “moral.” John Paul uses these terms to contrast both the types of suffering and of evil. He explains that all suffering is the result of the experience of evil, this evil may be of a physical or moral nature. God allows physical evil, as it would be impossible to maintain in this world the unlimited existence of every individual body. But moral evil is to be equated with sin and its effects. Both of these evils bring to man the experience of suffering. Suffering which transcends the physical plane and challenges man’s understanding of self and God is properly called moral suffering—“pain of the soul” (*SD* no. 5). It would be incorrect to equate moral evil with moral suffering, because it is not by sin alone (moral evil) that man experiences moral, i.e., the deepest form of suffering.

suffering is interiorized, intimately known, and experienced in the whole dimension of one's being and capacities of action and reaction, of receptivity and rejection.<sup>19</sup>

The unity of the physical and moral dimensions of suffering are demonstrated in the fact that even when one does not experience suffering as principally initiated physically, there is a bodily connection to moral suffering... In fact, one cannot deny that moral sufferings have a 'physical' or somatic element, and that they are often reflected in the state of the entire organism.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the reality of suffering is evidence of the psychosomatic unity in man. In all of visible creation, where pain is widely present, only man has the capacity to suffer and wonder why. The human experience of suffering implies a conscious seeking for meaning.<sup>21</sup> These insights into the mystery of suffering show continuity with his thought in the Theology of the Body.

In recognizing the tremendous contribution of science and medicine in addressing the reality of human suffering, John Paul is consistent with the goals of medicine insofar as he sees in the deprivation of wholeness in the person both the presence of ontological evil and the opportunity for action, but his point of departure from a merely scientific physical evaluation of suffering is both epistemological and exhortative. Science cannot reveal the meaning of the experience of suffering; however, Christ has revealed not only the command to do good to those who suffer, but for man to do good by his own experience of suffering.<sup>22</sup> It is this departure from the standard attitude toward suffering, that its presence should be treated, avoided, or eliminated, that is the contribution of John

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<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, June 4, 1986, 269.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris* nos. 5-6, pp. 7-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* no. 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 30.

Paul's thought. His call to meditate on the "gospel of suffering" is a turn to the contemplation of the mystery of each man who faces the reality of suffering from the experience of evil in a unique way which is distinguished from the more commonplace and reactive flight from the experience of suffering.

#### 7.1.1 Bridging the Gap: Levels of Contemplation on the Mystery of Suffering

Man's conscious suffering leads to the struggle to understand the purpose of his experience. The difficulty of reconciling the multiform experience of evil in human suffering with the goodness of God is an eternal one.<sup>23</sup> In *Salvifici doloris* John Paul summarizes a history of man's response to the question of suffering before expanding his own response. Sacred Scripture traces the various answers which are possible in raising the questions regarding the existence and purpose of suffering.

The first answer is that suffering is a justified punishment for sin. The doctrine of suffering expressed in the Old Testament makes a clear connection between the evil that falls to man and his transgressions against God. The prophets consistently link the evil and suffering which the people of Israel experience to their misdeeds before God.<sup>24</sup>

Though God is gracious in extending mercy and deliverance to Israel, the sufferings they

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<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, June 4, 1986, 269, expresses the difficulty of the experience of suffering "It is a terrible experience, before which, especially when without guilt, man bring forward those difficult, tormenting, and at times dramatic questions. Sometimes, they constitute a complaint, sometimes a challenge, and sometimes a cry of rejection of God and His providence. They are questions and problems which can be summed up thus: how can evil and suffering be reconciled with that paternal solicitude, full of love, which Jesus Christ attributes to God in the Gospel? How are they to be reconciled with the transcendent wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator? And in a still more dialectical form—in the presence of all the experience of evil in the world, especially when confronted with the suffering of the innocent, can we say that God does not will evil? And if he wills it, how can we believe that 'God is love?'—all the more so since this love is omnipotent?"

<sup>24</sup> Among many other sources explaining a causal relationship between transgressions and suffering, see Bruce Vawter, "The Nature of Prophecy" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown et al, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 186-192 as well as Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 317-336.

endure are often seen as a punishment for sin.<sup>25</sup> In this answer, some sense can be made of the legitimate punishment that falls to man because of his sin. For man's protection and flourishing, suffering can be seen even as the best and most merciful response of a loving God.<sup>26</sup> Each person knows of the experience of suffering due to the sinful choices which he has made. But John Paul resists the universality of this superficial explanation of suffering:

While it is true that suffering has a meaning as punishment when it is connected with a fault, it is not true that all suffering is a consequence of a fault and has the nature of a punishment.<sup>27</sup>

The results of this sin brings harm not only to the sinner, but often to others as well. But this answer of divine justice is unable to reach the issue of the suffering of the innocent, or the kinds of natural suffering which man experiences through no direct fault of his own.

John Paul presents the Book of Job as a bridge between the inadequate response of the overly moralistic and direct understanding of suffering as a punishment for sin and a more total vision of God's justice. Certainly the friends of Job represent an inadequacy in understanding the relationship between man and God's justice. Suffering is

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<sup>25</sup> Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 12. He is careful not to exclude the value of the suffering present in the first believers' understanding of God's justice. "Already in the Old Testament we note an orientation that begins to go beyond the concept according to which suffering has a meaning only as a punishment for sin, insofar as it emphasizes at the same time the educational value of suffering as a punishment. Thus in the sufferings inflicted by God upon the Chosen People there is included an invitation to His mercy, which corrects in order to lead to conversion: '...these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people.' (2 Macabees 6: 12). Thus the personal dimension of punishment is affirmed. According to this dimension, punishment has a meaning not only because it serves to repay the objective evil of the transgression with another evil, but first and foremost because it creates the possibility of rebuilding goodness in the subject who suffers."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 11, p. 15-16.

understood as a “justified evil” by which God restores the order of justice. Job’s friends elevate the objective order of God’s justice, as one puts it, “As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.”<sup>28</sup>

In God’s response to Job’s innocent suffering, the author introduces the concept of the inability to completely scrutinize the wisdom and justice of God with human knowledge and experience. God’s answer to Job, appearing to be less than satisfactory, demands his contemplation and demonstrates the reward of fidelity to God in the midst of suffering. John Paul states that the answer regarding suffering in Job is an insufficient solution, but is a challenge to the argument that suffering can be connected unreservedly and universally to the human moral order. The concept of the mystery of God’s justice as distinct from man’s delivers man from the frustration of the overly simplistic equation of suffering with sin up to a point. The attempt to justify God in the Book of Job introduces the concept of the depth of God’s wisdom compared with that of man as well as prefigures Christ’s innocent suffering through Job. But the radical nature of God’s love for man will not allow the question of suffering to have an incomplete answer. Instead of a theoretical explanation of suffering, the God who does not have to justify himself before man does exactly that in the historical culmination of revelation regarding suffering with the mystery of the cross.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Job 4: 8, as quoted in *Salvifici doloris*, no. 10, p. 14-15.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. 62. “Given our present discussion, we must ask ourselves: Could it have been different? Could God have justified Himself before human history, so full of suffering, without placing Christ’s cross at the center of that history? Obviously, one response could be that God does not need to justify Himself to man. It is enough that He is omnipotent. From this perspective everything He does or allows must be accepted. This is the position of the biblical Job. But God, who besides being Omnipotence is Wisdom and—to repeat once again—Love, desires to justify Himself to

The third level of the contemplation of suffering involves the scandal of the cross within the mystery of Christian redemption. Aware of the inability to answer the mystery of suffering with a logical framework, man turns to the center of the Christian life to give understandable meaning to the mystery of encountering suffering: Love alone, as most profoundly expressed in the paschal mystery of Christ, can make both understandable and bearable the confrontation with suffering:

...in order to perceive the true answer to the “why” of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists. Love is also the richest source of the meaning of suffering, which always remains a mystery: we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations. Christ causes us to enter into the mystery and to discover the “why” of suffering, as far as we are capable of grasping the sublimity of divine love.<sup>30</sup>

God’s loving answer to the reality of man’s suffering is not best expressed in the call to justice, that man often deserves what he suffers; nor in the call to contemplate how the mystery of God’s justice is beyond man’s ability to completely grasp, as experienced in the answer and eventual restitution given to Job; but, “...the answer has been given by God to man in the cross of Jesus Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

Building upon the relationship between suffering and evil, John Paul reiterates the basis of Christian soteriology, that Christ’s death and resurrection as God’s most profound salvific work, frees man from his being bound to sin and death. This liberation

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mankind. He is not the Absolute that remains outside of the world, indifferent to human suffering. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, a God shares man’s lot and participates in his destiny.”

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 13, p. 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, p. 18.

is the work which Christ came to accomplish for all men.<sup>32</sup> Christ's own suffering is the means of man's salvation. The conquering of suffering is possible only by the Son of God taking that suffering upon himself. One can see in John Paul's explanation of the relationship between evil and suffering within the relationship between God and man a linear progression: Evil brings suffering and death to man. God takes on suffering and death for man to end the reign of evil. God's actions aim to strike at the ultimate roots of evil, what John Paul calls "definitive suffering" which is the ultimate loss of man to sin—damnation. An understanding of the means and end of Christ's salvific work are crucial here, as John Paul explains:

Man 'perishes' when he loses 'eternal life.' The opposite of salvation is not, therefore, only temporal suffering, any kind of suffering, but the definitive suffering: the loss of eternal life, being rejected by God—damnation. The only-begotten Son was given to humanity primarily to protect man against this definitive evil and against *definitive suffering*. In His salvific mission, the Son must therefore strike right at its transcendental roots from which it develops in human history. These transcendental roots of evil are grounded in sin and death: for they are at the basis of the loss of eternal life. The mission of the only-begotten Son consists in *conquering sin and death*. He conquers sin by His obedience unto death, and He overcomes death by His resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

Christ does not take away all suffering from human experience, (this is the 'answer' of the linear progression that remains unanswered in the limitation of the human condition) but he changes its meaning and place in man's life. John Paul uses the word "dominion" to explain the continued presence of suffering (as well as sin and bodily

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 14, p. 18, where John Paul quoting John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he have his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," tell of the very heart of Christian soteriology.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., no. 14, p. 19-20, (emphasis in original).

death) in human experience, but not the presumption of its ultimate victory.<sup>34</sup>

Christ's means of achieving this victory are left for man to experience, and in the same manner in which evil gave birth to the gospel of Christ, the experience of evil in man gives birth to the gospel of suffering. The next two chapters are an investigation into how God uses the current presence of suffering in man's life to draw him to share in his own life.

John Paul's fourth level of the contemplation of suffering is the mystical experience of suffering, man's participation and incorporation in the sufferings of Christ in his own life. The mystical dimension of Christian spiritual life signifies an intensely personal and powerful experience of God.<sup>35</sup> Man's earthly participation in the Divine was the subject of Wojtyla's doctoral dissertation on St. John of the Cross. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Wojtyla sought to address the oft misunderstood discrepancy between conceptual faith and experiential faith. The mystic incorporates the two into himself, and John Paul's life gives witness to his own understanding of the unity. The mystical participation in suffering unites the conceptual basis for Christian faith, Christ's suffering as salvation for Christians, and the Christian's invitation to suffer in his acceptance of that salvation.<sup>36</sup> Mystical participation in the life of the God while on earth will draw

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., no. 15.

<sup>35</sup> See *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978), 952, for a definition of "mysticism." "An immediate knowledge of God attained in this present life through personal religious experiences. It is primarily a state of prayer and as such admits of various degrees, from short and rare Divine 'touches' to the practically permanent union with God in the so-called 'mystic marriage'. The surest proof adduced by the mystics themselves for the genuineness of their experience is its effect, viz. its fruit in such things as an increase of humility, charity, and love of suffering."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 108-109. Williams states the clarification made by Wojtyla: "Faith is discussed as the mystical motor, which, at the end of contemplation, enables

man to take on the life of Christ, a life which not only involved his historical suffering, but which brings man to and through suffering into participation within his own life today. This level of faith as experience of God's essence and not merely knowledge about him requires the willingness to be transformed through current participation in Christ's sufferings.

This mystical dimension is necessary to understand St. Paul's famous declaration of the power of suffering, "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church."<sup>37</sup> This mystical level of participation in suffering is John Paul's contribution which allows the Christian to speak of suffering as a mystery and not only as a problem to be overcome. John Paul's phenomenological insight is consistent with mystical spirituality in that man's personal experiences illuminate the deposit of faith. In fact, St. Paul's words are John Paul's choice to open his letter *Salvifici doloris*:

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the intellect to be united with the essence of Deity, grace intervening, without the pilgrim's ever being in this life able to know or see God. Hence the prominence of two kinds of 'obscurity' or 'nights' in St. John of the Cross, with respect to the senses and lower impulses but also in respect to faith itself because at the highest level in the agony of non-knowing. Ecstatic agony, because faith is the one virtue or power of the soul connected with the intellect and hence with some kind of knowing. Faith at the highest level has been shown throughout the night, passive and active, to have had two functions, unitive and purificatory. By the infused grace of the Holy Spirit, the soul, through vitalized, transformed faith, can attain and be divinely drawn to the Uncreated in supernatural non-cognitive yet objective union. This faith insofar as it partly makes possible contemplative participation in Deity, bears in itself the very substance of union. The union is transformation. When St. John of the Cross says that contemplation is communicated in faith, indeed when he calls contemplation faith, then surely he conceives of faith not only under the aspect of virtue of the soul but also properly as a theological power making possible the participation of the (blinded) intellect in Deity. Thus the evolution of vital faith signifies the progression in that union, wherein the soul in faith and love becomes Dios *por participación* (God by participation), a daring concept of St. John of the Cross, clarified by Father Wojtyla with exactitude as to both theological principle and experience."

<sup>37</sup> Colossians. 1: 24. While there remains some dispute over Paul's authorship of Colossians, the use of the well known first person quote suggests reference to a person over a reference to "the author." John Paul proceeds in *Salvifici doloris* to assume Paul as the author of Colossians.

These words [of St. Paul] seem to be found at the end of the long road that winds through the suffering which forms part of the history of man and which is illuminated by the Word of God. These words have as it were the value of a final discovery, which is accompanied by joy. For this reason St. Paul writes: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake” [Col. 1:24]. The joy comes from the discovery of the meaning of suffering, and this discovery, even if it is most personally shared in by Paul of Tarsus who wrote these words, is at the same time valid for others. The Apostle shares his own discovery and rejoices in it because of all those whom it can help—just as it helped him—to understand the salvific meaning of suffering.<sup>38</sup>

Without the double understanding of the third level of the contemplation of suffering, that of Christ’s sacrificial offering for the salvation of the world, and the fourth level of contemplation, the mystical experience of suffering of the Christian, there can be no rational framework for dealing with the mystery of human suffering, of doing anything except to flee from it.

There would be no reason for St. Paul to speak not only of the willingness to suffer, but also to embrace his suffering with joy if it could not be seen as a positive mystical experience. Under any other explanation, Paul is either extremely patient, following the insufficient example of the suffering of Job, or sadistic in his joy of suffering.

Paul’s own acceptance and even joy in suffering stems from this mystical incorporation into Christ’s suffering.<sup>39</sup> He represents the vicarious and redemptive suffering of all Christians in his exhortations to be faithful to Christ’s teachings. To

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<sup>38</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 1, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> See Romans 8:17 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

follow Christ means to willingly embrace the Cross, not as an obstacle to sanctity, but as a means of it.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note the difference in St. Paul between the possibility and even the obligation of the simple imitation of Christ's sufferings and the mystical participation of the Christian in Christ's sufferings. If the Christian life which included sufferings were merely based on the example of Christ and not an actual participation in them, then there would be no salvation. As John Robinson points out, "There would be nothing to join together what has been done for us with what has to be done in us."<sup>41</sup>

According to Robinson, Paul meticulously demonstrates the participation of the Christian's experience of suffering with the historical sufferings of Christ. His incarnation and crucifixion are the necessary setting up of the real participation of the individual Christian's own sufferings with Christ's. Citing Roman's 6:10, Christ's dying once for all, Paul explains that "Christians have died in, with and through the crucified body of the Lord."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. John McDermott, *The Bible on Human Suffering*, (Middlegreen, Slough, UK: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 121-23. He lists the consistent connection between being a disciple of Christ and the suffering that one faces on that account. But the taking on this suffering is always done in a positive spirit and not one of defeat. He lists the command of Christ to take up one's cross daily (Lk 9: 23) as well as the prediction of the sufferings of those who will follow him, for the disciple is never above the master (Jn 13:16) and "if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you (Jn 15: 18-21). The apostles, and Paul particularly, knew personal sharing of suffering as fidelity to the gospel they had received: Ananias' vision concerning Paul's vocation in God's own words, "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9: 15ff). To the first generations of Christians as well, the apostles understand the demands of faith include suffering: "we must enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations" (Acts 14:22) and "if we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim 2: 11). Summing up: "All who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).

<sup>41</sup> John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, (Colorado Springs: CO, Bimillennial Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 59-60. "If one examines the phrases whereby Paul extends the death of Christ to the dying of the individual, it becomes apparent that they presuppose a nexus not of example but of something that can be

Without an adequate reflection of the levels of the experience of human suffering as revealed in sacred scripture, man is unable to make sense of the suffering he experiences. In these movements to levels of understanding and incorporation into the gospel of suffering, man experiences penance as punishment and weight with regard to the concept of divine justice. Concurrently and with ultimate meaning, they take on salvific significance when they reach the levels of the perception of redemption and mystical participation.<sup>43</sup>

We must above all accept the light of revelation not only insofar as it expresses the transcendent order of justice but also insofar as it illuminates this order with Love, as the definitive source of everything that exists. Love is also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering.<sup>44</sup>

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expressed only by a variety of prepositions. Thus, it is 'in the body of his flesh through death' that Christians have been 'reconciled' (Col. 1:21f), 'in the circumcision of Christ' that they 'were also circumcised' (Col. 2:11). It is 'in Christ Jesus' that men are 'made nigh' (Eph. 2:13) and possess 'life' (Rom. 6:11, 23; 8:2). It is 'in Christ' that they have redemption' (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14; Eph 1:7) and 'forgiveness' (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7; 4:32), that they are 'justified' (Gal. 2:17), 'sanctified' (1 Cor. 1:2), 'made alive' (1 Cor. 15:22), and indeed, that they whole process of salvation take place (Eph. 2:6; *ἐν Χριστῷ* governing the complete sentence retrospectively). It is 'with Christ' that Christians 'died...from the rudiments of the world' (Col. 2:20; cf. Rom. 6:8), that their 'old man was crucified' (Rom. 6:6; cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:17), that they were buried (Rom.6:4; Col. 2:12), raised (Col. 2:12; 3:1; Eph. 2:6), quickened (Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:5), exalted (Eph. 2:6) and trust to be glorified (Rom. 8:17). It is 'through' the Lord Jesus Christ, says Paul, that 'the world has been crucified to me and I to the world' (Gal. 6: 14). It is those who are 'of Christ Jesus' that 'have, crucified in the flesh with the passions of lusts thereof' (Gal. 5: 24); it is those who were baptized 'into' Him who 'were baptized into his death' (Rom. 6:3) and 'did put on Christ' (Gal. 3:27)," (emphasis in original).

<sup>43</sup>McDermott, *The Bible on Human Suffering*, 128, encapsulates this progression of the experience of suffering. "Through Christ's cross the very meaning of suffering has been transmuted. It is not simply attributed to human finitude as something to be overcome by insight or asceticism that destroys or absolutizes individuality, as the Hindu and Buddhist wisdoms teach. Neither is it any longer just the result of sin, which leads to death, the manifestation of God's wrath against those who seek to avoid accepting his salvation in favor of justifying themselves. Now for believers, through the folly of the cross that is wiser than human wisdom, suffering becomes an invitation to share in Christ's redemptive love, the very life of God himself, and, by offering themselves in sacrifice for God and their fellow Christians, to grow in love and contribute to the growth of the whole body of Christ."

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 13, p. 18.

This call to love in the midst of suffering is a plea on John Paul's part to reexamine the experience of suffering as illuminated through man's experience of himself as a bodily and spiritual unity. This examination will challenge the cultural concept of suffering as a strictly negative experience and bring what it offers into the realm of man's sanctification. As much as in St. Paul's own day, this view of the cross seems as folly or a stumbling block, but to those who progress in the gospel of suffering, it is a manifestation of salvation.<sup>45</sup>

### 7.1.2 The Contribution of the Theology of the Body

John Paul's answer to the struggle of finding meaning in human suffering is, as outlined in *Salvifici doloris*, a call to penetrate the mystery of the redemption and the human mystical participation in Christ's redemptive offering.

John Paul II's theology of the body is most often cast as an extended catechesis on marriage and sexual love. It certainly is that, but it is also much more. Through the mystery of the incarnate person and the biblical analogy of spousal love, John Paul II's catechesis illuminates the entirety of God's plan for human life from origin to eschaton with a splendid supernatural light. It's not only a response to the sexual revolution, it's a response to the Enlightenment.<sup>46</sup>

The Theology of the Body addresses present a more detailed reflection on the larger anthropological issues which serve as an important foundation for the contemplation of the meaning of human suffering.

The connection between the reality of sin and the consequences in the human condition are mentioned in *Salvifici doloris*:

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<sup>45</sup> See 1 Corinthians 1: 23.

<sup>46</sup> Christopher West, "Preface" to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), xxvii.

Suffering cannot be divorced from the sin of the beginnings, from what St. John calls “the sin of the world,” from the sinful background of the personal actions and social processes in human history. Though it is not licit to apply here the narrow criterion of direct dependence (as Job’s three friends did), it is equally true that one cannot reject the criterion that, on the basis of human suffering, there is a complex involvement with sin.<sup>47</sup>

A deeper reflection upon John Paul’s anthropology is possible for understanding the effects of original sin in man’s life using the texts from Genesis which he examines in the theology of the body. John Paul’s use of the concept of concupiscence is worth particular mention. In Michael Waldstein’s more recent translation of these Wednesday audience talks of John Paul, he points to a previous tendency to narrow the scope of John Paul’s discussion toward issues of human sexuality alone, when in fact, the audiences provide a greater anthropological background to which issues of human sexuality are the ones immediately implied, but not the only pertinent issues connected to his anthropological base.<sup>48</sup>

John Paul notes that all of Christian anthropology demands an understanding of the reality of sin and its effects upon every man. Concupiscence presents to free man a

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<sup>47</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 15, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Waldstein, “Introduction,” in John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, 13. One striking example is the difference in the English translations from *L’Osservatore Romano* (OR) from the official Italian translation. “In the Italian text of [Theology of the Body] TOB, the word ‘lust’ (*lussuria*)” occurs four times. To these four one can add six additional instances of lustful (*libidinoso*) and eleven of ‘*libido*’ for a total of twenty-one defensible instances of ‘lust.’ In the OR translation, by contrast, ‘lust’ occurs 343 times. The main reason for this massive multiplication of ‘lust’ seems to lie in the RSV translation of Matthew 5:28 (‘looks lustfully’) When John Paul II discusses Jesus’ words in detail and repeatedly uses the word ‘desire’ (‘*desidare*’ or *desiderio*’) in agreement with the [*Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*] CEI translation (‘looks to desire’) the OR translation attempts to preserve the connection with the term ‘lustfully’ in the RSV and often translates ‘desire’ as ‘lust.’ It multiplies ‘lust’ further by frequently using it to translate ‘*concupiscenza*.’ Yet, concupiscence is a wider concept than lust. Sexual concupiscence is only one of its species. The multiplication of ‘lust’ introduces a note of pan-sexualism that is foreign to John Paul II.”

separate motivation apart from God himself, commonly called the “world.”<sup>49</sup> The First Letter of John (1 John 2:15-16) contains an exhortation to extend belief in Christ to ethical matters, specifically about attachments to the world and transitory goods. The verse which is often described as a three-fold lust—of the eyes, of the flesh and the pride of life—can more accurately be translated with the more broadly based concept of “desire” than of the more specific “lust.” As a traditional list of vices to avoid as intermediate goods or pleasures, the letter’s use of “desire/lust” encompasses a reference to all passions that are set against God, including but not limited to lust. Pride, greed, boasting, accumulation of material wealth, and arrogance are all manifestations of the “desire/lust” which Christians are exhorted to avoid.<sup>50</sup>

The effects of sin are multi-dimensional as John Paul explains them. The human body, as an expression of the person, held a transcendent quality of the presence of God. The presence of sin marks a change in the relationship in how man’s body images the presence of God. While it still carries the potential to do so, John Paul speaks of a “breakdown” which is manifested not only on a spiritual level in relationship with God, but in a physical one as well, where suffering and bodily disunity are the marks of the presence of sin:

The words of Genesis 3: 10, “I was afraid, because I am naked, and I hid myself,” confirm the collapse of the original acceptance of the body as a sign of the person in the visible world. Together with this breakdown, the acceptance of the material world in relation to man seems to falter as well. The words of God-Yahweh foretell the hostility, as it were, of the world, the resistance of nature against man and his tasks; they foretell the toil that

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, April 30, 1980.

<sup>50</sup> Pheme Perkins, “The Johannine Epistles” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer, and Roland Murphy, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 990.

the human body was then to suffer in contact with the earth subdued by him. “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the earth, for from it you were taken” (Gen 3: 17-19). The end of this toil, of this struggle of man with the earth, is death. “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19).<sup>51</sup>

John Paul notes that it is precisely within the body in “the sense of insecurity about his somatic structure in the face of the processes of nature,”<sup>52</sup> that man has awareness of the change in his relationship with God and creation.

The new reality of suffering and death as consequences of sin, diminishes the transcendent potential of the body’s authentic sign of the presence of God. But the body’s significance is far from negative, as it will have a role in man’s salvation and in his experience of that salvation. As the body is in its current state, the effects of sin and the body which knows of suffering and death have a tremendous role in mediating the presence of God. Thus, suffering plays a great part in the understanding of Christian anthropology as the “place” of both the manifestation of sinfulness and the reality of redemption.

Perhaps the most significant connection between John Paul’s understanding of suffering and the anthropology revealed in the *Theology of the Body* addresses is the discovery of the revelatory significance of an apparent passivity in the body for the purposes of self-mastery. Both the regulation of birth by periodic continence and the mystery of human suffering require man to observe and address what in contemporary culture would be considered a physical attribute over which he unfortunately does not

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<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, May 14, 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

have control.<sup>53</sup> It is important to recall however, that each comes to man from a different source—the fertility cycle as a natural and good phenomenon,<sup>54</sup> and the reality of suffering as the result of original sin.

Parallel to the virtue found in exercising periodic continence is the virtue of accepting and addressing the promptings of the body when one faces the reality of suffering. Voluntary continence promotes an attitude of more complete acceptance of the mystery of another's body, by the very fact of embracing what is outside of the couple's ability to control.<sup>55</sup> To engage the apparent passivity of the fertility cycle is an exercise in which the acceptance of, and reverence for the "limits" within man's nature in fact reward him.<sup>56</sup> In opposition to contemporary opinion, the promptings of the body found in suffering do not lesson man's dignity, but rather open up a realm for contemplation of his nature and an active engagement of his vulnerability.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 241. "And this is where we see how important it is to interpret periodic continence correctly: the utilitarian interpretation distorts the true character of what we call the natural method, which is that it is based on continence as a virtue and this...is very closely connected with love of the person. Inherent in the essential character of continence as a virtue is the conviction that *the love of man and woman loses nothing as a result of temporary abstention from erotic experiences, but on the contrary gains*: the personal union takes deeper root, grounded as it is above all in affirmation of the value of the person and not just in sexual attachment. *Continence as a virtue cannot be regarded as 'contraceptive measure.'* The spouses who practice it are prepared to renounce sexual intercourse for other reasons (religious reasons for instance) and not only to avoid having children," (emphasis in original).

<sup>54</sup> See John Paul, *Man and Woman*, March 12, 1980, 211, and August 29, 1984, 636.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, August 29, 1984, 634-35.

<sup>56</sup> See Mary Shivanandan, *Natural Sex*, (New York: Berkley, 1979), 73ff.

<sup>57</sup> John Paul, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 52.

## 7.2 John Paul's Anthropology of Vulnerable Persons

Jeffrey Tranzillo has developed the theme of John Paul's thought regarding the special dignity of vulnerable persons.<sup>58</sup> Suffering persons certainly represent the vulnerability within the human condition, as suffering is a manifestation of evil, as mentioned above as a privation of goodness.<sup>59</sup> Recalling John Paul's catechesis on the body in which he describes the effects of original sin in the relationship of the first couple helps in the analysis of all human relationships which are marred by sin.

The fundamental disposition of man affected by concupiscence feeds a tendency to act which is not based on the authentic understanding of human freedom for the purpose of self-giving in relationships, but based instead (in the man of concupiscence) on the desires of the self without proper reference to others. In the *Theology of the Body* catecheses, this understanding of sinfulness is a reference for careful evaluation of the intimate marital union of man and woman and its legitimate expression. But the same disposition of concupiscence extends to the disorder of every dimension of human relationships, sexual and otherwise. Persons who are vulnerable have a particular susceptibility to being viewed without proper reference as persons in themselves, as both their ability to assert themselves (which those who are not explicitly vulnerable are able

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<sup>58</sup> Tranzillo, *The Silent Language of a Profound Sharing of Affection*, 235, see footnote no. 12. Tranzillo's use of vulnerable includes but is not limited to those who are suffering. He states that "somatic, psychical, material and externally imposed conditions" can all lead to vulnerability.

<sup>59</sup> The themes of suffering and vulnerability are related and yet distinct. While suffering entails vulnerability, vulnerability may not require suffering. Vulnerability is brought up here as a dimension of suffering stressing the relation between care of the vulnerable/suffering and the one who cares for him as a potential mutual gift of self, a topic which will be expanded in the final section.

to do) as well as their apparent minimal contribution to any objective good.<sup>60</sup>

Tranzillo's analysis is noteworthy:

The vulnerable in particular stand in danger of not being affirmed as persons by the "non-vulnerable," whether in principle or in action. The severely deteriorated psychosomatic condition of some vulnerable persons [the suffering, for example] makes it impossible for them to perform fully personal actions through the body, and so a "non-vulnerable" person might not recognize their inherent subjectivity and personal dignity. In other cases, a non-vulnerable person might disregard the subjectivity of the vulnerable because a high level of somatic or a low level of psychosomatic disintegration hinders the visible expression of their fully personal actions. Sometimes certain external conditions (perhaps imposed deliberately) reduce persons to a vulnerable status by placing limitations on their manner of self-expression, making it easier for others to view them as non-persons. The vulnerability of the vulnerable has therefore two dimensions: they are subject not only to the structural conditions (somatic and/or physical) or to the external conditions (in some cases, both) that restrict their modes of self-expression and their self-sufficiency, but also to the consequent "condition" of having others disregard them as persons.<sup>61</sup>

The consequent viewing of the suffering and the vulnerable as less than persons partially demonstrates the effects of original sin in man. On the first level, suffering manifests the rupture to the body-soul unity which is a result of the sin of the first parents. From that disunity of the body-soul relationship in the suffering person himself, stems the lack of true perception of the full dignity of the suffering person by those who are not similarly vulnerable, which is also a result of sin. Recalling John Paul's words on the creation of woman in Genesis 2, before original sin the man found joy and exultation in the other (female) and accepted her immediately.<sup>62</sup> Original sin and personal sin

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 236-37.

<sup>62</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, November 7, 1979, 161. While it is impossible to remove the dynamic of the sexual differences between man and woman and the innocent and holy desire that can be inferred in

endanger man's authentic interpretation of relationships with others, limiting man's ability to see others in the dignity they have in themselves; instead, man begins to see them as objects over which he himself establishes value. John Paul's catechesis on the Theology of the Body is directly concerned with how this concupiscence, manifested as lust, enables vulnerable people to be exploited as sexual objects. However, concupiscence allows for the objectification of others for a wider variety of reasons.

Tranzillo speaks of the vulnerable with reference to the third category of concupiscence found in the First Letter of John, that of the pride of life. This expression depicts a disproportionate attachment to the material goods of the world, and other intermediate, non-material goods such as status and comfort of life with respect to or at the expense of others.

The pride of life therefore elicits in the "non-vulnerable" a certain fear of the vulnerable. For one thing, they may see the vulnerable as an obstacle to the pursuit and realization of personal goals or other forms of fulfillment connected with their accustomed way of life. But at a deeper level, the "non-vulnerable" see their *own* vulnerability in the vulnerable, or at least the potential for it. Their fear of the vulnerable is therefore really a fear for themselves and for the lifestyle in which they take pride. In a word, they see the vulnerable as posing both an indirect and a direct personal threat to their way of life. For that reason, the "pride of life" may well lead the "non-vulnerable" to arrogate themselves the power *over* life, so that, in seeking to eliminate the perceived threat posed by the vulnerable, they eliminate the vulnerable themselves.<sup>63</sup>

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man's view of the woman as his helper, John Paul is clear to mention that his acceptance of her is not based only in sexual terms, but as representing the acceptance of another as person, forming the first communion of persons. He cites *Gaudium et spes* 12, and its call to see in Genesis 2 the larger call to form a communion of persons. He speaks of the creation of woman in Genesis 2 as the revealing for the first time of man's experience of himself, via the woman, as a value. See audience of November 14, 1979, 161-62. "While Genesis 1 expresses this value [of the creation of man] in a purely theological (and indirectly metaphysical) form, Genesis 2, by contrast, *reveals, so to speak, the first circle of experience lived by man as a value.*" (emphasis in original).

<sup>63</sup>Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 238-39, (emphasis in original).

This observation of the temptations to view those who are vulnerable as less valuable than those who are not applies to the specific relationships between those who are suffering with those who are not. Perhaps more than other vulnerabilities, like social, material or racially discriminatory disadvantages, the threat of moving from being a non-suffering person to a suffering person is quite likely for people of every race, class, and circumstance, whether they have ever experienced other forms of vulnerability or not. In this manner, the “threat” that Tranzillo mentions in the vulnerable as a reminder of the vulnerability of all persons is even more real in application to the specific vulnerability of suffering. Not only do suffering persons, or the potential suffering of persons, threaten the financial and social well being as well as the comfort level of non-suffering persons who are in relationship with them, suffering poses a threat to the potential way of life for those who are not yet suffering.

On the concept of shame, which John Paul describes as the consequence of original sin in the book of Genesis in the *Theology of the Body*, Tranzillo develops an implicit affirmation of vulnerable persons. He suggests that the shame which the non-vulnerable often feel in the exploitation of the vulnerable is an indirect and unintended affirmation of those who manifest vulnerability. Shame, which results from the human conscience’s reaction to having given in to the concupiscent desire to manipulate or objectify the vulnerable, is actually an indirect affirmation of the value of the vulnerable betrayed in the actions of the non-vulnerable.

Such actions depersonalize not only the victim but also the perpetrator; therefore, in failing to affirm the vulnerable as persons through their actions, the “non-vulnerable” simultaneously fail to fulfill themselves as

persons. In order to achieve self-fulfillment, man's actions must always correspond to the true value of their "object." If the "non-vulnerable" experience shame rather than fulfillment in their actions toward the vulnerable, then: they must be inwardly aware of their own rightful value as persons, which their actions did not uphold; and they must be likewise aware that the true value of the vulnerable corresponds precisely to their own, since, in treating the vulnerable according to the standard of any lesser value, they experience only non-fulfillment and shameful guilt.<sup>64</sup>

John Paul's meditation on the shame first experienced by our first parents after original sin demonstrates that the experience of shame corresponds to a change within man's consciousness. Man experiences an interior truth about his own vulnerability, with a two-fold realization: a change in relationship with God and creation, (be others and/or self) and a loss of true perception of the world.<sup>65</sup>

The man of concupiscence is tempted to view the suffering or other vulnerable persons as having reduced value, and hence, to lose an objective perception of their worth. In doing so, the dignity of both the suffering and vulnerable as well as the non-suffering or non-vulnerable person is lessened. When one fails to see in vulnerability or suffering an invitation to respond with initial acceptance (mirroring man's acceptance of woman as helper and having value in and of herself) the call to greater love to which suffering should invite is silenced. This greater call to love, true compassion, is a virtue which in contemporary culture is often interpreted in a completely opposite manner, a flight from suffering.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, May 14, 1980, 241.

<sup>66</sup> See Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering*, 63-4.

The call to suffer with the suffering will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9, on the two fold challenge relating suffering and giving. It is pertinent here to connect what Tranzillo offers with regard to the devaluing of the vulnerable with what has been mentioned in Chapter 3. Medical procedures, such as prenatal diagnosis of genetic diseases and elective abortion as well as euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide which make a judgment against the worth of the life of an individual person are often paradoxically viewed as truly compassionate and promoting of the personal dignity and autonomy of those involved.<sup>67</sup> Here, a similar disposition can be located between Christ's example of the man who looks lustfully at the woman (Matt. 5:28) and those who look down upon the suffering. In both cases, a person is judged not upon the value he has within himself, but upon the value placed upon him by another person.

John Paul introduces a positive dimension to those who experience suffering. With a parallel to the relationship in individual families, those who suffer bodily represent the vocation of all Christians to love without objectification. Tranzillo points out that just as parents build up with their dependent and vulnerable children a true communion of persons in the family, so too society is called to a particular love of the vulnerable and suffering in their midst.

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<sup>67</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Affection*, 240-41. "The interior act by which the lustful [concupiscent] heart degrades the vulnerable is always ordered toward some form of exterior expression, such as the [non-vulnerable] person's way of looking at or treating them. Under some circumstances, the interior and the exterior act may not correspond, for example, when the person tries to disguise his real attitude toward the vulnerable by projecting an air of respectability or benevolence where they are concerned. Such a pretense might be motivated by a sense of shame, revealing to this person the attitude that he should have toward the vulnerable but does not. This means, in turn, that he really does have an underlying grasp of the true value of the vulnerable. For that reason, his effort to deceive others on the exterior plane serves, in the end, to expose his interior deceit of himself. By interiorly denying the truth about the personal dignity and worth of the vulnerable, the "non-vulnerable" man contradicts the truth of his own conscience and thus degrades himself as a person."

That is why the loving relation of spouse-parents to their infants and young children, who in their psychosomatic immaturity, their defenselessness and their dependency typify human vulnerability, says much about the fundamental principles that should govern how individuals and societies ought to view and treat vulnerable human beings. In turn, just as children, from the beginning of their existence, enrich the lives of their parents (and other family members) in profound ways, so, too, do vulnerable persons in every category contribute to the formation of genuinely personalistic relationships and societies.<sup>68</sup>

Those who suffer and are vulnerable as well as those who are not are all blessed with the capability of giving and receiving love. Suffering persons present to the non-suffering the gift of themselves to be received (and not judged by quantitative standards). Those who bear the marks of the disorder of creation, even in their physical or psychological disunity, nevertheless demonstrate an ontological homogeneity with all men. No more are those who suffer various manifestations of evil in their bodies to be unrecognized as sharing a common human condition to those who do not, than are man and woman to be judged as having greater or lesser dignity because of their sexual difference.<sup>69</sup>

The commands of God to love are consistently directed toward the strong for the weak. It is not out of pity, nor for the benefit of the weak and suffering alone, that the command to love is given, but to build up the community of persons for the good of both the weak and the strong. The mystery of the Incarnation reveals an even greater impetus to view the suffering with dignity.<sup>70</sup> Christ's last command in the Gospel of Matthew

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 227. Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 43, p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Affection*, 228.

<sup>70</sup> Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 50. He speaks of a dignity which is quite distinguished from normal external realities. Contrasting the power of God with the status and power of the world.... "The coming of Jesus of Nazareth into the world, the incarnation, of the Word, is the revelation of a completely different economy. He who was sent by the Father (cf. Lk. 4:18; Jn. 10:36) appears before our eyes as a thoroughly poor man all his life. 'Foxes have their lairs and the birds of the air their nests; but the Son of man had nowhere to lay his head' (Mt. 8:20). The quantifier in the divine economy—if one may speak in such

before entering into his suffering and death was the challenge to see in all those who suffer and are in need, the real presence of himself.<sup>71</sup> He equates the dignity of the suffering with the dignity of himself. John Paul suggests that far from sharing less dignity, those who suffer are implicit reminders for all humanity about the work of God in the world; a certain manifestation of hope.<sup>72</sup>

The reality of vulnerability and suffering in the world tempts its members to make exceptions about the universal dignity of man. But John Paul's view of the equality of the human person demands that suffering be considered from a new perspective. His anthropology of the dignity of human life challenges the notion that suffering, while a manifestation of evil, is without significant meaning, or that its presence undermines the equality and dignity of every human life. This foundation would move him to speak even more specifically with regards to the various sins against the dignity of human life in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae*.<sup>73</sup>

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terms—is totally different from the one used by the world. That is because God himself is totally Other. God wills himself 'poor', he wills himself 'defenseless' and 'weak'. The power that never deserted Jesus as he went about his teaching has nothing in common with the motives characteristic of human reasoning."

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 25: 31-46. The judgment of the nations incorporates the practical acts of love as necessary for salvation. The list of deeds done to Christ in the person of the needy represent six of the seven corporeal works of mercy. See Benedict Viviano, "The Gospel According to Matthew" *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer, and Roland Murphy, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 669.

<sup>72</sup> John Paul II, *Homily on the Jubilee of the Disabled* (12/3/00). Available online (5/10/07): [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/homilies/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_20001203\\_jubildisabled\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20001203_jubildisabled_en.html).

<sup>73</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*. Of special significance are paragraphs 46-47, where the specific challenges to the sanctity of life are raised regarding society's view of the suffering and the aged.

### 7.3 The Hermeneutical Key in *The Acting Person* and *Salvifici doloris*,

#### Mystical Participation as a Transcendent Act of Man

Arguably the most important aspect of *Salvifici doloris* is the call for an interpretation of the mystery of suffering which is a shift from a purely passive view of the of the experience of suffering, in which suffering only happens to man, and in which man finds himself as its victim. Obviously, there is a dimension of the passive in the experience of suffering, whereby one is afflicted with the experience of evil which is not his intention or choice.<sup>74</sup> But in these situations too, the Christian call to embrace the mystery of suffering is one of active bearing and offering, not simply of passive reception.<sup>75</sup> John Paul's mediation on the mystery of suffering is a strong confrontation with the more prevalent cultural and medical tendency to view suffering only as an evil to be eliminated by all means possible. As *Salvifici doloris* explains, an understanding of the

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<sup>74</sup> Gisbert Greshake, "Towards a Theology of Dying," in *The Experience of Dying*, Norbert Greinacher and Alois Müller, eds., (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 80-85. Including the existential reality of suffering in the process of death, Greshake outlines an argument for one's suffering and death as man's personal and free act. "What constitutes the whole of human life—the interaction of the impotence of suffering and the freedom of action, of being dominated by others and autonomy—therefore reaches its highest point in death. At the point where in death man suffers total external domination over himself, he is asked to make the final and supreme active expression of his freedom. In this way, he either accepts it as a fulfillment and enters the mystery of God or he closes himself in on himself in a final protest." Greshake insists that there are several difficulties with speaking about suffering and death as an action and not a passivity. The first is that this ultimate experience is outside the realm of verification and experience of others. Secondly, he notes the observation of E. Jüngel, that there is a dimension of passivity in the very being of man, such that no action can be exclusively said to be active. This is similar to Karl Rahner's Theology of Death, see *On the Theology of Death*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961).

<sup>75</sup> Arguably the most thorough theological reflection on discipleship with regard to the passive dimension of man's life is Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, Bernard Wall, ed., (New York: Harper and Row 1960), Part II "The Divinisation of Our Passivities," 74ff

mystery of Christ's sufferings is crucial for the proper understanding of the meaning of man's suffering.<sup>76</sup>

Placed within the context of a great theme of God's divine providence, John Paul, in his Wednesday audiences on the creed, notes that even man's experience of suffering is located within God's loving care. Man's ability to interiorize his experiences, to act and react, to receive or reject, demonstrates the potential that man has even in suffering to imitate the salvific work of Christ. All of these experiences exist within the realm of God's providential care.<sup>77</sup> In fact, far from being absent from man in his time of suffering, John Paul, in describing the active and mystical participation in suffering declares that man is allowed to suffer intermediate goods so as not to lose sight of the ultimate ones.<sup>78</sup> It is not a question here of returning only to the second level of the contemplation of suffering, as revealed in Job, that God alone in his mysterious wisdom above human capacity uses suffering to correct, instruct, and convert man in a way that is proper to his understanding alone. Rather it is that the mystery of the redemption, *the* way in which in God's providential care that suffering is addressed, involves the active work of the Son, his active taking on of what had been seen as a passive reality and incorporating men of all time into the reality of man's redemption.<sup>79</sup>

### 7.3.1 The Active Suffering of the Redeemer and Man's Active Participation In It

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<sup>76</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 13, p. 18.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *God Father and Creator*, June 4, 1986, 269.

<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 14, p. 19. "God gives His only-begotten Son so that man 'should not perish' and the meaning of these words 'should not perish' is precisely specified by the words that follow: 'but have eternal life.' Man 'perishes' when he loses 'eternal life.' The opposite of salvation is not, therefore, only temporal suffering, any kind of suffering, but the definitive suffering: the loss of eternal life, being rejected by God—damnation. The only begotten Son was given to humanity primarily to protect man against this definitive evil and against definitive suffering."

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 23, p. 36.

A tempting, but incorrect view of Christ's suffering and death is that these historical events are the unfortunate results of the injustice of the world. This view is tempting because to the casual (or even Christian) observer, an innocent man was sentenced to death and horrifically executed. This view is incorrect in that it suggests the accidental or passive suffering of Christ.<sup>80</sup> John Paul is clear in *Salvifici doloris* to speak of Christ's suffering as a victory, a conquering of suffering itself. As a demonstration of the providential love of the Father, Jesus said to Nicodemus "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16)."<sup>81</sup> It is in this explanation that God's gracious will is manifested—that the suffering of his creation does not go unnoticed, but that God offers man salvation even for the sin he himself has initiated. God is active in giving Christ to the world. It is not that suffering or evil make a claim on the life of God by their own power, but rather that the power of God's love is manifested in the action of giving to the world. It is important to note as John Paul clarifies that Christ is active in taking on suffering:

...Christ drew close above all to the world of human suffering through the fact of having taken *this suffering upon His very self*. During His public activity, He experienced not only fatigue, homelessness, misunderstanding even on the part of those closest to Him, but more than anything, He became progressively more and more isolated and encircled by hostility and the preparations for putting Him to death. Christ is aware of this, and often speaks to His disciples of the sufferings and death that await Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man *will be delivered* to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to

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<sup>80</sup> For a detailed account of the development of the doctrine of man's redemption in Christ's suffering, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978), 170-78. The development of the doctrine of the salvific purpose of Christ's death as more than instructive, but efficacious can be found particularly in Kelly's description of the contributions of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian.

<sup>81</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 14, p. 18, (emphasis in original).

death and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise” (Mk. 10: 33-34). Christ goes towards His passion and death with full awareness of the mission that He has to fulfill precisely in this way. Precisely by means of this suffering He must bring it about “that man should not perish, but have eternal life.” Precisely by means of His cross He must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of His cross He must accomplish *the work of salvation*. This work, in the plan of eternal Love, has a redemptive character.<sup>82</sup>

John Paul takes several opportunities to repeat that Christ’s suffering was an active offering, reminding the reader of Christ’s chastisement of Peter, who logically wanted to spare Christ from the kind of suffering he had predicted and which was done in a “totally voluntary way.”<sup>83</sup> The radical nature of this activity is juxtaposed with any suggestion by Christ or the evangelists that he and the Father were not active givers of his life: “I give my life, no one takes it from me!”<sup>84</sup>

Christ’s acceptance of suffering and struggle to embrace the cross, as most dramatically evidenced in the garden of Gethsemane, is not to be viewed as his passive acceptance of the will of the Father over and against his own. It is a revelation, as John Paul says, of the “dual nature of a single subject of redemptive suffering.”<sup>85</sup> Christ is both the only-begotten Son of, consubstantial with God, and at the same time is a man. The dual natures of Christ bring about a suffering, unique in the whole history of man, which alone can embrace the full measure and totality of evil contained in the sin of

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., no. 16, pp. 22-23, (emphasis in original).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., and no. 18, p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> John 10:18.

<sup>85</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 17, p. 25

every man, both individually and collectively.<sup>86</sup> Christ's "victory" may seem to be clouded due to his having to suffer. But it is in this absorption of the greatest work of evil—the intermediate manifestations of evil—suffering and death—that Christ ushers in a new dimension to the positive power of suffering, as a drawing out of love. For followers of Christ, to suffer means to become susceptible not just to the presence of evil, but even more to the same call to love from which came man's salvation.<sup>87</sup>

### 7.3.2 An Examination of the Act of Suffering

Three categories of involvement in human suffering must be discussed to help investigate the activity and purpose in those who suffer.<sup>88</sup> If Christ's sufferings were voluntary and efficacious, and he made clear the invitation for his followers to freely take up suffering in a like manner, which they clearly did and understood, then there must be a purpose and reason for man's own sharing in the manifestation of evil which is experienced in moral suffering.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Expounding upon St. Paul's understanding of the manner of Christ's defeat of evil in his own activity, John Robinson, *The Body*, 51, explains: "By his death Christ, as it were, 'died out on' the forces of evil without their being able to defeat or kill him, thereby exhibiting their impotence and gaining victory over them. The only way evil ever wins victories is by making a man retort by evil, reflect it, pay it back, and thus afford it a new lease on life. Over one who persistently absorbs it and refuses to give it out, it is powerless. It is in this kind of way that Paul sees Christ dealing with the forces of evil—going on and on and on, triumphantly absorbing their attack by untiring obedience, till eventually there is nothing more they can do."

<sup>87</sup> McDermott, *The Bible on Human Suffering*, 129. "The New Testament thus teaches that suffering reflects God's punishment only as long as we remain under his wrath by rejecting his proffered mercy in Christ...His mercy is admittedly fierce, for it is the burning of a love that forces us to abandon self-justification, to confess our sins and to accept salvation as a pure gift, letting him become all in us as we receive all in him. The sufferings which he sends or allows are revealed thereby as invitations to love. God's wrath results not from any pleasure of his in punishing but from our refusal to accept his love."

<sup>88</sup> These three categories are taken from Tranzillo's four categories of vulnerability, *Silent Language*, 252ff. One distinction which he makes, the vulnerable who experience some type of psychical or somatic disintegration, is here grouped with all who share in moral suffering regardless of its origin.

The first category includes those who voluntarily take up suffering, who become vulnerable by choice, for the good of someone or something else. This is likely manifested in an emotional or psychical suffering, by those who willingly carry the burdens of others, what may commonly be called the sharing in the sufferings of others when it would be possible to do otherwise. With that said, there are some who willingly take up physical sufferings without intending evil upon themselves or being masochistic. Obviously the concept of martyrdom and other heroic acts stand out as extreme examples of this kind of voluntary physical suffering, but there are multiple examples of sacrifices of a physical nature made for the good of others.<sup>89</sup> John Paul finds the motivation for the voluntary taking on of suffering for another in the call of Christ to identify him with those who are in need, as exemplified in Matthew's depiction of the final judgment.<sup>90</sup> Both in Christ, and in reverence to Christ, man finds the motivation and inspiration to freely offer himself for the benefit of another. This is love at its most Christ-like, in both acting by the strength of and for the benefit of the suffering Savior.<sup>91</sup>

The second category of the experience of suffering includes those whose suffering comes from without. The suffering imposed upon a person may be of a physical or emotional nature. As distinct from the first category, this type of suffering is not initiated by a free choice. Be it by somatic or psychic disintegration, the natural evil of the world, or the moral evil done by self or others, persons in this category find themselves

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<sup>89</sup> For an understanding of the concept of martyrdom, see John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, nos. 90-94. The traditional piety of fasting and almsgiving are built upon the notion of the voluntary doing without (refusal of some good) for the profit of another. Giving up of material goods, possessions and riches, the volunteering of time and energy that could be spent on one's own pursuits are everyday manifestations of this belief in corporal sacrifices for the good of others.

<sup>90</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 30, p. 53.

<sup>91</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 253.

confronted with the challenging reality of the imperfection of the human condition and tangibly experience a lack of complete control over their lives. But this lack of complete control does not necessarily signify passivity or defeat. Faced with the limitations of one's own condition, physical or mental suffering, or being deprived of human goods or rights, man finds a cross before him that is not of his own choosing.<sup>92</sup> Whether the oppressor is an external force or one's own body or mind, the internal freedom and dignity of the suffering person can never be extinguished.

All too often, when liberation or cure from externally imposed sufferings are not apparent, bitterness and despair tempt the sufferer, and even those who surround and witness his suffering. (And who, in the proper understanding of the communion of persons, share in his sufferings.) Far from conceding powerlessness or defeat, John Paul witnesses to the special and unique grace possible in those who suffer, not alone, but conscious of the presence of Christ.

Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace. To this grace many saints, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola and others, owe their profound conversion. A result of such conversion is not only that the individual discovers the salvific meaning of suffering, but above all that he becomes a completely new person. He discovers a new dimension, as it were, of his entire life and vocation. This discovery is a particular confirmation of the spiritual greatness which in man surpasses the body in a way that is completely beyond compare. When this body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, 82, for a reflection on the particularly difficult passivity experienced in failing health.

<sup>93</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 26, p. 44.

This grace introduces activity into a situation whereby only passivity is outwardly observable. Christ's act of offering salvation, into which he willingly entered, was nonetheless carried out with the intentions of and by the hands of others to whom he became vulnerable. In the proceeding discussions regarding current cultural and medical views of suffering, this vulnerability is often viewed without any positive potential, in a sense, failing to observe that "new dimension" of which John Paul speaks.

The third level of suffering incorporates those who, by either the severity of their somatic or psychic disintegration, their early level of human development, or lack of consciousness, do not have the potential for profound self-awareness of their suffering. For this group of people most of all, suffering could appear to be nothing but a burden, both for them and for those who must care for them in this state. It appears that they neither gain from, nor contribute to anything in their suffering. But here, John Paul's understanding of the mystery of the redemption expressed both as bodily sanctification and as the radical nature of God's action in mercy provides a framework for acknowledging the inherent dignity in the life and suffering of persons in this category.

Regarding the revelation of bodily dignity, it is crucial to recall that just because man's body reminds him of his imperfections (in the body of concupiscence), it is still never completely excluded from both the revelation of, and the participation in the transcendent action of God's sanctification. Just as the marital union of man and woman retains its dignity and participation in grace, even in its imperfect (concupiscent) form, its

impairment does not negate its inherent dignity; so the suffering person too shares in the dignity of every man, and even is a figure and hope of the redemption yet to be realized.<sup>94</sup>

Regarding the revelation of God's mercy, John Paul reminds man that the mystery of the incarnation and promise of redemption is bodily.

Through redemption, every human being has received himself and his own body anew, as it were, from God. Christ inscribed in the human body—in the body of every man and woman—a new dignity, because he himself has taken up the human body together with the soul into union with the person of the Son-Word. From this new dignity, through the “redemption of the body,” a new obligation was born at the same time, about which Paul writes in a concise but very moving way: “You were bought at a great price” (1 Cor. 6:20). The fruit of the redemption is indeed the Holy Spirit, who dwells in man and his body as in a temple. In this Gift, which makes every human being holy, the Christian receives himself anew as a gift from God.<sup>95</sup>

The work of redemption into a new creation includes those who suffer, both in them and through them. Just as Christ revealed the work of the redemption in his suffering in a way which would have been completely inconceivable in man's understanding at the time, so suffering can express a love, Christlike in its seeking nothing in return.<sup>96</sup> Even if they are completely unaware of the redemptive nature of their suffering, those in this category represent an invitation to welcome Christ into the midst of those who do not suffer in themselves.

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<sup>94</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 13, 1982, 507. “The heritage of grace was driven out of the human heart when man broke the first covenant with the Creator. Instead of being illuminated by the heritage of original grace, which was given by God as soon as he infused the rational soul, the perspective of procreation was darkened by the heritage of sin. One can say that marriage, as the primordial sacrament, was deprived of the supernatural efficaciousness it drew at the moment of its institution from the sacrament of creation in its totality. Nevertheless, also in this state, that is, in the state of man's hereditary sinfulness, marriage never ceases to be the figure of the sacrament.”

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, February 11, 1981.

<sup>96</sup> See Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 273 and John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, no. 93, p. 136-137.

How suffering becomes a redemptive action, particularly in the second and third categories, requires the examination of John Paul's philosophy of a proper human act. It might seem on first examination that only the suffering which one voluntarily experiences could be considered a properly human act, as John Paul describes it in *The Acting Person*. As Karol Wojtyla, he had written this work to argue that man is fundamentally free, and as a moral agent, is both capable and responsible so that his acting is a living out of that freedom to determine, (in the sense of carrying out, not as in arbitrarily deciding) what it means to be morally good.<sup>97</sup> This active dynamism of man's actions is distinct from what merely happens to him. For Wojtyla, the freedom of the will is necessary for man's being moral or immoral.<sup>98</sup> What only happens in him, by the actions of another, or by the processes of nature does not constitute actions by which man manifests his unique dignity as person. This would appear, in the popular understanding of suffering, to exclude man's suffering from having a dynamic dimension. If this is true, then suffering could properly be understood as nothing more than an evil to be eradicated, for it does nothing but to distract from man's self-actualization through free

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<sup>97</sup> Michael Waldstein, "Introduction" in John Paul, *Man and Woman*, 79.

<sup>98</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 100-101. A good summary of the specifics of this distinction can be found. "Conformably with our basic experience the totality of the dynamism proper to man is divisible into acting and happening (actions and activations). This distinction rests on the difference between the real participation of the will, as in conscious acting or actions, and the absence of the will. What happens only in man has no dynamic source; it lacks the element of freedom and the experience of 'I may but I need not.' In the perspective of the person and of his proper dynamism, that is, as dynamized by action, everything that happens in man is seen to be dynamized out of inner necessity without the participation of the moral becoming of man free from constraints, in this dynamism; the moment of the dynamic transcendence is lacking however; the moment of freedom is immanent to the conditions of man's moral becoming and connected with the causation by nature. Action proper, on the other hand, exhibits—owing to the causation by the person—the transcending feature that passes into the immanence of the acting process itself; for acting also consists in the dynamism of the subject. The dynamic transcendence of the person is itself based on freedom, which is lacking in the causation of nature."

choices, and could only be seen as a determination of man's nature. This interpretation is widespread, but contrary to Christianity.<sup>99</sup>

The insights with which Wojtyla examines the dimensions of the human act provide an understanding of action in man which show the potential for God's work as grace, not merely in spite of, but because of man's facing the challenge of suffering. His insistence that man not only has a rational but a social nature creates the space in which the sharing in suffering is not to be viewed as a limiting manifestation of evil, but in which it becomes an opportunity to go outside the limits of himself.<sup>100</sup> An openness to transcendence and the acting together with others means facing realities not initiated within the self. While this does not rule out true, free, human actions, it does rule out the absolutization of individual autonomy.<sup>101</sup>

The participation in actions with others demonstrates the interplay of an individual with others. Far from determining him, man's participation in action with others integrates his moral becoming.<sup>102</sup> Wojtyla's concept of participation, used philosophically in *The Acting Person*, used theologically in the meditation on the mystery

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<sup>99</sup> For an assessment of the contemporary temptation, even within Christianity, to look beyond suffering, see Surin, *Theology and the Problem of Evil*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 268. "The expression 'social nature' seems to signify primarily that reality of existing and acting 'together with others' which is attributed to every human being in, as it were, a consequential way; obviously this attribute is the consequence of human reality and not inversely."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 269. "It is the person's transcendence in the action when the action is being performed 'together with others'—transcendence which manifests that the person has not become altogether absorbed by social interplay and thus 'conditioned,' but stands out as having retained his very own freedom of choice and direction—which is the basis as well as the condition of participation. It also corresponds to the situation we emphasize over again, namely, of the integration of the person in the action; as we know, the latter is a complementary aspect relative to the former. To be capable of participation thus indicates that man, when he acts together with other men, retains in this acting the personalistic value of his own action and at the same time shares in the realization and the results of communal acting. Owing to this share, man, when he acts together with others, retains everything that results from the communal acting and simultaneously brings about—in this very manner—the personalistic value of his own action," (emphasis in original).

of suffering, becomes the hermeneutical key to understanding the transcendence possible in man's suffering, suffering which need not be limited to the passive dimension. To be sure, the one who, for whatever reason, refuses to either accept the reality of his suffering, and/or attempt to find meaning in his confrontation of it, interrupts this transcendent potential. The manifestation of St. John's three-fold concupiscence as "pride of life" is appropriately illustrated in such an example. But the one who, in humble acceptance of suffering, begins, with God's grace to transition a passive evil to an active bodily offering.<sup>103</sup>

The concept of the acceptance of suffering may appear to be passive. However one can take from John Paul's thought on the necessity of the social dimension of man, the opportunity to act not only with others, but to act with God in the movement from acceptance (already a move from outright refusal) to an act of offering. In all acting with others, man discerns from the possible options, either the participation in or withdrawal from others. So it is with the reality of facing suffering. Just as Wojtyla sees in the refusals of participation in "individualism" and "totalism" a true limitation of man's dignity, so too these concepts provide an analogy to the struggle to make one's suffering

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<sup>103</sup> John Paul, *Salvifici doloris*, 26, pp. 45-46 attests to the gradual nature of this process. "This interior process does not always follow the same pattern. It often begins and is set in motion with great difficulty. Even the very point of departure differs: people react to suffering in different ways. But in general it can be said that almost always the individual enters suffering with a typically human protest and with the question 'why.' He asks the meaning of his suffering and seeks an answer to this question on the human level. Certainly he often puts this question to God, and to Christ. Furthermore, he cannot help noticing that the One to whom he puts the question is Himself suffering and wishes to answer him from the cross, from the heart of his own suffering. Nevertheless, it often takes time, even a long time, for this answer to begin to be interiorly perceived. For Christ does not answer directly and He does not answer in the abstract this human questioning about the meaning of suffering. Man hears Christ's saving answer as he himself gradually becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ."

an action of offering.<sup>104</sup> As individualism refuses to see the common good as worthy of self-sacrifice, so the refusal to enter into suffering views it as below man's dignity and as an unnecessary endeavor—no reason to suffer. As totalism (perhaps better translated as the philosophy of totalitarianism) refuses to see the inherent dignity of the person in relation to the whole, so the one facing suffering without faith is tempted to see no one with which to suffer. These mirror the two extremes in the failures of the virtue of hope, those of presumption and despair.<sup>105</sup>

Man's participation in suffering clears the way for the transcendent grace which may otherwise not be experienced in those who do not face suffering. The philosophical concept of participation in *The Acting Person* prepares man for that mystical step in suffering with Christ. While man is certainly faced with realities that are not of his own choosing when he faces suffering, he is not without the option of making his suffering an active offering, and doing so with the mystical participation with the suffering Christ. In choosing to make this offering, he truly becomes an active manifestation of both the redemption of the body and a witness to the mercy of God.

Whether he is aware of it or not, man is motivated and sustained by Christ's redemptive grace and hence united to Him whenever he offers himself sacrificially to and for others through his somatic or his psychosomatic vulnerability [in his suffering]. For that reason, his action conforms to Christ's sacrificial offer of Himself on the cross and has Him as its ultimate referent. As a result...the action is never performed in vain, even if rejected by those to and for whom it is being offered. He who inspires it also accepts it, imparting to it a share in the redemptive efficacy of His own sacrificial action on the altar of the cross. The actor is thereby inserted into the salvific economy of Christ and inspired to perform further acts of disinterested self-giving through his vulnerability. Structural

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<sup>104</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 272-75

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

disintegration can thus become the means through which man, even at the point of death, both expresses and attains his spiritual maturity, his perfection as a person. Even a wholly interior act of sacrificial self-giving to and for others is accomplished through the instrumentality of the person's vulnerability, due in this case to structural disintegration. The interior act is therefore also an outward—a bodily—expression of the person, indicating that it is always the whole person body and soul, who is encompassed and transformed by the salvific power of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.<sup>106</sup>

John Paul's *Salvifici doloris* is a theological illumination of *The Acting Person's* investigation into how man's actions bring him transcendence through the concept of participation. In suffering, man is not abandoned, nor simply judged or left with the mystery of the chasm between his own understanding and God's perfect and providential justice. In participation with Christ's sufferings, he becomes involved in an act which transcends his own human power, he shares in the work of redemption. Tremendous strength can be borne of apparent waste and weakness. John Paul can proclaim that "The Gospel is the negation of passivity in the face of suffering."<sup>107</sup> This is true not only for those who respond to the call of the gospel to assist those who suffer, but also for those who find themselves imposed upon by suffering. To choose to participate in the suffering of Christ when faced with the reality of suffering, is to choose to be active. It is only by this concept of mystical participation with Christ that the Christian can contemplate that mysterious phrase of St. Paul: "I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church."<sup>108</sup> For Paul, but for all Christians this attitude requires a fresh way of viewing a mystery which is so often discounted as

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<sup>106</sup> Jeffery Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 266-67.

<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 30, p. 52.

<sup>108</sup> Col. 1: 24,

failure and weakness and the opportunity to work for and with God in one's own body. To explain how this work takes place in man's body, a more in depth examination of the themes of the revelation and presence of God in the body is required.

## CHAPTER 8

### REVELATION OF SUFFERING THROUGH EMBODIMENT

#### 8.1 Double Significance of the Body: Matter and Channel of Revelation

John Paul's Theology of the Body addresses continue his anthropological focus on the person of Christ and the significance the revelation of Christ has for historical man. Man's body is the visible manifestation of what is invisible to man, his sensing of the realities of the spiritual. The body is the means by which the divine mysteries of God become tangible, thus serving as a sign of God himself.<sup>1</sup> Man's experience of God and of all his surrounding realities is mediated through his body, as a sensory receiver for the whole person. The body thus reveals to man both God and himself, having great anthropological and theological significance.

Through reason, man can discover the workings of his own body as a biological organism, often with great precision and benefit to humanity. But the human body is not only biological. It is also, and even more so, theological. Only to the degree that we know what our bodies "say" theologically do we know who we really are and, therefore how we are to live.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thus John Paul's phenomenological approach is apparent in speaking of man's bodily experience in such an exalted way. It should be noted that "body" is not used in the sense of the physical element of man alone, separated somehow from his immortal soul, but as the member of his psycho-somatic unity as a person. For example, Waldstein's footnote to the audience of November 14, 1979, in John Paul, *Man and Woman*, 164. "In the conception of the most ancient biblical books, the dualistic antithesis 'body-soul' does not appear. As pointed out [audience of November 7, 1979], one could speak rather of a complementary combination 'body-life.' The body is an expression of man's personhood and, though it does not completely exhaust this concept, one should understand it in biblical language as '*pars pro toto*' [the part standing for the whole]; cf. 'neither flesh nor blood have revealed this to you, but my Father' (Mt. 16:17), that is, no *human being* has revealed it to you," (emphasis in original). For what can be called the kernel of revelation about the body as sign and sacrament see, February 20, 1980 and October 6, 1982, pp. 203, 503-06.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher West, "Preface" in John Paul, *Man and Woman*, xxix.

Mary Timothy Prokes offers insight into what the concept of the body as revelatory means in contemporary society. Her thoughts provide an important background for understanding the foundation of what John Paul articulates in the concept of the body having revelatory significance crucial to man's self-understanding.

First, the double meaning of "revelation" must be considered. Parallel to John Paul's dual understanding of faith as both content and response, discussed above, Prokes notes both the propositional and personal dimensions of revelation.<sup>3</sup> Both the content as well as the personal assimilation of revelation are to be held in an appropriate balance. At the expense of the revealed content of God's self-disclosure, one's personal experience can be (over) emphasized. This over-emphasis on personal reception at the expense of its content diminishes the balance one has in receiving revelation from God. This places more weight upon the means of the communication than on the communication itself.<sup>4</sup> The scriptures demonstrate a holy fear as well as a receptive attitude toward God's revelation.<sup>5</sup> This implies an openness not just to the presence of God but to the call to follow a particular way of life according to his plan.<sup>6</sup>

As illustrated in Chapter One, the dimension of holy fear and receptivity to God's revealed plan for man's actions can be considered counter-cultural, but it is the only proper way to speak of God's revelation. This revelation, both in the propositional and

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<sup>3</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 74.

<sup>4</sup> An example of such an imbalance of placing more significance on the promptings of the body without the revelation of the dignity of the person would be the above mentioned contemporary tendency to eliminate all manifestations of suffering, including vulnerable suffering persons, when suffering cannot be completely eliminated.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>6</sup> See Rene Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, (New York: Alba House, 1966), 35-37.

personal understandings, differs from the kind of knowledge gained from the gathering of scientific data in that it is received as a gift and transcends merely human calculations.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, revelation still purports to add to man's knowledge of that which he knows from his own experience. Revelation implies a knowledge and experience beyond what is attainable by man's experience alone, yet it does not imply a clarity which is total, for it both reveals and conceals at the same time as a type of introduction into the mysterious. A relationship is formed which extends beyond the absorption of simple factual knowledge. Historically, those who receive revelation in the scriptures are invited, or introduced, into a new relationship with the presence of God. In both Old and New Testaments, those who were recipients of revelation, (often with fear and trembling) were changed by what they received. But in the receiving of revelation, and thus with the increase of knowledge of the God who reveals, also comes one's own being disclosed to God, a type of reverse revelation or self-disclosure.

Their sinfulness and unworthiness were exposed to them through the God who addressed them in some manner in a mysterious, loving, unfathomable Presence. From Abraham, through Isaiah and Peter, there was an instinctual dread before the immediacy of the divine which required everything of them and affected all humanity. The recipients of primordial divine Revelation were able to recognize and receive it because it was clear in a manner accommodated to their bodiliness.<sup>8</sup>

Those scriptural figures above share a similar reaction to the presence of God—an immediate sense of their unworthiness of him. Perhaps more profound than the simple acknowledgment of personal sins and the dissonance felt before the presence of complete

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<sup>7</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of The Body*, 75.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Good with that knowledge, is the even more immediate (and bodily) awareness of the chasm between this experience of being in the presence of God and every other experience which had formed their previous understanding of what it meant to be in human relationship. This experience is more than a factual description of the differences between man and God. It is real fascination and awe at the presence of God.<sup>9</sup>

Not only in the body's capacity for the reception of the God-initiated relationship which is revelation, but also as revelation itself, the concept of man's body has significance. John Paul reflects upon the necessity of the body both as the mode of participating in God's revelation and as expression of the whole person to whom God reveals himself. He hears Adam's words of joy in his discovery of the creation of Eve (Gen. 2:23):

Look, a body that expresses the "person"! Following an earlier passage of the Yahwist text [Gen 2:7], one can also say that this "body" reveals the "living soul," which man became when God-Yahweh breathed life onto him.<sup>10</sup>

Man's body is the means of his understanding having a personal presence as an individual being. The recognition of bodily structure corresponds to man's understanding of himself as a subject. "The fact that man is a 'body' belongs more deeply to the structure of the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female."<sup>11</sup> Being a subject stems from the bodily initiation of action and not

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 75

<sup>10</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, January 9, 1980, 183.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., November 7, 1979, 157. Some have suggested a contradiction in this statement that the body reveals first and foremost a personal subject and secondarily masculinity or femininity, since the Theology of the Body emphasizes the originality of persons as men or women. This is not a chronological

simply from man's self-awareness or self-determination.<sup>12</sup> The body is the source of finding meaning in all the things that man encounters; it locates his presence. "Personal presence is more than the body, but we are able to know it to be more only through the body and never without a body."<sup>13</sup>

In Christ, this double significance of the body as both the given matter and channel of revelation takes on its most clear significance. John Paul's understanding of the meaning of the human body, that is, the meaning which is not just its somatic structure, but its dignity and vocation, stems from both the salvation promised to the person through Christ's incarnation and redemptive death and resurrection as well as his ethical teaching.<sup>14</sup> Christ, who addresses the Pharisees regarding the intention of the Creator for the life of man and woman (the twofold aspect of man's somatic constitution) teaches that an understanding of the person which refers to the prophets and which would be confirmed by Paul, is the same one through whom the body will be redeemed.

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precedence, but a substantial one. "The meaning of original solitude, which can be referred simply to 'man,' is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity; the latter is based on masculinity and femininity, which are, as it were, two different 'incarnations,' that is, two ways in which the same human being, created 'in the image of God' (Gen 1: 27), 'is a body.'" Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*, 149, "The deepest level at which the communion [of persons] takes place is at the level of persons, then as masculine and feminine manifestations of the person. This distinction, John Paul reminds us, is existential, not chronological. From this text of Genesis, John Paul sees right at the beginning of Scripture a indication of the Trinitarian nature of God. Man and woman as made in the image of God are like God in their solitude, but even more as a communion of persons." See also, José Granados, "Toward a Theology of the Suffering Body," "According to John Paul II, Adam, called to communion with God from the beginning (original solitude), is only able to discover and develop this call fully by meeting Eve (original unity). This process should not be understood as a temporal development, as though Adam's solitude were at some point overcome by his unity with Eve. Original solitude does not disappear with Adam's encounter with Eve, but is rather strengthened by it...Solitude for John Paul II, does not mean only the fact of being alone; it refers much more to man's foundational openness to God, who is the only one who is able to fulfill his heart."

<sup>12</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 78.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Vogel, *Body Theology: God's Presence in Man's World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 91 as quoted in Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> See John Paul, *Man and Woman*, November 14, 1979, 165.

As Prokes argues, “the reality and permanent effectiveness of Christ’s body has direct bearing upon a faith understanding of body-meaning.”<sup>15</sup> She points to a tendency in recent interpretations of the real “historical Jesus” which cast doubts upon the central tenet of the Christian faith of God’s actual incarnation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth as having significant effects on the understanding of human embodiment. Turning Christ into an “indefinite figure” not only undermines every mystery of the Christian faith, from the Trinity, to the resurrection, to the Eucharist,<sup>16</sup> but also casts doubt on the authority by which Christ speaks of the Creator’s will for man’s embodied life. Prokes suggests a connection between a “lower Christology” and a looser interpretation of God’s commandments regarding the value and purpose of human life.

Particularly with regard to the mystery of suffering, a gospel challenging already can become either impossible or meaningless if the authority of its preacher is undermined. Following *Gaudium et spes*, 22, John Paul’s words seem prophetic in that man can only find meaning for himself by finding meaning in relationship to Christ, the one who can fully reveal man to himself.<sup>17</sup>

Following John Paul’s call to focus on the person of Christ as the way to better understand the self, Prokes picks up on the need, as mentioned above, for a true pondering on the mystery of the incarnation. She argues that to understand the revelation in man’s body one must more deeply contemplate the body of Christ. Contemplating the fullness of God’s revelation in the incarnation of Christ demonstrates the importance of

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<sup>15</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 62.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*: no. 10.

the body as both channel and matter of revelation in man. In fact, the revelation of God in the particular person of Christ reveals so much dignity in the human body and the circumstances which human bodily living entails, that it is nearly scandalous to the concepts of the power and divinity of God. Prokes' reflection on the pertinence of mystery of the incarnation is worth quoting at length.

The Hebrew people described God's activity in history as *dabar*, meaning a 'word-event.' Divine Self-disclosure was never given merely for the sake of conveying information: it was a form of Self-gift expressed in a manner that embodied humans could apprehend sensibly in the 'here and now,' but which exceeded ordinary limits of space and time. *Dabar* meant an efficacious word, accomplishing what it communicated. As humanity grew in its capacity to perceive and respond to divine Self-manifestation, even in an elementary manner, God disclosed aspects of what it means for 'God to be God' and what it means for humanity to be brought into redemptive relationship. In the fullness of time, when there had been sufficient preparation, the completely efficacious Word was *disclosed in the flesh*: ultimate Revelation has been given in the Person of the eternal Word made man. Everything necessary for human salvation has been efficaciously disclosed in a gift that is everlasting—for all peoples of the earth at all moments in history. Divine Revelation to humanity has taken place in the space-time material universe and the Scriptures are particularly graphic in detailing the *embodied* experience of receiving it. Primordial revelation occurred in the midst of daily events: to Abraham when he welcomed visitors; to Moses as he tended sheep; and to Mary as she anticipated married life in the village of Nazareth. Despite the abundance of scriptural evidence, the concept of divine Revelation occurring within a particular time and place, and to specific, historical persons constitutes a major difficulty for some theologians (reflecting secular society's difficulty with recognizing transcendent mysteries of faith as these are expressed in concrete and particularized circumstances). Belief that the divine Word became enfleshed as a Jewish male who worked at the trade of an ordinary Galilean, and used the imagery of a naïve world view, constitutes a 'scandal of particularity' for many.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 75-76, (emphasis in original). For another analysis on the necessity of the physical bodily reality of the doctrine of the incarnation for the retaining of any sense of Christian theology, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Does Jesus Know Us, Do We Know Him?*, trans. Graham Harrison, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 61-64.

The radical nature of the relationship with God to which man is called in God's self-revelation in the person of Christ not only sanctifies the body which man has received, but also makes the body itself a sacred revelation of the way in which God reveals his plan of love to man. The discernment of the meaning man finds expressed in his body is an act of what John Paul calls the meaning man has in his heart from his body.<sup>19</sup>

## 8.2 The Relation between the Body and the Heart

In the context of the Theology of the Body addresses John Paul describes the "science" of discerning the interior reactions of heart which are the result of the promptings of bodily sensations. It is in addressing the specific issue of erotic spontaneity between man and woman created and revealed as male and female by God's design, where John Paul expresses the learning and perseverance necessary to properly interpret the promptings of the body.

Within the sphere of this knowledge, man learns to distinguish between what, on the one hand, makes up the manifold richness of masculinity and femininity in the signs that spring from their perennial call and creative attraction and what, on the other hand, bears only the sign of concupiscence. And although within certain limits these variants and nuances of inner movements of the "heart" can be confused with each other, it should nonetheless be said that the inner man is *called by Christ to reach a more mature and complete evaluation that allows him to distinguish and judge the various movements of his own heart*. One should add that this task *can* be carried out and that it is truly worthy of man.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, November 12, 1980, 320-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 320, (emphasis in original).

Written to express man's duty to evaluate his sexual nature as a plan of God and a call to live that plan according to the will of the Creator, John Paul's teaching is applicable for the discernment of all the promptings of the body, including the contemplation of the mystery of human suffering. John Paul provides three insights into the proper discernment of the heart which arise from the promptings of the body.

First of all, John Paul suggests that although the promptings of the body are meaningful and, in fact, necessary for discernment, they are insufficient alone to guide human actions.<sup>21</sup> Be it the spontaneity of sexual attraction or the reaction to the experience of suffering, carnal promptings require discernment. Although they are physically experienced as polar opposites, (attraction as pleasurable, suffering as painful), they both inform the heart of a powerful human bodily experience to be discerned. In fact, their power quite literally demands man's attention. These physically experienced opposites (attraction and suffering) share the characteristics that they rise to the surface of man's psyche, in that they cannot be immediately dismissed by the will, and command his attention. As such powerful experiences of his embodiment, they bear the marks of original sin.

In the man of concupiscence, his erotic tendencies fail to fully correspond with the will of the Creator, and are a manifestation of the reality of sin, becoming capable of being expressed for good or for evil. When expressed for evil, erotic tendencies are a

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<sup>21</sup> This would be Wojtyla's need to break with the phenomenology as articulated by Max Sheler, as noted above, due to the fact that the phenomena of bodily sensations require a objective framework for adequate reflection. See Karol Wojtyla, "The Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 32-38.

manifestation of concupiscence's ability to obscure the unity of the spirit and the body.<sup>22</sup> Instead of the contemplation of the meaning of the experience of erotic desire, the immediate response may not be in accord with the will of the Creator. In a similar vein, the man of concupiscence experiences suffering as a manifestation of the reality of sin in creation. Without proper reflection and discernment, man's reaction to his suffering may not only stifle the lessons one learns in suffering (discussed below within the context of the concept of body as sign) but may cause harm to others whom he may choose to use in the elimination of the experience of suffering.<sup>23</sup> In both erotic desire and the desire to be free from suffering, the promptings of the body are significant but insufficient as urges to be immediately followed.

Secondly, building upon this balance to be reached in the evaluation of bodily promptings, John Paul sets the challenge for man to find meaning in the interaction between that which is revealed personally (in each individual man) in his body and that which has been revealed universally (to all men) in Christ. Man is called to find God's presence and meaning in the promptings of his embodiment. This personal discernment incorporates individual experiences within the larger context of the revealed knowledge

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., September 17, 1980, 288. "[Lustful] desire has the effect that in the interior, in the 'heart,' in man and woman's interior horizon, the meaning of the body proper to the person itself is obscured. In this way, femininity ceases to be above all a subject for masculinity, it ceases to be a language of the spirit; it loses its character as a sign. It ceases, I would say, to bear on itself the stupendous spousal meaning of the body. It ceases to be located in the context of the consciousness and experience of this meaning. The 'desire' born precisely from concupiscence of the flesh, from the first moment of its existence in the man's interior—of its existence in his 'heart'—bypasses this context in some way (to use an image, one could say it tramples on the ruins of the spousal meaning of the body and of all its subjective components), and, in virtue of its own axiological intentionality, it aims directly toward one and only one end as its precise object: to satisfy only the body's sexual urge."

<sup>23</sup> To be sure, many experiences of pain and suffering can and should be addressed without considerable discernment. But by no means are all experiences of suffering to be lumped into this category.

of the Creator's plan, calling man to communion and away from isolation. In fact, Christ's challenge in the Sermon on the Mount is a call to view creation in accord with the plan which the Creator has revealed, through Christ himself in the dual dimension of his redemptive act and his historical teachings, Christ's call "impregnates the conscience and will of his disciples."<sup>24</sup> This is John Paul's concept of Christ calling man to a new ethic. He does not call man to a state in life before sinfulness, where there is no division between body and spirit, no concupiscent tendency to use someone as an object, nor into an existence in which there is no suffering. Instead, "he calls him to find—on the foundation of the perennial and, one might say, indestructible meanings of what is 'human'—the living forms of the 'new man.'"<sup>25</sup> He does not call man to this ethic by his teaching alone, but with his teaching and redemption of man in just the same way that God does not reveal his will to man in either just the objective propositional universal revelation, but in man's lived bodily experience.

Thirdly, God calls man to more authentic relationships through the discernment of his bodily promptings. God invites man to participate in the struggle of mastering his instincts. This is possible within the man of concupiscence as the body still retains its dignity even with the effects of original sin. Just as the spousal significance of the body can be discovered even with the reality of concupiscence, so too other moments of the

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<sup>24</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, December 3, 1980, 322.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

Christian life, especially the participation in the sufferings of Christ require man's discernment.<sup>26</sup>

The struggle to mastering the instinctual reactions to the promptings of the body call man to authentic relationships, which cannot be known without the participation in the struggle to discern their meaning. Analogous to John Paul's understanding that the depth of the heart cannot be fully understood with external manifestations of sexual desire alone, but that the discernment of their proper expression within the heart of man is required—with woman and not simply in desire for her—so too the struggle of discerning the participation in suffering is an opportunity to mature in relationship with others and with God.<sup>27</sup> This will be the focus of the following chapter with regard to understanding the mystery of suffering as an opportunity for giving oneself as a gift. Instead of dismissing either the promptings of the body or the revealed plan of the Creator when they seem to conflict, John Paul's understanding of Christ's call in the Sermon on the Mount indicates the possibility of pursuing “the road toward a mature spontaneity of the human heart that does not suffocate its noble desires and aspirations, but on the contrary liberates and helps them.”<sup>28</sup> The effect upon man's conscience is that he no longer makes decisions based upon the raw data of sensory experience, but discerns them as they affect his authentic relationships.

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<sup>26</sup> Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*. She highlights the Holy Father's teaching in *Familiaris consortio* as a call for couples to grow in love by their very experience of the cross in living that love according to the teaching of the Church to be open to the transmission of life in their marital intimacy. See John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 34, pp. 56-57.

<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, December 3, 1980, 323.

The interaction between the body and the heart is the place for the incorporation of all of theology. As Prokes says, all of theology is really a theology of the body. Otherwise, it becomes merely an intellectual endeavor.<sup>29</sup> As the body has manifested the struggle and effects of sin, it also becomes, in Christ, the means and locus for the revealed experience of salvation.

One could say without exaggeration that the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul's theology...It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the Cross that we have been saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined. Here, with the exception of the doctrine on God, are represented all the main tenets of the Christian Faith—the doctrines of Man, Sin, the Incarnation and Atonement, the Church, the Sacraments, Sanctification, and Eschatology.<sup>30</sup>

In John Paul's phenomenological approach, the evaluation of the body as revealer of God's will and means of man's sanctification demonstrates that man's experience of himself may itself be a means of God's revelation.

### 8.3 The Body as Sign

At the heart of John Paul's theology of the body is his description of the body as a sign, which represents something other than just itself. "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer onto the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from

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<sup>29</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, *The Body*, 10.

eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.”<sup>31</sup> An understanding of this statement requires an analysis of the concept of matter and of the theological use of the concept of semeiology.<sup>32</sup> Christopher Cullen argues that John Paul, in his *Theology of the Body* addresses, has taken up the great discourse on the meaning of the human body with regard to sexuality where St. Augustine began.<sup>33</sup> Standing out from the other great Doctors of the Church, Augustine had undertaken an understanding of the purpose to be found in, not simply the toleration of, the human realities of sexuality and marriage.<sup>34</sup> Augustine articulated his teaching in *De doctrina christiana*, defining a sign as “a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to the mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses”<sup>35</sup> primarily to better understand the hidden meaning contained in

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<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, February 20, 1980, 203.

<sup>32</sup> For an understanding of the concept of semeiology in theology, see Rino Fisichella “Semeiology” in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. Rene Latourelle, (Middlegreen, UK: St. Paul’s, 1994), 987-91. For what is necessary for a sign to be effective: “For a sign to be a sign, it must present itself to the senses and hence be presentable; it must be historical, that is to say contained in a sociocultural context; signifying, i.e., admitting to the comprehension of something signified and yet to be expressed, but not entirely contained in it; universal, i.e., that which creates consensus beyond the sphere of the individual,” citation on 988. On why semeiology is necessary for theology: “Since God dwells in inaccessible light and we cannot picture him (Ex 20: 4), the nearest means for expressing his relationship with his people will be the sign: a reality which expresses but cannot exhaust the content of the message,” citation on 988. “Signs on the one hand encourage faith to be more genuine since they refer to its basic content, which is the mystery of God; on the other, they stimulate nonbelievers to try and perceive through them the presence of the mystery which can give meaning to life,” citation on 989.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Cullen, “Between God and Nothingness: Matter in John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*” in *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial*, John McDermott and John Gavin, eds, (Philadelphia, St. Joseph’s University Press, 2007), 68.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. “Augustine stopped short of developing a sophisticated account of the sexualized person, or a theology of the body which integrates masculinity and femininity into his understanding of the human person and his teaching on sexuality and marriage. John Paul II has taken up Augustine’s unfinished task.” See also, Daniel Jamros, “Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen” in *Pope John Paul II on the Body*, 77. “Augustine appears more positive about marriage and sexuality than one would expect from his reputation as the Father of sexual repression in the Catholic Church.”

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 1, 1, p. 30.

the scriptures.<sup>36</sup> He writes of the struggle necessary to interpret the meanings often found in signs of God speaking to man, but his examples are ones which John Paul builds upon for the correct interpretation of the reality of the human body and the various things for which the body stands in man's earthly experience.

John Paul heavily employs semiotic language in conveying the anthropological as well as theological meaning found in the human body. He depends upon Augustine's distinction between natural signs and intentional signs, natural signs being those which are in a sense automatically conveyed by themselves, without the willful intention of a signifier, intentional signs are those which living things give to demonstrate knowledge which is not immediate based upon their own experience. There is no reason to give a sign except to convey to another's mind what is in the mind of the person who intentionally gives the sign.<sup>37</sup> John Paul's analysis of the Creator's will for man's bodily living and the explanation of Christ's call to a new ethic for man who currently lives in the realm of concupiscence, is an explanation of how the body is an intended sign of God's goodness and his will for man's life. Even though man's inclinations may not always point to the immediacy of understanding God's will, God had nevertheless retained for man the ability to decipher his will in his bodily creation of man.<sup>38</sup> Cullen concisely states:

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<sup>36</sup> Cullen, "Between God and Nothingness", 71.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 3, 1, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> It is here that the lack of teleology sometimes present in modern medical practice is most profound in contemporary culture. If suffering is seen only as a symptom to be eliminated, then its significance, in the truest sense of the word, is lost.

In a semiotic relation there is the sign and the referent or meaning. In the case of certain types of signs, namely intentional ones as opposed to natural ones, there is also a sign-giver or signifier. Presumably also, when there is a signifier, a conscious agent, there is an intended recipient of the sign. In the case of intentional signs, then, there are four things: the signifier, the sign, the signified, and the recipient. This fourfold relation, involved in the case of intentional signs, seems to be implied throughout much of John Paul's theology of the body. In his theological analysis, the sign is the human body; the signifier, God; the recipient, the human being. John Paul seems to speak of the signified in a two-fold way: as the "nuptial meaning" of the body and as "the communion of persons." Man alone, the pope reiterates on many occasions, is capable of recognizing the significance of the creation, or as he puts it, of recognizing his place in creation.<sup>39</sup>

There are multiple examples of John Paul's description of the body as a signifier. Man's body is a sign of the image of God,<sup>40</sup> and his original nakedness is a sign of God's goodness in creation.<sup>41</sup> But man's shame in nakedness reveals a change in the character of the body, and "Man loses the original certainty of the 'image of God' expressed in his

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<sup>39</sup> Cullen, "Between God and Nothingness", 72.

<sup>40</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 16, 1980, 189. It is important to note an important clarification when speaking about the body as a sign of God. Augustine placed the divine image in which man is created in the powers of the human soul, not specifically including the body in reference to the divine image. John Paul in attempting to find the semiotic character of the human body does not deny that the human soul is the image of God, nor intend to create a body-soul duality in speaking about the body as a sign of God. The body functions as a sign as it is understood to be in relation with the soul. Cullen notes John Paul's contribution to Augustine's understanding and theological use of a sign (Augustine's not including the gendered body as part of the divine image) by stating that for John Paul "The soul is the image of God and the body is a sign of it." See Jamros, "Sign, Subject, and Style" 77. Here he clarifies what some have mistakenly drawn from John Paul's *Theology of the Body* about the body being a sign of the presence of God and not clarifying the need for its relation to the immortal soul. "The meaning John Paul and Cullen want to give to the body requires more than the body; it requires a human soul, a self, a subject, a mind, a consciousness," citation on 79. John Paul's assertion that man becomes the image of God in communion takes for granted that the masculinity and femininity to which he refers are permeated by the soul. If not always explicit, John Paul's words depend upon this unity of body and soul to speak of the body being a sign of the presence of God. Discussion of "...Adam's masculinity follows remarks about Adam's human consciousness. Adam saw that he was not like the other animals, and this human awareness precedes the creation of Eve and their mutual discovery of gender. Thus for Adam her body (and his) can signify God's love only when the body also possesses a human consciousness," citation on 79.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 2, 1980, 177.

body.”<sup>42</sup> In sin, the body loses the immediate representation of the divine, and there is difficulty for man in seeing this sign.<sup>43</sup> Christ’s words in the Sermon in the Mount offer a challenge to revisit the goodness of the sign potential of the body and the Creator’s plan for man. This revision is necessary because for the historical man of concupiscence the sign of the body ceases to automatically convey that the body of man is for woman and vice versa, with the ability of objectification of the other.<sup>44</sup> But by God’s gracious will, the body becomes the sign of man’s redemption, not to be understood as evil, but as carrying the potential for salvation.<sup>45</sup> In the realm of the promise of man’s salvation in Christ, through grace and man’s discernment and self-mastery, the body can again become the “transparent sign” of God’s image and likeness.<sup>46</sup> In this action, the body represents man’s rediscovery of the will of the Creator and the love of the redeemer, manifested in his own flesh. Thus John Paul can conclude that the body is a “visible sign of the economy of Truth and Love.”<sup>47</sup>

Building now on John Paul’s understanding of the body as sign, one can examine how Augustine articulates seven stages for the proper interpretation of the signs manifested in sacred scripture and can see in this an example of how bodily suffering can also be interpreted semiotically. Augustine describes these stages as the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to man in a disguised way, through signs, the deepest mysteries of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1980, 241.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., May 28, 1980, 243.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., September 17, 1980, 288.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., October 22, 1980, 306-307

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., December 3, 1980, 324.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., February 20, 1980, 203.

God otherwise not attainable or not commanding man's attention.<sup>48</sup> These stages of achieving wisdom of the things of God are based on the gifts of the spirit, though in reverse order from which they are found in the prophecy of Isaiah.<sup>49</sup>

Augustine first declares that it is necessary to be moved by fear of the Lord. This fear is a learning of God's will and requires reflection about man's own mortality. Such reflection about the reality of sufferings "crucifies" man's impulses to be presumptuous about the things of God and allows him to perceive those things which God calls man to either employ or avoid in his life. Secondly, man needs docility through holiness to understand the mysteries which God reveals. Whether man understands the mysteries of God or not, he is to be open to the ways in which God reveals himself, for it is better to ponder, even if incompletely, the revelation of God than to falsely assume that what man may gain by himself is more true or better than the will of God. Next comes the stage of knowledge, through which man comes to act on the great commandments: to love God for his own sake and to love his neighbor as himself. In this stage, man will realize just how much he is attached to love of the present realities of his life in opposition to the eternal realities of the love of God. The fourth stage of fortitude bolsters man who would otherwise despair as he sees with greater clarity just how presumptuous his earthly life has been and how much he has wasted a hunger that is intended for righteousness on the passing things of reality. The fifth stage is a resolve for compassion, which purifies the

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<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 6, 13, p. 33, "No one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty."

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Isaiah 11: 2-3.

mind by the more perfect love of neighbor (not possible without the one's extrication from the things of the world). Next man's eyes are purified to see the real presence of God, still obscurely, but now with pleasure instead of fear. In this he is focused upon the truth of God, so that even other goods do not distract him. Lastly he reaches the peace and calm which come through wisdom.<sup>50</sup>

These stages described Augustine are quite similar to John Paul's explanation of the personal living out of the "gospel of suffering" articulated in *Salvifici doloris*.<sup>51</sup> In it the human body becomes the means of experiencing the necessary struggle for man in suffering and a sign of man's transformation and redemption. As Augustine reminds the reader that it is more rewarding to discover meanings which are won with greater difficulty, so the gospel of suffering presents to man an invitation to experience realities of God which are not always easily attainable to the human mind in ordinary human experience.

Following Augustine, the discovery of real wisdom is possible only through the struggle to correctly interpret the signs man finds before him in his suffering. This struggle in suffering is a conversion, or truer interpretation of what is signified in the body. Remembering that man's suffering is an experience of evil and that man faces suffering with great difficulty and even protest,<sup>52</sup> the Christian finds himself in good company with those who struggle to correctly understand the body as sign of redemption. Again, the mystery of the incarnation of Christ ushered in an act that was only complete

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<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 7-9, pp. 33-35.

<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

in the bodily offering of his suffering. Not only the disciples who questioned the need or purpose of Christ's having to suffer, but Christ himself bore witness to the struggle as he faced the reality of his own suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. As Augustine describes the seven stages of achieving wisdom through the signs of God found in the scriptures, so John Paul, in speaking of a gospel of suffering declares that there must be some significance to the mystery of suffering which God calls man to penetrate. Just as the correct interpretation of signs requires discipline, so too, Christ does not give either a direct or abstract answer to the mystery of suffering, but offers it as a sign of salvation, a concealed power.<sup>53</sup>

In the correct reading of the sign of the body in the gospel of suffering, man is called to remember the proper value placed on it. John Paul's teaching on the goodness of the body and its revelatory potential, strikes a balance between the philosophical extremes of materialism and the Cartesian inspired concept of the body. In the former, everything is reducible to the physical forces of nature and matter—having no intrinsic value or purpose, in the latter the body it is viewed as an instrument by which each individual creates its proper expression.<sup>54</sup> In *Evangelium vitae* he points out the danger of not employing a proper significance to the body. This brings about a materialism within the culture which leads to hedonistic, utilitarian, and individualistic tendencies, whereby all goods are subject to evaluation in ultimate favor of “the pursuits of one's

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Cullen, “Between God and Nothingness,” 65-6.

own material well-being.”<sup>55</sup> He also describes threats with which a materialistic culture confronts a Christian anthropology. The first is that the body becomes primarily an instrument for pleasure. The body loses its dignity and stops being “the sign, place and language of love” and instead is a means for personal satisfaction of desires and instincts.<sup>56</sup>

In such a context suffering, an inescapable burden of human existence but also a factor of possible personal growth, is “censored,” rejected as useless, indeed opposed as an evil, always and everywhere to be avoided. When it cannot be avoided and the prospect of even some future well-being vanishes, then life appears to have lost all meaning and the temptation grows in man to claim the right to suppress it.<sup>57</sup>

Another threat posed by materialism is that an instrumental view of the body which lauds efficiency and utility replaces a view of the body which upholds its inherent dignity. The sign of the body is misread or misunderstood either not to signify anything greater than itself, or to signify only the individual’s means for personal satisfaction, however that might be achieved.

In the materialistic perspective described so far, interpersonal relations are seriously impoverished. The first to be harmed are women, children, the sick or suffering, and the elderly. The criterion of personal dignity—which demands respect, generosity and service—is replaced by the criterion of efficiency, functionality and usefulness: others are considered not for what they “are” but for what they “have, do and produce.” This is the supremacy of the strong over the weak.<sup>58</sup>

The failure to see the body as a sign of a greater reality, namely the sign of the economy of salvation within man, presents that man with an existential struggle in

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<sup>55</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 23.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

suffering, which is often greater than the suffering itself.<sup>59</sup> Materialistic values are easier for man to pursue, for they are immediate, tangible and intensive, requiring neither great contemplation nor the grace of rereading the signs in their pursuit. This is what Augustine called the difficulty of extricating oneself from the things of the world in order to see the deeper realities revealed of and by God.<sup>60</sup> It is no surprise then, as argued at the beginning of this dissertation, that both contemporary culture and multiple groups within the medical community respond to the mystery of suffering with an attitude of dismissal.

The culture's movement to [a pleasure driven/materialistic] meaning in life, therefore, is leading to a loss of the capacity to suffer well. Indeed, we don't even know how to find meaning, depth, virtue, freedom, and love through our suffering. We don't even know that we can find these qualities in our suffering. For this reason, we will become far more fragile and inclined toward self-pity and far more likely to give up in the face of adversity.<sup>61</sup>

The body's ability to be a sign of the spiritual and the divine as John Paul writes, to make visible what is not immediately so, is manifested in its capacity for suffering as well as in its other characteristics.

#### 8.4 Realities Signified in the Suffering Body

As Augustine wrote in *De doctrina christiana*, lessons presented by imagery and with difficulty are most profitable and rewarding,<sup>62</sup> so too the struggle through suffering

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., no. 22, p. 42, in which John Paul notes the fear that comes with the "freedom" from God's design for man.

<sup>60</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 2, 7, 10, p. 34.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Spitzer, *Healing The Culture*, 307.

<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2, 6, 13, p. 33. Here his words could aptly be understood to include the lack of wisdom afforded to those who refuse to enter into the mystery of suffering. "But no one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more

has the potential to bring man an experience of God which otherwise would be impossible. Though a result of sinfulness and evil, human suffering, as John Paul has stated, is not simply an accidental feature of man's existence, but "seems to be particularly essential to the nature of man."<sup>63</sup>

John Paul's reflections on human work shed light on his anthropological view of suffering. Recalling the epistemological significance of the dual aspects of labor, pertinent to the evaluation of any human action, it is crucial with the act of suffering to meditate on its intransitive nature.<sup>64</sup> The intransitive aspect of action in man is that which remains in the agent himself as the subject of the action. In fact, the intransitive aspect of action is more significant in John Paul's personalistic perspective than the transitive or external manifestations of actions.<sup>65</sup> With this in mind, one can glean from *Salvifici doloris*, the oft hidden personal significance of suffering. Man becomes something different in his conscious experience of suffering. The body's suffering provides man with, and in fact forces upon him, both the matter and occasion for reflection upon himself and of God as nearly no other experience may.

In this light, suffering is not seen as primarily an evil, but as an experience of evil from which can be drawn perhaps the most profound good. Contemporary culture is often too busy to take note of this intransitive aspect of suffering, or perhaps only

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rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty. Those who fail to discover what they are looking for suffer from hunger, whereas those who do not look, because they have it in front of them, often die of boredom. In both situations, the danger is lethargy."

<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 2, pp. 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> Karol Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community*, 263-66. See also John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, no.13, pp. 31-33.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith*, 174-75.

acknowledges the intransitive aspect of suffering with regard to what good can be brought about *despite* the suffering that is present, but less often acknowledges the good brought about *because* of suffering. For not without reason nor for vengeance does God allow suffering in those whom he loves. Rather, as Leon Bloy observed, “Man has places in his hearts which do not yet exist, and into them suffering enters in order that they may have existence.”<sup>66</sup> The discussion must then turn to what is discovered or created within man precisely in suffering which is beneficial to him, or allows man to understand what John Paul calls the “eloquence which human suffering possesses in itself.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, what does suffering add to the significance of man’s bodily reality?

#### 8.4.1 Contingency in being

John Crosby provides insight into the thought of John Paul regarding the makeup of the individual person in relation to others. John Paul quotes the text of *Gaudium et spes* often in describing the mystery which is the human person: “man, though he is the only creature on earth which God willed for his own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”<sup>68</sup> This points to a deep theological paradox of what it means to be a person: man is truly his own person willed by God for his own sake, and yet not so much his own that he is able to live only for himself. Indeed man is both his own unique self and yet always and everywhere in need of communion with

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<sup>66</sup> Leon Bloy: *Pilgrim of the Absolute*, Ed. Raïssa Maritain, Trans., John Coleman and Harry L. Binsse. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1947), 349.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, pp. 48.

<sup>68</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no 24, p. 925.

others.<sup>69</sup> Often called the “personalism” of John Paul, this thought recognizes the dignity of man as an individual and as called to participate in communion with others and with God.

Crosby observes the paradox of the human condition as John Paul sees it, that “a person is a being who belongs to himself and who is not a part or property of anything else.”<sup>70</sup> Man’s dignity is such that he is not to be incorporated into a larger totality in which he would be reduced to being a mere part, aiding only, and perhaps lost in, the benefit of the greater entity. John Paul argues that man, as a being of his own, has such a dignity that the principle banning his use, ownership, or absorption holds even for God who created him.

Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator. On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature, he has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity, and not be a blind tool of someone else’s ends. Therefore if God intends to direct man toward certain goals, he allows him to begin to know those goals, so that he may make them his own and strive toward them independently. In this amongst other things resides the most profound logic of revelation: God allows man to learn His supernatural ends, but the decision to strive towards an end, the choice of course, is left to man’s free will. God does not redeem man against his will.<sup>71</sup>

Man’s knowledge of himself as this being of great dignity, willed for himself, comes to him only with his interaction with the truth. John Paul sees in the creation

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<sup>69</sup> This section will follow the structure of John Crosby’s “The Personalism of John Paul II as the Basis of his Approach to the Teaching of *Humanae Vitae*,” in *Why Humanae Vitae was Right: A Reader*, ed. Janet Smith, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 195-226. Though not specifically on the issue of human suffering, its foundations are useful in seeing the similarities in the Church’s teaching found in the observations of man’s being which form the teachings of human sexuality and human suffering.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>71</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 27.

account, particularly in Adam's naming of the animals, God's gift to man—the gift of finding the truth about himself—by going out to the truth of the things around him. He came to the realization of selfhood and interiority, his understanding of his own essence, by returning to himself from all that he had observed in the truth of the other.<sup>72</sup> From this observation man comes to understand that his objective dignity as a unique being in himself is based upon an orientation towards the truth which he is able to discern. The things of the world draw man to them, and his understanding of the truth allows for the “spiritual distance” to judge between them without being overcome by, or wholly incorporated to them, thus losing his true and good exercise of his interiority.<sup>73</sup> Man's interiority demonstrates a self-determination which reiterates his being a person for his own sake and not for the sake of something or someone else.

Therefore the suffering which man experiences is not out of vengeance from God, or a use by God which entails man's destruction, but that can in some way be an experience of good. As quoted above in *Love and Responsibility*, John Paul believes that God never makes man a blind tool for another potential good, yet may certainly direct him toward a good by revealing other goods or goals to him as he wishes.<sup>74</sup>

The second part of the paradox adds that man can only find his true self (his true self before God) by making a sincere gift of himself. He is called therefore not to live solely for himself, but is called to communion outside himself. Man does not live for,

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<sup>72</sup> Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” 208. Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 10, 1979, 148-49.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>74</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 27-28.

nor can he by himself acquire, his own happiness. “If the human person through his selfhood reflects God, then through his being made for communion with other persons, reflects the inner-Trinitarian life of God.”<sup>75</sup> His catechesis on marriage, particularly his finding of norms which govern the man’s use of his body, points to an understanding of man’s selfhood only being understood in relation to the truth and in relation to the good of the other, his spouse, to whom he gives himself as a gift.

Instead of beginning with man’s self-determination with the purpose of building a notion of man as autonomous and the subject of rights, John Paul builds the dignity of man’s selfhood on the imitation of and participation in the revelation of the love of God. In relation to God, man not only stands in himself, he also stands with another, through God. “As person, he belongs to himself; as creature he belongs to God.”<sup>76</sup> Thus man can reach the concept that he in his dignified selfhood is a contingent being.<sup>77</sup>

John Paul’s personalism is a departure from the traditional metaphysical assumptions of the contingency of being, whereby individuals are simply subsumed into the general category of man as creature. Man’s relation with God—particularly the mystery of the Incarnation—as well as God’s gifts of creative faculties to man, prohibit the simple classification of man as creature before God. Yet man’s role as cooperator in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 212; John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, November 14, 1979, 163. “Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, ‘from the beginning’ not only an image in which the solitude of one Person, who rules the world, mirrors itself, but also and essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons.”

<sup>76</sup> Crosby, “The Personalism of John Paul II,” 225.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 224. “The fact that the human person is a composition of personal selfhood and of nature gives us evidence of the contingency of the human person. An absolute being would have to be pure selfhood, pure interiority, it would have to be nothing but personal selfhood and to lack anything in the way of nature, and principle of undergoing and enduring.”

God's creative power demonstrates that he is paradoxically both a possession of himself and called to union outside himself with others and God. John Paul illustrates this contingency in the context of man and woman's cooperation in the transmission of human life. He states that the use of artificial contraception does not presume a share in God's creative power, but rather the assumption of being the ultimate arbiter of human life, not as a minister of the plan willed by the Creator.<sup>78</sup> A rightly understood autonomy of the person depends both upon man's understanding of the contingency of his being and as being willing to enter into cooperation with God.<sup>79</sup>

#### 8.4.1.1 Man as temporally finite

Man may have no difficulty in comprehending his contingency, since he understands that his non-existence is not just a possibility, it was at one time absolute fact. To have being without qualification or the possibility of exception would be to exist through one's own power and therefore not capable of not existing. This absolute being could have no beginning in time, but would have to have always existed.

Let me express the matter by considering the eternal self-presence of God who endures without losing what he once had, who endures without ever ceasing to be what he once was. Is it not certain that we do not endure like this, but that our enduring is such as always to render past what we now are in the present?<sup>80</sup>

Man's temporal contingency also provides an openness to the future, for he knows that much of his being has not yet been actualized.

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<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, August 29, 1984, 635.

<sup>79</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32, pp. 52-53.

<sup>80</sup> John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 254.

Man's temporal limitations provide, as it were, an openness to being from the outside which he does not and cannot fully possess in himself.<sup>81</sup> The "metaphysical abyss" between God (as the being of complete self-possession) and man presents him with the reflection of what will yet be in him, and opens him for reception of God. Edith Stein says that the human person:

is confronted with itself as a living being which is present to itself, but which at the same time comes from a past and lives into a future—he and his being are inescapably there, he is "thrown into being." But that is the extremest [sic] antithesis to the sovereignty and self-sufficiency of a being existing through itself. And his being is one which surges up from moment to moment. It cannot "stop" for it cannot be "held up" as it passes away. And so it never really comes into the possession of itself.<sup>82</sup>

Man's temporality forces a reflection upon his bodily earthly life, which at every moment is in the process of passing away. Even in its beauty, man experiences the contingency of his being. In his life, so often focused on passing goods, particularly in a culture which values economic efficiency and consumption, physical pleasure and beauty, the more profound dimensions of man's existence are often superseded by more proximate and intermediate goals.<sup>83</sup>

We live in a world, with its inevitable prospect of death, right from the moment of conception and of birth. And yet, we must look beyond the material aspect of our earthly existence. Certainly, bodily death is a necessary passage for us all; but it is also true that what from its very beginning has born in itself the very image and likeness of God cannot be

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>82</sup> Edith Stein, *Endliches und ewiges Sein*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), 52. Quoted and translated by John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, 255.

<sup>83</sup> See John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 23, pp. 42-43.

completely given back to the corruptible matter of the universe. This is a fundamental truth and attitude of our Christian faith.<sup>84</sup>

#### 8.4.1.2 Man Suspended Between Potentiality and Actuality

Not only is man's being temporally contingent, his earthly life is, in Aristotelian terms, an exercise in making actual what is potential. As a being which is temporally contingent, not making himself, and therefore having the possibility of not being, his earthly life is a constant suspense between his potential and his fulfillment. The reason for this suspense is that his actualization on earth will never be completely fulfilled:

However much they become, they will always know to experience it as a confining limit and to be restless until they have surpassed it. But this call to surpass themselves, which is always renewing itself, reveals unfulfilled potentiality. This in turn means that an actuality in a person that would swallow up all potentiality, is as impossible as a natural number that is the greatest number and has no successor number.<sup>85</sup>

Since man is constantly striving, but will never reach his full potential, he lives with something outside his own being for which he must look for actualization. Not only his earthly life, but his self-possession is truly finite. Therefore man, lacking complete self-possession, while constantly becoming in this life, is not an end unto himself.<sup>86</sup>

Wojtyla taught on this continual striving in *The Acting Person*, where he spoke about man's earthly existence as an exercise of constant dynamism.<sup>87</sup> Theologically

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<sup>84</sup> John Paul II, "Homily at San Antonio, Texas," September 13, 1987, cited in *The Wisdom of John Paul*, Nick Bakalar and Richard Balkin, eds., (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 84-85.

<sup>85</sup> John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, 259-60.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>87</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 96. "Every form of the dynamism we find in man, whether it be acting, that is, action, or happening in its manifold forms here called activation, is also associated with a certain form of becoming of the man-subject. By 'becoming' we mean such as aspect of the human dynamism—whether it is the aspect of man's acting or as aspect of what happens in him—that does not

speaking, John Paul reiterates the ultimate perfection that all of creation has only in relation to the Creator, and the dependence that all of creation, man included as his highest creation, has on God.<sup>88</sup>

In the Theology of the Body discourses, John Paul's use of the image of a triptych demonstrates his theological understanding of the historical-salvific realities of man's earthly life which reconcile his contingent being in relation to God, as well as his potential for eternal life. The first panel represents man in his original creation, free from original sin; the second shows historical man of sin, the third shows both historical man who is redeemed in Christ, but still retains the limits of his createdness and the effects of sin, and also foretells the resurrection of the body.<sup>89</sup> The movement within third panel is what grants man the promise of hope, where, though often confounded by the limits of his own being, his experience of sinfulness, and the reality of suffering, man's full potential in the resurrection speaks to his current situation. This "three-dimensional" view of humanity is both firmly grounded in the reality of man's contingency, both temporally and essentially, and affords him the vision of the future.

Reflection on his contingency demands not a vague hope—but a personally revealed one—in Christ's resurrection from the dead.<sup>90</sup> Man cannot be completely actualized in his earthly life, but is called to pass from this life to the life of the

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only center on man himself, the subject of this dynamism, insofar as it introduces or carries on a process of change. In point of fact, in all dynamizations the subject does not remain indifferent: not only does it participate in them, as demonstrated to some extent above, but it is itself in one way or another formed or transformed by them."

<sup>88</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, January 29, 1986, 204-205

<sup>89</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, November 11, 1981, 380.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1981, 384-85. John Paul notes that it would be only in the personal knowledge of the resurrection of Christ that true understanding of the hope provided in the scriptures would be fulfilled.

resurrection, which alone promises perfection. The road of this life, then, is filled not only with the temporal limitation of his potential, but also with the suffering in the longing of the suspense awaiting that transformation.<sup>91</sup>

#### 8.4.1.3. Contingency and Suffering

The lessons to be found in suffering from the concept of the contingency of the human person are ample. The presence of suffering reminds man of his lack of perfection. On the purely natural level, as finite beings, suffering is often required to serve as a reference to a greater reality and purpose. Discipline of the body and soul, painful as it is, is frequently an exercise in man's desire to more fully actualize his potential. Suffering can also contribute to an understanding of the value and precious nature of man's existence. If suffering were not possible, challenge as well as adventure would not be possible.<sup>92</sup>

John Paul notes, on a natural level, that death—related to suffering as a manifestation of the lack of perfection within man—is now incorporated into God's plan in regard to the overall good of his creation.<sup>93</sup> The book of Wisdom reminds the reader that God did not make death and does not delight in the death of the living (Wisdom 1: 13-14). John Paul follows up:

As regards the permission of evil in the physical order, e.g., the fact that material beings (among them also the human body) are corruptible and undergo death, it must be said that this belongs to the very structure of the

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<sup>91</sup> Among other sources, Karl Rahner offers a theological reflection on the mystery of death as a necessary part of human experience, see *On The Theology of Death*, esp. 21-39.

<sup>92</sup> See John M. McDermott, "Suffering" in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, (Middlegreen, Slough, UK: St. Pauls, 1994), 1014-15.

<sup>93</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 54.

being of these creatures. In the present state of the material world, it would be difficult to think of the unlimited existence of every individual corporeal being. We can understand that, if “God did not make death,” as the Book of Wisdom states, he nonetheless permitted it in view of the overall good of the material cosmos.<sup>94</sup>

On a deeper and more personal level, the acknowledgement of the contingency of one’s being revealed in suffering calls man to an important reflection on the hierarchy of goods in himself. Recalling the mission of Christ on earth, John Paul notes that Jesus had great concerns for man’s bodily life. He was sent to proclaim the good news of freedom from those who were oppressed and to bring healing to the brokenhearted (Cf. Lk. 4: 18; Is. 61: 1). He performed numerous acts of healing for the sick, the blind, lepers, and even the raising of the dead to life, showing in his compassion a connection to health and life with that of faith and forgiveness of sins. He sent his apostles to carry out a mission of healing which is a part of the proclamation of the gospel. He tells them to heal the sick and lepers and to raise the dead (Cf. Mt. 10:7-8). But even in this, Jesus revealed the gift of earthly life and health to be an intermediate good and not the absolute good for man.<sup>95</sup> He also called his disciples to be willing to lose their lives for the greater good of the gospel, to willingly take on the sufferings they experience and not to flee from temptations and tribulations which would challenge their earthly existence (Mk. 6: 17-29).<sup>96</sup>

In challenging his disciples, Christ raised the concern for man’s external body to concern for the higher good of man’s interior or spiritual life. While Christ openly

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<sup>94</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, June 4, 1986, 271.

<sup>95</sup> See Love, “The Concept of Medicine in the Early Church,” 230.

<sup>96</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 47.

reveals that being a disciple will require additional suffering on the part of many, he promises an interior or spiritual assistance, which is the true intended aim of being a disciple because of one's willingness to suffer. He paradoxically connects the treatment which will be given to those who profess belief in him, the treatment which he himself received, with joy, even a peace, which the world is unable to give, but a world which he has overcome.<sup>97</sup>

To the suffering brother or sister, Christ discloses and gradually reveals the horizons of the kingdom of God: the horizons of a world converted to the Creator, a world free from sin, a world built on the saving power of love. And slowly but effectively, Christ leads into this world, into this kingdom of the Father, suffering man, in a certain sense through the very heart of His suffering. For suffering cannot be transformed and changed from the outside, but from within.<sup>98</sup>

Fundamentally, suffering and the knowledge of one's contingency is an invitation to be open to God. It might better be described as a forcing of the acceptance of being open to God. Forcing, as it were, a sense of openness from the false notion of control, reflection upon one's suffering provides the space for the ever greater submission to the things of God and to God himself. Quite the opposite of responding to suffering with denial or stoicism, which can ultimately only be temporary, God uses the openness to suffering which begins with the acknowledging of man's contingency, to reveal to him

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<sup>97</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 25, pp. 42-43, where he quotes successive chapters in the Gospel of John which seem contradictory. "If they persecuted me they will persecute you" (John 15:20), and "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace" (John 16: 33).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 26, p. 45.

the deeper mysteries, seemingly less likely to be contemplated when one faces life with a sense of personal security and health.<sup>99</sup>

Man struggles to question the meaning not only of the suffering he is experiencing, but in the trial of suffering, the meaning of his own life. The human perception of understanding suffering must be acknowledged for its limitations, so that God may proceed to reveal to man in his own bodily experience of suffering the realities that are beyond his current ability to grasp.<sup>100</sup> The experience of suffering can be an exercise in learning a revealed truth in the body about its ultimate destiny, its proper role in mediating the truth about man's life and the life of God to him. While man's bodily sensations initially inform a flight from the experience of suffering, this subjection requires reflection on man's essence in the confrontation of his own limitations. He can no longer simply pursue the fulfillment of appetites or avoidance of discomfort as a criterion for action. He is forced in his suffering to find meaning to what the body affords him. This is the challenge of personal integration in the psyche and the soma.<sup>101</sup> It is an acceptance, as Teilhard de Chardin expressed, of being able to see God's grace in a form of human passivity and make it an action of love.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Where man begins by asking God 'why' on the human level, the only way he can begin as a creature, God, even through a long period of time posits the answer not to man but within man..

<sup>101</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 233.

<sup>102</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, 84. "It is a perfectly correct view of things—and strictly consonant with the Gospel—to regard Providence across the ages as brooding over the world in ceaseless effort to spare that world its bitter wounds and to bind up its hurts. Most certainly it is God himself who, in the course of the centuries, awakens the great benefactors of humankind, and the great physicians, in ways that agree with the general rhythm of progress. He it is who inspires, even among those furthest from acknowledging his existence, the quest for every means of comfort and every means of healing. Do not men acknowledge by instinct this divine presence when hatreds are quenched and their protesting

#### 8.4.2 Suffering as Affording Conversion and Redemption

Man's sinfulness has a complex effect in bringing about his suffering.<sup>103</sup> Within man's experience of the evil of suffering blooms an invitation to conversion and experience of redemption. His experience of the contingency of his bodily life can become a channel by which the body calls man to an awareness of his need for salvation. It confronts him, unlike almost any other experience, to reevaluate the priorities of his life, the first step in understanding the need for conversion and acceptance of redemption.

John Paul's Catechesis on the Creed provides an insight into the redemptive potential of the experience of suffering. God's permission of the evil of suffering is at the service of the higher purpose of man's redemption. This is true in the unique sufferings of Christ as well as the multiple expressions of man's suffering. In his own life, his experience of suffering as "sublime wisdom" revealing his redemption only comes through contact with Christ's sufferings. This reflection on suffering deserves to be quoted at length:

A definitive answer cannot be given to the question about the reconciliation of evil and suffering with the truth of divine Providence, without reference to Christ. On the one hand, Christ, the Incarnate Word, confirmed through his own life—in poverty, humiliation and toil—and especially through his passion and death, that God is with every person in his suffering. Indeed God takes upon himself the multiform suffering of man's earthly existence. At the same time, Jesus Christ reveals that this suffering possesses a redemptive and salvific value and power. That

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uncertainty resolved as they kneel to thank each one of those who have helped their body or their mind to freedom? Can there be any doubt of it? At the first approach of the diminishments we cannot hope to find God except by loathing what is coming upon us and doing our best to avoid it. The more we repel suffering at that moment, with our whole heart and our whole strength, the more closely we cleave to the heart and action of God."

<sup>103</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 15. Clearly not all suffering is the direct result of sin, as demonstrated in John Paul's addressing of the various theological approaches historically advanced, see above, 7.1.1

“imperishable inheritance” of which St. Peter spoke in his first letter is prepared through this suffering: “an imperishable inheritance kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). The truth of Providence acquires, through the “power and wisdom” of the cross of Christ, its definitive eschatological sense. The definitive answer to the question about the presence of evil and suffering in our earthly existence is offered by divine revelation in the perspective of “predestination in Christ,” in the perspective of man’s vocation to eternal life, to participation in the life of God himself. Christ has provided this answer, confirming it by his cross and resurrection. In this way everything, even the evil and suffering present in the created world, and especially in human history, are subjected to that inscrutable wisdom, which St. Paul exclaimed in rapture.<sup>104</sup>

The wisdom acquired in the experience of suffering is not a theoretical wisdom, but nothing less than the wisdom of man’s redemption, a redemption possible only by participating in God’s own life. That participation is made up both of the cross of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. The redemption offered to man includes, the “creative character of suffering” whereby man shares in, and in his own way “completes” as St. Paul says, the sufferings of Christ. This is not because Christ’s offering is incomplete, but rather because God in his wisdom has desired that all be open to the love which finds expression in suffering. “Yes, it seems to be part of the very essence of Christ’s redemptive suffering that this suffering requires to be unceasingly completed.”<sup>105</sup>

Redemption comes about through man’s conversion and cooperation with the grace of Christ’s suffering, a conversion that cannot be forced upon him, for it must be internal, but a conversion that is mediated by his own experience of suffering. John Paul

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<sup>104</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, June 11, 1986, 274. See Romans 11: 33 “O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and inscrutable his ways.”

<sup>105</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, p. 38.

goes as far as to say that this experience of suffering for man is made by Christ to be “firmest basis” of the greatest good, his own eternal salvation.<sup>106</sup>

As with the acquisition of any wisdom in the human experience, it comes about through testing and trial. The wisdom which is man’s conversion and redemption comes about by testing, as both the book of Sirach and first letter of Peter attest with the analogy of gold tried in the furnace. In his Catechesis on the Creed, John Paul adds a dimension to the fatherhood of God in this search for understanding his essence through the test of suffering.

Alongside the fatherhood of God, the divine pedagogy also appears, manifested by divine Providence: “It is the discipline (*paideia*, that is, education) that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?...God disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness” (Heb. 12:7,10)<sup>107</sup>

In the Theology of the Body, John Paul also connects the bodily revelation of man and his search for his essence with the notion of a test. Within the context of reflection on the significance of man’s original solitude, John Paul’s reflection pertains to both the test and the knowledge gained as man is examined before God as he exercises his dominion over the rest of creation in the naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19. In and through this test, man gains knowledge about the goodness of God, his own dignity (as superior to the rest of the created world) and his call to unity, insofar as “the man did not find a help similar to himself.”<sup>108</sup> So too, in his suffering, man undergoes a test with parallel lessons found in the creation account. The suffering man ponders the goodness

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, *God, Father and Creator*, June 11, 1986, 276.

<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 10, 1979, 148.

of God, albeit often in a reverse manner. His experience of the lack of bodily health or peace force him to confront the experience of the goodness of God's blessings, now experienced as *lacuna* and to reflect on the meaning of this experience of lack of goodness. He also finds in this struggle with suffering that there is no parallel in the created world to his dignity as man. No other blessing distracts or appeases him in his experience of suffering.

Finally, and most profoundly, man realizes in this test that he is called to find a help which is beyond his current earthly experience. John Paul states that the test of naming the animals before God is a test of man's self-knowledge which makes him go outside of himself, and yet at the same time "reveals himself to himself in all the distinctiveness of his being."<sup>109</sup> Here, returning to the prominent theme in *Salvifici doloris*, man's encounter with God in his suffering is the encounter with the helper, Christ, who has become one like him. These experiences of suffering in man's life invite him, in a testing experience he does not usually have, to search out the meaning of his existence.

It seems as if during suffering man is better able to appreciate the fundamental meaning of values which generally escape his notice; he seems to be more conscious of the fragility of his existence and therefore of the mystery of his creation, of his responsibility for his life, of his sense of good and evil and, finally, of the inexpressible majesty of God.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 150. While the example of naming the animals that John Paul uses as a revelatory experience for man in his relationships with self, God and other is helpful by way of comparison for other experiences which test man, i.e., suffering, this is not to suggest that the experience of suffering was present before the Fall.

<sup>110</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction*, 168.

The testing of man in his experience of suffering should be seen as the acquisition of both the need for and knowledge of his redemption. It is not a test to which God demands a universal standard for each man, but rather a journey toward spiritual maturity,<sup>111</sup> with which he finds his only suitable help in the person of Christ himself.

#### 8.4.3 Suffering as Affording Transformation of Evil

Not only is man transformed in his conversion and experience of redemption in suffering, but man's participation in suffering is an ongoing transformation of suffering itself. Recalling how St. Paul depicted the power of Christ's sacrificial offering, John Robinson offers an insight into how Christ transformed evil by his suffering.

The only way evil ever wins victories is by making a man retort to evil, reflect it, pay it back, and thus afford it a new lease of life. Over one who persistently absorbs it and refuses to give it out, it is powerless. It is in this kind of way that Paul sees Christ dealing with the forces of evil—going on and on and on, triumphantly absorbing their attack by untiring obedience, till eventually there is nothing more they can do. Or, rather, there is one thing more—and that is to kill him. This they do. But in the very act they confess their own defeat. For all they achieve thereby is to deprive him, still inviolate, of the flesh, through which alone they have any power of temptation over him. He thus slips their grasp and renders them impotent. The resurrection is the inevitable consequence of this defeat.<sup>112</sup>

John Paul states that St. Paul is clear that believers in Christ share in the work of Christ's redemptive offering, which is the victory over evil, in their own experience of

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<sup>111</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 22.

<sup>112</sup> Robinson, *The Body*, 51.

suffering.<sup>113</sup> Christ's suffering reached to the very heart of evil, sin, and death, conquering it for rebellion against God by his perfect act of obedience to God.<sup>114</sup>

While objectively conquered and limited in its dominion; evil, manifested in suffering, still plagues man's experience today. But instead of seeing this experience as somehow an "incomplete victory" or a victory which is only a goal or destination for man's earthly existence, John Paul sees man's bodily suffering as also a participation in the transformation (and defeat) of evil through suffering. Christ's victory is witnessed in the sufferings of his brothers and sisters today. Christ acts through the witness of suffering today, and "is present in every human suffering."<sup>115</sup> Man's share in suffering is a witness to his limitations, that evil can tempt man and even threaten and claim his earthly existence. Similar to how Robinson speaks of Christ's sufferings, man too, is a witness that evil has power to a certain point, but may not, through man's fidelity to God and the grace he finds in Christ's participation with him in the time of his suffering, claim his whole being. Man too, transforms evil, absorbs in his own body, the manifestations of evil in suffering. Just as "Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation,"<sup>116</sup> so too man can participate in the absorption of evil in his test of suffering and be a witness to the ultimate victory of Christ's sufferings.

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<sup>113</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 19, p. 30.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 26.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, no 26, p. 44.

The body here is dynamically revelatory. It is a witness to the temptation of and reality of evil in its suffering. But it is also a channel of grace as it absorbs, in a sense, all that evil can do, as did Christ's body. The man who remains steadfast in faith in his suffering imitates as well as participates in the perfect offering of Christ. The body which absorbs the evil in suffering is the offering that each individual makes alongside the offering of Christ.<sup>117</sup> While in death it is the ultimate offering, the faithful sufferer's body is all that evil can take. And parallel to and due to Christ's resurrection, even that loss is temporary. John Paul speaks of the bodily suffering of a person to be a witness, to reveal a union with and manifestation of the victory in Christ's suffering. He uses the analogy of the sacred word, continuously written on to the gospel of suffering.

While the first great chapter of the Gospel of suffering is written down, as the generations pass, by those who suffer persecutions for Christ's sake, simultaneously another great chapter of this Gospel unfolds through the course of history. This chapter is written by all those who suffer together with Christ, uniting their human sufferings to His salvific suffering. In these people there is fulfilled what the first witnesses of the passion and resurrection said and wrote about sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Therefore in those people there is fulfilled the Gospel of suffering, and at the same time, each of them continues in a certain sense to write it: they write it and proclaim it to the world, they announce it to the world in which they live and to the people of their own time.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Edith Stein, *The Hidden Life: Essays, Meditations and Spiritual Texts*, eds. L. Gelber and Michael Linssen, trans. Waltraut Stein, vol. IV of *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1992), 92. "When someone desires to suffer, it is not merely a pious reminder of the suffering of the Lord. Voluntary expiatory suffering is what truly and really unites one to the Lord intimately. When it arises, it comes from an already existing relationship with Christ...Only someone whose spiritual eyes have been opened to the supernatural correlations of worldly events can desire suffering in expiation, and this is only possible for people in whom the spirit of Christ dwells."

<sup>118</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, pp. 43-44.

Christopher Steck sees in John Paul's *Salvifici doloris* a unique aesthetic approach to the mystery of suffering.<sup>119</sup> Building on the notion of how evil and suffering can easily obscure the image of God,<sup>120</sup> the redemption of the world requires that this image be returned to its beauty. Aesthetically, redemption can be said to require a restoration of man's capacity to himself image God, so that the world may again see God clearly. This restoration depends upon the transformation of those things, (suffering and evil) which most directly manifest alienation from God.

In speaking of restoration, it is important to understand that this is not a mere restoration, but rather that the suffering of Christ has a restoring effect. There is the redemption a complete newness beyond man's original innocence.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, St. Paul, in speaking of man's new condition in relation to the suffering and death of Christ, speaks of a superabundance of grace, not just a restoration, but a new relationship with God.<sup>122</sup> Through Christ's suffering, and by his followers' participation in its redemption in their own suffering, believers are not merely returned to a state before the reality of sin, but are given a whole new orientation before God. Of this new orientation, John Paul says:

At this moment [in redemption] endowment with grace is in some sense a "new creation." It differs, however, from the sacrament of creation inasmuch as the original gracing, united with the creation of man, constituted that man "from the beginning" through grace in the state of

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<sup>119</sup> Christopher Steck, "In Union with the Paschal Mystery: The Eucharist and Suffering in the thought of John Paul II", *Pope John Paul II on the Body*, 314-16.

<sup>120</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 9, p.13.

<sup>121</sup> See John Paul, Man and Woman, October 13, 1982, 508: "Man's new supernatural endowment with the gift of grace in the 'sacrament of redemption' is also a new realization of the mystery hidden from eternity with God, new in comparison with the sacrament of creation."

<sup>122</sup> See Romans 5:12-21.

original innocence and justice. Man's new gracing in the sacrament of redemption, by contrast, gives him above all the "forgiveness of sins." Still, even here "grace" can "superabound" as St. Paul expresses himself..."Where sin abounded, grace superabounded" (Rom 5:20).<sup>123</sup>

The need to express the newness of man's situation in redemption and not simply a return to a former innocence is profound for the issue of his own facing of suffering. Initially, man may often desire to return to his former self, free from suffering. But this is not possible. The taking on of suffering changes man existentially, as did original sin. There is no going back, there is instead the potential for transformation.

In Christ's suffering, the signs of defeat are given new meaning as the means of victory over evil. Suffering itself has been given a new potential as the means by which evil is conquered.<sup>124</sup> The conquering of sin has taken place in Christ's cross. The witnessing to it, and the continual absorption of it takes place in man's suffering. Man images God in the participation of the defeat of evil in suffering by offering his own body, as Christ has, as a witness to the potential of being reunited to God. In his body, man carries out a work in his suffering which is more than just an instrument of his own conversion, but also for the conversion of the world.

Faith in sharing in the suffering of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person "completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"; the certainty that in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption *he is serving*, like Christ, *the salvation of his brothers and sisters*. Therefore, he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is the *irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things* which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering, more than anything

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<sup>123</sup> John Paul, Man and Woman, October 13, 1982, 508-09.

<sup>124</sup> Steck, "In Union with the Pascal Mystery, 318.

else, which clears the way for the grace that transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that “cosmic” struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the letter to the Ephesians, [Eph. 6: 12] human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, *constitute a special support for the powers of good*, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers.<sup>125</sup>

It is in this vein which one of the Beatitudes can be understood. To be willing to mourn is a participation in the journey toward the Kingdom of God. Christ did not come to heap suffering on his followers, but in his call to radical love, he demanded a willingness to suffer which comes from authentic love. The traditional Catholic adage to “offer it up” and the spiritual work of mercy to bear wrongs patiently both point to a mystical reality in which one’s sufferings are seen as a participation in the cosmic struggle against evil, a willingness to offer oneself in this struggle. It is insufficient to will only one’s own sanctification in suffering, but rather one wills to make his suffering an offering, following the example of Christ, for others.

You act through self-love is you seek *your perfecting* in *your* suffering. Love—and suffer as you like. Don’t worry: you will not miss out on it...if you *love*. Suffering does not necessarily lead to love, but love does lead away, and soundly to suffering.<sup>126</sup>

#### 8.4.4 Sharing in God’s Omnipotence through Suffering

John Paul recognizes that one of the greatest struggles with suffering is the trial of weakness in the face of elements over which man does not have control. He speaks of a “paradox of weakness and strength” which the Christian endures in his encounter with

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<sup>125</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, p. 47, (emphasis in original).

<sup>126</sup> Louis Evelyn, *Suffering*, trans. Marie-Claude Thompson, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 77, (emphasis in original)

suffering.<sup>127</sup> John Paul does not further articulate the manner in which weakness becomes a power for the suffering Christian. But Hans Urs von Balthasar's description of the power hidden in Christ's redemptive sacrifice can be helpful in demonstrating how the suffering Christian, despite seeming powerless, actually shares in the omnipotent power of God. He formulates a theology of power, which reveals the type of paradox to which John Paul only alludes.<sup>128</sup>

Man experiences power in his existence, for he asserts himself against nothingness (death) and against the other (oppression). The creation accounts have their culmination with man having a share in divine power as he is given sovereignty over all the rest of the natural world. (Gen 1: 26-29). Man, though a creature and ultimately subjected to the authority of God, is nonetheless in an intimate relation to understand his sharing as a partner in the creative power of God.<sup>129</sup> Sin is the disruption, the usurping of the divine power of God; naturally speaking, it is man's attempt at a *coup* over God, in the light of grace it is a manifestation of the refusal to love. How this double refusal (both of justice and of love) of God's power is to be reversed without man's loss of freedom is through the self-limiting of God's power in the mystery of the incarnation and redemptive act of Christ's sacrifice.

The original decision of God to reveal his power as love means something like a self-restriction of his absolute power. It is as if divine justice ties its hands toward sinners through the saving event of the cross. This self-

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<sup>127</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 23, p. 35.

<sup>128</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 193-213. Certainly, the theologies of von Balthasar and John Paul are not identical, but the explanation of von Balthasar additionally illustrates the paradoxical language of weakness and power.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

restriction of God has its manifestation in the obedience of the Son to the salvation will of the Father which was given as a law: “The Son can do nothing of his own accord” (Jn. 5:19); “I can do nothing on my own authority” (Jn. 5:30). Because of this incapacity he cannot defend himself against the secular, ravishing power of the Jews and Gentiles. And his disciples do not fight because his kingdom is not of this world. On the other hand, in this self-limitation of divine power in love there lies the absolute removal of limits and, thus, the revelation of the divine omnipotence before the world. (Eph. 1: 19). The large number of expressions for “power” which Paul uses in speaking of the wakening of the man Jesus, powerless in death, for the sake of our resurrection, shows that the extreme of divine power is manifest. Hence, one must say that the self-limitation of the *potenta absoluta* of God for live is therefore itself omnipotence, because it is compelled by nothing outside God.<sup>130</sup>

This mystery of God’s weakness which is revealed in the life and suffering of Christ as well as in his mystical body of the members of the Church becomes the mystery of his omnipotence. Here the natural sign of the body is unable to signify power in the experience of weakness, the paradox cannot be understood. But through the intended sign of the body, seen in relation to Christ, von Balthasar makes three observations.

First of all, in God’s providential wisdom, his power is all the more noticeable when not linked to any creaturely power. Christ’s words manifest a completeness of power which is beyond the greatest antithesis of the world. He shows life in the (apparent) victory of death and demonstrates both an abandonment to the will of the Father and of complete self-ownership. Far from being contradictory, Christ’s words “I have the power to lay down my life and the power to take it up again” (Jn. 10:18), von Balthasar says, show that the one who has authority over all life, is life even in the midst

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 209.

of death.<sup>131</sup> For man, the similarities between the power of the world and the power of God must be dismissed.

In his own suffering, man passes through the literal exhaustion of his own strength into the mystery of the weakness of Christ. This requires a reverent openness, to be open to the “weakness” of God, for this is the only way for the power of God to break through into the life of man. It is in this vein which Paul heard Christ speaking to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect through weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). For von Balthasar, this paradox of power is crucial for man’s ability to know the power of God in his own weakness.

To perform this act of reverent openness in weakness is to follow Christ to the cross, where he showed the full obedience to the Father. Paul goes as far as to say, “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).<sup>132</sup>

This insight as to God’s revelation of himself through man’s suffering is consistent with Augustine’s understanding of all that must take place for man to be able to comprehend the wisdom of God. The abandonment of all other blessings in the search for the wisdom of God as articulated by Augustine is parallel to von Balthasar’s concept of the abandonment of one’s own power as the (only) way to experience the power of Christ. For just as self-limiting love is ultimately power in God, so can it be in man.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 211.

Von Balthasar's second point is connected to his first: "the weak man offers less resistance to the power of God's love."<sup>133</sup> The suffering body provides a refuge for the love of God when throughout the previous journey of man's life he has trusted in the power of the world and in himself. Those who find themselves in the place of weakness have the potential to become particularly close to God, as Christ reminded in the first beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount. Von Balthasar notes that the "evangelical counsels" are to be seen in this light. By foregoing not only some forms of pleasure, but in a real sense power, renunciation allows one to be completely at God's disposal and serve with an undivided heart. John Paul's interpretation of Christ's words regarding voluntary continence underline this notion of a bodily renouncement to be receptive to God.<sup>134</sup> In health and strength, one's heart may be less inclined to seek the power of God than the intermediate blessings of God in this life.

Von Balthasar concludes with his observation that the poverty taken on in sharing in the cross of Christ in one's own suffering is the greatest invitation to holiness by the Holy Spirit. John Paul notes how this invitation to holiness has often been an invitation for saints to share in suffering.<sup>135</sup> Catherine of Sienna saw in Christ's blood an expression of the love of God that could never have been adequately expressed in any other way. St. Francis saw in Christ's poverty a tenderness of God's love which

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, March 10, 1982, 412-14. John Paul insists that Christ's call of some to continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is in no way an opposition to marriage. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, no. 42, p. 401.

<sup>135</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26.

surpassed all other revelations of his love for man. Christ's cross becomes the central Christian mystery, the greatest insight into God's own Trinitarian love: possible only through the Spirit's introduction.

Accordingly, the Holy Spirit is described as groaning within groaning creation; it is weakened together with the weak, limited together with the finite spirits caught in their clouded subjectivity, frightened and lashing around them. It flows together with the whole process of the world which struggles for the manifestation of its sonship of God. The Christian is the point of intersection of this dual groaning of the creaturely spirit and the divine spirit: "we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons" (Rom. 8:23). The creature is no longer just a vessel for the presence of divine power, nor is he now only the occasion for the epiphany of the sovereign majesty of God, but is united directly in his impotent self-giving with the absolute self-giving of the triune, absolute ground of all being.<sup>136</sup>

John Paul calls this the lifting up which is most possible when one suffers. Man partakes in his very bodily susceptibility, of the potential to be lifted up by God's power in a way in which he is unable to lift himself.

In such a concept, to suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific power of God, offered to humanity in Christ. In Him God has confirmed His desire to act especially through suffering, which is man's weakness and emptying of self, and He wishes to make His power known precisely in this weakness and emptying of self.<sup>137</sup>

The body then, has the potential to be a sign, even, or perhaps mostly in its weakness, of the strength of God for man.

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<sup>136</sup> Von Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology*, 212-13.

<sup>137</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 23, p. 36.

#### 8.4.5 Suffering and an Unleashing of Hope

Finally, John Paul points out that suffering serves as an instrument to unleash the virtue of hope in the individual as a part of his spiritual tempering.<sup>138</sup> It is of great importance to understand that this unleashing of the virtue of hope which suffering makes possible is not the commonplace desire for health or well-wishing that a suffering person naturally possesses. To speak of suffering as unleashing of the virtue of hope, it is necessary to understand hope as a theological and not a natural virtue.

Josef Pieper's classic theological treatise on the theological virtue of hope provides an insight into how to make sense out of John Paul's claim that suffering contains the positive dimension of assisting in virtue and not simply the avoidance of evils to which hope is a defense.<sup>139</sup>

Pieper develops the concept of the common misunderstanding of the virtue of hope as a desire for a beneficial outcome. But the proper understanding of hope as the theological virtue requires two foundational characteristics. First of all, it requires that man view his life as a pilgrimage; the *status viatoris* of embodied man.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, it requires the humility of knowing the potentiality of his being, that what he faces, even what he wants in his life, is insufficiently found by himself or of his own design.

For the individual who experiences, in the *status viatoris*, his essential creatureliness, the "not-yet-exisitng-being" of his own existence, there is only one appropriate answer to such an experience. This answer must not

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Citations are from the compilation, Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 95. The *status viatoris* is similar to the image of historical man in a triptych which John Paul uses in his Theology of the Body Addresses, in that man's life of faith is an historical journey.

be despair—for the meaning of the creature’s existence is not nothingness but being, that is fulfillment. Nor must the answer be the comfortable certainty of possession—for the “becoming-ness” of the creature still borders dangerously on nothingness. Both—despair and the certainty of possession—are in conflict with the truth of reality. The only answer that corresponds to man’s actual existential situation is hope. The virtue of hope is preeminently the virtue of the *status viatoris*; it is the proper virtue of the “not yet.”<sup>141</sup>

Suffering has the potential to refine man’s hope from a natural virtue or inclination for all to be well to a truly supernatural theological virtue more concerned about ultimate than immediate goods.<sup>142</sup> The difficulty with suffering is that it forces a purification from natural hope to theological, or supernatural hope, not frequently needed or exercised outside of the experience of suffering. Pieper notes that contemporary culture struggles in finding sufficient strength in natural hope, not knowing the real longing is for theological hope. This helps explain the “natural” flight from suffering.

Natural hope blossoms with the strength of youth and withers when youth withers. “Youth is a cause for hope. For youth, the future is long and the past is short.” On the other hand, it is above all when life grows short that hope grows weary; the “not yet” is turned into the has-been, and old age turns, not to the “not yet”, but to memories of what is “no more”.<sup>143</sup>

On the other hand, supernatural hope is freed from the limits of the body and of time, for it gives to man “a ‘not yet’ that is entirely superior to and distinct from the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 103, Pieper gives a concise account of the relationship of the theological virtues. “The existential relationship of these three—faith, hope and love—can be expressed in three sentences. First: faith, hope and love have all three been implanted in human nature as natural inclinations (*habitus*) conjointly with the reality of grace, the one source of all supernatural life. Second: in the orderly sequence of the active development of these supernatural inclinations, faith takes precedence over both hope and love; hope takes precedence over love; conversely, in the culpable disorder of their dissolution, love is lost first, then hope, and, last of all faith. Third: in the order of perfection, love holds first place, with faith last, and hope between them.”

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 110, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, II, 40, 6.

failing strength of man's natural hope. Hence it gives to man such a 'long' future, that the past seems 'short' however long and rich his life."<sup>144</sup> Hope for natural things runs counter to theological hope—for despite contemporary culture's many advances, it lacks the ability to bolster man's natural hope in himself and in the world toward the theological virtue of hope. Suffering is potentially necessary to translate man's natural hope to a supernatural virtue.

Following Augustine, Pieper names two types of hopelessness, that of despair and that of false hope, or presumption. "Both of them destroy the pilgrim character of human existence in the *status viatoris*. For they are both opposed to man's true becoming."<sup>145</sup> They are also both dangers in man's familiarity with suffering. It is both common and understandable in the human experience to be presumptuous when suffering is absent and to fall toward despair when it is present. Man often oscillates between extremes which prohibit a real openness to the presence of God in dealing with suffering. Pieper lists them as two distinct but dangerous extreme manifestations of presumption.

Neither hopelessness nor presumption are new, yet both are certainly present in contemporary culture. The first is a Pelagian stoicism which denies the real need for God's continual presence and action in one's life. The second is a liberal assumption of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 111. He adds, "The gift of youth that supernatural hope bestows on man leaves its mark on human nature at a much deeper level than does natural youth. Despite its very visible effect in the natural sphere, the Christian's supernaturally grounded youthfulness lives from a root that penetrates into an area of human nature that the powers of natural hope are unable to reach. This is so because the supernatural youthfulness emanates from participation in the life of God, who is closer and more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. For this reason, the youthfulness of the individual who longs for eternal life is fundamentally imperishable. It cannot be touched by aging or disappointment; it proves itself above all in the face of the withering of natural youth and in temptations to despair. St. Paul says, 'Even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day' (2 Cor. 4:16).

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 113.

the sole efficacy of God's grace. The presence and challenge of suffering, and the attempt to pursue the theological virtue of hope must cut right through these theological extremes. In fact, it may be the most effective tool in doing so in man's experience.<sup>146</sup> By calling suffering an exercise of potential spiritual tempering and an unleashing of hope, John Paul notes that suffering is that experience of evil through which God has brought about the ultimate good of salvation (for man through Christ and for man in his own sharing in it). The body reveals to man the work of his redemption still to be accomplished in the individual and yet anchored to the work of Christ. His sufferings have no use without being efficacious both through Christ and in himself. Suffering forces this transition from a natural hope to a theological one, calling man out beyond himself.

Building upon Paul's Letter to the Romans, John Paul speaks of the redemption of the body as the object of man's hope. He states that hope was implanted in man, as it were, immediately after the first sin. The body's sufferings witness to a hope of the

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 126-27, aptly describes what suffering does for correct pursuit of hope. "Theology calls the first kind of presumption 'Pelagian.' It is characterized by the more or less explicit thesis that man is able by his own human nature to win eternal life and forgiveness of sins. Associated with it is the typically liberal, bourgeois moralism that, for no apparent reason, is antagonistic not only to dogma per se but also to the sacramental reality of the Church: solely on the basis of his own moral 'performance', an 'upright' and 'decent' individual who 'does his duty' will be able to 'stand the test before God' as well. Between this first basic kind of presumption and the second lies that pseudoreligious activism that believes it can construct, out of a thousand 'exercises', a claim to the kingdom of heaven that is rightful and absolutely valid and able, as it were, to pit itself against God. The second form of presumption, in which, admittedly, its basic character as a kind of premature certainty is obscured, has its roots in the heresy propagated by the Reformation: the sole efficacy of God's redemptive and engracing action. By teaching the absolute certainty of salvation solely by virtue of the merits of Christ, this heresy destroys the true pilgrim character of Christian existence by making as certain for the individual Christian as the revealed fact of redemption the belief that he had already 'actually' achieved the goal of salvation. It has often been observed how close—both logically and psychologically—this second form of presumption is to despair, on the one hand and, on the other, to the moral uninhibitedness of that 'inordinate trust of God's mercy' that theology reckons, along with despair, among the sins of the Holy Spirit."

resurrection, for while the body reminds man of his belonging to the visible world, it also reminds man of the transitory nature of that belonging. While the whole created world groans in a (hopeful) anticipation of redemption, for man, the experience of suffering is that particular manifestation of the cosmic struggle in which he participates.<sup>147</sup> John Paul sees hope as integral to both the response to the goodness of creation and the possibility of mastering the concupiscence which man experiences in the body.<sup>148</sup>

The revelatory nature of the human body, well documented by John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body Addresses* is also manifested in his understanding of the mystery of human suffering. As the body manifests God's will in his sexual dimension, so too, the experience of suffering is revelatory for man. The body's significance demands that it be understood not as finished revelation, but rather as a process by which God manifests his will to man. In his body, man gains self-knowledge in reference to the salvific will of the Creator. The evaluation of his sufferings which are physical promptings of the contingency of his being and the reality of evil, demand discernment as continuing revelation, of the working out of man's salvation. Suffering is a manifestation of the struggle between man's actuality and his potentiality. While the body has lost

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<sup>147</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, July 21, 1982, 459ff. It is in the context of commenting on Romans 8 that John Paul speaks about the hope to which the body witnesses. "The apostle speaks about the groans of 'the whole creation,' which 'cherishes the hope that it itself will be set free from the slavery of corruption to enter onto the freedom of the glory of the children of God.' (8:20-21). In this way St. Paul reveals the situation of all that is created and, in particular, that of man after sin. What is significant for this situation is the aspiration that tends—together with the new 'adoption as sons' (8:23) precisely toward the 'redemption of the body,' presented as the end, as the eschatological and mature fruit of the mystery of the redemption of man and world achieved by Christ. See also December 3, 1980, 322.

<sup>148</sup> See *Ibid.*, December 1, 1982, 522.

some of its clearest significance in sinfulness, in God's wisdom it becomes the mediator and channel of man's redemption.

It is apparent that although John Paul addresses in depth the need to alleviate the sufferings of others, (which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter) the mystery of God's love and wisdom has made suffering, which is an experience of evil, also an experience of man's sanctification. By the "forced" meditation which it affords, it matures man, deepens his experience of God's power, signifies and reminds him of redemption afforded in Christ and needed for himself, and unleashes a unique hope which is firmly centered on God rather than on himself (or another's power to deliver). None of what he has written or what is interpreted above makes light of the real agony and depth of experience found in the experience of suffering. Nor was Christ completely assuaged in his need for relief in his suffering. But similarly, man's sufferings remind him that he is not alone in his vocation.

When we have striven to alleviate or overcome suffering, when like Christ we have prayed that "the cup pass us by" (cf. Mt. 26:39), and yet suffering remains, then we must walk the royal road of the Cross. As I mentioned before, Christ's answer to our question "why?" is above all a call, a vocation. Christ does not give us an abstract answer, but rather He says, "Follow me!" He offers us the opportunity through suffering to take part in His own work of saving the world. And when we do take up our cross, then gradually the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed to us. It is then that in our sufferings we find inner peace and even spiritual joy.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> John Paul II, Homily at Los Angeles Coliseum, September 15, 1987, quoted in *The Wisdom of John Paul II*, 87.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE LANGUAGE OF SUFFERING AS GIFT FOR COMMUNION

The preceding chapter spoke about the personal dimension of human suffering from the point of view of the suffering person and his relationship with God and his growth in self-understanding through the mystery of the suffering which he encounters. In John Paul's thought, the experience of suffering is not a passive evil which one simply tolerates, but an event which can become an active endeavor which both symbolizes and manifests his personal redemption in Christ through his own (individual Christian's) body. This chapter will seek to explain John Paul's thought on the interpersonal dimension of human suffering, that is, what the experience of suffering signifies in man's relationship with others, particularly with regard to the concept of how both the suffering person and those who care for the suffering offer themselves as a gift.

#### 9.1 Commonalities in the Language of the Body

Speaking with regard to the sacrament of marriage, John Paul's weekly audiences in January of 1983 focused on the concept which he termed the "language of the body."<sup>1</sup> The pope stated that in their sexual union a married couple "speaks" a language which communicates their fidelity and self-donation. This communication without words is a ratification and consummation of the verbal promises which the couple first made in the vows of their wedding. Their communication through this language of the body is a

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman* audiences of January 5, 12, and 19, 1983, 531-542.

continual participation in the sacramental grace they first received on the day of their wedding. But the couple continually renews the self-donation and fidelity throughout their lives as God has given them, in their masculinity and femininity, the means by which they may physically communicate the reality of their own marital covenant.<sup>2</sup>

John Paul notes that the expression of the language of the body, is for the married couple, a movement from a verbal to a bodily reality. For while marriage is contracted by means of the words in the vows which are verbally expressed, the words themselves are only “a sign of the coming to be of marriage.”<sup>3</sup> The consummation of the marriage through conjugal intercourse is the fulfillment of the couple’s verbal expression, now communicated through the language of the body as intended by the Creator.<sup>4</sup> For historical man, the man of concupiscence, the language of the body is not one that is automatically understood. The reality of sin which tarnishes the image of God in man tempts him with regard to his fidelity to and honest expression of the language of the body.

John Paul points out the long biblical tradition whereby marriage is used as an analogy for the covenantal relationship between God and his people. This image demonstrates the power of the physical dimension of man to reveal the deepest image of love and interpersonal relationship. The prophets in particular are rich in the use of the marriage analogy, and Israel is often cited as adulterous in her lack of fidelity to God. St.

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<sup>2</sup> John S. Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 46.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 5, 1983, 532.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., quoting Genesis 2:24 “A man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh.”

Paul also makes use of marriage as the expression of the ultimate covenant between Christ and his bride, the Church.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the reality of sinfulness resulting in various manifestations of infidelity between God and his people as well as between men and women in the lived vocation of marriage, John Paul calls for the continual rereading of the language of the body in truth. “The body speaks the truth through conjugal love, faithfulness, and integrity, just as untruth or falsity is expressed through all that negates conjugal love, faithfulness, and integrity.”<sup>6</sup> To reread the language of the body means that man and woman are constantly aware that although they speak with each other in the body, they are constantly in need of a more authentic interpretation of this language. The couple needs to reread it in the twofold truth that God has integrally inscribed its structure according to his plan, as well as the fact that Christ has raised the speaking of this language to be the content and guiding principle of their life in him in the church.<sup>7</sup>

John Paul adds that married couples share the dignity of the prophetic vocation in the church. They witness to the creative and redemptive love of God by their faithful and self-giving love. As a prophet expresses the message of God with human instruments,

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 12, 1983, 535. “The prophets portray the covenant as a marriage established between God and Israel (which in turn allows us to understand marriage itself as a covenant between husband and wife; see Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). In this case the covenant comes from the initiative of God, the Lord of Israel. The fact that, as Creator and Lord, he makes a covenant first with Abraham and then with Moses attests [to] a particular election. And for this reason, the prophets, who presuppose the whole juridical-moral content of the covenant, go into greater depth, revealing an incomparably deeper dimension than that of a mere ‘contract.’ By choosing Israel, God united himself with a particular bond, which is deeply personal, and thus Israel, although it is a people, is presented in this prophetic vision of the covenant as ‘Bride’ or ‘wife’ and thus in some sense as a person.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., January 19, 1983, 538.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 539-40. “On the background of the words spoken by the ministers of the sacrament of marriage, there stands the perennial ‘language of the body,’ to which God himself ‘gave its beginning’ by creating man male and female: a language that was renewed by Christ. This perennial ‘language of the body’ bears within itself the whole richness and depth of the Mystery: first of creation, then of redemption.”

usually words, so in God's plan, a couple witnesses to the plan of God for the world in their authentic living out of chaste married love. Their witness, spoken through the language of the body, their continual conjugal consent, is both the message and the channel of God's communication of a plan for man.<sup>8</sup> This witness is a realization that even in the realm of concupiscence, while man is in danger of misreading the language of the body, (by engaging in moral evils which are contrary to chastity), he is also capable by his self-determination to freely choose its correct interpretation. As man *simul lapsus et redemptus*, he is "essentially 'called' and not merely 'accused'" in the present state of his body to be a witness to the creative and redemptive love of God.<sup>9</sup>

While John Paul uses the terminology of a language of the body with reference to the marital vocation of man and woman, its use can be extended to the proper contemplation of other bodily sensations and manifestations within man, including the reality of suffering. "The human body is not only the field of reactions of a sexual character, but it is at the same time the means of expression of man as an integral whole, of the person, which reveals itself [or himself] through the "language of the body."<sup>10</sup>

The human body speaks a "language" of which it is not the author. Its author is man, as male and female, as bridegroom or bride: man with his perennial vocation to the communion of persons. Yet, man is in some sense unable to express this singular language of his personal existence and vocation without the body. He is constituted in such a way from the "beginning" that the deepest words of the spirit—words of love, gift, and faithfulness—call for an appropriate "language of the body." And without this language, they cannot be fully expressed. We know from the gospel

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 539.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., February 9, 1983, 546-47.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., August 22, 1984, 631.

that this point applies both to marriage and to continence “for the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>11</sup>

Subtracting the obvious discrepancy that the conjugal language is a part of God’s plan from the time of creation (whereas suffering, as a result of sin, did not exist in the intention of the Creator) significant commonalities remain which can be used to develop a language of suffering based upon John Paul’s concept of the language of the body. The analogy of the language of the body seeks to make sense of how and for what purpose man’s bodily sensations prompt him to act. He indicates that just as the revelation of man as male and female provide the context for man’s interpretation of his sexual sensations, so other bodily sensations provide the matter to be read for proper interpretation of his other actions.

It is obvious that the body as such does not “speak,” but the one who speaks is man, who rereads what needs to be expressed precisely on the basis of the “body,” of masculinity or femininity of the personal subject, or, even better, *on the basis of what can be expressed by man only through the body*.<sup>12</sup>

First of all, according to his phenomenological style Wojtyla evaluates the promptings of the body as revelatory for man to know both his nature and his destiny. Both the desires of man’s sexual dynamisms and his reaction to the experience of suffering are sensations which require his contemplation and inform his self-understanding.

In the habitual experience of one’s body there are sensations and feelings and thus sensory stimuli expressing the body and its reactive-motor dynamisms. These sensations reveal to every man not a separate “subjectivity” of the body but the somatic structure of the whole subject

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., January 12, 1983, 537.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., January 26, 1981, 542, (emphasis added).

that he is, of the whole ego. They reveal to what extent he is a body, to what extent his soma participates in his existence and his acting. We may even say that a bodily sensation—a direct reflex or the body, a reflex that in a way is being continually formed and shaped—has in this respect a fundamental significance in one’s own bodily ego.<sup>13</sup>

Jaroslav Kupczak points out the intermediary role that sensations play in John Paul’s understanding of the proper progression from man’s sensations to their proper integration in action.

To human feelings he attributes a certain cognitive function which consists of the subject’s sensitivity. Etymologically, both in English and in Polish, sensitivity is related to sensation, which in turn points to sense-perception. Wojtyla insists, however, that human sensitivity does not possess a purely sensory character, but is deeply rooted in the intellectual and spiritual life of the person. At the same time, sensitivity has a primary receptive character and, therefore, should be integrated into the person’s self-determination. Wojtyla explains the cognitive function of feelings by pointing out that they are directed intentionally to values. For example, the person’s self-feeling manifests a distinctive, qualitative trait and value element, as is evident in expressions like “I feel well today” or “I do not feel well.” Wojtyla insists that this emotive experience of values should be subordinated to the objective truth about values as cognized by the person’s intellect.<sup>14</sup>

As described in previous chapters, both the sensations of man’s sexual desires and his experiences of suffering provide data for his contemplation of their value.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, an evaluation of what is brought out from these promptings is necessary for man’s authentic interpretation of the language of the body. Some actions based upon his senses are legitimate, and some are not. The senses by which he will be drawn to act and from which he may cringe often have more significance than man’s

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<sup>13</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 229.

<sup>14</sup> Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 137.

<sup>15</sup> Among other things, it was pointed out in chapter 6, in the realm of man’s sexual dynamisms he experiences in his body the existential need for communion with another, while in his experience of suffering, in chapter 8, it was shown that he experiences the contingency of his being.

instinct can initially perceive. This is due to the fact that the man of concupiscence is not fully integrated in the body-spiritual unity of original man.<sup>16</sup> The body's promptings are in need of rereading within the two historical realities of the intention of the Creator and the sacrifice of the Redeemer. Karol Wojtyla called this connection to the intention of the Creator the priority of reference to truth.

Integration of the person in the action refers essentially to truth which makes possible an authentic freedom of self-determination. Therefore, experience of values, which is a function of man's sensitivity itself (and hence also a function of feelings) has within the dimension of the acting person to be subordinated to the reference to the truth. The fusion of sensitivity with truthfulness is the necessary condition of the experience of values. It is only on the basis of such an experience that authentic choices and decisions can be formed.<sup>17</sup>

Every person who reflects upon it knows the struggle to read the language of the body in its proper light. Every person experiences the fact that desires which God has intended to lead to conjugal unity can instead draw him away from that reality. This is the tension which is the result of sin in the man of concupiscence.<sup>18</sup>

Thirdly, trends in contemporary culture, most substantially within the realms of human sexuality and human suffering, have lead to dehumanizing actions due to the misreading of the will of the Creator for man's life. John Paul sees in the contemporary "culture of death" the manifestations of an improper reading of the will of the Creator in the attitudes toward the suffering and in understanding of the full truth of the conjugal

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<sup>16</sup> See the audiences on the interpretation of shame in the man of concupiscence, especially John Paul, *Man and Woman*, May 28, 1980, 242-43.

<sup>17</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 233.

<sup>18</sup> James Knapp, "Purity in the Adequate Anthropology of John Paul II," *John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial*, John McDermott and John Gavin, eds., (Philadelphia: St. Joseph's University Press, 2007), 255.

act. Having turned aside from these revealed truths in an incorrect reading of the language of the body, man has violated his own dignity.<sup>19</sup> In fact, in *Evangelium vitae*, he describes the sins against the proper expression of the conjugal act directly after those regarding the dismissal of the suffering as acts which help to form the “culture of death.”<sup>20</sup> And later on he notes after mentioning the tendency to reduce suffering to merely an evil to be avoided or rejected, that sexuality *too* is often misread as an occasion for self-assertion rather than as an opportunity to be an expression of the acceptance of another.<sup>21</sup> Understanding both of these areas calls for a common effort to authentically interpret the language of the body.

It is therefore essential that man should acknowledge his inherent condition as a creature to whom God has granted being and life as gift and duty. Only by admitting his innate dependence can man live and use his freedom to the full, and at the same time respect the life and freedom of every other person. Here especially one sees that at the heart of over culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Where God is denied and people live as though he did not exist, or his commandments are not taken into account, the dignity of the human person and the inviolability of human life also end up being rejected or compromised.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, both the marriage covenant and the care of the suffering find expression in the body through particular gestures of tenderness. John Paul notes that the

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<sup>19</sup> See John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 6, p. 17. Speaking on the various challenges that face the family in contemporary culture, he writes: “At the root of these negative phenomena there lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God’s plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one’s own selfish well-being.” Speaking on the issue of the trend toward euthanasia as an absolute resistance in facing suffering, see John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 64, p. 105, where he comments: “When he denies or neglects his fundamental relationship to God, man thinks he is his own rule and measure, with the right to demand that society should guarantee him the ways and means of deciding what to do with his life in full and complete autonomy.”

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, nos. 12-13, pp. 26-28.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, no 23, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 96, p. 151.

married couple become the authors of their own language of love as they express to each other the depth of their love for each other by way of the body.

The couple are [sic] called to form their lives and their living together as a “communion of persons” on the basis of this language. Given that a complex of meanings correspond to the language, the couple—through their conduct and behavior, actions, and gestures [*Gaudium et spes* no. 49]—are called to become the authors of these meanings of the “language of the body” from which they build and continually deepen love, faithfulness, conjugal integrity, and the union that remains indissoluble until death.<sup>23</sup>

The couple’s gestures are means of building up, enriching and actually increasing their love for each other. They are not simply expressions that arise from love, but in a cyclical manner both reflect and build up their love for each other.<sup>24</sup> The Council states that this is, in fact, the difference between true acts of marital love and simple acts of erotic attraction.

Similarly, physical acts of love expressed to the suffering person are acts which have a cyclical dimension. They stem from a love of neighbor and also manifest the love which moves the caregiver to action. Citing the parable of the Good Samaritan, John Paul notes the connection between the “sensitivity of heart, which bears witness to compassion towards the suffering person” and the actions which help the injured man.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 26, 1983, 543.

<sup>24</sup> See *Gaudium et spes*, no. 49, p. 952. “Married love is an eminently human love because it is an affection between two persons rooted in the will and it embraces the good of the whole person; it can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with a unique dignity and ennoble them as the special elements and signs of the friendship proper to marriage. The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on it, has restored, perfected, and elevated it. A love like that, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual giving of self, experiences in tenderness and action, and permeates their whole lives; besides, this love is actually developed and increased by the exercise of it. This is a far cry from mere erotic attraction, which is pursued in selfishness and soon fades away in wretchedness.”

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 28, p. 49.

It is not enough to be moved with compassion at the sight of suffering, that compassion must become the incentive to enter into acts of caring. In the telling of the parable, Jesus does not simply tell the listeners that the Samaritan cared for the man who had been robbed and beaten. He both notes the relation between the emotion and the action of the Samaritan and mentions with detail the physical acts by which his he demonstrates his compassion.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him.<sup>26</sup>

While there are obvious differences between the emotions of a married couple sharing conjugal intimacy and a person caring for the suffering, there are also multiple similarities. Both examples of speaking through the language of the body depend upon intimate physical action, act as a physical manifestation of an interior disposition to love, and demonstrate and build up that love in situations where words alone are insufficient. For both the married couple and the one engaged in the care of the suffering, verbal communication is unable to adequately manifest the love which God intends to be spoken. The analogy of the language of the body is a useful tool for describing the communication present in both the physical love of husband and wife and in the care of the suffering.

To more fully understand the interpersonal communication intended by the Creator in the care of suffering, an examination of the concept of gift as used by John Paul is necessary.

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<sup>26</sup> Luke 10: 33-34.

## 9.2 Hermeneutics of the Gift

For John Paul, who repeatedly returns to the book of Genesis for a proper reading of man's nature and destiny, the bodily life of man is to be understood as a gift. In acknowledging this fact, creation shows itself to be a gift to man from an omnipotent and loving God. Therefore, the gift implies a relationship between the two, as does every intentional gift. To speak of a gift in the fullness of the word means to have an intention in both bestowing the gift upon another and the understanding of having received something as a gift.

The biblical creation account offers us sufficient reasons for such an understanding and interpretation: creation is a gift, because man appears in it, who, as an "image of God," is able to understand the very meaning of the gift in the call from nothing to existence.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of gift has a dual nature, for man has received the world from God, but also the world had received man as a gift for itself.<sup>28</sup>

We should now turn anew to those fundamental words that Christ used, that is, to the word "created" and to the subject, "Creator," introducing into the considerations carried out so far a new dimension, a new criterion of understanding and of interpretation that we will call, "hermeneutics of the gift." The dimension of gift is decisive for the essential truth and depth of the meaning of original solitude-unity-nakedness. It stands also at the very heart of the mystery of creation, which allows us to build the theology of the body "from the beginning," but at the same time demands that we build it precisely this way.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, January 2, 1980, 180.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1980, 179.

The body is a witness to the fact that creation is fundamentally a gift from God of which man is now in possession.<sup>30</sup> His being in possession of this bodily witness is itself a gift, through which man perceives and acts. This gift of the body and man's potential to act though it is a revelation of the freedom through which God intends man to act, and to act with a specific purpose: to express love.

One can say that, created by Love, that is, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, both are "naked," because they are free with the very freedom of the gift. This freedom lies exactly at the basis of the spousal meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains "from the beginning" the "spousal" attribute, that is, the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence. We recall here the text of the most recent Council in which it declares that man is the only creature in the visible world that God willed "for its own sake," adding that this man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self" [*Gaudium et spes* 24].<sup>31</sup>

John Paul terms the mutual giving of man and woman to each other the "spousal character" of the person.

In original innocence, man and woman, in their nakedness without shame, possessed an interior potential to welcome each other as a gift. The interior freedom to offer the disinterested gift of self is a participation in the giving of the Creator, as God willed man for his own sake.<sup>32</sup> Though sin casts doubt on the gift,<sup>33</sup> even in the historical man of concupiscence, man still retains the potential, through self-mastery, to offer

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., January 9, 1980, 183.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., January 16, 1980, 185-86.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., April 30, 1980, 236.

himself as a gift to another and to receive another as a gift.<sup>34</sup> There is, as John Paul notes, an almost “constant danger” in seeing another as an object from which to gain as opposed as a subject to whom one gives.<sup>35</sup> Christ’s call to a new ethic establishes the era of the redemption of the body, through which man’s discernment and rereading of the language of the body allow him to participate in his own sanctification by the authentic mutual gift of his body.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of gift in the language of the body does not pertain to genital actions alone, but they are an expression of the totality of acts within the life of the married couple, which are acts of mutual self-giving which build up the relationship between man and woman for their lives together.

Analogously, it might be said that while sexual union is but one small part of a couple’s overall relationship, it “sacramentalizes” their self-gift lived out in a multitude of daily acts of service and love. It is a concretization and expression of the other forms of intimacy in their relationship: physical (but nongenital), emotional, relational, and spiritual. Furthermore, the couple’s bodily union signifies and effects the union of their persons. They realize themselves precisely in the gift of themselves. They become more deeply an “I” in the bodily dialogue with the “Thou” who is their spouse. When this embodied dialogue results in the creation

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<sup>34</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, July 30, 1980, 263, explains how the threefold concupiscence deprives the reciprocal meaning of the body from its original dimension. Possession of another has the potential for objectification of another for enjoyment: “Concupiscence of itself, however, pushes man toward the possession of another as an object, pushes him toward “enjoyment,” which carries with it the negation of the spousal meaning of the body. In its essence, the disinterested gift is excluded by egotistical “enjoyment.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., citing Romans 7: 23.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., November 12, 1980, 320-21; Crosby *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, 265, sums up this process. “He [John Paul] has shown how the self-donation of spouses, which is preeminently an act of them as persons, can inform their sexuality, which is first experienced as a drive springing up outside of their freedom. Men and women can integrate their sexuality into their self-donation, not just in the sense of controlling and channeling it but of making it a medium for the enactment of their love, thereby gaining for its gesture of self-donation an entire dimension that it would otherwise lack. It is clear that in performing this work of integration, the spouses do not use their sexuality as an object, but incorporate their sexuality into their subjectivity, and in fact incorporate it so intimately as to perfect the entirely personal act of spousal self-donation.”

of new life—a third term whom the couple can address as a “We”—then the couple’s communion presents a striking analogy of Trinitarian life.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, one can gain from what John Paul says regarding the concept of gift in the authentic speaking of the language of the body in spousal relations, a broader concept of other acts of self-giving, particularly with regard to the experience of suffering. He states that authentic love is always spousal in character if not always in fact.<sup>38</sup>

It is here in the extension of the analogy of the concept of gift, that John Paul’s theological anthropology makes a profound contribution to the Christian concept of suffering. What John Paul adds is an active notion of the concept of gift. Most Christian authors base the concept of reverence for human life on the foundation that this life is received as a gift from God. Obviously John Paul agrees with this foundation.<sup>39</sup> This foundation has multiple requirements in anthropology and ethics, particularly with regard to the issue of human suffering. Understanding human life as a gift entails treating it with reverence, and refusing to view it merely with the reductive lenses of utility and technology. It also requires treating the sick and suffering with respect, offering care and compassion to those in need. But even these foundational ethical requirements of viewing human life as a gift are insufficient for John Paul’s anthropology. These requirements, as vital as they are, in and of themselves treat suffering only in a passive

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<sup>37</sup> Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 11 above.

<sup>39</sup> John Paul’s use of the concept of gift is widely used in *Evangelium vitae*, mentioned more than 70 times. See no. 81, pp. 129-30. The foundation for respect for human life, he says, is the core message of the “Gospel of Life” that life is a gift from God. “This involves above all proclaiming the core of this Gospel. It is the proclamation of a living God who is close to us, who calls us to a profound communion with himself and awakens in us the certain hope of eternal life. It is the affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his life and his bodiliness. It is the presentation of human life as a life of relationship, a gift of God, the fruit and sign of his love.”

way. They see suffering as a manifestation of evil, which it certainly is, but also view suffering as a tarnishing of the gift, instead of an occasion which has the potential, as John Paul says, with God's grace to unleash positive virtues in man and among men.<sup>40</sup> As man is created male and female in order to express love in a unique way, so suffering is present to allow the unique expression of love through the body, as a revelation of the gift of the body. In order to view the love expressed through the language of the body when facing the reality of suffering, it is necessary to examine the revelation of the redemptive love of Christ.

### 9.3 Unitive and Redemptive Love Together in Christ's Suffering

Man and woman are called in their bodily relation to reveal both the goodness of creation and redemption to each other and to the world through their bodies. It is in Christ Jesus that the revelation of the goodness of creation is fulfilled.<sup>41</sup> In Christ, man finds the fullness of revelation of himself by entering into a personal union with Christ.<sup>42</sup> The love with which man is redeemed is the total self-giving of Christ, who suffered for man's redemption. John Paul asserts that man cannot understand himself, his life, nature or destiny if he does not love. For man in the realm of concupiscence, to love authentically means to enter into the struggle to properly read the language of the body. The human dimension of the mystery of the redemption is that "man finds again the

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<sup>40</sup> See John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, nos. 29-30, p. 50, 54.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 8, p.24.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity.”<sup>43</sup> Man shares in the struggle to love in every dimension of his life, including, but not limited to, a spousal relationship. Jeffrey Tranzillo explains the fusion of unitive and redemptive love in Christ:

By giving himself up to death, Christ united the Church to Himself as His Body in a quasi-spousal way. Conversely, through the fusion of redemptive and unitive love in Christ, the body took on a new redemptive significance, apart from which authentic unitive love cannot be expressed. Christ gave himself to the Church precisely by giving Himself for the Church; hence self-sacrifice is now essential to unitive self-giving, which has consequently become redemptive.<sup>44</sup>

The letter to the Ephesians (5: 25-30) explains how Christ formed the church to be his bride through his own bodily suffering. The mystical union between Christ and the church is the result of the sacrificial act of his voluntary suffering. He redeemer her, and she is redeemed inasmuch as she continues to be united with him as a bride is to the bridegroom.<sup>45</sup>

This analogy of the body is significant for the reality of suffering in the life of the Christian.<sup>46</sup> In God’s wisdom, the taking of the human body was not sufficient for man’s redemption. Though the mystery of the Incarnation has wedded God to man and man to God in an unbreakable bond, and has already demonstrated the self-giving of Christ for

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., no. 10, p. 27-28.

<sup>44</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 250.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>46</sup> While this section seeks to highlight the similarities between the dimensions of spousal love and suffering which are found in the perfect love of Christ, it is crucial to remember, as was stated above, that there remains a significant discrepancy in the analogy—that while the Church maintains that the body was created by God from the beginning to offer spousal love through their bodies, that suffering is not revealed to be the intention of the Creator from the beginning—that it is an evil and a trial, *through* which redemption *might* be experienced.

man, it was Christ's bodily suffering that completed the act of man's redemption. To be redeemed therefore means having a share in Christ's sufferings.<sup>47</sup>

As God has created the body, both man's sexual union and his other bodily senses are revelations in need of authentic interpretations. The experience of suffering is another expression of the language of the body wherein there is the opportunity for God to reveal his power and love.

In fact, John Paul argues that suffering is a great preparation for the transformation of grace, allowing for God to make present the power of the redemption.<sup>48</sup> Viewed from the totality of man's bodily expression, just as Christ has redeemed the spousal union of man and woman by his bodily suffering, offering them the possibility to reread the language of the body in truth, so man's own sufferings offer the potential to unleash the hope and love which flow over to the other areas of his life, that he may reread these areas anew in truth. This truth is the call to view the gift of life which man has received in its ultimate purpose, not simply the gift of his earthly life communicated through his body, but how the revelation in that body calls him to communion with others, with God, and toward the gift of eternal life.<sup>49</sup>

As John Paul sees it, the authentic reading of the language of the body in lived marital fidelity is a revelation of the same love which is most fully expressed in the sacrifice made by Christ. Christ's sacrifice is symbolized in language of the body

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<sup>47</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 251.

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 81, p. 130.

through the regular lived expression of the spousal union of man and woman.<sup>50</sup> The body allows man and woman to love each other as Christ loves each of them. The presence of suffering, as well, unleashes a potential to love as a participation in the redemption brought by Christ's offering of himself.<sup>51</sup>

#### 9.4 The Eucharist as Model of the Bodily Gift in Suffering

Christopher Steck has sketched a way of developing John Paul's reflections on the issue of human suffering in the light of his 2003 Encyclical letter *Ecclesia de eucharistia*. While the letter certainly seeks to deepen a sense of Eucharistic piety among Catholics by among other things, addressing various practical issues regarding the proper celebration of the sacrament, the underlying purpose is to rekindle a sense of awe and reverence for the mystery of the Eucharist.<sup>52</sup> In the course of the letter, John Paul states the need for a return to the view of the celebration of the Eucharist as a sacrifice and not merely a fraternal banquet.<sup>53</sup> The Church does not merely gather together at the Eucharist; it gathers together at every Eucharist with the purpose of being spiritually present at the mysteries of man's redemption. Man spiritually returns to the offering of Christ in each celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>54</sup> The Eucharist, then, is a primary means for the Christian to witness to the sacrificial offering of the body of Christ, both universally for man's salvation, and personally in his own reception of Christ's body. Participation in the

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<sup>50</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 13, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, pp. 53-54.

<sup>52</sup> Steck, "In Union with the Paschal Mystery, 312.

<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de eucharistia*, "The Eucharist and its Relationship to the Church," Vatican Translation, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2003), no 10, pp. 15-16, *AAS* 95 (2003), 433-475.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, no 3, p. 9.

Eucharist bridges the gap between the suffering sacrifice of Christ, whose self-donation is man's redemption, and man's own struggle to know the presence of Christ in his own experience of suffering.

The image of the sacrifice present in the Eucharist is to be balanced with the notion of fraternity, by which the Church is gathered together, not as the initiator of the sacrifice, but which nonetheless makes an offering as a response to divine initiative.<sup>55</sup> In his 1980 letter, *Dominicae cenae*, John Paul reflected upon the symbolic nature of the offerings made by the participants of the Eucharistic liturgy.

Although all those who participate in the Eucharist do not confect the sacrifice as he [the priest] does, they offer with him, by virtue of their common priesthood, their own spiritual sacrifices represented by the bread and wine from the moment of their presentation at the altar. For this liturgical action, which take[s] a solemn form in almost all liturgies, has a "spiritual value and meaning." The bread and wine become in a sense a symbol of all that the Eucharistic assembly brings, on its own part, as an offering to God and offers spiritually.<sup>56</sup>

The concept of sacrifice is crucial for the understanding of the mystery of suffering and its connection with the theological concept of gift. As a means of being "spiritually present" at Christ's sacrifice, the Eucharist calls upon the radical nature of God's love for man in Christ's own bodily suffering.

As Steck puts it, the Eucharist elicits tremendous reverence for the body of Christ on multiple levels: "the self-giving offer that is at the heart of the sacrifice, the suffering which is endured, the troubling recognition that this act was done because of our sin,

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<sup>55</sup> Steck, "In Union with the Paschal Mystery," 315.

<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae cenae*, "The Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist," Vatican Translation, (Boston: St. Paul Books, 1980), no. 9, p. 18, *AAS* 72 (1980), 113-148.

etc.”<sup>57</sup> The power of participating in this offering is accomplished because “The Eucharist then places us before an event beyond our control, one which erupts in salvation history as dramatic act of God.”<sup>58</sup>

The participation in the reality which is the Eucharist is initially one of reverence and awe, but is not in any way merely passive. The renewal of this mystery incorporates, as mentioned above, the spiritual offerings of the participants. The divine initiative also calls for the active offerings of those present. While under the forms of bread and wine, and the other material gifts presented for the Eucharist, the participants are actually offering all of themselves as a gift to God to be sanctified.<sup>59</sup> Included in this spiritual offering are the individual’s struggles and sufferings, and in their offering, Christ offers completion, such that as John Paul says, Christ’s desire to be united with those who suffer, is “completed” by the sufferings of his followers.<sup>60</sup> The Eucharist is this meeting place whereby the “completing” acts of the followers of Christ in their sufferings are offered to the Father, with and through the sacrifice of Christ, which they receive.

John Paul notes the relation between the sacramental configuration to Christ, which takes place in the Eucharist, and the experience of the suffering person.

In the Pascal Mystery Christ began the union with men in the community of the Church. The mystery of the Church is expressed in this: that already in the act of Baptism, which brings about a configuration with Christ, and then through His sacrifice—sacramentally through the Eucharist—the Church is continually being built up spiritually as the Body

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<sup>57</sup> Steck, “In Union with the Paschal Mystery,” 314.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 314-15.

<sup>59</sup> See John Paul II, *Domenica cenae*, no. 9, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, p. 37.

of Christ. In this Body, Christ wishes to be united with every individual, and in a special way He is united with those who suffer.<sup>61</sup>

The Eucharist depends upon the Christian's willingness to make an offering to God.

John Paul uses the example of Mary, an example for all Christians, as prefiguring the sacramental dimension of the Eucharist at various points in her life. He writes that Mary exhibited a Eucharistic faith and "made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist."<sup>62</sup>

In her own sufferings, John Paul says, "Mary experienced a kind of 'anticipated Eucharist'—one might say a 'spiritual communion'—of desire and oblation, which would culminate in her union with her Son in his passion."<sup>63</sup> For John Paul, a Eucharistic faith, as described in the life of Mary, means the willingness to offer one's own sufferings with faith, uniting them to the perfect offering of Christ. This is an act of anticipation. Specifically speaking of Mary, he notes that this anticipation "to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's own body and blood."<sup>64</sup> Steck bemoans the lack of detail in John Paul's specific extension of this spiritual manifestation of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the lives of all Christians beyond Mary.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de eucharistia*, no. 56, pp. 69-70.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., no. 55, pp. 68-69.

<sup>65</sup> Steck, "In Union with the Paschal Mystery," 316. "In one brief paragraph in this section, the pope does hint at the idea that, as part of their response to Christ, believers are called to a genuine participation in the suffering and sacrifice of Christ, but here only Mary is specifically mentioned." This is perhaps due to the fact that John Paul has already highlighted the relationship of the suffering person to Christ in the Eucharist in *Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, p. 37.

John Paul notes that in the Eucharist, the revelation of the sprinkled blood of Christ is two-fold for the Christian. First, for the suffering, it is a profound revelation of hope. This blood is “the most powerful source of hope, indeed it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God’s plan life will be victorious.”<sup>66</sup> Those who are in the midst of the battle between good and evil in the experience of their suffering are not only reminded of the definitive victory of Christ, but they also are brought into the spiritual presence of that victory in the person of Christ whom they receive. Additionally, the blood of Christ is the strength by which Christians are drawn to the promotion of the dignity of life in those who are vulnerable:

Whoever in the Sacrament of the Eucharist drinks this blood and abides in Jesus is drawn into the dynamism of his love and gift of life, in order to bring to its fullness the original vocation to love which belongs to everyone.<sup>67</sup>

The Catholic tradition of offering sacrifices is ultimately always to be connected with the offering of the Eucharist. The believer finds solace in the interaction with the mystery of Christ’s complete offering. As Mary Timothy Prokes notes, Christ’s handing over of his body as food and drink is the most profound offering one can make. This is because this offering is unique in its intimacy and is the unique eternal gift, such that Christ’s followers share in it perpetually.<sup>68</sup> In uniting one’s own sufferings with the offering of the Eucharist, the Christian seeks Christ’s completion of his own gift of self, and thus participates in what Prokes calls, “praying the body.”<sup>69</sup> The Eucharist becomes

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<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 25, pp. 46-47.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 141.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 140-145.

the prime reference for each individual's potential bodily gift of self.<sup>70</sup> The traditional prayer of the morning offering is a lesson in uniting one's own sufferings with the prayer of the church, particularly the Eucharistic offering.<sup>71</sup>

### 9.5 True Communication: The Language of Gift in Suffering

John Paul describes the nuptial gift between man and woman as the analogy by which man can comprehend the radical nature of the gift of salvation which God communicates to him through his body.

The gift given by God to man in Christ is a "total" or radical gift, which is precisely what the analogy of spousal love indicates: it is in some sense "all" that God "could" give of himself to man, considering the limited faculties of man as a creature. In this way the analogy of spousal love indicates the "radical" character of grace: of the whole order of created grace.<sup>72</sup>

The mystery of God's eternal life is understood in the historical event of Christ. The invisible love of God is made known through the person of Christ and his gift of redemption. The analogy of spousal love serves to mediate man's understanding of what it means to offer oneself completely as a gift to another person.<sup>73</sup>

In *Salvifici doloris*, John Paul utilized three levels of the language of gift in the mystery of suffering, another analogy of the revelation of the eternal mystery of God's life. First, he speaks of the gift of God the Father in initiating man's redemption. "For

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>71</sup> One form of the prayer is "O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayer, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of my relatives and friends, and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father," (28 July 2007), as found on [www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/prayers/morning2.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/prayers/morning2.htm).

<sup>72</sup> John Paul, *Man and Woman*, September 29, 1982, 501.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”<sup>74</sup> The profound reality of this gift of God changes man’s destiny.

...in spite of the sin that took root in this history both as an original inheritance and as the “sin of the world” and as the sum of personal sins, God the Father has loved the only-begotten Son, that is, He loves Him in a lasting way; and then in time, precisely through this all-surpassing love, He “gives” this Son, that He may strike at the very roots of human evil and thus draw close in a salvific way to the whole world of suffering in which man shares.<sup>75</sup>

This gift of God to man is means of his salvation, Christ, whose sufferings would free the world from the realm of sin and death. Jesus’ words to Nicodemus demonstrate both the freedom of the gift and the source and motivation of the Father’s offering: out of love for sinful man, God willingly gave up the life of his only Son.

John Paul also notes the freedom and active nature of the total gift of Christ in his sufferings. Christ willingly and actively offered his life in the suffering of the cross.

Christ goes toward His passion and death with full awareness of the mission that He has to fulfill precisely in this way. Precisely by means of this suffering He must bring it about that “man should not perish, but have eternal life.” Precisely by means of His cross He must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of His cross He must accomplish the work of salvation. This work, in the plan of eternal Love, has a redemptive character.<sup>76</sup>

John Paul explains the dual nature of the subject of these sufferings and the uniqueness of the radical gift that only Christ is able to give.

He who by His passion and death on the cross brings about the Redemption is the only-begotten Son whom God “gave.” And at the same time this Son who is consubstantial with the Father suffers as a man. His suffering has human dimensions; it also has—unique in the history of

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<sup>74</sup> John 3:16 as cited in *Salvifici doloris*, no. 15, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 15, pp. 21-22.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 16, p. 23.

humanity—a depth and intensity which, while being human, can also be an incomparable depth and intensity of suffering, insofar as the man who suffers is in person the only-begotten Son Himself: “God from God.” Therefore, only He—the only begotten Son—is capable of embracing the measure of evil contained in the sin of man: in every sin and in “total” sin, according to the dimensions of the historical existence of humanity on earth.<sup>77</sup>

Christ’s gift is the most complete gift, in that he offers himself wholly and voluntarily in the redemption and it is the unique gift of his offering as God and man, what no one else could offer.<sup>78</sup>

John Paul notes two dimensions in this gift which are applicable for man’s suffering as well. Christ’s sacrifice is the epitome of both freedom and obedience. Christ’s gift was totally voluntary<sup>79</sup> as well as being obedient to the salvific will of the Father.<sup>80</sup> This apparent paradox strikes to the heart of the mystery of suffering. He notes that the episode of Christ’s trial in the garden of Gethsemane demonstrates the eternal struggle contained in suffering.

The words of the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane prove the truth of love through the truth of suffering. Christ’s words confirm with all simplicity this human truth of suffering to its very depths: suffering is the evil before which man shudders. He says: “Let it pass from me,” just as Christ says in Gethsemane.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., no. 17, pp. 25-26.

<sup>78</sup> The Eucharistic liturgy demonstrates in several places the unique and total gift of Christ’s offering. See especially, the Preface “Easter V” in *The Sacramentary*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985), 442. “As he offered his body on the cross, his perfect sacrifice fulfilled all others. As he gave himself into your hands for our salvation, he showed himself to the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice.”

<sup>79</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 18, p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., no. 14, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., no. 18, p. 27.

Through her history, the Church has interpreted Christ's gift through suffering in various ways.<sup>82</sup> In all of them, however, suffering is the demonstration of the depth of love which Christ has for man, to offer the gift of his own life, even when the gift is not appreciated or received, as evidenced in Christ's final words of forgiveness from the cross.

The third level of the gift offered in suffering is on the part of man. As mentioned above, St. Paul exhorts Christians, as Christ himself taught his disciples, to share in suffering as a real participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ. By man's offering of his suffering, both freely and obediently as did Christ, he shares in the work of redemption.<sup>83</sup> The apostle urges: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."<sup>84</sup> John Paul states that the double aspect of suffering, both the gift of oneself in suffering and the gift of oneself in the care of the suffering person, is a recognition of the profound presence of Christ both in the suffering person and in the one who cares for him. It is Christ who is present in the person who suffers as well as Christ who is present to and leads the disciple in his suffering.<sup>85</sup> "At one and the same time Christ has taught man to do good by his suffering and to good to those who suffer. In this double aspect He has completely revealed the meaning of suffering."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> It is not within the scope of this dissertation to address the various interpretations or theories on the effects of Christ's sacrifice. Among them, theories of atonement, satisfaction/ransom, and recapitulation can be found in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, especially pp. 163-188.

<sup>83</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 20, p. 31.

<sup>84</sup> Romans 12: 1, as cited in *Salvifici doloris*, 20, p. 31.

<sup>85</sup> See *Salvifici doloris*, nos. 26, pp. 43-44; 30, pp. 53-54.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 30, p 54.

### 9.5.1 Gift of Self by the Suffering Person

John Paul notes the reciprocal nature of the concept of the gift. After having spoken about the gratuitous nature of God's gift of life to man, he speaks of the purification and renewal of that gift for man, promised through the prophets, but ultimately fulfilled in the unique and complete gift of the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>87</sup> He notes the relationship in knowing one's life to be a gift and then coming to realize that this gift is only fulfilled in the return of the gift to another. As the Second Vatican Council notes, "man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere gift of himself."<sup>88</sup> Within the mystery of suffering, man is afforded the opportunity to give himself, completely and sincerely in two distinct ways: by accepting his own suffering and offering it as a gift to God, and by giving of himself to assist those who suffer.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it could be argued that the suffering which one receives in his own life is hardly the type of matter from which one could make an offering. This is to assume the passive dimension of suffering alone, which John Paul negates by stating that "Christ has taught man to do good by his suffering."<sup>89</sup> Christians who accept suffering complete the saving work of Christ's offering of himself, they choose to be active in suffering, not merely as a recipient of suffering.<sup>90</sup> The mystery which is suffering—by the very definition of mystery—requires grace to understand that man's suffering can be offered as a gift.

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<sup>87</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 2, pp. 12-13.

<sup>88</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24, p. 925.

<sup>89</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 54.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, no 20, p. 31.

Speaking in the context of both the nobility and challenge of the disciple of Christ, John Paul notes the concrete reality of struggle and suffering.<sup>91</sup> While acknowledging the various extraordinary forms of witness in martyrdom, John Paul is clear to teach that every disciple receives the call to self-donation to Christ. How this gift of self is given to Christ varies from individual to individual. Not all are able to make the same gift. All are called to carry out a gift of self to Christ as a response to being his disciple. Ultimately for many, this includes the readiness to suffer as an expression of interior detachment.<sup>92</sup>

John Paul speaks on the cosmic level of the offering which man makes of himself in suffering. Faith in participating in the saving work of Christ, allows man to make his self-offering, completed in Christ, an offering for others. This requires the willingness to take up one's cross following the example of Christ. This is the only way in which the redemptive dimension of one's suffering can be known. Christ does not answer with abstract logic, but instead with a personal experience of his own cross:

The answer which comes through this sharing, by way of the interior encounter with the Master, is in itself something more than the mere abstract answer to the question about the meaning of suffering. For it is

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<sup>91</sup> John Paul II, *Jesus, Son and Savior: A Catechesis on the Creed*, Vatican translation, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1996), audience of October 29, 1987, 249. "In establishing the need of the response to the call to follow him, Jesus concealed from no one that to follow him involves sacrifice, sometimes also the supreme sacrifice."

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 248. "Undoubtedly the concrete forms of the following of Christ are graduated by himself according to the conditions, possibilities, missions and charisms of persons and classes. Jesus' words, as he himself said, are 'spirit and life' (Cf. Jn. 6:63). And one cannot presume to materialize them in an identical manner for everyone. But according to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Gospel request for heroic renunciations, such as those of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and self-denial in order to follow Jesus, commits everyone *secundum praeparationem animi* (cf. *Summa Theol.*, II-II, 184, 7 ad. 1). That is, it means to be ready in spirit to carry out what is required, should one be called upon to do so. The same can be said of the oblation of martyrdom rather than deny the faith and the following of Christ. The counsels therefore imply for everyone an interior detachment, a donation of self to Christ, without which there is no true evangelical spirit."

above all a call. It is a vocation. Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else He says: “Follow me!” Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering! Through my cross! Gradually, as the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him. He does not discover this meaning at his own human level, but at the level of the suffering of Christ. At the same time, however, from this level of Christ the salvific meaning of suffering descends to man’s level and becomes, in a sense, the individual’s personal response. It is then that man finds in his suffering interior peace and even spiritual joy.<sup>93</sup>

In this compact paragraph, John Paul reveals a theology of sacrifice, the offering of oneself as a gift, within the language of the body.

John Paul states that man cannot find meaning for the sufferings which he experiences at the merely human or natural level. He can only find meaning for them at the level of Christ’s sufferings. But he cannot reach the level of Christ’s sufferings without giving over the gift of himself. John Paul notes that the feeling of uselessness in suffering is a profound temptation at the human level of this experience,<sup>94</sup> but man can traverse this level only by the acceptance of the call to suffer. John Paul calls suffering a vocation. A vocation presumes a response. This response is the initial gift of oneself, to journey with Christ himself to a level of understanding in suffering that is divine.

This gift of oneself in suffering is analogous to the sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist. Christ, who proclaimed that a grain of wheat remains only that until it dies—and then can produce much fruit, spoke not only of his own offering for the salvation of

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<sup>93</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*., no. 26, p. 46.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 27, p. 47.

the world, but also called his followers to do the same.<sup>95</sup> As with the concept of the Eucharistic sacrifice, whereby one cannot receive the body and blood of the Lord without making the offering of bread and wine, representations of the sacrifices of the people,<sup>96</sup> so one cannot come to the level of the sacrifice of Christ, without making the offering of self. John Paul calls man's suffering his own response to the experience of the profound love of the suffering Christ.<sup>97</sup> The good received from the offering of the Eucharist is the presence of the body and blood of Christ. The good received in the offering of oneself in suffering is a support, united with Christ's offering, for the cosmic struggle of good over evil.<sup>98</sup> It is only in this continual giving of oneself, and being lifted up to the spiritual level of Christ, that one can make sense of the joy, which both St. Paul and John Paul note in the experience of suffering.<sup>99</sup>

Like Christ, the Christian's vocation of suffering exists in the balance of freedom and obedience to the will of God. While one may not be free to suffer when facing pain and illness or the struggles that come to a person because of the actions of another, one is free to choose to make it an act of offering. This is the movement from passive to active suffering, the decision, like Christ, to bear the sufferings which come man's way. John Paul notes that this takes a gift of grace, for suffering is usually met with fear, doubt, and

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<sup>95</sup> The twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John reads, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in the world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; for if any one serves me, the Father will honor him." John 12: 24-26.

<sup>96</sup> John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, no. 9. p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, p. 46.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 27, p. 47.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, and citation of Colossians 1: 24.

protest.<sup>100</sup> Recalling the temptation and agony of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane,

man can exercise his freedom in accord with the will of God when facing suffering.

Dying to the Lord means experiencing one's death as the supreme act of obedience to the Father, being ready to meet death at the "hour" willed and chosen by him, which can only mean when one's earthly pilgrimage is completed. Living to the Lord also means recognizing that suffering, while still an evil and a trial in itself, can always become a source of good. It becomes such if it is experienced for love and with love through sharing, by God's gracious gift and one's own personal and free choice, in the sufferings of Christ crucified. In this way, the person who lives his suffering in the Lord grows more fully conformed to him and more closely associated with his redemptive work on behalf of the Church and humanity.<sup>101</sup>

John Paul argues that the offering of one's suffering in imitation of Christ is both an act of obedience and an act of the proper exercise of freedom. This appears as a contradiction, as the natural reactions of man to preserve his life and flee from suffering would seem to preclude the ability to freely enter into suffering.<sup>102</sup> In the 1976 retreat to Pope Paul VI, Karol Wojtyla gave a reflection about the lessons for man in his suffering found in the event of Christ's confrontation with his suffering at the garden of Gethsemane.

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<sup>100</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, p. 45.

<sup>101</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 67, p. 111.

<sup>102</sup> Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd, (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 77, in writing about the love of God in the midst of affliction, moves beyond John Paul's reflection on suffering, but nevertheless gives an analogy of the concept of obedience which is helpful here. "Men can never escape from obedience to God. A creature cannot but obey. The only choice given to men, as intelligent and free creatures, is to desire obedience or not to desire it. If a man does not desire it, he obeys nevertheless, perpetually, inasmuch as he is a thing subject to mechanical necessity. If he desires it, he is still subject to mechanical necessity, but a new necessity is added to it, a necessity constituted by laws belonging to supernatural things. Certain actions become impossible for him; others are done by his agency, sometimes almost in spite of himself. When we have the feeling that on some occasion we have disobeyed God, it simply means that for a time we have ceased to desire obedience. Of course it must be understood that, where everything else is equal, a man does not perform the same actions if he gives his consent to obedience as if he does not; just as a plant, where everything else is equal, does not grow in the same way in the light as in the dark. The plant does not have any control or choice in the matter of its own growth. As for us, we are like plants that have the one choice of being in or out of the light."

He called this moment of intense prayer in which Christ faced the reality of his forthcoming suffering and death “a meeting place between the human will and the will of God.”<sup>103</sup> Christ faced suffering with the knowledge and fear of the human heart as well as the divine knowledge that he had become man with the purpose of offering himself completely as a “gift of oneself in sacrifice.”<sup>104</sup> In this interior struggle, facing human fear with divine knowledge, Christ’s obedience is the acceptance of the truth of the Father’s will for man’s salvation. For Christ as well as for man, obedience is not only the renunciation the supremacy of one’s will, but above all, an opening to the perception of the love of God.<sup>105</sup> Obedience and freedom coexist in the truth. That suffering would be demanded of Christ, as well as of his followers, is a truth understood in the contemplation of the mystery of redemption, in which every man of all time participates with Christ. One’s offering of himself in suffering, as a gift to God, is an act of obedience to the eternal and salvific will of the Father.

The offering of oneself as a gift in suffering is a manifestation of redemption. Analogous to John Paul’s understanding of the progression from a verbal to a bodily reality in the consummation of marriage, wherein the couple’s verbal promises are realized in the mutual gift of self in their spousal union, so too the verbal promise made in baptism may be realized in the gift of oneself to God in suffering.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried with him by baptism into

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<sup>103</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, 150.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.<sup>106</sup>

From this revelation of St. Paul connecting baptism to a death of the former self, the Christian enters into a new relationship with Christ, whereby he is “introduced” to the means by which Christ has gained salvation.<sup>107</sup> The “divine adoption” in baptism grants a rebirth to man, who now as sons and daughters in the order of grace, live not only for themselves, but participate in the economy of salvation.<sup>108</sup> In this participation in the economy of salvation, God’s adopted sons and daughters are called to share in Christ’s sufferings for the salvation of the world. The status of man as an adopted son of God in baptism points to his being a new creature and for a new purpose. In receiving baptism, the new creature shares in the common priesthood of all believers, and is called upon, in living no longer just for himself, to belong primarily to Christ and to be subject to others.<sup>109</sup> As marriage is consummated in the spousal union of man and woman, so the vows of man’s baptism can be said to be consummated in his offering of himself in suffering, by a share in the common priesthood.

John Paul speaks of a “wonderful interchange” present in the mystery of suffering by which the one who gives of himself is given a place intimately closer to Christ.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Romans 6: 3-4.

<sup>107</sup> See Joseph Fitzmyer, “The Letter to the Romans,” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond Brown et. al. eds., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 847. “The rite of Christian initiation introduces a human being into union with Christ suffering and dying. Paul’s phrase is bold; he wants to bring out that the Christian is not merely identified with the ‘dying Christ’ who has won victory over sin, but is introduced into the very act by which that victory has been won. Hence the Christian is ‘dead to sin’, associated with Christ precisely at the time when he formally became Savior.”

<sup>108</sup> John Paul II, *The Spirit: Giver of Life and Love*, August 29, 1990, p. 264.

<sup>109</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vatican translation: (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997) no. 1269.

<sup>110</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, p. 44.

John Paul taught in his analysis of Ephesians 5: 21-33 that it was by Christ's giving himself up to death that he has not only fulfilled the will of the Father for the life of the Church, but that the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, indirectly by allusion, become the source for understanding the dimension of the body meant to be given as a gift for another.<sup>111</sup> In the economy of salvation, God has revealed his redemptive plan for man's salvation through the suffering of Christ. That salvation is effected through human suffering in Christ means that suffering serves as a means through which man participates in his own salvation.<sup>112</sup>

Man is called to follow the path of Christ's sufferings, and in sharing in them in his own body, he preserves a "particle of the infinite treasure of the world's redemption."<sup>113</sup> To speak of suffering as a state which has the potential to reveal a treasure requires not only the docility to see the will of God through obedience, but also to learn to reread the language of the body in the truth, such that what God allows man to experience can be understood.

In a reflection on the Way of the Cross, John Paul notes that a change in perspective is needed to understand the role of suffering as a blessed one, not a cursed one.

In a Lenten hymn, we hear the words: "Under the weight of the cross, Jesus welcomes the Cyrenean." These words allow us to discern a total change of perspective: the divine Condemned One is someone who, in a certain sense, "*makes a gift*" of his cross. Was it not he who said: "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:38)? Simon receives a gift. *He has become "worthy" of it.* What the

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<sup>111</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, October 27, 1982, 514.

<sup>112</sup> Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 249.

<sup>113</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, p. 48.

crowd might see as an offense to his dignity has, from the perspective of redemption, given him a new dignity. In a unique way, the Son of God has made him a sharer in his work of salvation. Is Simon aware of this?<sup>114</sup>

John Paul notes the struggle, to move from being forced to carry the cross to accepting it for one's own good as necessary journey of personal faith.<sup>115</sup> While John Paul uses the concept of language for the communication found in suffering, in this example he also sees in Simon the concept of apprenticeship, as does Simone Weil.<sup>116</sup> In both images, the need for working with God in order to understand his will is crucial. It gives meaning at the very moment in which it sanctifies, and these must be accomplished simultaneously.

These images of the gift of man's suffering to God as the most intense gift of self demonstrate that, in accord with John Paul's anthropology, God speaks to man in a language of the body, through which he calls man to himself, by means of the offering of man's self as a gift. This language is often met with resistance, but becomes the means of man's own sanctification and participation in the sanctification of the world. Louis Evelyn describes the language of suffering in similar vein to John Paul's.

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<sup>114</sup> John Paul II, *John Paul II's Way of the Cross*, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2000) 34-35, (emphasis in original).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>116</sup> Weil, *Waiting for God*, 78. "As one has to learn to read or to practice a trade, so one must learn to feel in all things, first and almost solely, the obedience of the universe to God. It is really an apprenticeship. Like every apprenticeship, it requires time and effort. He who has reached the end of his training realizes that the differences between things or between events are no more important than those recognized by someone who knows how to read, when he has before him the same sentence reproduced several times, written in red ink and blue, and printed in this, that, or the other kind of lettering. He who does not know how to read only sees the differences. For him who knows how to read, it all comes to the same thing, since the sentence is identical. Whoever has finished his apprenticeship recognizes things and events, everywhere and always, as vibrations of the same divine and infinitely sweet word. This does not mean that he will not suffer. Pain is the color of certain events. When a man who can and a man who cannot read look at a sentence written in red ink, they both see the same red color, but this color is not so important for the one as for the other. When an apprentice gets hurt, or complains of being tired, the workmen and peasants have this fine expression: 'It is the trade entering his body.' Each time that we have some pain to go through, we can say to ourselves quite truly that it is the universe, the order and beauty of the world, and the obedience of creation to God that are entering our body. After that how can we fail to bless with tenderest [sic] gratitude the Love that sends us this gift?"

He has always spoken to us in his language, in the severe and simple language of our daily existence. We do not hear him because we would like him to speak in ours, in a language of happiness such as we imagine it, through poor and silly satisfactions of feeling, self-love, or even comfort, the only messages that we have decided to recognize as his. But God speaks to us with perseverance in his language. God speaks to us in this language, unknown to us and which we are reluctant to learn, of acceptance, of sacrifice, or renunciation, the language of prodigiously far-reaching, unconceivably [sic] audacious, incredibly generous plan through which he wants to save us, us and the world. God speaks to us unceasingly through the events of our life, through his obstinacy in thwarting our petty human plans, through his punctuality in disappointing our projects and our attempts to escape, through the perpetual failure of all our calculations to manage to do without him. And, little by little, he tames us, he familiarizes us. One day, when we are confined to our bed, checkmated by a failure, isolated by a misfortune, annihilated by the feelings of our powerlessness, one day, he resigns us to listen to his language, to admit his presence, to acknowledge his will. And we know then that he was speaking to us all the time.<sup>117</sup>

The love which is released in suffering is a mutual gift from God to man, and in man's offering of himself in his suffering, a gift back to God. The reception and giving of this love is that which gives meaning to the experience of suffering.<sup>118</sup> The person who suffers is not to be viewed as a passive victim of the brutal randomness of evil, but rather as a particular manifestation of the sharing of the love of God in the work of redemption and as one who makes an offering, following the example of Christ, for the salvation of the world.

### 9.5.2 The Gift of Self to the Suffering Person

John Paul's final segment of *Salvifici doloris* entails the gift of oneself in service to the suffering person. He gives a reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan, a

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<sup>117</sup> Louis Evely, *Suffering*, 142-43.

<sup>118</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 81, p. 130.

parable spoken by Christ to the question of whom, as a “neighbor” should be loved as much as one loves himself in order to attain eternal life.<sup>119</sup> John Paul’s use of this parable is to complete the understanding of the reciprocal nature of love which is unleashed in the mystery of human suffering. “The parable of the Good Samaritan belongs to the Gospel of suffering. For it indicates what the relationship of each of us must be towards our suffering neighbor.”<sup>120</sup> John Paul reflects on the various lessons which are present in the revelation of God’s will for man’s love of neighbor in this parable. But, noting the connection between the suffering person and one who cares for him, he brings up the language of the concept of gift:

We can say that he [Samaritan] gives himself, his very “I,” opening this “I” to the other person. Here we touch upon one of the key points of all Christian anthropology. Man cannot “fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” A Good Samaritan is the person capable of exactly such a gift of self.<sup>121</sup>

In this concept of the gift of oneself—one’s care, resources and energies to assist the suffering person, as personified in the Good Samaritan—John Paul highlights the relational nature of the concept of the giving of this gift of self. Man understands that the reception of his own life as a gratuitous gift of God places within him an understanding of the connection between God’s commandments and his own love for man.

God’s commandment is never detached from his love: it is always a gift meant for man’s growth and joy. As such, it represents an essential and indispensable aspect of the Gospel, actually becoming “gospel” itself: joyful good news. The Gospel of life is both a great gift of God and an exacting task for humanity. It gives rise to amazement and gratitude in the person graced with freedom, and it asks to be welcomed, preserved and

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<sup>119</sup> See Luke 10: 25-37.

<sup>120</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 28, p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

esteemed, with a deep sense of responsibility. In giving life to man, God demands that he love, respect and promote life. The gift thus becomes a commandment, and the commandment is itself a gift.<sup>122</sup>

The gifts which man receives from God, both as life and the command for life, then become a task for his action. The interlocutor who asks Jesus what is necessary for salvation is given the opportunity to recall the command by which God has connected the love for him with the love for neighbor. Christ's first response to the lawyer seeks his interpretation: "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"<sup>123</sup> The lawyer's response demonstrates knowledge of the connection between the love of God for man and man's response for love of neighbor.<sup>124</sup>

The follow-up question by the lawyer strikes to the heart of what it means to truly understand the connection between the radical nature of the gift which God has given to man and the radical response and task required of each recipient of God's gift. Desiring to justify himself, the question "and who is my neighbor?" is a legitimate response when confronted with the radical nature of the task given by God. Christ's response to this question by way of the story of the Good Samaritan ended with the imperative to imitate the boundless love of God for man.

In order to be able to imitate such a love, John Paul urges a greater contemplation of the gift of life. He notes the disposition of the Samaritan who was moved at the sight of the suffering victim, that instead of passing by on the other side of the road, he was

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<sup>122</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 52, pp. 85-86.

<sup>123</sup> Luke 10: 26.

<sup>124</sup> The response, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself," is a recitation from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19: 18.

moved to act.<sup>125</sup> John Paul argues that to be able to be moved with love for another person in need, to be able to make a gift of oneself to another, man must have a contemplative outlook upon life.

For this to happen, we need first of all to foster, in ourselves and in others, a contemplative outlook. Such an outlook arises from faith in the God of life, who has created every individual as a “wonder.” It is the outlook of those who see life in its deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility. It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image. This outlook does not give in to discouragement when confronted by those who are sick, suffering, outcast or at death’s door. Instead, in all these situations it feels challenged to find meaning, and precisely in these circumstances it is open to perceiving in the face of every person a call to encounter, dialogue and solidarity.<sup>126</sup>

Clearly, no one can know the intention of the fictitious character of the Good Samaritan. And although the Gospel writer claims that the intention of the lawyer’s question was to justify himself, it is impossible to know how he would respond if inserted into the situation of the story. These two characters are set up as opposites in the story—the lawyer demanding to know just how much love needed to be expressed regarding the persons who are included in the command, and the Good Samaritan’s willingness to extend even more than he had, in both time and money, for the person he did not know. John Paul notes the depth of understanding of the human condition which Christ demonstrated as he told this story: “If Christ, who knows the interior of man, emphasizes this compassion, this means that it is important for our whole attitude toward others’

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<sup>125</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 28, p. 48.

<sup>126</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 83, p. 132.

suffering.”<sup>127</sup> Just as in the story where neither the priest, the Levite, nor the Samaritan could have known in advance what he would face along the way, so too, John Paul notes the need for contemplation in the proper disposition with which to find neighbor in others, particularly in the suffering.<sup>128</sup>

Noting that the Good Samaritan does not stop at sympathy and compassion, though they are essential for his motivation, John Paul calls man to move to action based upon his motivations, recognizing the need to re-read the language of the body beyond the immediate sensory signs. In *Salvifici doloris*, he notes that all who bring help to the suffering, whatever its nature, by the gift of themselves in their good deeds can be properly called Good Samaritans.<sup>129</sup>

These deeds strengthen the bases of the “civilization of love and life,” without which the life of individuals and of society itself loses its most genuinely human quality. Even if they go unnoticed and remain hidden to most people, faith assures us that the Father “who sees in secret” (Mt. 6:6) not only will reward these actions but already here and now makes them produce lasting fruit for the good of all.<sup>130</sup>

He briefly lists the various manifestations of those who in the medical community, in ecclesial and other community organizations, as well as individuals and families who respond to the call of those who suffer through unselfish love, give of themselves to those in need.<sup>131</sup> In fact, John Paul reminds the reader that no organization, despite its far

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<sup>127</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 28, p. 49.

<sup>128</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 83, p. 132.

<sup>129</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 28, p. 49.

<sup>130</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 27, p. 49.

<sup>131</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 29, p. 50; *Evangelium vitae*, no. 27, p. 49.

reaching ability or resources, can replace the individual human heart as the personal point of motivation for the showing of love to the suffering.<sup>132</sup>

John Paul identifies the common themes of every deed done for the suffering. No matter how one chooses to give of himself to a suffering brother or sister in a time of need, the real fruits of his labors are the confrontation of evil itself as it manifests itself in suffering. The “companionship, sympathy and support in the time of trial” addresses the need of upholding the absolute dignity of the person in attending to the suffering.<sup>133</sup> Every assistance, no matter how given, is a manifestation of personal dignity. Even when illness cannot be overcome, pain lessened, or death escaped; the duty to stop, have compassion, and act is the disposition to which every Christian is called.<sup>134</sup> Christ offers no end to the story of the Good Samaritan with regard to the suffering person’s condition—of the “success” or “failure” of the care he was given. The end is simply the imperative to follow the example of the Samaritan: “Go and do likewise.” In this gift of self for the suffering person, there cannot but be “success” to the extent that love is extended in the gift of self.

In caring for the suffering person, the physician, nurse, caregiver, and family members and friends witness to the dignity of the suffering person, and on both a material and immaterial level, enter into a “dialogue” with the suffering person.

When illness or trauma beset the body, the ability of the body to express the person is limited, even though the fullness of the person is still present. Illness and other afflictions of the body seem to turn a person in on himself, in order to preserve his energies for healing. This tendency,

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<sup>132</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 29, p. 50.

<sup>133</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 67, p. 110.

<sup>134</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 53.

while appropriate to an extent, nonetheless can make it more difficult for the sick person to extend beyond himself to others. In attending to the sick person in order to restore wellness, the healer is able to help facilitate the restoration of the patient's expression of the person through the restoration of his body.<sup>135</sup>

The "dialogue" is more than merely physical, as the care given to the suffering is of emotional and spiritual nature as well.

[T]he attempt to restore the body is not the only important component of the physician's care for the patient. It is also critical to care for the sick person in a manner appropriate to the patient's dignity. In this way, the physician allows his *own* body to speak, lovingly and with care, within the doctor-patient dialogue. It is in the language of the body, then, which the healer seeks to restore and preserve the patient, precisely through speaking his own language of the body. Exhibiting self-giving, love, and fidelity to the sick, the healer heeds the call to enter into a communion for which we were created. It is only in giving that one truly finds oneself, so this self-giving of the health-care professional is actually healing for both physician and the patient.<sup>136</sup>

To connect the contemplative and active dimensions necessary for the work of the Good Samaritan, John Paul offers the Eucharist as the bond which enables the gift of self to one's brothers and sisters in need. Noting that it is the Eucharist which allows man to see the value which each person has in God's eyes, authentic Eucharistic worship makes man grow in this awareness of this dignity which each person shares. "The awareness of that dignity becomes the deepest motive of our relationship with our neighbor."<sup>137</sup> The participation in the Eucharist changes man's view of his brothers and sisters and opens

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<sup>135</sup> Seyfer and Travaline, "*The Theology of the Body* and Modern Medicine," 18.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., (emphasis in original).

<sup>137</sup> John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, no. 6, pp. 10-11.

his eyes to an ever more profound potential to express love to others by the gift of himself.<sup>138</sup>

It is in this context, so humanly rich and filled with love, that heroic actions too are born. These are the most solemn celebration of the Gospel of life, for they proclaim it by the total gift of self. They are the radiant manifestation of the highest degree of love, which is to give one's life for the person loved. They are a sharing in the mystery of the Cross, in which Jesus reveals the value of every person, and how life attains its fullness in the sincere gift of self.<sup>139</sup>

### 9.5.3 Mutuality of the Gift received through Suffering

Having noted how the person who experiences suffering has the potential to actively engage his suffering, offering it as a gift to God as a cooperation with the work of redemption, as well as noting how the person who cares for the suffering of another offers himself as a gift; it is important to note the reciprocal revelatory nature of suffering. John Paul notes that although suffering is an experience of evil, in God's plan it exists in order to unleash love.<sup>140</sup> This unleashing takes place both in the suffering person and in the one who comes to his need. It is only by way of speculation that the readers of the Gospels can ponder the reason why when asked "who is my neighbor?" Christ chose to use the example of love of the suffering person to demonstrate the love he wishes for man to express. John Paul clearly believes that more than in any other situation, suffering offers the potential to bring about a love of neighbor through the

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., "We must also become particularly sensitive to all human suffering and misery, to all injustice and wrong, and seek the way to redress them effectively. Let us learn to discover with respect the truth about the inner self that becomes the dwelling place of God present in the Eucharist. Christ comes into the hearts of our brothers and sisters and visits their consciences. How the image of each and every one changes, when we become more aware of this reality, when we make it the subject of our reflections! The sense of the Eucharistic Mystery leads us to a love for our neighbor, to a love for every human being."

<sup>139</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 86, pp. 135-36.

<sup>140</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici, doloris*, nos. 29-30, pp. 50-54.

reciprocal giving of self to another. “Suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbor, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a ‘civilization of love.’”<sup>141</sup>

The reciprocal nature of the gifts that each of them give to the other are parallel to John Paul’s teaching of the communication spoken through the language of the body. The first gift revealed through this language of suffering is the gift of acceptance of the other. On the part of the one giving care to the suffering, this often requires a radical acceptance of the other. Often ne who suffers is not one who is superficially pleasant to another. In fact, the opposite is usually true; there is often repulsion toward one who is suffering.<sup>142</sup> This is true for many different reasons ranging from physical repulsion, lack of comfort or embarrassment, to fear. But recalling John Paul’s analysis of Adam’s acceptance and joy at the creation of Eve, “This is flesh of flesh,”<sup>143</sup> in which the pope reads the revelation of the communion of persons; so too, the acceptance of the other, regardless of his somatic condition or disintegration, is an act of a broader radical acceptance.<sup>144</sup>

The acceptance of the suffering person is in reality, an acceptance both of communion with another, as well as the acceptance of the potential for one’s own suffering. When one stops to help a suffering brother or sister, he not only accepts the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., no. 30, p 54.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, 71. “Men have the same carnal nature as animals. If a hen is hurt, the others rush upon it, attacking it with their beaks. This phenomenon is as automatic as gravitation. Our senses attach all the scorn, all the revulsion, all the hatred that our reason attaches to crime, to affliction. Except for those whose soul is inhabited by Christ, everybody despises the afflicted to some extent, although practically no one is conscious of it.”

<sup>143</sup> Genesis 2: 23, Revised Standard Version.

<sup>144</sup> For the connection between the creation accounts and the concept of “communion of persons” see John Paul, *Man and Woman*, November 14, 1979, 161-65.

person, but is also forced to ponder for himself the potential for suffering in his own body. The recognition of one like himself who is suffering and in need, both spurs him on to act with compassion for another, who shares the dignity he has, as well as demands the contemplation of his own destiny. He truly loves, like the Samaritan, another as he loves himself. This love for a neighbor is not just “in like manner” or “in equal degree” to the love of self, which God has commanded, but in God’s wisdom, the acceptance of another, based upon the dignity that humanity shares in the communion of persons, is an act of love for another out of a love for oneself.

The suffering person too, must embrace the acceptance of another in his need. It is often with great difficulty and humility that a person must accept the gift of another to help him in his struggles. Accepting help and assistance from others can create the fear of being a burden to them, while feeling useless himself.<sup>145</sup> In humility, the suffering person imitates Christ in this acceptance of help from other. The suffering person not only shares in Christ’s redemptive offering by the acceptance of suffering and offering that suffering as a complete gift of self to God, but he imitates Christ who receives help in every suffering person. Since Christ is present in the reception of love in the suffering, “As often as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me,”<sup>146</sup> so the suffering person is called to accept the aid of another, and let another unleash love, to let another see Christ in him. More often, the suffering person would rather be the one to give care than receive it, even give radically to another who is suffering than to accept the assistance of another in his own suffering. But the unleashing of love which suffering

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<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, p. 47.

<sup>146</sup> Matthew 25:45, as cited in *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 53.

brings, calls for Christ's followers to imitate his dual presence with the experience of suffering.<sup>147</sup>

A second gift of the language of suffering is the call to rereading the body in truth. In a manner similar to John Paul's contention that the body can be reread in the truth of revelation about man's origin and destiny regarding the proper expression of his sexual dimension, so too the experience of suffering calls for a rereading of the purpose and dignity of the human person. The reality of sin clouds man's understanding of the proper expression of his being, and the man of concupiscence is always tempted to view another as an object.<sup>148</sup> For those who care for the suffering, there is the constant temptation to view both the suffering of others as well as one's own self-giving and, at times, heroic sacrifice as useless.

John Paul notes the tendency in contemporary culture to see suffering only as failure.

Today, as a result of advances in medicine and in a cultural context frequently closed to the transcendent, the experience of dying is marked by new features. When the prevailing tendency is to value life only to the extent that it brings pleasure and well-being, suffering seems like an unbearable setback, something from which one must be freed at all costs.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> See *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30, p. 54, for the double aspect of Christ's presence where there is suffering. See also Tranzillo, *Silent Language*, 152. "One should keep in mind that for Wojtyla/John Paul II, authentic self-giving exists only where there is authentic reception, which includes receiving another, being received by another, and receiving oneself through another (self-discovery or self-realization). Self-giving and reception are really two different aspects of the same dynamic reality, forming the basis of true interpersonal communion. Reception on the fully human level, like self-giving, presupposes the Trinitarian model. While in *Dominum et vivicantem* the Pope elaborates a Trinitarian theology highlighting the aspect of self-gift, he still implies the strictly correlative notion of reception."

<sup>148</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, July 30, 1980, 263.

<sup>149</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 64, p. 104.

John Paul sees this tendency to objectify the value of persons by indiscriminate qualifications as the driving force behind the request to legitimize euthanasia. “Man thinks his is his own rule and measure, with the right to demand that society should guarantee him the ways and means of deciding what to do with his life in full and complete autonomy.”<sup>150</sup> This desire for control over suffering and death, while understandable, is a manifestation of the improper reading of the dignity of the person on three levels: as one who receives his life as a gift from God, as one who is called to offer his life as a gift to God, and as those who are called to give of themselves to those who are suffering as the gift of love of neighbor. Thus, parallel to John Paul’s concept of both the need to and the possibility of doing so, man is called in the moments of suffering to reread the language of the body in truth. To do so means to move beyond the raw carnal promptings given by the body, to search for God’s meaning and presence in each particular circumstance, and to master one’s instincts in the struggle for authentic relationships.<sup>151</sup> The struggle experienced in suffering makes even more “authentic” the relationships which challenge man’s sense of control through the mutual self-giving, even self-emptying, which is an imitation of the love of Christ.

And yet the courage and the serenity with which so many of our brothers and sisters suffering from serious disabilities lead their lives when they are shown acceptance and love bears eloquent witness to what gives authentic value to life, and makes it, even in difficult conditions, something precious for them and for others.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>151</sup> See John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, November 12, 1980, 320-321.

<sup>152</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 63, p. 104.

Gilbert Meilaender describes the role of suffering in the lives of families with a more anecdotal tone, but nonetheless advancing the same thoughts of John Paul. He notes a common perspective of people who, when pondering the reality of the end of their lives at some future point, comment that they considerably fear most of all being a burden to someone else, particularly a member of their family who may be saddled with their care. He notes that while this is a common feeling which is certainly understandable, in the end it is incompatible with Christianity. He admits that his first difficulty with this sentiment is selfish, that as a father and husband, he has often times had to spend more time, money and energy on his family than he certainly would have desired. And so initially, out of justice, he argues that people have the right to be a burden to others. But his point is more about what burdens really signify in life.

Is this not in large measure what it means to belong to a family: to burden each other—and to find, almost miraculously, that others are willing, even happy, to carry such burdens? Families would not have the significance they do for us if they did not, in fact, give us a claim upon each other. At least in this sphere of life we do not come together as autonomous individuals freely contracting with each other. We simply find ourselves thrown together and asked to share the burdens of life while learning to care for each other.<sup>153</sup>

John Paul also uses the image of the family as a lesson in the authentic attitude that man must have for others in respecting their dignity and having the willingness to give of oneself when faced with the needs of another.

By respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value, this free giving takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity. Thus the fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons within the family is the first and irreplaceable school of

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<sup>153</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Things that Count*, (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2000), 81.

social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love.<sup>154</sup>

Whereas Meilaender uses the concept of acceptance because families “find ourselves thrown together,” John Paul bases this dignity to be learned in the family and shown to a neighbor more upon the divine providence of God, in willing the life of the family for the learning of crucial lessons in the gift of oneself to another.<sup>155</sup> No doubt, Meilaender agrees with the concept that families are brought together by the will of God for man’s benefit. But his use of the image of finding oneself thrown together, suggesting that it is almost accidental in nature, is consistent with the disposition one must have in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The suffering man had no claim on the Samaritan in any way—by family, creed or culture, and their interaction in the story would not have been willed by either of them. Yet the response of the Samaritan presumes that a relationship exists due to the very fact of its being needed. This is the motivation in an extreme circumstance which John Paul credits to the presence of suffering—“Man owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in his heart and actions.”<sup>156</sup>

#### 9.6 Suffering and the Forging of Solidarity: Learning the Language of Love

The philosophical concept of solidarity, which Karol Wojtyla developed in *The Acting Person*, finds theological significance in the language of the body expressed in the mystery of human suffering. Calling it an authentic attitude for life with others, solidarity

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<sup>154</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 43, p. 68.

<sup>155</sup> See *Ibid.*, and *Gaudium et spes*, no. 52, p. 956.

<sup>156</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 29, p. 50.

is the concept of living and acting together with others, in which the common good initiates the proper interaction of individuals.<sup>157</sup> The awareness of a common good demands that man look beyond simply what is his own share. But in doing so, in seeing the whole and the communal nature of his life, Wojtyla argues, man gains a better realization of what essentially is his own share or responsibility. For the common good demands that he not take over what does not belong to him, however, there are circumstances in which, for the common good, he must step in to act in what is not essentially his own share.<sup>158</sup>

The presence of suffering is exactly the kind of opportunity which calls man to step outside his own share for the common good. In the theological plane, the common good is the universal call to salvation, to which every other good is subject.<sup>159</sup> Faced with the reality of suffering, the individual has the opportunity to assist in the ultimate common good, the very work of the redemption, by offering his life as a gift in union with the perfect offering of Christ. In a real sense, he steps into the act of giving of salvation to another. By doing so, the suffering individual is in solidarity both with his brothers and sisters in need of salvation (cosmically helping them toward it, knowingly or not) as well as with Christ.

For historical man, redeemed yet fallen, the second frame in John Paul's triptych, the reality of concupiscence means that there is a challenge to authentically read the

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<sup>157</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 284-85.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 285. In this concept one can envision, in a manner similar to the Good Samaritan, circumstances which demand one to step up to address the suffering of those people who are not family or friends, or who hold no greater claim on one's energy or resources beyond the fact of their simply being in need.

<sup>159</sup> See John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 14.

promptings of the body. The promptings of suffering which can move one to enter into solidarity with others are not automatic. The temptation to flee from experiences of suffering makes the call to solidarity the complete opposite of the temptation to remain indifferent. Therefore it is not suffering itself which divides and separates persons, but the tendency to be indifferent to its call to be in solidarity with those who suffer.<sup>160</sup>

The person who acts as the Good Samaritan, coming to the aid of the suffering person, is also acting in solidarity with the suffering. He steps in to what is not normally his own share, the intimate care of another, in order to assist him toward the common good, his self-gift at the service of the redemption of the world. This mutual giving and receiving of the gift of another, in truly intimate ways of compassion and sacrifice, manifests the authentic rereading of the language of the body. The rereading of the body, its dignity and destiny, calls man to act both in his willingness to suffer, offering himself as a gift to God and to others to share in the work of redemption, and to assist those already engaged in that work.

The God of the Covenant has entrusted the life of every individual to his or her fellow human beings, brothers and sisters, according to the law of reciprocity in giving and receiving, of self-giving and of the acceptance of others. In the fullness of time, by taking flesh and giving his life for us, the Son of God showed what heights and depths this law of reciprocity can reach. With the gift of his Spirit, Christ gives new content and meaning to the law of reciprocity, to our being entrusted to one another. The Spirit who builds up communion in love creates between us a new fraternity and solidarity, a true reflection of the mystery of mutual self-giving and

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<sup>160</sup> Granados, "Toward A Theology of Suffering," 545. "The effects of this [concupiscence] absence of original justice mark man's entire constitution. Its absence is particularly noticeable in regard to man's body, which is the way he experiences the world and is present to it. In this regard, we speak of concupiscence as a difficulty in perceiving the manifestation of love in the world and of expressing an adequate response to it on one's body. This incapacity comes from sin and inclines man toward sin, inasmuch as sin is the contrary of love and sets out, not from a denial of love, but rather from indifference in the face of its manifestation."

receiving proper to the Most Holy Trinity. The Spirit becomes the new law which gives strength to believers and awakens in them a responsibility for sharing the gift of self and for accepting others, as a sharing in the boundless love of Jesus Christ himself.<sup>161</sup>

Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán comments that John Paul's vision of suffering brings together the two revelations of Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan and the last judgment in the Gospel of Matthew in the call to human solidarity as the attitude which will allow man the grace to respond to Christ himself in his brother and sisters in need.

Every man and every woman should feel personally called to bear witness to love in suffering and must not leave those who are suffering to be cared solely by official institutions. The Parable of the Good Samaritan corroborates what Christ said about the Last Judgment: "I was sick and you visited me." Christ himself is the One who was cared for, and the one who fell into the hands of bandits is cared for and helped. The meaning of suffering is to do good by one's suffering and to do good to those who suffer.<sup>162</sup>

To reread the body in the truth of the redemption is to incorporate the attitude of Christ, who is the ultimate act of solidarity in the Incarnation. The attitude of solidarity is the application of John Paul's insight, "The Gospel is the negation of passivity in the face of suffering."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 76, p. 124.

<sup>162</sup> Javier Lozano Barragán, "Pain, an Enigma or a Mystery: The Thinking and Theology of John Paul II, a Christian Understanding of pain and Suffering," Excerpts from this lecture are available on-line in English: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/hlthwork/documents/rc\\_pc\\_hlthwork\\_doc\\_20050629\\_barragan-aachen\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/hlthwork/documents/rc_pc_hlthwork_doc_20050629_barragan-aachen_en.html), December 2, 2008. See also *Salvifici doloris*, nos. 29-30, pp. 50-54.

<sup>163</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no 30, p 52.

## 9.7 The Language of the Body: Domination vs. Self-Mastery: How an Adequate

### Anthropology of Suffering Addresses the Cultural/Medical Void

The end of John Paul's Theology of the Body is a call for understanding the essence of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*. He undertook the more than four years of audiences not simply to reiterate, but to explain with great depth, the significance between the "domination of the forces of nature and self-mastery which is indispensable for the human person."<sup>164</sup> In this distinction, one can also observe the difference between addressing the needs of suffering persons and dismissing the unpleasant reality of suffering in the human experience. The reality of sin in the man of concupiscence means that the grace of God, and attention to his plan are always necessary to reread the body in light of the truth of the redemption. That suffering is present in the world is the result of sin, but it is not a cause to dismiss the dignity of the human body as a sign of the human person, (a tendency of Manichaeism) nor a cause to ignore the cries of the suffering, (a tendency of stoicism) but rather a call to act in solidarity with Christ for the redemption of the world, both in one's own sufferings, and in addressing the needs of those who suffer.

The "Majority Report" of the commission which Pope Paul VI created to investigate the legitimacy of artificial birth control stated a certainty of knowledge which Paul VI and John Paul II negate.

The story of God and of man, therefore, should be seen as a shared work.  
And it should be seen that man's tremendous progress in control of matter

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<sup>164</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman*, August 22, 1984, 630, citing Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, nos. 2, 21.

by technical means and the universal and total intercommunion that has been achieved, correspond entirely to the divine decrees.<sup>165</sup>

This conclusion is a symptom of the Baconian project's desire to identify man's desires and technological gains with the divine will. John Paul insists on an anthropology which challenges this assumption.

Nature itself, from being "mater" (mother), is now reduced to being "matter," and is subjected to every kind of manipulation. This is the direction in which a certain technical and scientific way of thinking, prevalent in present day culture, appears to be leading when it rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected.<sup>166</sup>

John Paul's anthropology does not seek to negate the gains in scientific knowledge for the care of the human person, but he challenges the notion that technology's power is independent from the will of the Creator. By losing sight of God's plan for him, man not only "loses sight of the mystery of God, but also of the mystery of world and the mystery of his own being."<sup>167</sup>

The development of palliative care, often called hospice, has been an endeavor to care for the suffering person in a way which upholds his dignity, realizing the body's limitations, but building up an environment of solidarity with the suffering person, and thus having many similarities to John Paul's theology of suffering. David Kuhl tells of the ability of suffering to uniquely awaken the call to unconditional love.<sup>168</sup> As John Paul

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<sup>165</sup> Commission on Birth Control, "Majority Report," 150, cited by Michael Waldstein, "Introduction," *Man and Woman*, 100.

<sup>166</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 22, p. 41.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Kuhl, *What Dying People Want*, 204.

taught that suffering is “present in order to unleash love in the human person,”<sup>169</sup>

Kuhl explains the human need to know of unconditional love, and the struggles throughout so many lives to satisfy this need. Often suffering is the opportunity for the giving and receiving of that love in a manner that has never been experienced. He speaks of cases of patients who face this reality when confronted with suffering, and struggle at the moments of suffering to either accept the risk of opening up themselves or recoiling in seclusion.<sup>170</sup> The potential that suffering brings to these circumstances is a crucial step in reconciliation and interpersonal communion, which may not occur without the experience of suffering. The Church offers in sacramental reconciliation, as well as in the general teachings of Christ for accepting and receiving reconciliation the opportunity to take advantage of the situation of suffering to bring about a greater good, that of restored communion.

As the Church sees the care of the sick and suffering as a mission carried out in conjunction with the mission of salvation in Christ himself, its many and varied apostolates to the suffering are always inspired by a properly contextualized view of suffering.<sup>171</sup> Quoting John Paul II, the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to

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<sup>169</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no 29, p. 50.

<sup>170</sup> Kuhl, 214. “Some people will choose isolation rather than risking another difficult or impossible attachment. For them, the fear of a second rejection limits relationships with others. A sense of belonging becomes heightened for many who know they have a terminal illness. People yearn for this sense of belonging to their family of origin as well as their family of choice.”

<sup>171</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives*, p. 4. “The mystery of Christ casts light on every facet of Catholic health care: to see Christian love as the animating principle of health care; to see healing and compassion as a continuation of Christ’s mission; to see suffering as a participation in the redemptive power of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection; and to see death, transformed by the resurrection, as an opportunity for a final act of communion with Christ.”

Health Care Workers' *Charter for Health Care Workers*, the work of healing must be seen as a vocation.

Health care is a ministerial instrument of God's outpouring love for the suffering person; and at the same time, it is an act of love of God, shown in the loving care for person. For the Christian, it is an actualized continuation of the healing love of Christ, who "went about doing good and healing everyone" (Acts 10:38). And at the same time it is love for Christ: he is the sick person—"I was sick"—who assumes the face of a suffering brother; since he considers as done to himself—"you did it to me"—the loving care of one's brother.<sup>172</sup>

Thus, from the Catholic view, the manner and purpose of dealing with the suffering patient becomes as important as the medical treatment proscribed. Quite apart from results driven context of contemporary medical practice, there is much to be gained into the care of patients by better understanding the mystery of suffering.

In the final analysis, just as Christ's body always pointed to something greater than itself, so too the Christian is called, sometimes by way of his suffering, to signal a greater reality than even the temporal goodness of his physical body. He may offer it as a participation in the eternal mystery of the redemption, and then truly be most like Christ.<sup>173</sup>

Far from being critical of the gifts of scientific medicine, John Paul often praises the humanitarian gains by those dedicated to the healing and care of the suffering.<sup>174</sup> But at the same time, he rejects the ability of man to exercise control over the plan of God for

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<sup>172</sup> Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, no. 4, p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> References to such selflessness are frequent in the Gospels, the giving over even of one's earthly life for the service of something greater. Perhaps most clearly, the teaching regarding the grain of wheat which must die to become something greater than itself, and the call that he who loves his life will lose it. See John 12:25.

<sup>174</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, no. 26, p. 47.

his life, and challenges man to participate in the endeavors of science and medicine to the degree to which they respect the will of God. Suffering, ironically, is a reality wherein man is challenged to be active in the attempt to relieve it, but a reality by God's design in which man will always participate by the offering of himself within that mystery. This is not true because man is cursed to never find a way out of the experience of suffering, but rather because in man's fallen state, God has revealed to him that his own participation in suffering allows for the release of a language of loving concern which would never be spoken in its removal.

In spite of sin, the body is not accused but called. In the sacrament of marriage, the body is called to reveal the love of the Creator, of his desire for man to share in the work of creation, to give and receive love, and to build up and witness to the Gospel of Life. That same body is called, and not accused, to reveal, even, and often especially in the midst of suffering, the goodness of God who invites man to share in the work of redemption.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION AND FURTHER EMPLOYMENT OF WOJTYLA/JOHN PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

#### 10.1 Conclusion

A theology of suffering as articulated here from Karol Wojtyla/John Paul's thought, especially from his Theology of the Body relies on the phenomenological point that the embodied person is a gift which implies an anthropology and demands its understanding, or reading, for moral decision-making. This anthropology requires that one see creaturely being as God's intentional gift, demonstrated most clearly in the human person, and made to reflect the generosity of God's gift in man's own giving over of himself in and through his bodily relations. Within that gift of the embodied person, the filial and spousal relations have particular significance. The relationship between the Father and the Son leading to the Son's gift of life to man through his own death, reveals that the body is already a gift which man can use to image God. The moments of man's life in spousal relation and in the entrance into the mystery of redemptive suffering allow him to speak a language of love already encoded in the body.<sup>1</sup>

The reality of suffering has a place in the temporal pattern of the relationship of God with man, which John Paul described in the form of a triptych in his catechesis on the body. Recalling that the three panels depict man's pre-lapsarian creation, historical man both fallen and redeemed in Christ, and the final stage of the resurrection of the

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<sup>1</sup> See David L. Schindler, "The Embodied Person as Gift and the Cultural Task in America," *Communio* 35, no. 3, (Fall 2008), 421-22.

body, José Granados states that the “missing chapter in question” is that which would move man from the second to the final panel, from his fallen state to his fully redeemed state.<sup>2</sup> The act of redemption itself is the life and death of Christ, but the missing piece for historical man, is his own participation in Christ’s sufferings in his own suffering and in addressing the suffering of others—the active extension of his body as gift when faced with the reality of suffering. This corresponds to the words of St. Paul, that the believer completes for himself the sufferings of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

This “missing chapter” of the late pope’s triptych is the opportunity of suffering—so often viewed as a threat to man’s well-being and as a manifestation of evil which is only to be either avoided or overcome. This study used Wojtyla/John Paul’s phenomenology, as articulated in his Theology of the Body catechesis, to extend his specific writings to address the issue of human suffering and to see it in a new light: that suffering is a unique human experience which though often dismissed, has the potential for deepening interpersonal relationships and one’s relationship with God—having a unique potential in the life of man bring about an authentic communion of persons. It has demonstrated that suffering, as an experience of evil, is a most ironic experience—that it has the potential to divide or unify, bring bitterness or reconciliation, prove the presumed power of evil or of grace’s ultimate victory over this evil.

The first section of this dissertation demonstrated that both in contemporary culture and the practice of medicine, suffering is often regarded as devoid of any potential for good. However in the opportunity of suffering is an invitation from God to

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<sup>2</sup> Granados, “Toward a Theology of the Suffering Body,” 540.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Pau II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, citing Colossians 1: 24.

the same kind of love which is expressed in John Paul's understanding of the nuptial meaning of the body. As an invitation, it may be heeded or ignored. But suffering is never completely avoidable. The reality of the presence of concupiscence means that there will always be a struggle to read the language spoken in the suffering body in accord with the will of the Creator—that suffering presents an unsought opportunity to give and receive love in a unique way.

The reality of suffering, so often viewed as a passivity in man, can, according to Wojtyla/John Paul's analysis of man's actions, become a means of his transcendence, integration, and participation/intersubjectivity.<sup>4</sup> For both the suffering person, and for the one who attends to him, the intentional choice to bear suffering with faith and love, instead of anger and bitterness, is a process of transcendence, of choosing to go outside of oneself, and seek anew a relation to truth, goodness and beauty, which take on a new meaning in suffering.<sup>5</sup> "Suffering cannot be transformed and changed by the grace from outside, but from within."<sup>6</sup> Here the process of this transcendence is not accidental, but essential, similar to Wojtyla/John Paul's notion of the intransitive nature of labor, whereby man does not just make something with his work, but becomes something different by his work.<sup>7</sup> So too in facing suffering, man has the possibility to transcend his own limitations (and fear) as well as his previous sense of success and happiness, in favor

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<sup>4</sup> These observations follow the presentation in Section 4.2.2.2 above and Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 119ff.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Wojtyla, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community*, 266, 270-71.

a deeper sense of truth, goodness, and beauty. "It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls."<sup>8</sup>

The redemptive aspect of suffering takes into consideration Wojtyla/John Paul's understanding of integration in human action. In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla spoke of integration, whereby successive layers and dimensions of the personal subject are integrated in personal acts of love. One encounters the double dimension of both the one who suffers and participates in his own redemption as well as in the cosmic struggle of good over evil, but also the personal acts of love which speak of the tenderness and care given by family and friends as a gift to the one who suffers. Sense impressions and emotions, though distinct, are linked together in an intensity of experience.<sup>9</sup> In suffering, man is called to integrate his physical and psychical faculties, in conjunction with the grace of the Redeemer to reach an interior maturity and spiritual development.<sup>10</sup>

The social dimension of suffering, as participation and intersubjectivity come into play. In seeking a concept of solidarity within cultures, Wojtyla is at the same time linking an interdependence among people that is manifested in suffering.<sup>11</sup>

A source of joy is found in the overcoming of the sense of the uselessness of suffering, a feeling that is sometimes very strongly rooted in human suffering. This feeling not only consumes the person interiorly, but seems to make him a burden to others. The person feels condemned to receive help and assistance from others, and at the same time seems useless to himself. The discovery of the salvific meaning of suffering in union with Christ transforms this depressing feeling. Faith in sharing in the sufferings of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person 'completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions;' the certainty that in the

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<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 103.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 261ff.

spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption he is serving, like Christ, the salvation of his brothers and sisters. Therefore he is carrying out an irreplaceable service.<sup>12</sup>

Equally important is the understanding that the one who cares for the suffering person makes this solidarity possible. John Paul, in using the example of the Good Samaritan, points out that this person identifies himself with the victim, and in the spirit of solidarity, “indicates what the relationship of each of us must be towards our suffering neighbor.”<sup>13</sup>

That human suffering can be described as missing piece of John Paul’s triptych has primarily to do with his understanding of mercy as a bilateral act.<sup>14</sup> In John Paul’s thought, mercy and justice have a mutual dependence, not an antagonism. This varies starkly from a mere human concept of justice. God’s mercy is his justice, and this is not a simple lowering of the standards of justice, as powerfully illustrated in Christ’s suffering and death—the true meeting place of justice and mercy. Christ’s cross is the perfect atonement for human sin, and human suffering in turn allows man’s participation in this perfect act of redemption.

In the living out of redemption, contemplated and realized in human suffering, the extension of mercy is bilateral. God bestows mercy on the suffering person, and with his grace and strength man’s own acceptance of the cross and participation in redemption allow him to be active in God’s bestowal of redemption and mercy to his suffering brothers and sisters.

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<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, pp. 46-47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, no 28, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> This follows section 5.4.3 above, citing John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, nos, 6-7.

By his description of suffering as a unique phenomenon which unleashes both hope and love, John Paul acknowledges the irony that a manifestation of evil can be the means by which the individual can come to greater conversion.<sup>15</sup> As the body is meant to be read in such a way as to understand the commands of the Creator, so suffering is an experience which provides existential lessons of man's contingency and cooperation in his own redemption, the sharing in the cosmic struggle against evil, and the omnipotence of God at work both in man's acceptance of suffering and in helping to address the needs of the suffering persons he encounters.

The specific thematic progression of this study began by articulating the cultural vacuum, influenced both by popular and scientific/medical presumptions surrounding the issue of suffering. In the overwhelming assumption of suffering as simply an evil to be overcome, often by any means whatsoever, the suffering which remains, and which will always remain, exists without any framework in which to understand it. The attempt to eliminate suffering based on the assumption of man's control over the body leads to the overemphasis on his autonomy leading often to the sense of isolation in the midst of suffering.

The next step was to point out in Wojtyla/John Paul's philosophical and theological writings, most especially in the "Theology of the Body" addresses, a means by which the body has the potential to be revelatory and a phenomenon by which man gains existential understanding of his relationship with God, others and himself. The revelatory nature of the body illustrates that man cooperates with his Creator in a paradox

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<sup>15</sup> See John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris* nos. 23, 29

of freedom and obedience in which an authentic reading of the body becomes a necessary task due to the reality of sin, which keeps the Creator's will for man from becoming automatically clear. The body then, becomes a signifier of the goodness of God—the reminder of the reality of sin, but also of God's continual activity with man for man's salvation.

The final development in this study was to show that suffering offers man the potential, in seeing his life expressed in his body as a gift, to be in solidarity with God in his own suffering in the cosmic struggle against evil. He may as well be in solidarity with his suffering fellows in his own care for them, expressed by the unleashing of love in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Man may choose to be active in his suffering and not just passively a victim of it, and therefore this reading of the suffering body is an act of faith to offer the body as a gift in the midst of the cultural and scientific attempts to control it.

## 10.2 Related Issues for Further Investigation

John Paul's words underscore the complexity of the issue of suffering and the various manifestations of human action which are the result of suffering.<sup>16</sup> While there are many areas of clashing ideologies between the broader culture and the Church's teaching, he was careful to promote conversion, not discouragement.<sup>17</sup> With a greater

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<sup>16</sup> See John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 26-7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., no. 26, p. 47. "In effect, signs which point to this victory [over death through Christ from 1 Cor. 15: 54] are not lacking in our societies and cultures, strongly marked though they are by the 'culture of death.' It would therefore be to give a one-sided picture, which would lead to sterile discouragement, if the

awareness of the grace afforded in the facing of suffering, he encouraged the faithful of the Church to be ever more effective witnesses in the midst of the culture, witnessing to the potential to unleash love and hope in the presence of suffering in the various situations in which it is present.

Unfortunately, it is often hard to see and recognize these positive signs, perhaps also because they do not receive sufficient attention in the communications media. Yet, how many initiatives of help and support for people who are weak and defenseless have sprung up and continue to spring up in the Christian community and in civil society, at the local, national, and international level, through the efforts of individuals, groups, movements and organizations of various kinds!<sup>18</sup>

This study does not attempt to summarize the manifold witness which John Paul encouraged within the Church by addressing of the reality of suffering, but rather to identify a few specific areas where his understanding of the mystery of suffering could make a positive contribution.

The acceptance of the invitation to take part in the mystery of redemption through suffering requires a special grace, and the Church is entrusted with articulating this invitation, as John Paul taught: “The Church has to try to meet man in a special way on the path of his suffering.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, based on a synthesis of Wojtyla/John Paul’s contribution to a theology of suffering, some further discussion and application for the Church’s mission to meet man on this path is given below. It is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather an attempt to connect what was noted as a lack in contemporary

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condemnation of the threats to life were not accompanied by the presentation of the positive signs at work in humanity’s present situation.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 3, p. 7.

culture in dealing with suffering with the content of John Paul's contribution to the mystery of human suffering.

Building upon the relevance of John Paul's anthropology for the mystery of human suffering has an application for the Church's mission of catechizing. Suffering is clearly a visible reality. But the Church has the duty to preach that suffering, while a manifestation of evil, has, as John Paul argues, the unique potential for the greatest good, namely, man's salvation.<sup>20</sup> In a culture where suffering is often perceived only as an evil to be eliminated, the need for this catechesis is of the utmost importance. In her preaching and teaching, the Church is called to reiterate the saving message of Christ's suffering for man's salvation, and both man's suffering and his address of the suffering of others as a participation in it.

#### 10.2.1 Openness to Suffering as Revelatory

Suffering has the potential to be a means of revelation for man—a personal encounter with the body of public revelation entrusted to the Church. Realizing the contingency of his own being, the need for redemption, and his own ability to participate in the redemptive action of Christ, suffering is often the means through which man will focus on these realities, in a way which he otherwise may not.<sup>21</sup> This is exactly where the phenomenological bent of John Paul provides an invitation to grace in the experience of an otherwise wholly negative reality. That human bodily experience can be a means of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., no. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Crowley, *Unwanted Wisdom*, 12

revelation is an anthropological shift from classical theology.<sup>22</sup> But as in the Theology of the Body, so too in suffering, bodily experience becomes a means by which man can sense the order and salvific will of God. In suffering, that can be manifested in an awareness of his limitations, a call to conversion, and an acceptance of the cosmic struggle of good and evil taking place in one's own body.

Recalling both the objective body of truth found in divine revelation and one's subjective personal lived experience which is unique to each person, John Paul understands suffering to be that phenomenon which bridges the experiential gap in personal salvation, making it a quasi-mystical experience, or invitation to experience personal salvation.

The answer [to the initial question of "why" in suffering] which comes through this suffering, by way of the interior encounter with the Master, is in itself something more than the mere abstract answer to the question about the meaning of suffering. For it is above all a call. It is a vocation. Christ does not explain in the abstract reasons for suffering, but above all else He says: "Follow me!" Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world.<sup>23</sup>

This relationship between the dogmatic and mystical dimensions of faith is a common thread through Wojtyla/John Paul's thought, which applies perfectly to the contemplation of the mystery of suffering.<sup>24</sup> Suffering has the potential to unite these dogmatic and mystical dimensions.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 98-114. Dulles is quick to point out the dangers of subjectivism in the model of revelation as a new awareness, but Wojtyla/John Paul II himself was well aware of this danger. Chapter Four's treatment above of Wojtyla's refusal to be a strict phenomenologist points to this awareness of a grounding in objective revelation.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 46. "[Wojtyla] strongly emphasized the personal character of the encounter between God and man which engenders faith. Declarations of faith are oriented toward the proper object of faith, which transcends them. Mystical experience is a God-given experience in which creaturely

In her preaching and teaching, the Church is to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the gospel.<sup>25</sup> Surrounded by the frustrations of not overcoming the reality of human suffering, the Church must capitalize on the possibility of good and sanctification even in midst of the evil of suffering.<sup>26</sup> This possibility can only be actualized by the introduction of the revelatory potential of suffering—the need to stop and ponder the meaning of this powerful experience in the life of man instead of out-right rejecting it.

Suffering, as a boundary experience for man in John Paul's triptych, has revelatory potential for those who experience it.<sup>27</sup> The Church therefore has the responsibility to catechize her members in the awareness of this potential, thus providing the catechetical framework for dealing with suffering upon its arrival into one's life. The Church can preach not only on the mystery of suffering, but use the reality of suffering when preaching about other theological truths.

José Granados lists the various results from John Paul's analysis in *Salvifici doloris*, demonstrated above. In her preaching, the Church can better articulate that the experience of suffering demonstrates the integrity of the Church's doctrine. With regard to the diversity of creation, the potential for redemptive suffering is an example of man's

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boundaries transcend themselves toward God. Faith in a dogmatic sense and faith in a mystical sense are two aspects of a unitary process by which creaturely limits are transcended."

<sup>25</sup> See *Gaudium et spes*, no. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 10, p. 910. "[I]n the face of modern developments there is a growing body of men who are asking the most fundamental of all questions or are glimpsing them with a keener insight: What is man? What is the meaning of suffering, evil and death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress?"

<sup>27</sup> The term "boundary experience" refers to man's experience of the limits of his being as he faces them, causing him to reflect upon how his experience is consistent with what God has revealed to be true not only for man's present state (which he experiences) but also to ponder what has led him to this experience and what lies beyond it.

unique relationship with God, and the potential which man has for self-discovery. The mystery of his being is revealed in and through, among other things, his experience of suffering.<sup>28</sup> Suffering can be seen as a parallel reality with John Paul's understanding of shame in the Theology of the Body. Both are related to concupiscence in that they are disorders which hinder the potential for the body's full expression of love. But at the same time, they both carry the potential for recalling an "original" existence, which points to the need to re-read the body and its original dignity.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, with regard to man's ordering of his activities into cooperation with God, suffering is the most crucial and admittedly difficult "task" he undertakes. While many of man's activities are reduced to the mechanical, suffering remains a bodily experience in which a dialogue with God is required.<sup>30</sup>

[Q]uestions [about the nature of suffering] are difficult, when an individual puts them to another individual, when people put them to other people, as also when man puts them to God. For man does not put this question to the world, even though it is from the world that the suffering often comes to him, but he puts them to God as the Creator and Lord of the world.<sup>31</sup>

Preaching on being active while suffering and not simply a passive victim is difficult in contemporary culture, and yet that is exactly what is required.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Granados, 551; see John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Granados, 551.

<sup>30</sup> Granados, 552.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 9, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., no. 30, p. 52. "...Christ's revelation of the salvific meaning of suffering is in no way identified with an attitude of passivity. Completely the opposite is true. The Gospel is the negation of passivity in the face of suffering."

### 10.2.2 The Church's Greater Reflection upon the Cross

An important anthropological lesson is offered in the experience of suffering. Man's openness leads to vulnerability, which may then lead to solidarity and communion with others. But just as with the need to read the language of the body in truth for man's spousal meanings of the body to speak with integrity, so too in dealing with suffering, the potential for the movement to solidarity and communion from openness and vulnerability requires a proper reading of bodily sensations in the redemptive act of Christ.<sup>33</sup>

As much as anything else, suffering is a profound example of the great paradox of Christianity. Reflecting on the words of St. Paul, John Paul notes the paradox of weakness and strength that is played out in suffering.

The gospel paradox of weakness and strength often speaks to us from the pages of the letters of Saint Paul, a paradox particularly experienced by the Apostle himself and together with him experienced by all who share Christ's sufferings. Paul writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "I will at all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." In the Second Letter to Timothy we read: "And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed." And in the letter to the Philippians he will even say: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."<sup>34</sup>

This great paradox of divine power, salvation through Christ's suffering precisely in human weakness, is at the very center of the mystery of the cross. It is this mystery which is the fundamental source of the Church's teaching activity.

Preacher to the papal household, Raniero Cantalamessa notes the need to focus on the reality of the cross in today's society, and urges the Church to more faithfully unveil

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<sup>33</sup> Granados, 553.

<sup>34</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 23, p.35.

the hidden power of the cross.<sup>35</sup> As argued in Chapter 1, a society that tries to convince itself that it can successfully oppose suffering—the facing of the cross—has great difficulty making sense out of it when it appears. Cantalamessa believes that the dialogue between the Church and the larger culture must first connect the liturgy to the life of the Christian, and in doing so, cease fleeing from the reality of the cross. While the larger culture attempts to separate suffering from pleasure, it is aware, as is the Church, that these two are inextricably linked to each other.<sup>36</sup>

The recalling of the presence of the cross in the liturgy and the faithful preaching of man's participation in it is a new kind of unveiling of the eternal mystery of the cross, which Cantalamessa calls a new contact with the divine, in which the sufferings of humanity are no longer only shunned, but allow for a renewed appreciation of the grace they offer.<sup>37</sup>

The cross does not oblige us to renounce pleasure, but we do have to submit it to God's will, pursuing and living it in obedience to his Word and to the law which he has laid down. This he has done not in order to spoil our pleasure, but to preserve it from failure and death, so that through the small joys we encounter on our way we might learn to aspire to the joy that never ends.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Power of the Cross*, Frances Lonergan Villa, trans., (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1996), 146.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 147. "The point we have in common is the realization that in this life, pleasure and pain follow one another with the same regularity as a trough follows the swell of an ocean wave, pulling a shipwrecked person back to the sea even as he struggles to reach the shore."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., "From deep within society, the need for a new contact with the divine is emerging, that will enlarge the soul and give people strength, joy, hope, and a sense of life's glory. This is precisely what the preaching of the cross achieved in the first ages of Christianity: like an uncontrollable wave of hope and joy it swept away everything in which people of the decadent Roman Empire sought refuge: mystery cults, magic, theurgy, [sic] new religions. There was a sense of a new springtime in the world. The preaching of the cross of Christ can do the same today, in this tormented age of ours, if only we are able to restore to it the inspiration, enthusiasm, and faith of those early times."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 149.

### 10.2.3 Developing a Communion of Persons in Relationships of Suffering

The Church's pastoral care of the sick and suffering can be developed to bring more of Christ's faithful people in regular contact with the suffering in their midst. As John Paul articulated, the Church's mission to be present to the reality of human suffering calls men into communion with God and solidarity with others. As he taught in *Salvifici doloris*, so the Church has the opportunity to see that the gift given to man of the body is a gift that is at the service of communion with God and others. Returning, as John Paul always did, to the person of Christ, the lessons of suffering are to be found in Christ's example. When suffering is accepted and one's body is in a real sense given over, then the suffering person participates in an act which transcends his individual body in connecting it with that of Christ.

José Granados argues that Christ's body always pointed toward something more than itself. The letter to the Hebrews explains that Christ's body is given by the Father, at the service of man.<sup>39</sup>

It is precisely by entering into this world that Christ "has united himself in some fashion with every man" (*Gaudium et spes*, 22). The suffering body appears at the point of communication between mankind and Christ. We can see thus how Christ's suffering and death did not remain an isolated act of an individual, but was able to transform our own suffering and death. Christ's words at the institution of the Eucharist ("This is my body, given up for you") are the final expression of this meaning of the body, which was made to express love and to make communion possible.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Hebrews 10:5.

<sup>40</sup> Granados, "Toward A Theology of the Suffering Body," 559.

Christ's suffering fully demonstrated the reality of what happens in all suffering, namely that man relates to God and God alone is his "fulfillment and consolation."<sup>41</sup> The Church can capitalize on emphasizing the sacramental nature of suffering as participation in the suffering of Christ, as well as incorporating the sacrament of the Eucharist into the addressing of suffering as a preparation for the strength needed to face it—for it is the Christian's greatest connection to the body of Christ.<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between individual and community which is incorporated in the Eucharist, parallels the relationship between the one who suffers and those who attend to him. For both the Christian's full participation in the Eucharist and finding communion possible in suffering require that individual and autonomous tendencies be overcome by a desire for solidarity with another. In both, the individual realizes the interrelatedness of the human condition, and the temptation for a self-focused response due to concupiscence.

In this regard, we speak of concupiscence as a difficulty in perceiving the manifestation of love in the world and of expressing an adequate response to it in one's body. This incapacity comes from sin and inclines man towards sin, inasmuch as sin is the contrary of love and sets out, not from a denial of love, but rather from indifference in the face of its manifestation.<sup>43</sup>

Both the Eucharist and the presence of suffering can sanctify only because of the social nature of their being.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 560.

<sup>42</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Granados, 545.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen M. Fields, "Sacrament and Sacrifice of Freedom," in *John Paul II on the Body*, 210. "By underscoring the mutuality between Church and Eucharist, John Paul emphasizes the visible sacrament as the efficacious sign of Christ's mystical body. In so doing, he follows the vision of *Lumen gentium*, which he calls 'the key to the whole accomplishment of Vatican II.' This vision has been developed by

Tara Seyfer and John Travaline have written about the possibility of informing the practice of medicine in view of the insights that John Paul II developed in the Theology of the Body catechesis.<sup>45</sup> They rightly insist that the work of medicine is one that upholds the dignity of the (sick) person, and that the carrying out of this task with compassion allows the professional to speak in the language of the body, with his own body to the one in need. This language is at the service of building up a communion of persons.<sup>46</sup>

The physician is called to give of himself in the service of the well-being of the patient, and the patient is called to open himself up in trust of the care of the healer, thus creating a kind of communion of persons.

In the interaction between healer and patient, a communion of persons is formed. The patient makes himself vulnerable. The healer senses this and responds with gentleness and sensitivity, so as to convey that he is grateful to the patient for allowing himself to be vulnerable, and that he is worthy of this trust. The patient has, essentially, given the healer his body. It is the healer's for a few moments, to inspect, touch, and treat. With this trust, the healer is to gather information, apply bandages, or medicine, and

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postconciliar thinkers as a way of addressing an inadequacy in Thomas who, as Rahner opines, makes the relation between Church and Eucharist seem accidental. Thomas implies that God gives sanctification directly to individuals. On the contrary, contends Rahner, the efficaciousness of the Eucharist, and indeed of all the sacraments, finds its ground, not primarily in God's instrumental consecration of natural signs, but within the Church's own efficaciousness. As the representation of God's graced immanence in history, the Church is the fundamental sign that endows the sacraments with sanctifying power. They signify the Church, even as the Church signifies the divine economy of salvation. This view makes the Eucharist the Church's 'exhibitive symbol': Christ is not only present in the Eucharist as he is in all the sacraments—namely in and through a sign. He is present as *the* sign that manifests the essence of the Church as the body of Christ" (emphasis in original).

<sup>45</sup> Seyfer and Travaline, "The *Theology of the Body* and Modern Medicine," 16-28.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 18-19. "Undoubtedly, a physician must be disposed to a careful reading and correct interpretation of the *Theology of the Body* in order to view the patient in the proper light. What the *Theology of the Body* does so nicely is to cogently offer a view of the person as created for love relationships. One comes to understand that the body expresses the person, and that the body has a certain language, which fully possesses the capacity to speak truth. In order to not be swayed by attitudes or technology which can depersonalize the sick, one must repeatedly remind oneself that the patient is created in the image and likeness of God, for love relationships," citation on 19.

diagnose. The patient has also given to the healer his psyche, in a sense. He is saying to the healer, “I trust in you. I will listen to what you say, to your diagnosis. Then even after our encounter is over, I will continue my gift of trust to you because our relationship will continue in my carrying out your instructions” (whether it be to take or apply a certain medicine, or to perform a certain behavior or therapy). In this way, the gift of the healer to the patient is also continued, even when they are not in each other’s physical presence any more.<sup>47</sup>

The authors note that the care given and relationship initiated with such an attitude extend well beyond what is actually done, or whether or not the treatment is successful. Clearly, this ideal in the physician-patient relationship demonstrates a perfect application of the possibility of John Paul’s focus on the intransitive dimension of human interaction, whereby the interior results of one’s work is significantly more important than its tangible outcome.

Some practical steps follow from this analysis. The medical professional ought to be up front and to address the embarrassment and guilt that are often associated with illness. By openly addressing the needs of the patient and allowing the display of weakness and fear, the physician affirms the dignity of the patient. In turn, the patient should trustingly expose himself to the professional, accept and follow through with treatment, as well as accepting the consequences, whether positive or negative from such treatment.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 26-27. Clearly the authors understand that the healer as professional takes the lead in helping create the right environment in the relationship with the patients where such a communion of persons can be established. “The healer should also recall that Christ has redeemed the body, and redeemed suffering. Through His suffering and death on the cross, He has shown us that suffering has value, and can work for the good of the sanctification of ourselves and others. His redemption ameliorates the distorting effects of shame about our bodies and about illness, and helps us to understand that we, as body-persons, are all created in the image of God and should not be ashamed of our afflictions or disabilities. We should seek healing when necessary, and not be afraid to be vulnerable in front of our healers. Healers must also strive

One concrete way of improving the acceptance of suffering and honest communication in health care is for medical professionals to make improvements in their truth in prognostication, specifically to those who are dying.<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Christakis has reported tendencies among physicians to be indirect and disproportionately positive when a negative prognosis is evident. He reports that they see this less as being untruthful than intentionally vague.<sup>50</sup> While Christakis reports that the withholding of information (especially negative) is becoming less prevalent, it remains an issue. While the reasons for this behavior are many-faceted, they center on the notion of not wanting to extinguish the hope of recovery regardless of the chances.<sup>51</sup> This would seem to do a great disservice to the emotional needs of the patient and the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship. If, as David Kuhl points out, the need for the suffering patient to be completely honest and truthful to regarding their relationships is of utmost importance in his terminal illness, then those who serve them have the duty to help initiate this process with the same honesty.

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to see the image of God in each and every patient they treat. In a real sense, these are further ways of ‘re-reading the language of the body in truth,’” citation on 27.

<sup>49</sup> This paragraph follows Chapter Five Christakis, *Death Foretold*.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>51</sup> This is in no way intended to demonize the physician who himself, faces great pressures in the attempt to treat a suffering patient. Seyfer and Travaline in, “The *Theology of the Body* and Modern Medicine,” help contextualize the pressures that fall on the physician. “It is disturbing and ironic that the current trend in medicine toward unbridled usage of any and all advancements in technology, apparently to help the patient, seems to lead to a dehumanization of the patient as a person who is created in God’s image and likeness. Today’s medical culture seems characterized by a brief encounter between the patient and physician which is focused on specific ailments or complaints, followed by a battery of highly sophisticated tests, upon which the physician tends to rely more than on the patient’s medical history. The patient’s concerns are often not completely addressed, and the patient often ends up feeling frustrated. In large part, this method of practicing medicine is related to the variety of financial disincentives and pressures put onto physicians by insurance companies and health-care institutions to practice in this way. The physician must end up endeavoring to see the largest number of patients in the shortest amount of time, and must often resort to time-saving laboratory tests rather than taking the time and discussion that he sees the patient actually needs. In this milieu, it is not surprising that the patient is often viewed, albeit unintentionally, as someone less than a holy creation of God,” citation on 20.

Clearly, the physician's care when medical technology is insufficient in healing is a change in the manner of addressing the patient's needs. The example of the hospice movement testifies that there is more to caring for the sick and suffering than offering a cure. Christakis notes the difficulty that physicians often face when having to offer negative prognostication—that they are typically much more honest when discussing treatment and therapy options than when offering prognosis.<sup>52</sup> The type of honesty and frankness required of physicians in these cases is truly an offering of the self—a mutual openness and trust required when the technical aspect of healing fails—which Seyfer and Travaline call a “communion of persons.”

Stanley Hauerwas points out the natural inclination to recoil from suffering, and the danger which affects not just the suffering person, but also the healthy.

Our pains isolate us from one another as they create worlds that cut us off from one another. Consider, for example, the immense gulf between the world of the sick and world of the healthy. No matter how much we may experience the former, when we are healthy or not in pain we have trouble imagining and understanding the world of the ill.<sup>53</sup>

This natural temptation for suffering to bring isolation can be overcome. The Church, John Paul says, must become an example for developing a framework of social life and interpersonal relationships which combat an indifference to suffering and an isolation of those who suffer.<sup>54</sup> Not only with its preaching and pastoral outreach, though they are the most visible manifestations of addressing suffering, but in its very being, the Church

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<sup>52</sup> Christakis, *Death Foretold*, 110.

<sup>53</sup> Hauerwas, “Salvation and Health,” 79.

<sup>54</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, no. 29.

is a witness by her habits and resources of unconditional love—a love needed both to face suffering, and then abundantly released through it.

Thus our willingness to be ill and to ask for help, as well as our willingness to be present with the ill is no special or extraordinary activity, but a form of the Christian obligation to be present to one another in and out of pain. Moreover, it is such a people who should have learned how to be present with those in pain without that pain driving them further apart. For the very bond that pain forms between us becomes the basis for alienation, as we have no means to know how to make it a part of our common history. Just as it is painful to remember our sins, so we seek not to remember our pain, since we desire to live as if our world and existence were a pain-free one. Only a people trained in remembering, and remembering as a communal act, their sins and pains, can offer a paradigm for sustaining across time a painful memory so that it acts to heal rather than to divide.<sup>55</sup>

The Church's preaching, ministry and sacramental life all must give witness to the redemptive potential which suffering affords, both in helping to overcome the temptation to see futility in suffering, as well as the indifference to those who suffer.

This study has raised further philosophical and theological questions which could not be fully explored or answered here. The exploration of the impact of the ever-growing use and focus on medical technology which results in the depersonalization of the patient and separates the suffering person and the healer would be a relevant endeavor. So also would be a study on the increasing trend to view healthcare as a business enterprise rather than as a profession which seeks to bring about healing and communion. Specifically within the field of moral theology, what, if any moral imperatives exist in the addressing of suffering from the notion of the communion of persons, as well as the duties of the Catholic physician to be faithful to his conscience in

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<sup>55</sup> Hauerwas, "Salvation and Health," 81.

an increasingly diverse culture with wide-ranging expectations of health would be timely studies. Finally, it would be pertinent to evaluate the effects on this communion of persons that various attempts at healthcare reform would bring.

While this work has attempted to articulate the cultural need for a renewed understanding of the mystery of suffering—and John Paul’s contribution toward a more developed theology of suffering which incorporates his observations from the Theology of the Body to bring about a more authentic communion of persons—as with any mystery, there comes a point in which theological investigation can probe no further. All that this study has advanced has significance only to the degree that each person is either open to accepting his own suffering when it comes, finding the redemptive aspect in it, and uniting it to the redemption offered through Christ, or seeing in a suffering person the invitation to attend to him as did the Good Samaritan. Though hopefully helpful, it is painfully theoretical when compared to the actual experience of facing suffering. John Paul himself, not only developed an anthropology to help the Church engage the cultural lack of understanding of the place of suffering in the life of the Christian, he also personally gave witness to the power released in suffering in facing his own death in 2005.

It is by watching Christ and following him with patient trust that we are able to understand how every form of human pain contains within itself a divine promise of salvation and glory. I would like this message of comfort and hope to reach all, especially those experiencing moments of difficulty, those who suffer in body and spirit.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, Angelus of February 6, 2005, in *Let Me Go To My Father’s House: John Paul II’s Strength in Weakness*, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006), 33.

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