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## The Consequences of the Anthropological Mistake According to Karol Wojtyła

### **Introduction**

The anthropological mistake as discussed by Karol Wojtyła identifies incorrect anthropological views of the nature of man and explains the reasons as to why these views are incorrect. Developing from this, one must naturally come to the conclusion that there are certain incorrect states that occur if an anthropological mistake is made. This is correct, with there being certain “consequences” or “repercussions” that arise from such a situation. These repercussions constitute certain ideologies, sociopolitical systems, and views and ways of conducting life. This work discusses these errors as well as the particularly erroneous views of man they present, following a work previously published in this journal titled *The Forms of the Anthropological Mistake According to Major Works of Karol Wojtyła*. A common theme throughout the succeeding text is the reductive aspect of these errors. These errors, while they do not necessarily destroy the concept of man, reduce him in such a way that the nature of man is given less value and importance than it properly deserves. Particular attention is given to views regarding knowledge concerning man, poli-

tics and social life, and the goal of human life in morality and ethics.

Following these general guiding themes, each section is given an individual dedication, with sub-topics discussing the particular situations that arise when an aforementioned anthropological mistake is present. Nonetheless, the spirit of Karol Wojtyła pervades this chapter, with the metaphysical anthropology of Wojtyła, and his concept of the anthropological mistake, providing the basis from which critiques are made.

## **1. The Reductive Concepts of Man in Knowledge Concerning Man**

The first concept one must investigate when discussing the consequences of the anthropological mistake is the reductive concepts of man found in certain systems of knowledge concerning man. This is the knowledge of man that is contained within certain, holistic, and total worldviews, and the erroneous anthropology that emerges from them. As such, critiqued here are general philosophical worldviews, with more particular strains of these general worldviews being reviewed as well. With these concepts being more general, the critiques in turn are more general. The particular incorrect concepts of man in knowledge concerning man discussed include the errors of materialism, relativism, nihilism, and rationalism.

### **1.1 Materialism**

The repercussions of a materialist view of man and the world are quite shocking. Materialism generally provides a view that the nature of all things is composite of some kind of material, and that all knowledge that is possible regarding the nature of man is knowledge as to the material makeup of humans. As such, the nature of man is that of a purely material being, having no nature outside of this material. Now materialism can appear in diverse

ways, and with regards to different things. Materialism does not necessitate the view that the world is made up of a physical material world, as there can be a spiritual materialism that sees everything, including man, as being strictly made up of a spiritual material, or an ethereal materialism in which neither matter or spirit, but rather a third “other” material, makes up reality. In this overall view man is stripped of his individuality. We no longer have individuals, but rather beings made up of a particular kind of matter. Action is also not considered in this worldview, with only the material constitution of man being of any interest. Thus, in the materialist worldview man is not an actor, a person, or even an independent being, he is just a pile of matter of one kind or another. Now there are three important sub-trends that follow from a general error of materialism, these being monism, dualism, and consumerism.

Monism is a materialist view in which all reality is made up of one individual kind of matter, and only this one kind of matter. As such there is a singular anthropological nature to man, with man being made up of this one singular kind of matter. Thus, interest in the “nature of man” is not made, as this nature itself is materialistically apparent. Generally, this leads to a situation where all other aspects of the nature of man are seen as accidental orderings of matter. Action, person, and everything else relating to man’s identity is ergo in all circumstances a delineation of the order of this primary singular matter. With this there is a kind of mechanistic determinism that emerges. Man is not a being who acts on his own accord, but rather acts in accordance with the movement of the composite matter. All that is done is done simply due to the fact of the movement of some more primary matter. This is a strange mixture of chaos theory and Aquinas’ primary mover. While admitting that with regards to action there must be an antecedent from which contemporary action emerges, such primary force is not seen as the benevolence of God, but rather

a chaotic lineage of the movement, whims, and thrashings of monistic matter, a matter that is almost always seen as being in a continual flux. The nature of man is then crushed within this tide of material chaos, just as a ship is torn apart in the chaotic waves of a maritime storm. In both cases, man is destroyed.

Related to this chaos of material movement is the incorrect knowledge of man presented in the materialism found in dualism. In dualism, everything is seen as being material, albeit there are multiple material genera to which a material may be part of.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, it is a metaphysics where the ultimate metaphysical nature of something, and therefore the metaphysical anthropology of man, rests on being in the genera of one material or another. As such, this reflects the errors of monism in that value is only given to material nature, with all other aspects of man losing their value. So, while a metaphysician of a more proper order may wish to investigate how the identity of an individual arises within man, a dualist would argue that this is a silly question and that we must only investigate which material substances make up man. Thus, all questions regarding the nature of man find their answer in and only in the material makeup of man.

Related to this belief in a multiple genera-based materialism as found in dualism, there is the belief that these genera are in constant conflict with one another.<sup>2</sup> The spiritual vs. the physical, the mind vs. the body, and the interior vs. the exterior, with this showing that in the dualist mind there is a fundamental battle happening throughout all of reality, with this being the force that creates identity, action, will, and all the other aspects which make up the essence of man in a more correct anthropology. As such, while monism sees the general aspects of man as the accidental products of the movement of matter, dualism sees the gen-

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<sup>1</sup> Nearly all forms of dualism claim that there are only two genera in which things find their metaphysical identity, the physical and the spiritual.

<sup>2</sup> While this is not always the case, this is once again found in nearly all forms of dualism, to the point that when making general claims about dualism it is safe to claim this.

eral aspects of man as being the accidental products of the conflict between various kinds of matter with one another. In the dualistic view reason arises from the point of conflict between the mind and body, or individuality from the conflict of spirit with body. In this dualist mindset one sees the anthropology of man as reflecting this general metaphysical conflict, and therefore man is subsequently not an integrated being. There is no unification or cooperation between the different composite factors of man, with these divergent aspects being in a continual battle with one another and ultimately reflecting the eternal conflict found in the general forms of matter found in the world. This lack of unification and presence of a constant internal conflict thus destroys any general anthropology of a unified or holistic man.

Two exemplary examples of this erroneous dualist concept of knowledge regarding man are the dualism of Descartes and the dualism of the early Christian Gnostics.<sup>3</sup> The dualism of Descartes strictly separates the mind from the body, with there simultaneously being given a supremacy of the mind and mental cognition in regards to the personhood of man, as well as a placement of this mind/mental cognition against experience, the body, and the physical generally. As such, in the mind of Descartes, there is a separation of reality into the mental, and all else. In the *Meditations* Descartes goes so far as to reflect this in his statement, “I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it. But I do not yet know clearly enough what I am, I who am certain that I am”<sup>4</sup> and in, “I am, however, a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks.”<sup>5</sup> All other possible things outside of this thinking

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<sup>3</sup> Particularly the Manicheans, Valentinians, and Marcionites. It should be noted that the Marcionites, while being dualists, were not strictly Gnostics. Further clarification of this can be found in the works of Adolf Harnack.

<sup>4</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in Robert Hutchins (ed), *Great Books of the Western World*, vol 31. *Descartes Spinoza*, pp. 75-103. Translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross. United States of America: Encyclopaedia Britannica, INC, 1952. p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

thing form a black void of doubt which relies on “an intuition of the mind, which may be imperfect.”<sup>6</sup> As such, there truly is no concept of “man,” with metaphysical anthropology outside of the mental cognition of the individual being impossible.

With regards to early Christian Gnostics, there is more of a sense that the dualist conflict between kinds of matter is inherent to the nature of man, with there subsequently being a conception of man as an inherently unintegrated being. In the cosmology of the Marcionites there was a belief that there was a primordial spiritual reality, with all physical reality, and the physical nature of man, being the creation of a villainous demiurge. In toe with this, man’s current nature was seen as being in conflict with itself. This good and primordial soul was placed in conflict with this evil and base physical body. The Manicheans had a similar view, with reality having risen from a conflict between the spiritual good and the physical evil, with this battle raging on within all of mankind. Valentinians, while having a somewhat different cosmology, still believed man was made up of two composite substances that are in conflict with one another,<sup>7</sup> with salvation stemming from the overcoming of man’s lower, physical nature. Ultimately, in this situation there is an anthropological error in the belief that man is made of two, in conflict, natures. It comes as no surprise that in these belief systems there is no concept of the “integrated man,” with this ultimately being impossible due to this stated internal, metaphysical conflict.

While religious dualism presents the problem of an internally conflicted and unintegrated man, consumerism presents a strange dualism where the nature of man is placed below the nature of the consumer product. In the consumerism of modern capitalist society, the end goal of all human action is the attain-

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80. In this particular situation Descartes gives the example of, and doubts the existence of, a humble piece of wax.

<sup>7</sup> These parts being the psychic and hylic.

ment of the product. Live for the product, work for the product, with happiness being the purchase of the product. As such the product becomes a good in and of itself and takes on an almost spiritual quality. The product isn't just the physical item itself, but is also all the ideas, hopes, dreams, and emotions of the buyer. When one buys something, particularly a non-essential product, they buy more into the products "spiritual" elements than anything else. As such, in the fact that modern capitalist man places his happiness and craft into the attainment of these goods, we are presented with a situation where there is this high spiritual good (the physical product) and the low means by which these goods are attained, by physical through his action. This is a basic dualism of spirit vs. physical with products being the former and man and his labor being the latter. In this cosmology man is lowered to just being a means for attaining these goods and as such there is a mistake with regards to the knowledge of man. If man is simply a tool used to attain physical products, he is no more than a means, and as such an anthropological mistake is present.

Materialism is one of the most common reductive concepts with regards to the knowledge of man. In all the aforementioned situations, man is reduced to a particular kind or kinds of material, with his holistic and integrated nature being destroyed. This mistake is also the most tempting in the times currently abiding. In a world full of people claiming that there is only the observable physical world, coupled with fast-food, shopping centers, and credit cards, is it any surprise that people see a need to create ideological systems that reduce all of reality and man into nothing more than matter? Nonetheless when these anthropologically erroneous mindsets arise, the repercussions found in their respective anthropological mistakes must arise as well.

## 1.2 Relativism

After having seen the repercussions of a materialist worldview on knowledge concerning man, one can continue by observing the anthropological mistakes made within relativism. Now the relativist worldview goes much deeper than materialism. While materialism simply presents a view of the nature of the material world,<sup>8</sup> relativism is much more primary than this, with there being a nearly a priori conception that at best everything is interpreted by the individual, and at worst, that the being of man isn't important. This ultimately stems from the belief that personal experience, and personal interpretation of that experience, is what determines truth. The only reflection one considers in this regard is the strictly personal, no recourse is made to anything outside of an individual's ego. Ergo man becomes the soul arbiter of truth, a god who determines what is and what is not. From this metaphysical mistake emerges the anthropological mistake of man being nothing more than an object determined by this determining ego, and as such is an object placed outside of, and having no relation to, this same individual ego. Man is simply a determined being, whose worth is determined by an individual's perception and will and holding only a minor relationship to that same perception and will. The basis from which identity emerges is not man as a being, but rather that which determines. Having such a reliance on a determining ego, two sub mistakes emerge, metaphysical relativism and ethical relativism, both of which have their own mistakes with regards to knowledge concerning man.

Beginning with metaphysical relativism one sees how through the whim of an individual's ego, all nature loses its sense of being a being. When it is the ego that determines what is and what isn't, it is the ego that becomes the agent by which things are given their nature, and as such, there is a rejection of the quintessential steadfastness of truth. What is "true" in this regard be-

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<sup>8</sup> And by extension man.

comes whatever the individual ego sees it as. As such, there are as many interpretations of what is true as there are people. This then becomes the same case with knowledge concerning man. "Man" as such is no longer a certainty, anybody can think anything they want about man, with these conclusions all having the same validity. What we see in this situation is the reduction of man from a being, to strictly being an object, an object that contains a near caprice-based metaphysics that rests on the will of an observer. As such, the "true" and "man" is restricted to my own conception of the "true" and "man," with any "truth" or anthropology beyond this internally conceived "truth" or anthropology being impossible.

Coming from this point of reductive metaphysical relativism emerges the reductive knowledge of man found in ethical relativism. In ethical relativism there is generally a relativism found with regards to the "good," and the correct moral-ethical system that should be established with regards to this relativist "good." As such, reflecting the errors of metaphysical relativism, it becomes the ego that establishes what is good and how one should be ordered towards the good. The reductive aspect with regards to knowledge concerning man comes from how a proper or "good" system of conduct towards man does not consider the anthropology of man, but rather places this determination of conduct once again on the whim of the ego. Man isn't a being that, through his metaphysical anthropology, one builds a system of proper conduct and ethics; in ethical relativism, such deliberation once again rests on the will and feeling of an individual ego, and how this ego, on its own accord, determines how to properly conduct itself with man.

Relativism is a tempting mistake. Even though it reduces the knowledge one can have of man, it does give an individual and their ego to a near godlike power of determination. No longer is recourse to reality or values necessary, the validity of something

arises from whether you approve of it. Many people would fall into this, as it is the natural temptation of power. One note of clarification must be made. The ego of an individual isn't necessarily always the individual ego of a person. Communities can have a collective individual ego with regards to relativism, with a kind of super ego from a community being this relativistic arbitrator of the "true" and "good." Gilbert Harman describes this in his work *Moral Relativism Defended* when he describes a moral relativism where, "the judgment that it is wrong of someone to do something makes sense only in relation to an agreement or understanding."<sup>9</sup> These "agreements" and "understandings" reflecting the ego based moral-ethical determinations of a community or group.

### 1.3 Nihilism

A nihilistic worldview presents a repercussion on knowledge concerning man in a restrictive negative. In nihilism there is a severe reduction of knowledge concerning man to the point where anthropology as properly understood does not exist. Nihilism sees man as nothing, or at best only the self is given. As such, the repercussion of nihilism is a complete reduction of the nature of man and a stifling of value, with the remaining anthropological value being of a level that isn't that noteworthy when compared to the value of the self and the actions thereof. Nihilism as such can be separated into two distinct sub groups, metaphysical nihilism and the anthropological and emotive nihilism that follows, and ethical nihilism and the will to power and legal nihilism that follows. Essentially, what one has is an erroneous metaphysics where either nothing is of value, or only the first person I itself is of value. Thus, any proper metaphysical anthropology is swept under the waves of either nothingness or narcissism. This is the error of both despair and self-presumption, the reduction of

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<sup>9</sup> Gilbert Harman, *Moral Relativism Defended*, in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed), *Ethical Theory*, pp. 41-50. Singapore: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007. p. 41.

the knowledge of man made by both he who sees nothing and he who sees himself as everything.

Metaphysical nihilism is perhaps the most dangerous reductive concept in knowledge concerning man. In metaphysical nihilism there is an overall rejection of ends and values as such. There is simply nothing there. As Vittorio Possenti puts it, this kind of nihilism, “lacks an end, and it lacks an answer ‘why.’”<sup>10</sup> It goes beyond the concept of the unattainable or unknowable, as in some forms of relativism, with there being only a metaphysical void. Metaphysical nihilism thus makes even, “the question of death impractical and makes it completely banal.”<sup>11</sup> What follows is a deconstructionist mindset. If there is no ultimate being, meaning, or purpose, then why have all these grand idols? Thus, the nihilist becomes a dark revolutionary, destroying all claims to value of any kind, with this revolutionary zeal resting in an acceptance of the nothingness of all things. The conceptions of being, God, man, action, and all else are subsequently thrown into the philosophical waste bin, with the nihilist finally, through his denial of his own personhood, rejecting his own conception of self and value and thrusting himself into the void as well.

As can be easily determined from this conception of overall metaphysical nihilism, there emerges an anthropological nihilism which produces a complete reduction of knowledge concerning man. In the rejection of knowledge of all things, one must logically also reject both man and the possibility of knowing what man is. This is a complete reduction in the broadest sense. Man simply is seen as not.<sup>12</sup> As such, due to man’s not *being*, knowledge of man is impossible. By extension, man himself becomes an

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<sup>10</sup> Vittorio Possenti, *Nihilism and Metaphysics: The Third Voyage*. Translated by Daniel Gallagher. United States of America: Suny Press, 2015. p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> The uncommon grammar used here is connected to the difficulty in describing the actual situation. I could have used the sentence “man simply is seen as not being a being,” but such an ordering would not include the totality of the nihilistic rejection of man and the subsequent rejection of his nature.

impossibility. Man is no longer a creature of “dramatic character”<sup>11</sup> with even man’s, “pain, fear of death, guilt, and finitude”<sup>11</sup> being dissolved, annihilated, and negated. This is the mistake found in the ennui and melancholy of the modern age; the bored, listless nihilism that leads to self-destructive trends. If man is nothing, then why peruse anything of value? One must instead grasp out to fleeting images of pleasure, which are themselves masks of the void as well.

With this nihilistic reduction of knowledge concerning the anthropology of man one finds the conclusion of the reduction of knowledge concerning man in emotive nihilism. In emotive nihilism one finds metaphysical nihilism at its greatest extent, as emotive nihilism is the brutal existentialism found in the denial of the self. Subsequently, the person and their being, action, and value are denied from a personal level. The “man is not” from the previous section transforms into an “I am not.” As such, the individual has no value and is internally reduced to a vacuous void. This emotive nihilism is very close to the excesses of the self-denying existentialism portrayed by Sartre and Camus, with the ennui and melancholia of anthropological nihilism becoming self-hatred, depression, and suicidal tendencies. If “I” truly am not a being and lack value, then life itself does not exist or have value. Life is therefore less than a dream, with the extinguishing thereof having as little value as the life being extinguished. This is the mistake found in chronic depression, existential angst, and the man contemplating suicide. The nature of man found in all men is denied in the self, thus we are reduced to nothing.

Not all forms of nihilism stem from these metaphysical reductions of man. Either due to a lack of insight, interest, or philosophical integrity, some forms of nihilism do not invest themselves in metaphysical conjecture but rather place their interests into more practical and worldly matters. This is the case with ethical nihilism and the sub-forms that follow. Generally, ethical

nihilism concerns itself with a rejection of the concept of the “good.” As such, in the ethical nihilist’s mind, there is no such thing as an objective, valuable good. So while the metaphysical nihilist rejects “being” generally, the ethical nihilist rejects the “good” generally. This reduces knowledge concerning man, in that there is no system by which an ethical or moral system that regards the value of other men can be conceived. Man is then not treated as an end, and in fact the issue of treating anything for any possible value is rejected as well. Any external moral world outside of the individual is destroyed, with there being an ethical, “Embodiment of the Subject and the Dissolution of the Object.”<sup>13</sup> Knowledge of man, both an ethical subject and object, is thus “dissolved” and reduced.

From this ethical and moral dissolution comes the narcissistic *will to power* nihilism made most popular by Friedrich Nietzsche. With the absence of moral values as presented in the previous paragraph, it naturally arises that the will, goals, and desires of the individual rise to precedence. With there being no greater system of morality, and no values outside of the self, one must, to quote Aleister Crowley, *do what thou wilt*. Thus the will operates for the sake of the will alone.<sup>14</sup> With this there is once again the primacy of the individual and their will, with all of reality being nothing more than an object used for the pleasures of the individual. As such, knowledge of man is reduced in this regard from “how one should act in relation to this man” to “does this man please me” and “how can I use this man.” This is very close to the use of man that Wojtyla critiques in *Love and Responsibility*, but the ends in the case of will to power nihilism are the whim or pleasure of an individual. Subsequently, knowledge regarding all of man is reduced, with the only proper man being this indi-

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. England: Penguin Books, 1990. p. 67.

vidual, with all action focusing on the accomplishment of his own personal goals. With this the external world becomes nothing more than a tool, with all things, including man, deferring to the individual's interests. This is the complete opposite of emotive nihilism, even though it stems from a similar rejection. While emotive nihilism destroys the self, will to power nihilism raises the self to the point of near godhood, with it being the error found in dictators, criminals, nihilistic hedonists, and anyone else with illusions of grandeur. As such it is tempting, who doesn't want to be a being of singular power, who bends situations, people, and reality to his will?

Finally, in this train of ethical nihilism, one comes to the conclusion of legal nihilism. In legal nihilism one sees a disregard for the law that rests on the back of will to power nihilism. Law is something that can bend to the will of the individual and is no longer a reflection of either metaphysical truth or higher values. As such, what is valuable with regards to the knowledge of man is lost, with individuals wielding the law as a blade to defend their own ends. No longer does law protect people and their nature, but rather law serves the need of individual groups or individual persons. Man is then crushed under this sense of law, with man thus becoming something that is unimportant, with the knowledge thereof at best contributing to the nearly utilitarian use of law used to achieve a specific end. This is the reduction of knowledge concerning man found in those who use the law to achieve personally beneficial and non-man promoting ends. Examples in everyday life could include vulture capitalists, scheming businessmen, loan sharks, cloak and dagger politicians, and anyone else who would "use" the law to benefit themselves or hurt others.

Nihilism presents both a very dangerous as well as very tempting mistake in which knowledge concerning the nature of man is reduced. This general sense of denial of things includes the denial of man, or at least aspects of man, with a somber nothing-

ness taking its place. For this reason, it must be avoided. Nihilism is beyond a denial in that it is a general claim of nothingness. It's not that there are certain things that are wrong within certain metaphysics and anthropologies, it is that they are not. From nothing comes nothing, with this being the space from which evil can emerge. A positive metaphysical anthropology that gives a proper view of man is the answer to this consequence of the anthropological mistake.

### **1.4 Rationalism**

Finally, one must look at the consequences on the view of the nature of man found in rationalism, the prevalent view found in the world of today. In rationalism, the nature of man is seen as something observable, something strictly empirical in one sense or another. This thus makes the nature of man identifiable to, and defined by, the processes of observations of individuals or groups. Simply put, cognition itself comes before being. Generally and with this, man is reduced to a secondary nature in being equal in value to other identified beings or is only valuable in connection to the process of observation. While similar to relativism, rationalism is different in that the fact that something is cognized gives it all of its reality and the fullness of its nature. Thus, the nature of man is reduced to what is cognized by an outside source. Man simply becomes an object of cognition, and quite often this thus makes man equal to other cognized objects. Wojtyla identifies this in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* when he claims that the error of Descartes rests firmly in the fact that he, "split thought from existence and identified existence with reason itself,"<sup>15</sup> and when he discusses the, "*great anthropological shift in philosophy*"<sup>16</sup> towards this cognition before being found in the rationalism of both

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<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Translated by Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee. New York: Borzoi, 1994. P. 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51.

the Anglo-Saxon as well as Germanic rationalist traditions. Thus, subjective consciousness becomes, "absolute."<sup>16</sup>

Rationalism is prevalent in contemporary times, with scientism being its current manifestation. In scientism it is the observational powers of certain scientific methods and forms of observation that present the complete and absolute nature of objects, with these objects having only these observable natures. As such man is then reduced to either his chemical makeup, his genetics, his psychological aspects, or neurological processes. Knowledge regarding man is then reduced to what is observable through scientific investigation, with there being no room for anything outside of this. By extension, this also reduces the nature of man as presented to the same value as other comparable entities with similar observable material natures. An example of this would be if, determined through genetic analysis, man is nothing more than a bundle of genes, he is therefore similar in value to other bundles of genes. Man and animals both have complex genetic makeups, therefore they have the same metaphysical value. Ironically, this produces a situation where competing methods are seen as giving true metaphysical value. Some would argue nature rests on genetic makeup, others chemical, others neurological, with there being a continual conflict as to which mode or science is supreme.

Rationalism presents a situation wherein knowledge concerning the nature of man is reduced to the conclusions of processes of observation. In such a way, man becomes nothing more than that which is determined by, almost always physiological, forms and methods of observation. From this the act of cognition comes before any kind of metaphysics, with the metaphysics of man presented in this situation relying on the fact of observation. It is as if man and the totality of his nature was placed into a snow globe, with the hungry eyes of an observer looking in, and subsequently believing that this little figure which it sees trapped within is all there is. This is the mistake made by most contemporary

academics, who see only material or physiological observation as both that which allows one to identify man, and the force which gives man his nature.

## **2. The Reductive Concepts of Community in Politics and Social Life**

After seeing how there can be mistakes in reductive concepts of knowledge regarding man, one must continue to the realm of practical reductive concepts found in social life, with there being erroneous reductive ways in which man is presented in regard to the community. This rests upon the fact that communities are made up of men, with issues regarding the concept, order, and conduct of community life thus reflecting on the nature of man and how man is anthropologically understood. With this in mind, one can present a critique of how there are concepts of community in certain socio-political ideologies that ultimately present a reduction of the nature of man. This reduction naturally being anthropologically erroneous and degrading the metaphysical nature of man. Of particular interest, and due to their direct relation to the thought and life of Karol Wojtyła, this section concerns the anthropologically reductive errors found in socialism, fascism, individualism, and capitalism.

### **2.1 Socialism**

With regards to socialism, the reductive concept thereof ultimately emerges from the relationship of the person with other persons and the state. This comes as no surprise, as the political standards of socialism have a totalistic perspective with regards to conduct between the state and individuals. In this system it is the state that is the arbitrator of the identity and value of man. Man is valuable only insofar as he has identity within certain classes and with regard to the function of the state at large. Ergo the community, and particularly the class community, takes a place of superi-

ority in place of man, with the person disappearing into a swarthy mass of class identity. Class warfare then arises, with these different classes being placed in conflict with one another, and this perspective resting on man being seen as a tool used by classes for their own means, with individual personhood destroyed in the process.

This all ultimately rests on how socialism rejects the concept of the person, with the person being what is properly seen as that from which human identity emerges, and instead presents the identifying agent as being class. As such man is defined by, and by extension his value emerges from, only his class identity. This thus completely strips man of his particular nature, with there being only masses of men who have one cohesive identity in the eyes of the state. As such, it is not the person who the state deals with, but rather the proletariat within the socialist model. One should remember, the call of Marx was, “Working Men of All Countries, Unite!”<sup>17</sup> with the “working man” seen as one solid group, who was placed against others. The socialist declaration is a call that does not attempt to entice the individual person, but rather takes in a whole block of humanity, and as such this block becomes a totalistic collective. The “socialist man” is not a powerful individual person who carries himself, but rather is a smaller reflection of his class, and by extension the state.<sup>18</sup> With this, Marx argued that “class consciousness” would be the vehicle of positive social change, with a person’s consciousness never being touched upon.

Having man thus reduced to his class identity, socialism then reduces its concept of man and community even more by placing the aforementioned class blocks into constant class war-

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<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Marxists Internet Archive, 2010. Retrieved from: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Much like how an individual ant or bee is meaningless in its own individuality, the insect only has purpose within the hive. The “queen ant” or “queen bee” in socialism thus being the class group (proletariat) at large.

fare with one another. Thus, the nature of these non-individual constituted blocks becomes one of conflict, with community itself becoming a struggle. The concept of man is further reduced in this, with those whose identity is found outside of the proletariat not being considered people as such, with their identity being nothing more than “class enemies” or “class traitors.” As such, the ruler, the bourgeoisie, the clergyman, and the kulak all lose their humanity and with this become nefarious non-persons who must be destroyed. They then become *persona non grata*, monsters who are feared, loathed, and killed by the proletariat mass. This is the anthropological mistake found in the countless murders and massacres made in the name of the working man found in the socialist revolutions and states of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is the mistake of the Russian purges, the Cambodian killing fields, the Gulag, the Great Leap Forward, the Boat People, the re-education camps, the Holodomor, Katyn, the assassination of trouble makers, and the knock on the door in the middle of the night. It has led to the greatest collective loss of human life the world has ever seen. When man is not seen as an individual, his death is never a tragedy, it becomes a statistic.

In an irony that is as black as the hearts of the men involved, these very evils, and the destruction of the individual that is needed to get to such a point, are done in the name of a specific “good.” This being the general good of the proletariat. The very destruction of the individual person, and the harvest of executions and terror that naturally follows, is for the sake of the working man. Man’s very identity and community life are reduced to the service of and the participation in the life of the proletariat class. Thus, the *homo sapien* becomes not even the *homo faber* of modern anthropology, but rather only the *operarius*, with the individual fading into the face of a proletarian monster.

From this the final mistake of socialism emerges. From this destruction of the individual, man becomes nothing more than

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a means to the proletariat class. A tool which can be wielded for the happiness of the workers at large. This reflects the error identified by Karol Wojtyla in *Love and Responsibility* when he claims, “Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.”<sup>19</sup> Wojtyla had good knowledge of this violence as it was central to the political system in which he lived during his formative years. Communism was the system that eliminated the weekend so that industry never slept, threw unarmed soldiers at machine gun nests in order to deplete enemy munitions, worked people to death in order to build railroads in treacherous terrain, forced farmers to make crude iron instead of providing food for their community, shot their own soldiers who tried to retreat, and saw humanism as a bourgeoisie contradiction to dialectical materialism. In socialism, and particularly in its Marxist strains, the anthropological mistake rests on the seeing of the individual as being a non-autonomous matter which can be formed for the end of the proletariat class. Man is a tool, formed and molded by the state, and used for the end of promoting the happiness of working man. Thus, man is not a person, but rather a sword, hammer, sickle, or threat.

In socialism there is a reduction of the idea of community, and by extension the persons who make up that community. This anthropological error rests on the seeing of man not as an end but rather as a means, with a myriad of associated errors emerging in this error’s wake. Having lived in the People’s Republic of Poland,<sup>20</sup> Karol Wojtyla put particular interest into critiquing the errors found in socialism, communism, and their adherents. This critique of socialism is valuable today. With the rise of Neo-Marxist ideologies, Cultural Marxism, and a glorification of socialism’s

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<sup>19</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*. Translated by H.T. Willetts. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993. p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Poland was a communist Soviet satellite state from the end of the Second World War until 1989.

past, one must remember both the anthropological mistakes this ideology is founded on and the historical horrors that it created. The greatest of these horrors being the simple fact that it led to the greatest loss of human life the world has ever known. Ironically, this fact is barely ever spoken upon, with socialism and Marxism still being a trendy ideology for people the world over. One must not forget the anthropological mistake that held a third of the world hostage for nearly a century.

## 2.2 Fascism

Fascism follows an incredibly similar trend to that recently elaborated upon, with national socialism being socialism's ideological sister. In the fascist mindset, there is again a totalism with regards to the powers of the state. This, as in socialism, includes the state as being the factor that determines both the nature and value of man. The main point of difference with regards to fascism is the fact that it isn't so much political class that determines value, but rather racial, ethnic, or political identity. Additionally, the way in which a person is seen as a means of the state is more total. In a way, the totalism of fascism is more total than the totalism of socialism. This is due to the fact that in the fascist state the state is seen as being the consciousness of the country, or in more Germanic terms, the living consciousness of the *volk*. So rather than being a representative for a particular group within society, the fascist state is, "*the living organism of a nationality which not only assures the preservation of this nationality, but by the development of its spiritual and ideal abilities leads it to the highest freedom,*"<sup>21</sup> and as such is seen as the complete, singular, and total conscious representation of a complete group of people. Like in socialism, fascism also, from this perspective of group representation, believes the state can form and

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<sup>21</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971. p. 394.

use people for the ends of the *volk*. The difference here being that all classes, groups, and identities<sup>22</sup> become ordered to the end of the happiness of the *volk* at large, with the people belonging to this *volk* having a higher personhood than those outside this identity, and with there being a reduction of the personhood of all those in a society who are not part of this *volk*.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the banker, soldier, housewife, factory worker, academic, and street cleaner all have a place of use and value to the collective ends of the state, but with their life, personhood, and work itself only having an identity and value within these state goals. This leads to the horror of fascism, in that when the such goals are disordered,<sup>24</sup> the whole force of a country is put behind them, and when the state is lost or these goals not met, everything and all identity is lost. This leads to nations investing their total energy and persons into at worst evil ends, and at best ludicrous follies. This is the anthropological mistake found in both the ethnic holocausts commonly found in fascism, and the hard, fanatical defeats of fascist parties and countries. It is the reduction of man found in both the concentration camp and the fanatical, and hopeless, defense of Berlin in 1945. It is the mistake found in the placement of a whole country's industry into the elimination of the Jewish and Slavic races and the suicide of high-ranking generals and party members.

### 2.3 Individualism

While the previous two examples have presented totalisms in which it is the state that pontificates on man's value and sees man generally as a means to certain ends, in individualism one sees a reverse of this paradigm. In individualism what emerges is the absolutization of the individual, with the reduction of all else

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<sup>22</sup> With this including all the persons in these classes, groups, and identities.

<sup>23</sup> This is comparable to the reduction of the personhood of those not part of the proletariat found in more Marxist forms of socialism.

<sup>24</sup> These goals naturally are erroneous to begin with due to the a priori anthropological mistakes found in fascism as an ideology.

in the face of this super-ego following in toe. The mistake regarding the knowledge of man that is found within individualism rests on the fact that only the individual is seen as truly being a person. All other human beings become objects, with the use these objects not being ordered towards an honest good, but rather a particular useful good. Therefore solidarity, and by extension society at large, is impossible in this paradigm. Karol Wojtyla critiques this not just on the grounds of the use of men as ends, but also how such a perspective denies all men except the individual the ability to act, reflect, and be a person. This is naturally a deformation of the understanding of man that destroys the possibility of conducting natural relations<sup>25</sup> and as such is an anthropological mistake.

The first erroneous aspect of individualism is found in its creation of an overinflated sense of the “I,” with the individual, personal self becoming the only thing that is seen as a person. Thus, the personhood of all other persons is rejected, with the “I” individual being the only person in all existence. The ego then supersedes all, with all things outside of this “I” being lowered. As such, all humanity except the “I” ceases to be a person, and with this an erroneous reduction of the nature of man is made. The rest of humanity outside the individual then becomes a kind of means that is used by the individual to attain their own ends.<sup>26</sup> By extension, any kind of good which is not directly and only connected to the “I” is not seen as valuable, with any common good then becoming impossible, as only the particular goods of individuals are perused. This “I” individual acts only in its own regard, promoting only itself. Also, with there being a reduction in the value of all other people, it makes sense that any sense of common good would naturally fall away. Particular goods are then

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<sup>25</sup> With this being the basis of all communal life.

<sup>26</sup> This use is not necessarily ordered towards a specific, material end as it can also be a general goal such as peace, happiness, or even calm. The only problem being that these goals are pursued from an individual perspective. Peace, happiness, and calm are not pursued because they are a value or because it benefits the whole community, but rather because it pleases the “I” individual.

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given a place of precedence in an individualist ideology or worldview, with all that exists outside the “I” falling into obscurity.

With this super placement of the “I” person above all, the use of people as ends, and the denial of communal goals, there arises an anthropological error in the ideas of man found in the inter-personal relations that constitute the basis for community life. If the “I” person is seen as the only person, and other people are seen as a means to particular ends, then there is a complete rejection of the possibility of relations between humans. The “I” person does not act with other people, but rather is using these human objects to achieve a particular and individually experienced goal. This is erroneous in that it denies man his ability to develop his individual personhood through the experience of, through working with, other persons. The error does not end here, with this being the basis for the impossibility of human solidarity that is found within individualism. If man cannot have proper relations with one another, it naturally follows that any kind of unity or mutual experience becomes impossible, thus taking solidarity out of the experience of man. There is no comradeship, no collective identity, no team-based sense of action or experience. This then leads to the ultimate anthropological error and reduction found in individualism, the rejection of human society. Without human relations or solidarity, society and the relations that require it becomes impossible. At best, the world, as experienced by the “I” person, is simply a “human environment” where human objects go to and fro, having only transactional situations between each other and the singular “I” person. This is a synthesis of all the previous minor errors and contributes to both the reduction of community and the denial of personhood found in individualism generally. The rejection of society also denies man his ability to be a social animal and restricts all of the “I” person’s identity to the individual ego. This is the anthropological mistake and reduction found in narcissism and goes hand in hand with will to power forms of

nihilism. Thus, all glory, identity, and action found outside oneself falls into the wayside, with all the beautiful things done and created by men working together for a common goal losing all value and importance as they have little connection to the “I.”

Individualism ultimately is erroneous in that it sees man as in no way a social creature. Individualism inflates the value of the “I” person to nearly the point of caricature, with common goals, solidarity, and society itself being at best perverted into particular individualist goals, and at worst completely disregarded. This is the mistake found in the narcissistic individualism prevalent in developed societies. It is the “forget the rest, I’m the best” mentality that is all too common in a fast world where the individual can satisfy all their own needs. It is the error found when one places personal convenience ahead of the personhood of others, or when one ignores the valid needs of others due to personal annoyance. In an ironic twist, society is partially to blame for this. Through providing contemporary man with more resources than in any other time in history, the need to rely on others or society at large for personal survival has decreased. Perhaps due to this lack of interpersonal life dependence, individualism has found a foothold in the culture of today. This is not to say that individualism did not exist before today, but individualism was previously more likely to get one killed when one had to worry about food resources, war, extreme weather, natural disasters, disease, and the like. The loss of the tribe in the face of development leads to the over inflation of the “I,” and the death of a sense of communal identity.

## 2.4 Capitalism

Capitalism naturally follows after the rise of individualism. John Paul the II goes so far as to identify this in *Centesimus Annus*, claiming that the mistakes of capitalism rest on a sense of alienation that destroys the experience of the other, and a consumerism that ensnares people, “in a web of false and superfi-

cial gratifications rather than being helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way.”<sup>27</sup> Capitalism’s knowledge errors with regards to the human person thus follow the primary errors found in individualism, this being the absolutization of the private good and the reduction of the common good in the face of the private good. The issue here rests not as particularly on the raising of the value of the “I” person or on the devaluation of man, but rather on the erroneous raising of the value of material goods.<sup>28</sup> As such, through a simultaneous rejection of the common good and the erroneous rise in value of material goods, there arises a strange situation wherein products and items that are bought are as valuable, if not more valuable, than people. These items then become the goal of all these aforementioned private goods, and the personhood of an individual is gauged by their level of material ownership of goods, with alienation of both the individual person and the other succeeding this.

Within capitalist societies there is an ultimate primacy of both the purchase and consumption of goods. This rests on an idea of man as a person who is, “concerned solely or primarily with possessing and enjoying,”<sup>29</sup> and is, “no longer able to control his instincts and passions, or to subordinate them by obedience to the truth,”<sup>29</sup> thus making him unable to be free. This lack of freedom then destroys a person’s independence and makes his identity one and the same with this consumption of goods and pleasures. One becomes defined not by their actions or their relationships, but by their brands and possessions. In this man becomes less than a being, with man becoming but a servant of the one true being, material goods. This inverts the, “correct scale of values,”<sup>29</sup> and reduces man, community, and the relationship thereof to a kind of

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<sup>27</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus Annus*. The Holy See: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991. Retrieved from: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html), on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. pp. 32-33.

<sup>28</sup> Particularly the material goods of consumption and pleasure.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

materialist personal libertinism where a person is what they buy. This anthropologically erroneous reduction of both community and personal life is identified as an anthropological mistake by John Paul II, and is the mistake found in the glowing neon advertisements, seas of garbage, endless consumption, and soulless pleasures found in the developed world. With the rise of economic levels and personal income the world over, this consequence of the anthropological mistake will only increase, with more and more of the world chasing after the end of the purchased thing. All else be damned.

### **3. The Reductive Concepts of the Goal of Human life in Morality and Ethics**

After discussing the errors of the reductive concepts of community in politics and social life, one must subsequently discuss the error ridden reductive concepts of the goal of human life found in unsound systems of morality and ethics. This should come as no surprise, as politics and social life rest upon common moral and ethical systems. Ergo, the concept of what is good comes before the discussion of the nature of man. As such this subsection dedicates itself to a discussion of the anthropologically troublesome reductive moral and ethical systems that reduce, destroy, or pervert the goals of human life and thus the nature of man. This is less of a connection of Wojtyla's thought to specific systems active in the contemporary world, but rather a summarization of Wojtyla's critique of certain ideological worldviews from which these practical issues emerge. In this, what is truly good, and how one orients themselves to this good is discussed, with interest being given to issues within utilitarianism, liberalism, hedonism, and puritanism.

### 3.1 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism finds itself as being the most common, as well as the most progenitive, reductive concept found in nearly all other reductive errors. In this one finds ultimately a perversion of the concept of the good, with the good becoming particular, situational, and fulfilling only sensual human desires.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the issues of utilitarianism find their origin in the replacement of the highest moral good with the particular situational good, and by this there is established an “absolutizing of human attitudes.”<sup>31</sup> These attitudes connect with an orientation towards materialism, with the goals of utilitarianism almost always being some material end for a person or persons.<sup>32</sup> Through this changing of values, ends, and nature, man is by extension unable to truly actualize himself in the sense Wojtyla proposes in *The Acting Person* and with this becomes little more than a material being. This being thus being a material being that pursues and is used for material ends.

The fundamental error in utilitarianism is found in the fact that in utilitarianism the concept of the highest good is replaced by the “best” good. No longer is the good seen as being an object or value that is both perfect and self-affirming. Within a utilitarian view, there isn’t even a sense of an overarching good. Goods are situational and present in time. What is good now, may not be good later. But more importantly, the goods which one pursues are ordered to the end of a particular pleasure. The good no longer has a moral value, with morality itself disappearing behind a veil of usefulness. This reflects utilitarianism’s perception of man, for in this system, man is good only in his ability to provide pleasure,

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<sup>30</sup> With regards to “sensual pleasure” we do not restrict the meaning of this pleasure to only pleasurable bodily feeling. “Sensual pleasure” in utilitarianism has a much broader definition and can include anything from mental states, to satisfaction, and even communal satisfaction/happiness.

<sup>31</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. The Holy See; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987. Retrieved from: [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.pdf), on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> Once again, the “material” here is not necessarily restricted to the physical.

with him having no intrinsic value outside of this. Man is no longer perfectible, he is only useful, with only his abilities to provide for and perceive good being the elements that contribute to his identity.

The rejection of any sense of personal perfection ironically makes the individual only a useful means as well. Man doesn't develop in perfection, and from lacking this reflective perfection loses his positive identity. In utilitarianism the attainment of ends requires the use of the individual, with there being no proper sense of action in this presentation of man. Action no longer provides a reflective basis from which identity can emerge but is rather the processes of attainment of the only thing of value, particular ends. With this, a low materialism emerges. Man is simply one material being in a world of material beings, these beings all being either useful or useless. As such, man's nature is reduced to being of the same material as the rest of the material world, with there being no position from which a person may emerge. This use does not end with only the self. The use of self-necessitates the use of other people as well. This of course destroys the anthropological nature of other people as well as the anthropological nature of the individual person. Once again, the critiques Wojtyla makes against the use of persons found in *Love and Responsibility* find their enemy in a moral system, although in utilitarianism, the very use of man in and of itself is seen as necessary to achieve the ultimate ends of a useful life.

This reduction of the nature of both the individual person as well as of man generally also diminishes man's nature even more in how it restricts man from being able to actualize himself and how it makes solidarity impossible. The actualizations of the will as, "directed toward a value as their end,"<sup>33</sup> and the actualization of man found in the reflective nature of actions when man

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<sup>33</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*. Translated by Andrzej Potocki. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979. p. 120.

experiences, “his acting as an action”<sup>34</sup> are in no way present in the utilitarian mindset. Within utilitarianism, will is not directed towards values and experience is not ordered to be reflective. Rather, the will desires strictly utilitarian material ends and experience presents only beneficial or non-beneficial material works. Therefore, being trapped in a world that seeks the materially beneficial, man cannot actualize himself in either his will or his action due to the lack of proper values and due to the non-reflective position of experience. With man being unable to be actualized within utilitarianism, solidarity becomes impossible as well. Only actualizing persons can jointly pursue external values and share the reflective experiences necessary for solidarity, with the utilitarian man thus being both reduced and atomized.

Utilitarianism presents a tempting moral-ethical worldview. Providing an increase in happiness, at first glance, seems like a noble goal. The issue with utilitarianism is its improper view of what constitutes happiness and its particular and utilitarian scale of determining the desired level of happiness and the appropriate method of achieving this happiness. Utilitarianism has been the common error found in many political and ideological movements since the end of the enlightenment. Through aiming to make people happy or satisfied as opposed to making them good, utilitarianism fails to realize how it leaves metaphysical questions unanswered, and as such creates a worldview in which true happiness, satisfaction, and personhood are impossible. With this, anthropological mistakes abound.

### 3.2 Liberalism

The goals which liberalism presents provide an erroneous anthropological view of man as well, following in the footsteps of utilitarianism’s corruption of any proper sense of the final good. With this said, liberalism’s issues with regards to the final goods

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

and values of life are not as destructive to the concept of greater transcendent ends as other philosophies. In a way, liberalism is the least noxious of the presented errors provided in that it does, in a way, see value as being both a purpose of life, and as residing within man. The issue being that this value stays undetermined, with relativism with regards to these values setting in. While there is an admittance to the existence of final goals, as well as of human value, a “live and let live” spirit pervades, restricting any solid<sup>35</sup> concept regarding metaphysics from being established. Thus, in a liberal system, anything is kosher. The lion lays down with the lamb, the atheist and the theist are just as correct as one another, and the radical Islamist is supposed to be friendly to his openly homosexual neighbors. With this, issues as to the nature of truth arise, with a soft relativism following liberalism’s lack of any positive identification with regards to nature, man, or truth.

The issue of what exactly is the nature of the final goals of man is the primary anthropological issue found within liberalism. Within liberalism, there is the possibility that man has certain goals that his life pursues, but any further research into these goals is not made. As such, man is something and is oriented towards something, but what these somethings are is either undetermined or unknowable. Man is thus reduced in this worldview, because by having no known goals by extension man himself becomes somewhat unknowable. This lack of true identification of final goals leads, in John Paul II’s mind, to a, “dialectic, if not an absolute conflict, between freedom and nature.”<sup>36</sup> The liberal mindset of course identifies this “freedom” with the aforementioned vagueness of ends and “nature” as being positive statements as to what constitutes these ends. This ensures that there is a conflict

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<sup>35</sup> Or correct.

<sup>36</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis Splendor*. The Holy See: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993. Retrieved from: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.pdf), on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. p. 30.

within man, with the resolution of this conflict being erroneously presented as the defeat of “freedom” in the face of “nature.” So, in order to preserve “freedom,” liberalism does not investigate anything for fear of man being totally subjected to nature’s, “own dynamics and even its own unbreakable laws.”<sup>36</sup> This is liberalism’s ultimate anthropological reduction, as man is reduced in this moral system to a vague entity, a vague entity whose nature is similar to all the other vague entities that inhabit the vague entity known as reality.

This vagueness with regards to metaphysics brings about issues with regards to liberalism’s relationship with truth, and ultimately guarantees that a soft relativism emerges within liberal moral systems. With a distrust of any positive statements, anything becomes possible and equally possible with everything else. Everything has a similar metric of both plausibility and metaphysical truth. This leads practically to systems in which contradictory values are both held and believed to be acceptable. Thus, in the contemporary world, atheists believe in astrology, feminists promote moral systems that demean women, race is simultaneously seen as being something that doesn’t exist and yet is claimed to be a factor of social currency, wealthy capitalists promote Marxist socialism, gender doesn’t exist and yet one can change it, and abortion isn’t murder, but the murder of a pregnant woman constitutes double homicide. Liberalism begets moral relativism, with man, his nature, and his goals being reduced to a vague pointlessness. Once again, an anthropological mistake of reduction is made.

### **3.3 Hedonism**

Hedonism is quite often directly connected with liberalism. Usually, within liberal systems, one finds the inklings of hedonism hidden in the vagueness of relativism that surrounds liberal conceptions of nature. But, there is less of a direct connec-

tion than one would originally assume. Hedonism does identify ultimate goals and human values as existing but restricts these goals and values to the attainment of pleasure. So, and perhaps ironically, while man is identified as having a nature, and being oriented towards a goal, this goal is only the attainment of pleasure.<sup>37</sup> With this there arises a soft physical materialism, in which all goals, and their attainment thereof take place within a monistic world. This thus destroys any concept of a spiritual aspect in the structure of man. Who needs a soul, when there is good wine? In this man is reduced to his physiological feelings. Nature is one and the same with these feelings, with the attainment of more and stronger feelings providing the development of identity. The goal and end of human life is the attainment of this pleasure, with everything else at best being seen as not important, or at worst seen as non-existent.

The primary issue of hedonism is its incorrect ordering of final goods and values. Instead of there being an orientation towards either the good or the person, there is an orientation towards the attainment of more and more positive feelings. Wojtyła warns against this when claiming that, “the pleasure or even the satisfaction that accompanies man’s acts must be treated as irrelevant both in regard to the process of moral perfection and to happiness: it should be treated as a side issue.”<sup>38</sup> This prominence of pleasure therefore becomes a wall that blocks any further development of metaphysical anthropology or higher morality. If man is strictly a creature that pursues pleasure; action, personhood, solidarity, and all other problems regarding man are thrown to the wayside. With this impossibility of a transcendent view of man or goals there emerges three subsets from which hedonism can create an anthropological reduction, with these subsets all having corre-

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<sup>37</sup> This pleasure almost always is identified as physical pleasure. While there are non-sensual forms of hedonism, by and large hedonism is one and the same with bacchian excess.

<sup>38</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Ethics Primer*. Translated by Hugh McDonald. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2017. p. 137.

sponding systems of morality/ethics. These subsets being: individual hedonism, economic hedonism, and political hedonism. Individual hedonism creates a system where the placement of individual pleasure before the person, action and individual goals reduces man to an atomized, pleasure seeking husk, economic hedonism creates a system where the placement of economic gain<sup>39</sup> reduces all of man's work and craft to the attainment of pleasurable goods, and political hedonism creates a system where the pleasures of the masses come before any sense of communal good or solidarity of peoples, thus reducing politics to nothing more than a means for the promotion of public pleasure. This tripartite understanding of hedonism shows how hedonism reduces both happiness as well as the concept of man to nothing more than the attainment of pleasure in all aspects of life; these aspects being the individual, economic, and political. Ergo when hedonism is practiced it is total, covering the totality of man's life, and makes transcendence in all forms of life impossible.

Wojtyla masterfully connects this hedonistic restriction of transcendence with the anthropological reduction hedonism makes of happiness. This rests on how true happiness is seen by Wojtyla as connecting to both the transcendence as well as the ultimate goals of man. In Wojtyla's mind, true happiness is not the sum of physical pleasure, it is not simply, "pleasure, joy, and satisfaction."<sup>40</sup> This aforementioned hedonistic view of happiness does not allow man to be fully actualized, and in fact is an improper ordering of happiness. While the hedonist places pleasurable happiness as the means by which man is "actualized," it is, in Wojtyla's mind, the actualization of man in his life that leads to the presence of true happiness. As such, true happiness is the byproduct of a proper actualization with relation to man, his ac-

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<sup>39</sup> And the pleasure thereof.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 139.

tion, and most importantly, his goals and ends.<sup>41</sup> With this hedonism has a significant anthropological reduction in that it makes both the true actualization of man, as well as true happiness, impossible. Having both an incorrect as well as partial view of man's relationship with happiness, hedonism fails in presenting a correct, positive, and transcendent view of man.

Connected to this lack of transcendence is hedonism's elimination of the spiritual aspects of man. Following the lack of actualization found in the previous paragraph, hedonism strips man of his spiritual nature. In the subsequent hyper focus on physical pleasure, and with this physical pleasure being the ultimate goal of hedonism, the spiritual aspect of man is lost. Without a transcendent subject and transcendent goals, the spiritual life of man becomes impossible; man loses that which, "chiefly determine man, his perfection."<sup>42</sup> So, as in the issues regarding hedonistic views of happiness, hedonism becomes a blockade that restricts man both in his anthropology as well as in his ability to attain certain secondary aspects.

Hedonism is an anthropological mistake that is as tempting as it is dangerous in the deformation of human moral life. A hedonistic ethical system provides reductions to man's anthropological nature in individual life, economic life, and political life. In hedonism, one sees a total restriction of the nature of man that allows man to go only so far. In a way, hedonism handicaps man's ability to truly be a man. But, the physical temptations of hedonism should not be taken lightly. The fact that hedonism rests on man's ability to act shows that it can be a powerful error with consequences both within the individual person, as well as the world at large. Particularly, one should be weary of a worldview that negatively raises hedonism to such a level of prominence that

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<sup>41</sup> Which are the highest good.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 149.

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in the rejection of hedonism, one falls into the same sensually obsessed mistakes.

### 3.4 Puritanism

Sister to the mistake of hedonism is the issue of puritanism.<sup>43</sup> In puritanism one finds the absolutism of the spiritual elements of the human being at the expense of all sensual, and by extension physical, aspects of the life of man. So, while in hedonism there is a soft monistic trend towards the physical, in puritanism there is a trend towards a hard dualistic view of man. The joy of life is then seen only in an esoteric and spiritual way. The simple joys of physical life are rejected at best as base, and at worst as evil. Man subsequently becomes only a spirit. In a way, puritans wish to force men to become angels, with the goal of life being only the promotion of the ascetic and the spiritual. Ironically, in this system there is an agreement with hedonists that the sensual pleasures of life are powerful, but within puritanism these sensual pleasures are rejected in their entirety, with the totalism of the puritan reflecting the totalism of the hedonist. The puritan's rejection goes farther than just the rejection of simple sensual pleasure, with the more advanced puritan also rejecting the material aspect of man and coming close to the dualistic errors of the early Gnostics. This is erroneous in the mind of Wojtyla, due to the fact that a properly ordered asceticism does not, "consist in a flight from life,"<sup>44</sup> and because,

"Quite the contrary, asceticism is to assure man the fullness of life through a perfect domination of the most difficult areas of life. By asceticism, man is precisely to enter into all values and experience them in their greatest possible truth, without delusions

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<sup>43</sup> Puritanism, in this situation, is identified with moral-religious movements that reject all forms of pleasure. While the sexual element is the most common, it is in no way the only element. Examples would include the more radical ends of Calvinism, Catharism, the Shakers, and other ascetic religious groups.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

and without disillusionments. Asceticism has a deep realistic sense; it is only the realist who can cultivate it.”<sup>45</sup>

As such, the anthropological mistake that is found in puritanism rests on puritanism’s denial of the material nature of man, and the subsequent denial of the reality and proper identity of man. This denial reflects hedonism’s tripartite denial but instead promotes a disordered spiritual metaphysics of man, economic systems, and political systems.

The issue with regards to puritanism rests on its orientation towards the absolutization of the spiritual aspects of man, at the expense of the material. This is found primarily in puritanism’s focus on strictly spiritual goals and values. In promoting only the spiritual, the totality of man is thus denied. As such, any value or good, such as joy and sexual love, is denied in the puritan’s mind. This follows the thought of Wojtyla who claimed that in puritanism, “conjugal life and sexual intercourse are good only because they serve the purpose of procreation.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, even procreation itself is seen strictly as being a spiritual good which is undertaken to glorify the creator. As such, love, joy, and sexual love are reduced due to puritanism’s orientation towards the spiritual. This is erroneous because a realistic view of love, joy, and sexual love identifies the aforementioned as being goods and values that have a complete nature that includes physical and spiritual aspects. As such, the puritans follow the mistake of the hedonists. In the puritan’s rejection of the physical aspects of certain goods and values, they see these values as being only physical, which is the exact error found in the hedonist mind. Wojtyla identifies this irony in claiming that puritanism, “arose when it did to oppose in practice the premises which it accepts itself in theory (puritanism and sensualist empiricism are very close to each other

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 159-161.

<sup>46</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*. Translated by H.T. Willetts. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993. pp. 58-59.

historically and geographically: both grew up largely in England in the XVII century).<sup>47</sup>

Puritanism repeats the anthropological mistakes found in hedonism, although it does come to separate practical conclusions. With this said, both ideologies identify man as having certain goods and values, the place of separation being the ethical interpretation and practice with regards to these goods and values. As opposed to more nihilistic views, puritanism does allow there to be a person and a world outside this person. The issue emerges from this system's denial of a complete realism. Puritanism is ultimately a reactionary error. When surrounded by hedonism and sensualist empiricism, one is tempted to flee in the opposite ideological direction. The problem being that within puritanism one runs so far that they circumvent the ideological world and return to the very errors they seek to avoid.

## Conclusion

The consequences of the anthropological mistake are as numerous as they are incorrect. Without a realistic and proper view of the metaphysical and anthropological nature of man, reductive and destructive ideas of the person emerge. These consequences can be observed and are made manifest on both the theoretical and practical levels. These theoretical repercussions incorrectly influence one's general understanding of man, his actions, his relation to other men, and his relation to final goods and values. The practical consequences of the anthropological mistake influence incorrect constructions of ethical, political, and economic systems in common life. As such, the repercussions of the anthropological mistake influence how human life is conceived and how it is actually undertaken in the world. The consequences of the anthropological mistake effect all from the thinker and his thoughts to the individual person and the world they live in and

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 58.

the way they act. This myriad world of anthropological errors begs for a complete a realistic solution. Karol Wojtyla does not restrict himself to simply identifying anthropological mistakes and their repercussions. Through developing a system of metaphysical anthropology, Wojtyla is able to present a conclusive solution to the anthropological mistake which is connected to a complete and integral construction of the human being. Further research should be undertaken into this aspect of Wojtyla's metaphysical anthropology, with such investigations allowing for a more complete understanding of the thought of Wojtyla, and providing a background from which to address contemporary anthropological errors as they arise.

### **The Consequences of the Anthropological Mistake According to Karol Wojtyla**

#### Summary

The “anthropological mistake” is of critical importance to the thought of Karol Wojtyla. It is a concept which establishes a process by which philosophical-anthropological perspectives can be critiqued and identified as presenting an erroneous view of the nature of man. Using this philosophical mindset, and following Wojtyla's works and areas of concern, this article critiques certain philosophical positions and ideologies for presenting an incorrect view of the nature and identity of man. Particular attention is given to reductive concepts of man in knowledge concerning man, reductive concepts of community in politics and social life, and reductive concepts of the goal of human life in morality and ethics. Critiques made follow the critiques of Wojtyla, or employ the thought of Wojtyla in critiquing certain ideologies contemporary to this article itself.

This work follows and continues the endeavors of an article previously published in this journal entitled *The Forms of the Anthropological Mistake According to Major Works of Karol Wojtyła*.

**Keywords:** metaphysics, metaphysical anthropology, the anthropological mistake, Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II

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