



CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT: This paper is divided into 8 sections: 1) Anthropological precedents in modern philosophy. 2) Intuitions and problems in existentialist anthropologies. 3) The noetic limit of phenomenological anthropology. 4) Lights and shadows in realist anthropologies. 5) The aporia of ‘totalizing’ anthropologies. 6) Advances and setbacks in theological anthropologies. 7) Cultural anthropologies or culturalism? 8) Postmodern antipersonalism.

Keywords: existentialist, phenomenological, realist, ‘totalizing’, theological, and post-modern anthropologies.

1. Modern antecedents

Two opposing tendencies can be distinguished in the anthropology of modern philosophy: rationalism and voluntarism, which persisted for three centuries (17th–19th), from Descartes to Hegel. Each one focused attention on a specific facet of the superior human ‘having’ (which in classical terms may be called the human ‘essence’), that is, on a concrete power that the human person has at its disposal: the first, on reason and its operativity; the second, on will and its productive action. Indeed, rationalism was the tendency to identify the distinctively human with reason²,

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2 These currents of thought have been rather rationalist in orientation — rationalism, mechanism, the Enlightenment, idealism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, analytic philosophy, structuralism, etc.

while voluntarism was the tendency to equate it with will³. But by that very token, both forgot the person (a distinctly Christian discovery of the first centuries of our era, later taken up by the subsequent medieval Christian doctors⁴), which may be termed — in scholastic language — the personal ‘act of being’ of the human person, really distinct from and superior to everything the person has, the ‘essence’.

If the foregoing was the legacy of modern philosophy, contemporary philosophy — post-Hegelian and hence anti-Hegelian — attempted to overcome that model by tentatively exploring two other possible alternatives. One did so by elevation, focusing attention on the subject, which was assumed to be irreducible to those two faculties. The other, for lack of inspiration, set aside both the subject (whose knowledge became problematic in existentialism) and those superior faculties — so as to avoid repeating a thoroughgoing rationalism like Hegel’s, or a radical and irrational voluntarism like Nietzsche’s. Instead, it focused on other, lesser human dimensions: the social, language, work, culture, technology, economics, etc. The first approach gave rise, first, to existentialism⁵, since

3 These philosophical currents have been more inclined toward voluntarism: empiricism, romanticism, voluntarism, vitalism, pragmatism, etc.

4 Cf. POLO, L., *La originalidad de la concepción cristiana de la existencia*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. XIII, Pamplona, Eunsá, 2015. The distinction between person and nature in man is a Christian discovery, first formulated with respect to God and Christ in the early ecumenical councils. Later it is found, for example, in ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *De fide orthodoxa*, III (PG MG, 44, 985–988); also in ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: “person signifies what is most perfect in all nature,” *S. Theol.*, I ps., q. 29, a. 3 co.; “this name ‘person’ was not imposed to signify the individual on the part of nature, but to signify the subsistent reality in such a nature,” *Ibid.*, I ps., q. 30, a. 4 co.

5 From that root came the philosophy of the existentialists Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, etc., whose precedents can be found in Kierkegaard. All of them hold that the human subject cannot be known in a natural way, although some of them, such as the thinker from Copenhagen, admit that this matter can be accessed only through supernatural faith, which is why their proposals become more or less problematic.

this understood the subject as a human biographical existence subject to all manner of difficulties, and then to personalism⁶, which set out to defend the dignity of the human person despite the problematic vicissitudes that man's biographical journey may encounter. The second gave rise to a multitude of 'philosophies of' that are still current today. We shall now summarize the anthropological keys of the most noteworthy philosophical currents of the past century.⁷

2. Intuitions and problems in existentialist anthropologies

Kierkegaard is considered the father of existentialism.⁸ Prominent 20th-century thinkers commonly grouped under this movement include,

6 Some thinkers of existentialism (Kierkegaard, Marcel, etc.) or of neo-Thomism (Maritain, etc.) have placed the center of attention on the person. Some representatives of phenomenology (Hildebrand, Stein, etc.) have also pointed to the person, although they speak rather of the heart. Likewise, some representatives of the philosophy of dialogue (Buber, Levinas) or of personalism (Mounier). All these positions attempt to offer positive solutions to the question of the human person. But in these philosophical currents one does not usually distinguish with precision between what characterizes the person and what corresponds to human nature and essence.

7 Obviously this is a summary, since it should be borne in mind that if in the 20th century around 150 philosophers stand out, only about 50 of them dealt with anthropology. Nevertheless, among these latter the prominent ones are around 20, and among those who may be called outstanding in this discipline do not exceed 5. The most prominent currents in this subject have been: existentialism, personalism, phenomenology, philosophy of dialogue, and realism. Of lesser anthropological depth have been: psychoanalysis, historicism, vitalism, positivism, utilitarianism, evolutionism, neo-Kantianism, neo-idealism, neo-Marxist materialism, various sociological and psychological schools, hermeneutics, structuralism, analytic philosophy, pragmatism, etc.

8 Cf. our work: *La antropología de Kierkegaard*, Pamplona, Eunsu, 2014.

for example, Jaspers⁹, Heidegger¹⁰, Sartre¹¹, and Marcel.¹² Mounier wrote that existentialism can be characterized “as a reaction of the philosophy of man against the excess of the philosophy of ideas and the philosophy of things.”¹³ Berdiaeff, on his part, characterized existentialism with a series of features that contrast with preceding philosophy: the primacy of freedom over being; the primacy of subjective existence over the objective world; dualism; voluntarism; dynamism; activism; personalism; anthropologism; and philosophy of the spirit.¹⁴ Fontán described it as “the product of a situation of profound crisis,”¹⁵ the fruit of a process of depersonalization on several planes — the philosophical (idealism, materialism), the sociopolitical (totalitarianism), and the labor-related (capitalism-communism) — against which existentialism reacts by attempting to recover subjectivity.

9 Cf. JASPERS, K., *Filosofía*, II (1932), trans. by F. Vela, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1958. Cf. on his anthropology: FERRER, U., “La antropología existencial de Jaspers”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), 2nd ed., Pamplona, Eunsas, 2006, 163-188.

10 Cf. HEIDEGGER, M., *Ser y tiempo*, Spanish ed. translated by Gaos, J., México, FCE, 1989. Cf. on Heideggerian anthropology: BERCIANO, M., “Heidegger: antropología problemática”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), Pamplona, Eunsas, 3rd ed., 2006, 77-103.

11 Cf. SARTRE, J. P., *El ser y la nada*, Madrid, Alianza, Losada, D.L., 1984. Cf. on his anthropology: LÓPEZ SÁENZ, C., “Apuntes antropológicos basados en una relación: M. Merleau-Ponty y J. P. Sartre”, in *Modelos antropológicos del s. XX*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 166, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2003, 83-114.

12 Cf. MARCEL, G., *Être et avoir*, Paris, Philosophie européenne, Aubier-Montaigne, 1991. Cf. on his anthropology: URABAYEN, J., *El pensamiento antropológico de Gabriel Marcel: un canto al ser humano*, Pamplona, Eunsas, 2000; “Gabriel Marcel: una imagen digna del hombre”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 327-343.

13 MOUNIER, E., *Introducción a los existencialismos*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1949, 3. Italics in the original.

14 BERDIAEFF, N., *Cinq méditations sur l'existence*, Paris, Aubier, 1936, 25.

15 FONTÁN JUBERO, P., *Los existencialismos: claves para su comprensión*, Madrid, Cincel, 1985, 17-22.

Other authors, rather than characterizing existentialism by contrast with prior philosophy, do so by the themes addressed throughout its development. For Reinhardt, for instance, the central themes of this movement are subjective truth, the experience of feeling like a stranger, existence and nothingness, existential anguish, individualism, being-in-a-situation, temporality and historicity, existence and death, and existence before God or before nothingness.¹⁶ Flynn, by contrast, summarizes them as follows: the greater relevance of existence over essence, time beyond essence, humanism, freedom, and ethics.¹⁷ Polo has recently remarked that “in the 19th century, the first thing is the work of Kierkegaard; the second is the work of Nietzsche; the so-called existentialism derives from these two thinkers, who already glimpsed the extreme gravity of the Hegelian crisis.”¹⁸ He adds that “from Kierkegaard derives not only existentialism, but also personalism. Yet neither of these continuations is faithful to the ultimate intention of the great Dane,”¹⁹ because Søren Kierkegaard placed the solution to the inherent aesthetic and ethical problem of human existence exclusively in the leap to the religious stage — a leap not taken by the most celebrated existentialists and attempted with little impetus by some of the personalists.

In existentialism, human existence is ordinarily understood as problematic. Strictly speaking, this conception is already found in Kierkegaard, and it is probably there because of his debt to Luther; for if one admits that human nature is corrupt, one has no choice but to accept that every

16 REINHARDT, K. F., *The Existentialist Revolt. The Main Themes and Phases of Existentialism*, New York, Fr. Ungar Publishing, 2nd ed., 1960, 228-243.

17 FLYNN, Th. R., *Existentialism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, 8.

18 POLO, L., *Hegel y el posthegelianismo*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. VIII, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2018, 72.

19 *Ibid.*, 176.

human being is existentially sick. Recall that the Danish thinker affirmed that despair affects every human being to a greater or lesser degree. The consequence of this thesis is sadness, an inherent mark in the life of the thinker of Copenhagen. But this, which is sheer existential pessimism, is not a *copyright* theme of existentialism; it derives from ancient nominalism²⁰ (recall that the vital tone of this current was called by its *Venerabilis Inceptor*, Ockham, *acedia* — ‘*tristitia spiritualis*’), from which not only modern rationalisms and empiricisms drew their influence²¹, but also contemporary voluntarisms²² and analytic philosophy as well.²³

“What is existence (for existentialism)?” asks Polo, and responds: “Existentialism holds that man exists, *is a pure existing*, which does not consist in any essentiality, but in pure *happening*. We are what we come to be, what we are in the process of being, what happens to us: *we are as we occur*. But if man is pure event, he is radically finite, and moreover with *an unsurpassable finitude*. But of unsurpassable finitude *we do not even know what it could mean*. Then human existence is absurd.”²⁴ It should be borne in mind that Kierkegaard does not distinguish between the act of being of man and his biographical-existential manifestation, and that, moreover, he admits human finitude and absurdity unless man corresponds to God solely through supernatural faith. But if one sets aside such faith, exis-

20 “Nominalism is the founder of existential pessimism.” Polo, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. X, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, 250.

21 Cf. Our work: “Ockham y los racionalismos”, *Contrastes*, XIII/1-2 (2008), 239-252.

22 Cf. Our work: “La sombra de Ockham es alargada. La afinidad ockhamista en los voluntarismos filosóficos modernos”, in *Estudios Franciscanos*, 111 (2010) 119-142.

23 Cf. our article: “Ockham y la filosofía analítica”, *Observaciones Filosóficas*, no. 6, 2008, www.observacionesfilosoficas.net.

24 POLO, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. X, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, 325. Italics in the original.

tentialism leads to atheism, because within this current it is not admitted that access to God is natural to every man.²⁵

3. The noetic limit of phenomenological anthropology

Phenomenology has oscillated among three poles: the thought object, the thinking consciousness, and the subject. It has held that consciousness, i.e., knowing, is intentional with respect to the known object, and has set aside the intentionality of the latter. This approach is obviously far removed from the classical position, for in Aristotelian epistemology what is intentional is the known object, not the act of knowing it. Recall also that its best medieval commentator, Thomas Aquinas, held that intentional acts are not those of the intellect but those of the will. Furthermore, phenomenology has claimed the autonomy of the thought object with respect to the psychic fact — a correct point that represents a great advance over the preceding empiricisms.

For phenomenology, moreover, consciousness is broader than the thought object; it is what is called the ‘horizon’. Hence, consciousness is not exhausted in objectifying one object and can continue to objectify, which is likewise correct. It also holds that consciousness has its own temporality, which is equally real, though obviously not physical time. Added to this is the fact that such consciousness has an advantage over Kantian epistemology: it does not construct the object but presents it, which is again accurate.

25 “This is the most modern form of atheism: since we are affected by an unsurpassable finitude, we do not know what it means for God to exist. We remain in the sheer solitude of existence. Therein lies the crisis of the theistic conviction. If God exists, our finitude is not the only thing, nor does it even follow with respect to itself.” *Ibid.*, 137.

Phenomenology also admits that no thought object is possible without a thinking subject. In the Cartesian manner, it thus assigns what is thought to an *I*. As regards the nature of this *I*, it admits that if the known object and consciousness are not empirical, the thinking subject must be still less so — which is correct. Yet, phenomenology observes that this *I* does not present itself, does not objectify itself. And here lies the problem: how is the subject to be known from within the phenomenological method? In order to determine this, the best phenomenologists — Husserl²⁶, Scheler²⁷, Stein²⁸,

26 Cf. HUSSERL, E., *Investigaciones lógicas*, vol. 2, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1982; *Ideas*, vols. 1-3, Mexico, IIF-UNAM, 2013/1997/2000; *Renovación del hombre y de la cultura*, Barcelona, Anthropos, 2002; *Meditaciones cartesianas*, Mexico, FCE, 1973. Cf. on his anthropology: BOROBIA, J., “Elementos antropológicos en la fenomenología de Husserl”, *Anuario Filosófico*, XXXIX/1 (2006) 17-53; SELLÉS, J. F. – REYNA, R., “Revisión poliana de la antropología husserliana”, in *El hombre como solucionador de problemas*, Cuadernos de Pensamiento Español, no. 57, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2015, 37-63.

27 Cf. SCHELER, M., *El resentimiento en la moral*, Madrid, Caparrós, 2nd ed., 1998; *Los ídolos del conocimiento de sí*, Madrid, Cristiandad, 2003; *Fenomenología y metafísica de la libertad*, Buenos Aires, Nova, 1960; *Esencia y formas de la simpatía*, Buenos Aires, Losada, 3rd ed., 1957; *El formalismo de la ética y la ética material de los valores*, Spanish trans. *Ética. Nuevo ensayo de fundamentación de un personalismo ético*, Madrid, Caparrós, 2001; *Acerca de la idea de hombre*, Buenos Aires, Nova, 1970; *Amor y conocimiento*, Buenos Aires, Sur, 1960; *De lo eterno en el hombre. La esencia y los atributos de Dios*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1940. Cf. on his anthropology: SELLÉS, J. F., *Intuición y perplejidad en la antropología de Scheler*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 216, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2009; SANTAMARÍA, M., “El rendimiento de un método. Acto y persona en Max Scheler”, in *Modelos Antropológicos del s. XX*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 166, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2004, 11-44.

28 Cf. STEIN, E., *La estructura de la persona humana*, trans. by José Mardomingo, Madrid, BAC, 1998; *Ser finito y ser eterno: ensayo de una ascensión al sentido del ser*, trans. by Alberto Pérez Monroy, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994. Cf. on her anthropology: HAYA, F., “La estructura de la persona humana según Edith Stein”, in *Modelos antropológicos del s. XX*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 166, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 61-81.

and Hildebrand²⁹ — detected that the subject is neither an object nor can it be known by forming thought objects of it. Moreover, it is irreducible to its acts, including those of thought or consciousness. Some of them, like Scheler — following Kierkegaard — held that knowledge of the subject must be subjective, experiential, non-objective, but they did not adequately articulate what this mode of knowing consists in. Others, like Husserl, restricted themselves exclusively to objective knowledge, the kind that forms thought objects in knowing, since all other forms of knowing appeared to them as psychologism. However, if one can only know objectively, one cannot attain knowledge of one's own acts of knowing, the cognitive habits, the cognitive faculty of the intellect, or the knowing person, because none of these are thought objects, nor can they be known in the manner of thought objects, for if they are objectified they are idealized and lose their real character. It does not seem accidental, then, that these matters are not a topic of study in one of the most prestigious (and perhaps the most rigorous) currents of thought of the 20th century: phenomenology. *Nor, indeed, in the others.*

If, on the other hand, one can only know our intimacy experientially, it will be necessary to determine what that experience consists in. If the answer — with Stein and Hildebrand — is that it is affective, one must conclude that of our intimacy we can only know its affective dimension, reducible to affects. But if we are not satisfied with this answer and seek to connect such spiritual affectivity to an intellectual knowing, it will be necessary to investigate what kind of knowing, distinct from reason, is involved. Obviously, for anyone who uncritically accepts the modern

29 Cf. HILDEBRAND, D. von, *El corazón: un análisis de la afectividad humana y divina*, introd. by Alice von Hildebrand; trans. by Juan Manuel Burgos, Madrid, Palabra, 1997; *La afectividad cristiana*, trans. by Martín Ezcurdia, Madrid, FAX, 1968. Cf. on his anthropology: CRESPO, M., “La ceguera al valor moral. Consideraciones en torno a la ‘Antropología integral’ de Dietrich von Hildebrand”, in *Modelos antropológicos del s. XX*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 166, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 45-59.

philosophical paradigm according to which reason is the highest human cognitive faculty, the question becomes insoluble. On the other hand, for one who — in accordance with medieval classical thought — discovers that intellectual knowing (*intellectus*) is superior to rational knowing (*ratio*), it remains possible to continue investigating whether we have an intellectual knowing that reaches our personal intimacy.

Is there a classical answer to the preceding question? Not a sufficiently explicit one, because, although its protagonists (Thomas Aquinas, for example) spoke of an ‘originary habit’ through which the soul knows itself³⁰, they did not articulate the nature of this cognitive level. Is there a current solution to such a pressing problem? Continuing from the classical thinkers, perhaps the most rigorous proposal is the following: “the *habit of wisdom* reaches the methodological-thematic radicality: the person cannot be thematically distinct from the method by which she is attained... In the habit of wisdom, method and theme are solidary; if they were not, the person would attend as a spectator to her own self-knowing, i.e., would presuppose herself with respect to it and, strictly speaking, would not know herself. The person is in solidary with her own self-attainment.”³¹

30 It is worth bringing in a note by Polo, in which he indicates the Thomistic passages in which this is stated: “Thomas Aquinas says: ‘as regards habitual knowledge, the soul knows itself by its essence’ (*De Ver.*, q. 10, a. 8, *co.*), and this does not require an acquired habit, but rather, with respect to habitual knowledge, the habit is the soul: ‘The knowledge by which the soul knows itself is not, insofar as it knows itself, in the genus of accident..., but rather the knowledge by which the mind knows itself is inherent in the soul as its own substance’ (*Ibid.*, ad 14). ‘The mind has habitual knowledge of itself by which it knows that it exists’ (*Ibid.*, ad 1).” POLO, L., *Escritos Menores*, I, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. IX, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2017, 156, note 16.

31 POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. XV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, 208. For a better exposure of this habit, cf. these works: SELLÉS, J. F., “El hábito de sabiduría según Leonardo Polo”, *Studia Poliana*, 3 (2001), 73-102; “El método del conocimiento personal”, in *Antropología de la intimidad*, Madrid, Rialp, 2013, 19-40; CORAZÓN, R., “El hábito de sabiduría y el carácter de además”, in *Studia Poliana*, 20 (2018) 33-63.

4. Lights and shadows in realist anthropologies

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the realist anthropologies of the 20th century has been the distinction between ‘person’ and ‘nature’ in man — a distinction absent from modern philosophy (after Descartes) and from contemporary philosophy (after Hegel). It was markedly set out for the first time in the second Scheler, that of the Catholic period (1912–1921), from whom it was taken up by at least Nédoncelle³² and V. E. Frankl.³³ Of the three, the one who articulated it most clearly was undoubtedly the most intuitive, the thinker of Munich, followed by the Parisian, and in third place by the Viennese; for the latter, although in most of his writings he clearly distinguished the person from the psychic and the corporeal in man, in some passages did not free himself from a ‘totalizing’ view of the person, since he there described the person as the ‘human whole’, which is aporetic for the reasons to be set out below.

The person-human nature distinction is clearly found in the 20th century also in Marcel, who, practically a contemporary of Nédoncelle, articulated it with a different but well-coined terminology: that of ‘being’ and ‘having’, with which he titled precisely one of his most representative anthropological books. In the same direction, though later than both, Julián Marías noted the real distinction between person and human nature, and also between person and *I*.³⁴ Yet both the French neo-Socratic thinker and the Spanish humanist had — like many others of their era — a

32 Cf. our work: *La antropología trascendental de M. Nédoncelle*, Madrid, Ápeiron, 2015.

33 Cf. our study: *¿Es trascendental la antropología de V. E. Frankl?*, Madrid, Ápeiron, 2015.

34 Cf. MARÍAS, J., *El tema del hombre*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1943, *Antropología metafísica. La estructura empírica de la vida humana*, Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1970, *Mapa del mundo personal*, Madrid, Alianza, 1993, *Persona*, Madrid, Alianza, 1996. Cf. on his anthropology: ARAUJO, A. M., *La antropología filosófica de Julián Marías*, Bogotá, Catálogo Científico, 1986; SELLEÉS, J. F., “¿Es de orden trascendental la antropología de Julián Marías?”, in A. M. Araujo (ed.), *Julián Marías: un pensador de nuestro tiempo*, Bogotá, Universidad de la Sabana, 2016, 155-168.

‘totalizing’ view of the person³⁵, in the sense already indicated that they regarded the person as the ‘human whole’. Indeed, despite establishing the aforementioned distinctions, the former held that “I am my body,”³⁶ and the latter likewise wrote that “I am’ corporeal,”³⁷ so that both considered the person as the ensemble of diverse human elements, not as what is radical or active with respect to them. Other philosophers who dealt with the real distinction in the 20th century were clearly the Thomists — Gilson, Fabro, etc. — but they addressed it principally in metaphysics, making little or no reference to it in the domain of anthropology. Another realist, Pieper, did address anthropology, highlighting above all that man is a being of hope.³⁸ Taylor’s anthropology also remains open to divine transcendence.³⁹

Another thinker in whom the real distinction between the personal act of being and the human essence appears prominently is Leonardo Polo. The exploration of this distinction in his anthropology comes late in his work, specifically in the 1990s. This penetrating and demanding Spanish philosopher has a tripartite vision of man, distinguishing, from lower to higher, the following dimensions: a) ‘Received life’, which he calls human ‘nature’, i.e., the corporeal endowment inherited from one’s parents. b) ‘Added life’, which — in parallel with medieval tradition — he calls the ‘essence’ of man, encompassing the *I* and the two immaterial faculties

35 Cf. our work: “La aporía de las antropologías ‘totalizantes’ como pregunta a los teólogos”, *Salmanticenses*, LVII/2 (2010) 273-297.

36 MARCEL, G., *Ser y tener*, Madrid, Caparrós, 1996, 22.

37 MARÍAS, J., *Antropología metafísica*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1973, 274.

38 Cf. SCHUMACHER, B. N., *Una filosofía de la esperanza: Josef Pieper*, Pamplona, Euns, 2005; FRANCK, J. F., “El hombre ‘bajo todo aspecto posible’. La antropología de Joseph Pieper”, in *Anuario Filosófico*, XXXIX/1 (2006) 133-162.

39 Cf. on his anthropology: LLAMAS, E., *Charles Taylor: una antropología de la identidad*, Pamplona, Euns, 2001.

(intellect and will), and consisting in the perfection with which each person, over the course of his or her life, endows that *I* by forming within it a personality, and those faculties by shaping in them habits and virtues respectively. c) ‘Personal life’, which he terms — following that nomenclature — the personal ‘act of being’, i.e., the spirit or human intimacy, formed by these transcendental dimensions: free coexistence, personal knowing, and personal loving.⁴⁰

Yet, neither Polo cited Scheler, Nédoncelle, and Frankl on this topic, nor did Nédoncelle and Frankl cite Polo, which suggests they were unaware of each other’s respective anthropological contributions. Furthermore, it is clear from dates that Scheler could not have known either Nédoncelle’s anthropology, since he died when the latter was 23 years old — the first work of the French personalist in which he marks the real distinction in anthropology was published when he was 37 years old — nor that of V. E. Frankl, since the first writings of the father of logotherapy post-date Scheler’s Catholic period. Moreover, both authors explicitly acknowledge their deep debt to Scheler, not the reverse. Nor could Scheler obviously have known Polo’s anthropology, since he died when the Spanish thinker was two years old.

Another recent philosopher in whom the real distinction between person and human nature appears is Spaemann.⁴¹ But in this author the distinction is, in our judgment, treated less satisfactorily than in the preceding

40 Cf. POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. XV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015. Cf. a systematic exposition of this anthropology in: PIÁ-TARAZONA, S., *El hombre como ser dual. Estudio de las dualidades radicales según la ‘Antropología trascendental’ de Leonardo Polo*, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2001. Cf. also our publications: *Antropología para inconformes*, Madrid, Rialp, 3rd ed., 2011; *Antropología de la intimidad*, Madrid, Rialp, 2014.

41 Cf. SPAEMANN, *Personas. Acerca de la distinción entre ‘algo’ y ‘alguien’*, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2000; *Lo natural y lo racional*, Santiago de Chile, Instituto de Estudios de la Sociedad, 2011; *El rumor inmortal*, Madrid, Rialp, 2010. Cf. on his anthropology our publication: “R. Spaemann: ¿Antropología o Ética?”, *Intus-Legere*, 7/1 (2013) 79-98.

thinkers, because, although it has certain undeniable positive points, it also has negative ones. Among the former, the following may be noted: that the person is indeed really distinct from her nature; that the person is a Christian discovery (not always well interpreted); that the person denotes personal relation and is open to divine transcendence. Among the latter, the following may be mentioned: his view that ‘having a nature’ is the ‘being’ of the person, which involves a *quid pro quo*; that the person ‘is temporal’; that — in keeping with Kantian thinking — the person is ‘an end in herself’; that the person ‘is known through reflection and acceptance’; that ‘she is known through repentance and symbol’; that ‘persons are only known through their manifestation via nature’. This philosopher, moreover, does not appear to have been influenced on this point by the authors previously named, since he drew his information from the patristic tradition.

Together with the preceding, some contemporary scholars have argued that one may speak in certain respects of a real distinction between act of being and essence in the anthropologies of other thinkers of the past century, such as N. Hartmann⁴², Ph. Lersch⁴³, or J. Maritain.⁴⁴ Such nuances, however, require a separate study that cannot be undertaken here. It is of course true that many other 20th-century philosophers alluded to personal intimacy as distinct from human manifestations — for example, the Germans E. Stein, D. von Hildebrand, and M. Buber, or the

42 Cf. HARTMANN, N., *Il problema dell'essere spirituale*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1971.

43 Cf. LERSCH, Ph., *La estructura de la personalidad*, Barcelona, Ed. Scientia, 4th ed., 1966.

44 Cf. MARITAIN, J., *Humanismo integral*, Buenos Aires, Lohlé, 1966; *La persona y el bien común*, Buenos Aires, Club de Lectores, 1946; *Para una filosofía de la persona humana*, Buenos Aires, Cursos de Cultura Católica, 1937; *El hombre y el Estado*, Madrid, Encuentro, 1983. Cf. on his anthropology: BURGOS, J. M., “La antropología de Jacques Maritain”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 105-135.

Spaniards Ortega and Zubiri⁴⁵, Millán Puelles⁴⁶, the early Laín Entralgo⁴⁷, etc. — but the features with which they describe intimacy, or the dimensions they ascribe to it (intellect, will, etc.), do not belong to it in any way; rather, they are diverse attributes to be predicated of what we have called the human ‘essence’.

Nor have there been lacking in that century thinkers — such as H. Arendt⁴⁸ — who, after noting intimacy as distinct from the various human manifestive dimensions, held that intimacy is difficult to know, and therefore oriented their anthropology toward explaining some of the manifestive facets of man (society, work, culture, etc.). We consider this hypothesis to be incorrect, not only because the person — intimacy, spirit, or human heart — can be attained naturally, but also because the explanation of any human manifestive dimension is secondary to and dependent upon the former.

In contrast to the preceding approaches, the aforementioned anthropologies of the second Scheler, Nédoncelle, and L. Polo stand out: rather than limiting themselves to explorations that seek to set out what is common to the human, they bear upon what is radical or intimate, what is novel and unrepeatable, the each-one, the person or human spirit,

45 Cf. our work: “Luces y sombras en tres versiones distintas de la Intimidad humana: Ortega, Zubiri y Marías”, in *Dimensiones de la vida humana. Ortega, Zubiri, Marías y Laín Entralgo*, J. SAN MARTÍN – T. D. MORATALLA (eds.), Madrid, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, 2010, 271-281.

46 Cf. in this regard: SELLÉS, J. F., *Sustancia, autoconciencia y libertad en A. Millán-Puelles*, Cuadernos de Pensamiento Español, no. 48, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2013.

47 Cf. on this extreme our study: *Del dualismo alma-cuerpo al monismo corporalista. La antropología de Pedro Laín Entralgo*, Cuadernos de Pensamiento Español, no. 53, Pamplona, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, 2014.

48 Cf. ARENDT, H., *La condición humana*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2005. Cf. on her anthropology: LASAGA, J., “El modelo antropológico de Ana Arendt. La condición del animal humano”, in *Modelos antropológicos del s. XX*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, no. 166, Publications Service of the University of Navarra, Pamplona, 2004, 115-141.

and it is therefore only in them that one may speak — in greater or lesser degree — of transcendental anthropology.⁴⁹ We consider this approach to be the most promising for the future.

5. The aporia of ‘totalizing’ anthropologies

Let us begin by illustrating with an example extrinsic to man what will be indicated below regarding what is meant by ‘totalizing’ anthropologies. Let us take the university as a model and ask whether the university is a ‘collection’ or ‘totality’ of Faculties and Departments. How many? Is there a stipulated number? If the answer is, in principle, ‘all of them’, one can continue asking: if some area of knowledge happens to be missing — for example, veterinary medicine or astronomy — can the institution no longer be considered a university? However, if the university is not a collection — larger or smaller — of summands, then what constitutes it? Surely the unity among the disciplines, as the very term ‘*uni*-versity’ suggests. But how are the diverse disciplines united? By summing them with one another? By mixing them? By gluing them together with some extrinsic element? What unites them? How is unity to be achieved? Perhaps by the imposing force of academic authority? By always fostering strict obedience? If there is no unity among the degree programs, and each

49 Here ‘transcendental’ is not understood as something adjectival, that is, as meaning that the human features so designated are or are taken to be ‘important’ or ‘relevant’, but as something substantive. Even more, as something verbal, that is, active. Nor is the term ‘transcendental’ meant to indicate — as it is ordinarily understood — that man is manifestively open to family, education, society... through dialogue, ethics..., since all these openings are secondary with respect to the constitutive and more relevant opening that is the human person in his intimacy. Man is ‘social’ by nature because he is a ‘transcendental relation’ as person. In other words, he does not desire to attend to human ‘having’, but to personal ‘being’. This entails maintaining that, in anthropology, one can observe that the person, the human ‘act of being’, is really distinct, by being superior, from what is common to men, that is, from the psychic — human essence — and from the human body — human nature.

Faculty or School goes its own way, each Department its own, and each professor his or her own, would it be easy in that situation to achieve the much-recommended ‘interdisciplinarity’? According to that model, could one speak of a ‘*uni*-versity’, or rather of a ‘*pluri*-diversity’?

It should be borne in mind that in man there are more components, and more diverse ones, than in a university, and that each of them possesses a certain sufficiency or autonomy, though obviously not complete. On account of that partial independence, one can have a disease of the eyes, for example, and have healthy ears; one can have great rational capacity and little force of will, etc. And yet it is clear that it is the same person who suffers even if only one of his human dimensions is affected. Following the earlier example, if we ask what makes a university a university, we are asking about the bond of cohesion of the higher institution of learning. If we then compare that human reality which is the university with man himself, in this case we must ask about the nexus that unites the different human dimensions.

The foregoing leads us to think comparatively that it is the superior human dimensions that bind the inferior ones, not vice versa; that the inferior must be subordinated to the superior, not the reverse; that the superior can exist without the inferior, but not conversely. Let us pass, then, to the question at hand — anthropology — and ask: will an anthropology that ‘sums up’, ‘collects’, ‘totalizes’ the multiple human dimensions it deems important and even inescapable (for example: soul, body, ethics, society, thought, will, language, history, work, culture, technology, economics, circumstances, rest, etc.) be a sound anthropology? Will it cease to be anthropology if it fails to account for one of them — for example, play? Or is a better anthropology one that reaches the root of the human (the ‘act of being’, in medieval terminology) and from it explains in an ordered fashion what arises from it and develops out of it — the human dispositions and manifestations (the ‘essence’ of man, following that terminology)? In addition to these ‘havings’, which always accompany man and are immaterial (intellect, will, etc.), the human being

also possesses a corporeal ‘nature’, more or less endowed and not always with him (after death). Must it therefore be said that the human person is the ‘whole’ of these elements? What if one is missing? For example, if someone is lame, or blind, or ugly, or has a two-month-old body, or is incapable of developing his intellect, must it then be said that he is not a person or that he is ‘less’ of a person?

‘Totalizing’ anthropologies of the 20th century include that offered in many passages by E. Stein⁵⁰; that of Scheler’s third period⁵¹, the most celebrated and, in our judgment, the least profound of his three periods; that of G. Marcel⁵²; that of M. Buber⁵³;

50 “The human soul, with its personal structure and its individual qualification, has revealed itself to us as the form of the whole corporeal and animate individual. I also usually call it the core of the person, because everything to which we give the name human person has in it the center of its being”. STEIN, E., *La estructura de la persona humana*, BAC., Madrid, 1998, 175. Cf. *Ibid.*, 180; *Ser finito y eterno*, FCE., Mexico, 1994, 383; *Ibid.*, 388; *¿Qué es el hombre? La antropología de la doctrina católica de la fe*, in *Obras Completas*, IV, Monte Carmelo, Burgos, 2003, 789; *¿Qué es filosofía?*, II. *Los problemas de la subjetividad*, in *Obras Completas*, II; ed. cit., 2005, 776; *Ibid.*, 788.

51 The person is “the active center in which the spirit manifests itself within the spheres of finite being, in rigorous difference from all the functional centers ‘of life’, which, considered from within, are also called psychic centers”. SCHELER, M., *El puesto del hombre en el universo*, Losada, Buenos Aires, 7th ed., 1967, 57. Cf. *Ibid.*, 98 and 99.

52 “I am my body, that is, I cannot treat as absolutely distinct from my body what would stand with it in a determining relation... it is evident that my body, in this precise sense, is myself, since I cannot distinguish myself from it except on the condition of turning it into an object, that is, of no longer treating it as an absolute mediator”. MARCEL, G., *Ser y tener*, Madrid, Madrid, Caparrós, 1996, 22-23. Cf. also: *Filosofía concreta*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1959, 29; *Diario metafísico*, Guadarrama, Madrid, 1969, 235.

53 “Man can reflect on himself only if the knowing person, that is, the philosopher who does anthropology, reflects on himself as a person... It is not enough for him to place his I as the object of knowledge. He can know the totality of the person and, through it, the totality of man, only if he does not leave his subjectivity outside and does not remain as an impassive spectator... As long as we content ourselves with ‘possessing’ as an object, we shall not enter into man except as into one thing among others, and the totality we are trying to grasp will not

that of P. Ricoeur⁵⁴; and paradigmatically that of X. Zubiri.⁵⁵ These are followed by those of many other contemporary thinkers less well known than the preceding. These positions are aporetic for two reasons: a) because someone lacking any component of the human composite (e.g., sight) would not be a person, while at the same time someone more abundantly endowed in each and every one of those dimensions (e.g., ‘miss universe’) would be ‘more’ of a person; b) because one could not speak of a person after death, since after death we clearly lack one of the human components: the body. But that this is absurd is self-evident.

Let us now consider a problem derived from the ‘totalizing’ conception of the human person: that of conceiving the body as a ‘part’ of the ‘whole’. To understand this error, note that ‘uniting’ is not ‘totalizing’. If the body is separated from the human person, can one no longer speak of a person, or explain her? If the body is included as a ‘part’ of the human person, what is the difference between this approach and the Hegelian dialectical one, according to which uniting is equivalent to negating the par-

become present to us”. BUBER, M., *¿Qué es el hombre?*, Mexico, FCE., 13th repr., 1986, 20-21. Cf. also: *Yo y tú*, Madrid, Caparrós, 1993, 9; *El camino del ser humano y otros escritos*, Salamanca, Kadmos, 2004, 63.

54 “The concept of person... is not a second referent distinct from the body, like the Cartesian soul, but rather a mode, still to be determined, of a single referent endowed with two series of predicates, physical predicates and psychic predicates. The possibility that persons are also bodies is maintained in reserve in the general definition of basic particulars, according to which these are bodies or possess bodies. To possess a body is what persons do, or rather what persons are”. RICOEUR, P., *Sí mismo como otro*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1996, 9.

55 “Between ‘soul’ and ‘organism’ there is no ‘relation’ of act and potency, but rather a ‘relation’ of mutual co-determination in primary coherent unity, that is, there is unity of structure, not unity of substance... Man is composed of a psychic substance and of millions of material substances. But all of them constitute a single structural unity. Each substance has its own properties, but the structure confers on them a unique substantivity”. *Siete ensayos de antropología filosófica*, Universidad Sto. Tomás, Bogotá, 1982, 73. Cf. *Ibid.*, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 99; *El hombre y Dios*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1984, 39.

ticularity and separation (negation of negation) of an element — his image of a circle of circles? Furthermore, if it is admitted that the human person — together with her body — is a complete ‘whole’, does that preclude her from growing, becoming more, being elevated? Is it not curious that the human body is designed to grow, that the immaterial potencies are designed to grow without restriction, that personal intimacy is designed to be elevated, and yet one seeks to close off growth with the notion of ‘whole’? Or is the whole also susceptible to growth? Is such growth real or only logical? On the other hand, is the ‘whole’ compatible with freedom, or is it compatible with determinism? Is it compatible with time, since where there is time there is change? Can time be totalized? But if freedom and time are real, why is the ‘whole’ incompatible with them?

As can be seen, ‘totalizing’ means gathering in a system what is present, at the cost of leaving outside the ensemble future increment. Yet, man is a being of projects, because he is himself a project as man. In sum, the person is not the whole of the human, simply because the whole is not real but mental. Indeed, ‘whole’ does not mean ‘being’, but the mental unification of distinct thought items. Hence, if the notion of person designates a reality, it cannot be equivalent to that of ‘whole’. Equally, if the notion of the human body designates a reality, it cannot be equivalent to the concept of a ‘part’ of the person, because ‘part’ is likewise a mental notion. May it not be that one is attempting to know what is real with a mental mode of proceeding that serves only to know matters that are merely logical? Does the real coincide with the mental? Was Parmenides right in saying that thinking and being are one and the same?

To avoid aporia it is better to replace the ‘totalizing’ model (which is idealist) with that of the real distinction between act and potency (which is realist), and to understand person as the ‘act of being’. In this way it becomes clear that persons are persons with or without a body, with or without the development of any immaterial faculty, etc., and that none of them is reducible to all their immaterial and corporeal faculties. The advantage of this realist model lies, then, in the real distinction between

person and nature in all personal beings, since it is evident that no person is equivalent to her nature, and it is clear that the resemblance among persons lies precisely in personal being, not in their natures.

6. Advances and setbacks in theological anthropologies

Not only great 20th-century philosophers, but also prominent theologians of that century have offered considerable contributions to the understanding of man. Among the latter, it suffices to mention, for example, the Russians V. Soloviev (who died, fairly young, just at the start of that century) and P. Florenski; the German dialectical theologians K. Barth, R. Bultmann, D. Bonhöffer, O. Cullmann; and others of different orientations, such as von Balthasar⁵⁶ and K. Rahner⁵⁷ (who, incidentally, gave his theology an anthropological turn); also French theologians such as J. Mouroux⁵⁸ and H. de Lubac⁵⁹; and, of course, the Polish K. Wojtyła.⁶⁰ For reasons of space, however, we can concentrate in this work on pre-

56 Cf. BALTHASAR, H. U. von, *Teodramática*, II: *Le persone del drama. L'uomo in Dio*, Milan, 1982; III. *L'uomo in Cristo*, Milan, 1983. Cf. on his anthropology: FISICHELLA, R., "La antropología de Hans Urs von Balthasar", in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (II), ed. cit., 248-259.

57 Cf. RAHNER, K., *Espíritu en el mundo. Metafísica del conocimiento finito según Santo Tomás de Aquino*, Barcelona, Herder, 1963; *Oyente de la palabra. Fundamentos para una filosofía de la religión*, Barcelona, Herder, 1967. Cf. in this regard: SARANYANA, J. I., "La antropología trascendental rahneriana", in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 301-326.

58 Cf. MOURoux, J., *Sentido cristiano del hombre*, Madrid, Palabra, 2001. Cf. on his anthropology: ALONSO, J., "Sentido cristiano del hombre", *Anuario Filosófico*, XXXIX/1 (2006) 179-210.

59 DE LUBAC, H., *Surnaturel: études historiques*, Paris, Aubier, 1946; *El misterio de lo sobrenatural*, Madrid, Encuentro, 1991. Cf. on his anthropology: GALVÁN, J. M., "H. de Lubac: el misterio del hombre en el misterio de Dios", *Anuario Filosófico*, XXXIX/1 (2006) 163-177.

60 Cf. WOJTYLA, K., *Persona y acción*, Madrid, B.A.C., 1982. Cf. on his anthropology: REIMERS, A. J., "La antropología personalista de Karol Wojtyła", in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (II), ed. cit., 309-328.

senting the anthropological keys of the following two, who in our judgment are the most relevant to the question at hand: R. Guardini⁶¹ and J. Ratzinger.⁶²

As regards the topic, Guardini holds that the human person is equivalent to intimacy, and he is correct in recognizing that at this level the person is constitutively a relation, i.e., bound to the divine personal being.⁶³

61 As is known, among his various anthropological works one may highlight *Mundo y persona*, Madrid, Encuentro, 2000; *La aceptación de sí mismo*, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1983; *Cartas sobre la formación de sí mismo*, and other brief writings.

62 The central book for discerning his anthropology is *Introducción al cristianismo*, Salamanca, Sígueme, 1970. In addition to this, one may consult his works *El Dios de Jesucristo* and *La Palabra en la Iglesia* and his *Escatología*, which, according to him, is his most elaborate and carefully crafted work. Cf. on his anthropology: BLANCO SARTO, P., “La teología de la persona en Joseph Ratzinger”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (II), ed. cit., 353-382.

63 “Man knows who he is insofar as he understands himself from God. To this end he must know who God is... If he confronts God, if he conceives Him erroneously, he loses all knowledge of his own being. This is the fundamental law of all knowledge of man”. GUARDINI, R., *Quien sabe de Dios conoce al hombre*, Madrid, PPC., 1995, 160-161. Elsewhere he writes: “my existence is a mystery. Thus it must express itself that it wishes to penetrate into the essential... Insofar as I draw near to God and participate in Him, I draw near to my own understanding. The seat of the meaning of my life is not in me, but above me. I live from what is above me. Insofar as I enclose myself within myself — which amounts to the same thing — I enclose myself in the world, I deviate from my trajectory... I am in harmony with myself, I understand my existence, only insofar as I accept myself as proceeding from the freedom of God”. *La existencia del cristiano*, Madrid, BAC, 1997, 180-181. Indeed, “who I am — he writes elsewhere — I understand only in Him who is above me... Man cannot understand himself by starting from himself”. *La aceptación de sí mismo*, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1983, 35. “God created me, but not as an object... He created me by calling me to be His thou. Now, the response to the call consists in my being the ‘He’ who called me to be and realizes my life, playing the role of ‘thou’ with respect to Him... This relation constitutes the truth of my being, as well as the foundation of my reality... the human person is, in his deepest sense, the response to the call that God addresses to him as to a ‘thou’”. *La existencia del cristiano*, ed. cit., 179 and 467. According to Guardini, this imprint stems from Augustine of Hippo: “the ‘O God! You have created us for Yourself’ is not to be understood in an enthusiastic or edifying way, but correctly. God has established a relation with man, without which he can neither exist nor be understood... Man

This bond is what in the Christian tradition is called ‘vocation’.⁶⁴ Each person, then, has a distinct personal meaning from the outset. He likewise discovers that each person can freely come to know this meaning progressively during this life until its complete divine manifestation *post mortem*.⁶⁵ However, in his excessive insistence that such meaning is attained

can be understood not as something closed that lives and rests upon itself, but as someone whose existence consists in a relation: from God, toward God. This relation is not something secondary added on to his being, so that he could continue existing even without it, but rather his being rests upon it”. *Ibid.*, 155. Note the insistence on emphasizing that man’s being is relation to God, that is, that this respective character is not an ‘accidental’ addition to human being, but his own nature. By this it is not meant that the relation is ‘substantial’, because both substance and accidents belong to the categorial or predicamental order, whereas the human radical is not of that nature. For this reason he adds that “the relation of which we are speaking is, on the contrary, of another order; in this relation I-thou consists his being”. *Quien sabe de Dios conoce al hombre*, 156.

64 “Precisely because God calls him, He lays the foundations of his being, and for that very reason he is constituted as person. Man consists in being-called by God, and in that alone. Apart from this, nothing remains for him. If man could detach himself from this being-called, he would become a phantom, even more, nothing... Only from this point can man be understood, and if one wishes to understand him from elsewhere, one commits a grave error concerning him”. GUARDINI, R., *Quien sabe de Dios conoce al hombre*, 157. This indicates that human personal being is not one’s own invention, but that God grants to each person a distinct personal meaning. Therefore, each man can understand himself only in correlation with God. Also for the reason indicated, insofar as man loses sight of God, he becomes meaningless to himself: “by abandoning God, he becomes incomprehensible to himself. His innumerable attempts at self-interpretation always end in these two extremes: in absolutizing himself or in becoming immolated, that is, in claiming absolute existence for himself in dignity and responsibility, or in surrendering himself to a profound ignominy such as he will never experience again”. *Ibid.*, 160. In short: “if he [man] rebels against God, if he thinks wrongly of Him, then he loses knowledge of his own being”. *Ibid.*, 161.

65 “If one reviews the answers man gives to the question concerning the meaning of his life — not only some of them, but all; not only the courageous ones, but the desperate ones; not only the noble ones, but also the base ones — one must conclude that man does not know who he is. He has merely become so accustomed to this not-knowing that he finds it correct”. GUARDINI, R., *Ibid.*, 162. “What man is, if he attains an authentic image, will be manifested

through supernatural revelation, he fails to make clear that this meaning can also be discovered, gradually, in a natural way — i.e., that each human person possesses an adequate natural noetic level for progressively knowing her own personal meaning.⁶⁶ But since this knowledge exists and can be accounted for, it may be concluded that we are dealing with a thinker who combines an indubitable thematic achievement with a methodological deficit.⁶⁷

For Ratzinger, thematically, the person — both in God and in man — is above all a relation; not a substance with accidents⁶⁸, but a coexistential

at the end”. *Ibid.*, 168. “The true name is a goal that will never be attained. But there is another reason why the true name is not reached during our temporal existence, namely that it would have to belong to a concrete man — and also to each one —”. *Ibid.*, 174. “Only in God is each human being rooted. Only in the encounter with Him does he learn who he is, for only God can tell him. Only the love of God definitively constitutes him in his own self. And, therefore, God is also the only one who authentically says ‘thou’ to him. His true name is the expression of this knowledge that God has of him and that he has learned from God about himself... God makes known to him who he must be eternally; He lovingly assumes him into His eternal life... This name is protected. ‘No one knows it’; only God and he, he in God”. *Ibid.*, 176. A similar allusion to love is found in another of his works: “The power that governs it is not the spirit but the hearth. With hearth we mean something radically different from emotionalism and sentimentality. The hearth is that living union of blood and spirit that characterizes man”, GUARDINI, R., *The Last Things*, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1965, 75.

66 “The first definition that man knows through revelation is: man is the image of God. The second: he has rebelled against the relation with his original, but without being able to invalidate it. Therefore he is a distorted image. And this distortion fully confirms how he understands himself, what he does, who he is. Then came revelation and redemption, which was carried out along the narrow line of Old Testament history and was consummated in Christ. Through it, man was told who he is, and also who God is. Knowledge of God and knowledge of man once again formed a whole, and the image once more recovered its meaning... From this point onward he could understand himself again”. GUARDINI, R., *Quien sabe de Dios conoce al hombre*, 162-3.

67 “Some areas of my interiority are evident to me, but others are hidden from me”. GUARDINI, R., *Ibid.*, 173.

68 The mentality of describing man as a composite of substance and accidents is ancient, and

bond.⁶⁹ With regard to the noetic method for accessing personal reality, he holds that access to intimacy can only be achieved by abandoning

is seconded in our time by some authors — Millán-Puelles, for example. But to Ratzinger it does not seem adequate because, if one affirms that the human relation is accidental, one could think that it is either a native accident or an acquired one. If it is considered acquired, one would be implicitly affirming that man is not natively open to God and that, therefore, atheism is the natural and proper state of man, which is erroneous. If it is considered innate, man's openness to God would be natural, but in any case of little relevance, that is, accidental, which is also erroneous.

- 69 “The person is not a mere individual... but person. Greek thought has always been seen in individual essences only individuals... The Christian sees in man a person, not an individual. It seems to me that in this passage from the individual to the person lies the great division between antiquity and Christianity, between Platonism and faith... If the person is something more than the individual, if the multiple is also what is proper and not what is secondary, if there is a primacy of the particular over the general, then unity is not the only and ultimate thing; multiplicity too has its own proper and definitive right. This expression, deduced with inner necessity from the Christian option, leads us, as if by the hand, to the overcoming of the conception of a God who is pure unity. The inner logic of Christian faith in God surpasses pure monotheism and leads us to faith in the triune God”. RATZINGER, J., *Introducción al cristianismo*, Salamanca, Sígueme, 1970, 132. As can be seen, he considers that ‘person’ denotes personal openness; it therefore implies — in divine being and in man — the existence of a plurality of persons. Let us attend to other relevant passages from this work on the content of the term ‘person’: “The simple one — as we read further on — that which neither has nor can have relations, cannot be person. There is no person in absolute singularity. This is shown by the words in which the concept of person developed: the Greek word *prosopon* means ‘respect’; the particle *pros* means ‘to’, ‘toward’, and includes relation as constitutive of the person. The same occurs with the Latin word *persona*: ‘to sound through’; the particle *per* (= ‘to’, ‘toward’) indicates relation, but this time as communicability”. *Ibid.*, 149. In other words: what Christianity adds to Greek philosophy at this point is that, above thought — both in divine being and in human being — there underlies a constitutively coexistent reality: “God is not only *Logos*, but dialogue, not only idea and intelligence, but dialogue and word united in the one who speaks. The ancient division of reality into substance, the authentic and accidental, the purely causal, is thereby surpassed. It is therefore clear that, alongside substance, dialogue and relation stand as an equally original form of being”. *Ibid.*, 152. Further on we read: “The person is the pure relation of what is referred, nothing more. Relation is not something added to the person... but the person consists in referability”. *Ibid.*, 152.

‘objective knowledge’, the kind that forms ideas through abstraction.⁷⁰ This is, then, a natural knowing constitutive of man, which can be exercised freely as long as one does not restrict oneself to knowing according to thought objects, for the person thought is an idea, not the real person. With respect to this author’s proposal, one may therefore say that we are confronted with a double achievement: methodological and thematic.

In contrast to both theologians, and by way of comparison, one may allude with regard to the anthropological topic to the anthropology of the Protestant theologian Pannenberg⁷¹, who, while agreeing with both preceding authors that man is a relation to God⁷² and with Ratzinger that

70 If one asks how Ratzinger was able to come to know the person as relation, the answer he himself gives is that he abandoned ‘objective knowledge’, because in this kind of knowing ideas that are thought are separated or isolated from one another. Indeed, in abstractive knowledge, if one thinks, for example, ‘cat’, one does not at the same time think ‘dog’, and so it is with all abstract concepts, for here what Aristotle said of this cognitive level applies: ‘only one thing is thought’. He surpasses this mode of knowing when he deals with the person, and expresses it in these terms: “With this, it becomes possible to overcome what today we call ‘objectified thinking’; with this, a new plane of being is revealed to us”. RATZINGER, J., *Ibid.*, 153. It is clear that this author detects this limit in the work we are now commenting on: “Without being able to find a concept that encompasses them, both things — for example, the structure of corpuscles and waves — must be considered as an anticipation of the whole in its unity, to which we have no access, owing to the limitation of our visual field. What happens in the field of physics as a consequence of our limitation is also valid, and with much greater reason, for spiritual realities and for God”. *Ibid.*, 144.

71 Cf. PANNENBERG, W., *El problema del hombre. Hacia una antropología teológica*, Barcelona, Herder, 1976; *El destino del hombre*, Salamanca, Sígueme, 1981. Cf. on his anthropology: O’CALLAGHAN, P., “Aspectos de la antropología de Wolfhart Pannenberg”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 253-271.

72 Cf. PANNENBERG, W., *El problema del hombre*, ed. cit., 12-13. In essence, “openness to the world, real in man, connotes a relation to God... The openness of human life is not exhausted in its meaning if one intends to understand man as destined merely for culture... To that environmental and vital bond which characterizes the animal there corresponds in man not a relation with the natural world, nor a familiarity with the world of culture, but an indigent dependence upon God of an absolute character. What the environment is for the animal, God

“all human interest is concentrated on the future,”⁷³ differs from both in affirming that the soul arises from the body and is not distinct from it; strictly speaking, that the person is a ‘whole’, meaning that the soul cannot exist apart from the body.⁷⁴ And therefore that life *post mortem* is admissible only with corporeal life.⁷⁵ But this entails a double error: philosophical and theological. Philosophical, because it is clear that act can exist and can be explained independently of the potencies it activates. Theological, because it leads him to eliminate at a stroke the entire intermediate eschatology⁷⁶ — an error that Catholic doctrine in no way can accept. As regards

is for man: the goal in which alone his impulses can find rest and in which his destiny must be fulfilled”. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

- 73 PANNENBERG, W., *Ibid.*, 64. This is coherent with the revealed message, since “the biblical promises were those that inaugurated the idea of the new”. *Ibid.*, 66.
- 74 Indeed, for him, who agrees with ‘modern anthropology’, the soul is not distinct from the body, since he maintains that everything called psychic is born from the corporeal. It should be recalled that the Thomistic tradition held that the lower powers arise from the higher, not the reverse, since everything potential in us — and the body obviously is such — arises from act. In accordance with his preceding thesis, Pannenberg maintains that “the distinction between inner and outer world is not a primordial reality, but a derived and deduced one, made possible only on the basis of man’s bodily behavior. From this it follows that in man there is no autonomous reality called ‘soul’, in contrast to that other reality called ‘body’; nor is it true that there is a body that moves mechanically and unconsciously. Both one thing and the other are mere abstractions. What alone is real is a living being, called man, who moves and behaves in a determinate way before the world. With this, the basic presupposition of the thought of an immortality of the soul is rendered void”. PANNENBERG, W., *Ibid.*, 73. “That idea, understood in the sense that a part of man continues, remaining incorruptible after death, cannot be sustained. In it the true tragedy of death is ignored, which truly signifies the end of all that we are”. *Ibid.*, 74. “The secret life of our consciousness is so bound to the functions of our body that it cannot continue by itself independently of the latter”. *Ibid.*, 75.
- 75 “The thought of a life beyond death is in reality imaginable in some form only if it is understood as a bodily rising again”. PANNENBERG, W., *Ibid.*, 75.
- 76 For this reason he admits that God’s judgment of each man will take place in the resurrection of the dead, not after one’s own death. Cf. PANNENBERG, W., *Ibid.*, 116-117.

the noetic method, Pannenberg proposes history⁷⁷, but that this is unable to account for personal intimacy is evident, simply because it belongs to the domain of human manifestations.⁷⁸

7. Cultural anthropologies or culturalism?

The current state of anthropology seems to be characterized by the substitution of the reality of the *I* with what narratives say about it. In parallel, philosophy in our day seems to resolve itself into literature.

77 Pannenberg considers that every anthropology is a partial vision, because it is abstract, of the individual being of man, and that sociology completes that vision, because it considers man as linked with others. Nevertheless, he thinks that sociology too is partial because it does not study the becoming of men. Thus, for him, the broadest science concerning man “is the one capable of pursuing these real transformations in the life of individuals and in the course of human groups. This is the science of history”. PANNENBERG, W., *Ibid.*, 193. “It may be said that the science of history is the culmination of all the anthropological sciences”. *Ibid.* And yet history too is in a certain sense abstract, “since it is never in a position to encompass the infinite number of circumstances and events that make up a determinate human destiny”. *Ibid.* As can be seen, the underlying thesis in his conception is that “man is time” — “man is by definition a historical being”. *Ibid.*, 194. “The *principium individuationis* in man is the history of his life, the existential path that differentiates him from others”. *Ibid.*, 195-196, a thesis that has many precedents — Nietzsche, Marx, Dilthey, Heidegger — and that is clearly contrary to the Aristotelian one: “to think time is not time”; therefore, if man transcends time by thinking it, he is not physical time. Nevertheless, he affirms that this biographical course always remains open to God: “the historicity of man is founded on his openness to God”. *Ibid.*, 197.

78 It can be seen, Pannenberg does not notice that human personal intimacy transcends what is common to human corporeal nature and to the immaterial human faculties — intelligence and will — which are likewise natively common to the human genus. For this reason, he holds that sociology, which studies what is common, is superior to anthropology, which attends to personal intimacy. And the same may be said of his opinion regarding history. Had he noticed what is transcendental or radical in man, he would not have maintained that man is a “historical being”, not only because in the higher human faculties there exist kinds of time that are not physical, but because, if man is designed for God and God is eternity, the key to man lies in the fact that he is capable of being eternalized.

Since literature speaks above all of the human, its creations revolve around the characterization of characters, and these in turn seem to constitute an *I* formed by narration. In this view, the person amounts to no more than a presupposition. Foucault⁷⁹, for example, considered the *I* to be a Kantian invention, though strictly speaking it was such for Kant himself too, for according to the philosopher of Königsberg, claiming to know the subject as real is to incur ‘paralogism’. But if the *I* is reduced to what is said of it, to literature, strictly speaking only linguistic truth about it is possible, but no genuine knowledge of its reality. Were this so, speaking about the real subject would be meaningless, as Wittgenstein noted in his *Tractatus*. But clinging exclusively to linguistic truth makes it difficult to account, in terms of truth, for language itself.

Culture is everything that man produces. But man cannot be measured exclusively by his cultural products. If this is done, cultural anthropology becomes culturalist. Yet “the most abusive and dangerous interpretation of culture is the one that anchors man entirely in his supposed consistency: in the identification between the being of man and his action resides one of the recurring motifs of modern anthropology. It is the decision to commit man entirely to his realizations.”⁸⁰ Cultural anthropology is more closely bound to and more dependent on will than on intellect, because the thought object is not transferred to action without the mediation of will. Thought objects are unreal; the acts of will, by contrast, are real, and they adapt to real goods. Action would not be real if it were only planned objectively by the intellect, without being willfully impelled into action by the will. On this account, the culturalist *I* seems more precisely a reduction of the modern voluntarist *I*. As is well known, the will can perform diverse acts;

79 Cf. FOUCAULT, M., *Hermenéutica del sujeto*, ed. and trans. by F. Álvarez-Uría, Madrid, Ediciones de La Piqueta, 1994.

80 POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. XV, Pamplona, Eunsu, 2015, 545.

some bearing on the end and others on the means. If someone polarizes his will by adapting it exclusively to the means, he becomes a culturalist. This constriction is easier to yield to today than in past epochs due to the current hypertrophy of means and the neglect of ends.

Culture as the theme of cultural anthropology belongs to the domain of the contingent and changing. This discipline, very much in vogue today, studies various artistic manifestations of diverse societies, tribes, or civilizations, ancient or modern. These, as human manifestations, are respectable. Nevertheless, if some are more human than others and humanize more than others, they will be more worthy. As a method, cultural anthropology typically employs hermeneutics, interpretation — that is, a use of practical reason (so called by the medievals). It is clear that this method is appropriate for better understanding what is not entirely clear, i.e., the plausible, the probable. However, with regard to what is obvious (the proper domain, according to that tradition, of theoretical reason), interpretation is superfluous.⁸¹ Hence the hermeneutic method should not be used abusively. Accordingly, one may ask whether we are capable of knowing truths ‘without remainder’, i.e., whether we are capable of discovering and contemplating axiomatic realities. Without this, neither metaphysics nor transcendental anthropology is possible. Recall that the medieval tradition assigned to these disciplines the cognitive level called ‘superior reason’, in which they typically distinguished two habits: that of first principles, the method of metaphysics which enables knowledge of real extra-mental first principles (which are necessary), and the habit of wisdom, the method of transcendental anthropology which provides access to the free personal being of the human person herself. It does

81 “Hermeneutics is animated by the intention of understanding what is, from the outset, scarcely intelligible by whatever reason. For this reason, it is not a valid method for what is intelligible in itself. For this reason, it is not a method applicable to metaphysics and to the deepest parts of philosophy”. POLO, L., *Nietzsche como pensador de dualidades*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, vol. XVII, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2018, 57, note 1.

not seem fitting, therefore, to reduce the human person to what she does or can do. Nor does it seem appropriate to reduce understanding of the human person to the attempt to endow her actions and cultural products with meaning.

The real *I* is not cultural, in the sense of a product of culture, nor can it be. Furthermore, the person is not reducible to her *I* or personality (the personal ‘act of being’ is not reducible to the human ‘essence’). Nor are thinking and the thought object culture. The thought object that is transferred to productive action by configuring it is prior to that action and is its condition of possibility. Such an object is already in thinking, whereas cultural products are not in it. Moreover, it is the *I* that gives rise to thinking objects or not thinking about them, to being willing to realize them or to omitting their production. Nor is man reducible to culture understood as effective human doing or as what man can do, for man is not identical (contrary to what pragmatism holds) with his actions.⁸² Furthermore, man is not even reducible to his reason and will (and other faculties inferior to these) that make human actions possible. Moreover, human actions are not reducible to cultural achievements. From this it follows that man cannot make himself or others. Hence the understanding of man is not cultural. Were it so, something of man would always remain to be done, because culture does not reach completion. Added to this is the fact that culture always occurs in history, and history does not close; so that if one holds a culturalist understanding of man, one ends up holding that man cannot be fulfilled in happiness, which is equivalent to supposing that he is absurd. But that this position involves a *quid pro quo* is patent: why seek to endow human actions with a certain meaning if one holds that man, radically and ultimately, lacks meaning?

82 Cf. BARRENA, S. – NUBIOLA, J., “Antropología pragmática: el ser humano como signo en crecimiento”, in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (II), Pamplona, Euns, 2007, 39-58.

Consequently, one must move from a cultural study of the *I* to a higher, personal investigation of it, for without it the human ‘act of being’ is not known; and without the latter, neither is the nature of the *I*, i.e., of the ‘essence’ of man. Claiming to draw out that human root from cultural manifestations is — as the Spanish proverb goes — trying to pull up the radish by the leaves. Indeed, neither action nor its results exhaust the essence of man; and moreover, this essence is not identical with the human act of being. Man is not time or world, but rather *is in* time and in the world by means of his essence, not his act of being. Hence what corresponds to culture is his essence, not his act of being. Strictly speaking, man *has* culture but *is* not it, and he has it through his corporeality. Hence man is reducible neither to culture nor to his body.

At the same time, the *I* does not coincide with the person, because the *I* passes through various biographical phases over the course of life, in which it progressively matures. It also admits common typologies. The key of each person, by contrast, is novelty. Since the *I* must bear on reason and will and through them, and through other potencies, on diverse intramundane realities, the *I* acquires experiences and changes over time. Simultaneously, external reality changes, for from the inherited cultural possibilities it takes advantage of some while setting aside others. And yet the end of the person is neither the world, nor her potencies, nor her *I*. The person is a strict novelty, for neither do there exist, nor can there exist, two identical persons. Human corporeal nature and the human typological essence, by contrast, are common to the human genus. “In man one can distinguish between person, *I*, and individual; this distinction is vertical or hierarchical. Society as an extra-individual manifestation is inferior to the person but not to the individual,”⁸³ and culture is inferior to society. On this view, it is clear that man can exist without rational development, which indicates that the *I*

83 POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, in *Obras Completas*, Series A, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, 554-555.

cannot be reduced to human reason (or to will). On the other hand, it is clear that when the *I* is known, it is not always known in the same way. The *I* is known throughout human life as diverse, passing through various phases. This indicates not only that biography and history affect the *I*, but also that the human person is irreducible to her *I*. The *I* is, in each biographical phase, the mode-method-means by which the person knows what is inferior to her; through it she knows what belongs to her nature and essence, but the *I* is not the person one is, because that person is irreducible to such knowledge.

The real distinction '*actus essendi* — *essentia*' must be maintained both in the layers of human reality (Anthropology) and in its cognitive levels (Theory of Knowledge). It is therefore pertinent to note that seeking to satisfy the happiness that the human act of being demands by trying to saturate the human essence or the *I* would be — also in the Aristotelian way of speaking — a form of *akrasia* (strictly, a pretension of self, of identifying with the essence), indeed the highest form of it. That supposed happiness, impossible to attain through such a subordination of the superior to the inferior, would carry with it the abuse of the human essence. With this, the personal character would be forgotten, and the person would become obsessed with her *I*.

In sum, cultural anthropology must be redirected (explained, justified) to personal anthropology; the *I* is not reducible to what has been done nor to doing; nor to its reason and will, conditions of possibility of human action; it is not a subject or foundation, but a cognitive method (*synderesis*, in medieval terminology). Consequently, the best approach to the *I* will not be to regard it as a reality in itself to which the person must conform, but rather the key must be self-forgetfulness; for to the extent that one tries to conform to it or to turn it into an 'in itself', i.e., to make that method into a theme, its knowing is obstructed. If the *I* is not an 'in itself', it is consequently not an isolated theme. It must therefore be dualized in a twofold manner: with what is inferior and with what is superior to it. With what is inferior — intellect and will — the *I* is dualized by ac-

tivating and knowing those potencies. In activating them it perfects them (the notions of acquired habits and virtues). With what is superior, the *I* is dualized by allowing itself to be personalized by the human person. Seen from the person's side, the *I* is a mode of knowing that arises from the person and looks toward human nature. Hence the person, as superior, is irreducible to the *I*, and consequently the *I* is not the theme of the person. In sum, the *I* belongs to the essence of man, while the person is the personal act of being, whose theme can only be personal.

8. Postmodern antipersonalism

Following Heidegger's denunciation that the subject cannot be known through reason, those who continued to maintain the centrality of the subject attempted to reach knowledge of it by other, non-rational paths: feelings, as the philosopher of Freiburg himself proposed; intersubjectivity, as Mounier thought⁸⁴; supernatural revelation, in the manner of Buber⁸⁵; etc. — paths regrettably lacking in sufficient philosophical grounding. This deficiency gave rise to a profound crisis in which we are still immersed and which has come to be called postmodernity. This seems to consist in the final twist of the screw with respect to the loss of personal meaning. That last turn may be understood as the abandonment of the anthropological search. Postmodern philosophy maintains this position, declaring that it is meaningless to seek the truth of the individual, simply because the individual does not exist.⁸⁶ In this sense, this philosophy may be called a- or anti-personalist.

84 Cf. DÍAZ, C., "La antropología de Emmanuel Mounier", in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 137-162.

85 Cf. GORDILLO, L., "Buber: un humanista trascendente", in *Propuestas antropológicas del s. XX* (I), ed. cit., 197-219.

86 Cf. VATTIMO, G., *Más allá del sujeto: Nietzsche, Heidegger y la hermenéutica*, trans. by J. C. Gentile

If this work were to conclude with the preceding accusation, it could be characterized, with some justice, as postmodern, since it is typical of this current of thought to provoke human problems while refusing their solution. The response to antipersonalism must therefore indicate that the person exists, simply because she can be known, and this because that knowledge can be set forth. Another matter is whether someone does not see it or does not wish to see it; for if one does not see it, there is nothing to be done; and if one does not wish to see it, no one can be compelled to do so, since we are not dealing with a rational, and therefore necessary, form of knowing, but with a personal, and therefore free, form of knowing. And the free is superior to the necessary. In affirming that the person exists, what is meant by the term ‘person’ is not that the human body exists, which no one disputes. Nor does that term refer to the ‘whole’ of man, i.e., to the sensible and the immaterial, the ensemble of organs, faculties, etc., because ‘totalizing’ means encompassing, and in encompassing the real distinctions among what is grouped are lost and one incurs — as has been seen — irresolvable paradoxes. By person is meant what is most central to each one: human intimacy, the spirit, or, in classical expression, the act of being.

One difficulty in the exposition of the personal act of being lies in the fact that it is superior to what we can know of it, not only because it is growing, but because the knowing by which we attain it, without being rational, is inferior to the act of being: it is the habit of wisdom. This indicates that we overflow our own knowledge. It also reveals that in some way the knowledge by which we attain it is not alien to being, i.e., that no person is deprived of her own self-knowledge. At its core, this reveals that it is inexcusable for one who is a person not to know herself as such, and that if self-knowledge is solidary with personal being, not knowing oneself as a person entails renouncing being one. It also testifies that

Vitale, Barcelona, Paidós, 2nd ed., 1992.

the person is knowing; not that she *has* knowing, but that she *is* it. Being knowing and yet not knowing oneself entirely indicates that the theme of our knowing personal being is not ourselves, but something that transcends us personally. The foregoing shows that human personal being is not isolated but open, coexistent with. It also indicates that if coexistence is lost, the meaning of personal being is lost.

It can now be explained why antipersonalism ends in nothingness: because the loss of personal coexistence is the loss of the meaning of the human personal act of being. With this loss, that act is reduced to nothingness. This shows that the existence of a single, isolated person is natively impossible. Since no other human person corresponds coexistentially to the intimacy of a human person, it must be noted that either the opening of human intimate coexistence refers to God⁸⁷, or to nothingness. There is no native openness to nothingness, simply because, were that the case, human personal being would not exist. However, such openness to nothingness is possible because native personal openness is not necessary but free, and hence personal freedom can direct its activity co-personally or, on the contrary, a- or anti-personally.

The foregoing indicates that the human personal act of being is open toward the future, and that freely denying openness to it is precisely to accept nothingness, because to deny the future is to deny the human personal act of being. Thus the hopelessness and pessimism of antipersonalism are understood. On the other hand, novelty is possible only through the future. If the future is denied, nothing radically new is possible. Therefore the human person looks toward the metahistorical future — toward the new *par excellence*. Now, what is closest to nothingness without ever

87 “The question concerning God thus refers back to a question concerning man. And the philosophical possibility of the problem of God will consist in discovering the human dimension from which that question must be posed, or rather, is already posed”. ZUBIRI, X., “En torno al problema de Dios”, *Naturaleza, historia, Dios*, Madrid, Alianza, 1994, 423.

actually being it is what lacks the possibility of novelty; indeed, without the possibility of growing renewal, one yields to decay and death. The foregoing explains why postmodernity represents something like the last swan song of the so-called ‘culture of death’. Hence it tends to turn even celebration into a funeral. And its secularizing interest is also understandable — more than of religion, of Christian revelation, since this is the only one that has known how to transform even sacrifice and even death into a celebration.⁸⁸ Moreover, the works of this antihumanist vision tend to be mediocre, since in looking with suspicion on the future its operativity is weak. And it will surely be the future that judges its labor.

One cannot pass *motu proprio* from not knowing oneself as a person to knowing oneself as a *who*. The reverse, however, is possible. No one gives herself being, above all when it is a matter of personal being; but one who is a human person can renounce her personal being and progressively lose it. The best objection to those who seek to deny personal being is not any argument, but the personal being itself of those who know themselves as persons and accept being so. What is the cause of progressive depersonalization? Perhaps the constant yielding to matters that are not personal — for example, sensory appetites. And yet, if an argument is requested to determine whether the subject exists, one may be offered: error. The subject exists because man makes errors, and not a few. Animals, after all, do not err. Hence they neither correct themselves nor can they ask forgiveness. In them one may improperly speak of error by virtue of defects inherent in their sensory knowing, but strictly speaking the animal does not err in itself, because it is not a *who*. Why? Because errors do not belong to knowing, since the knowing that is exercised knows at its own level. Knowing does not err. What errs is the person, for she asks of her knowing more than it offers her, or asks of it something other than what it gives. So that without a subject there is no error. But since there is an error,

88 Cf. PIEPER, J., *Una teoría de la fiesta*, Madrid, Rialp, 1974.

the subject exists. Moreover, since there is a superabundance of errors, one must conclude that the subject is superabundant, not only because its capacity for making errors is unlimited, but because it is not exhausted in making them, since it can correct them.

The technology of the mid-20th century gave man the possibility of the complete destruction of human nature. Yet, there remained something more radical to be annihilated in man, to which neither science nor technology had access: personal being, the human spirit. And it is at that critical point that the destructive work of the last philosophy of the past century — still current in the 21st — is concentrated. Will it achieve its purpose? Only in those who take as their own and without qualification the nihilistic character with which that philosophy describes the subject. Will it succeed in the present human situation? Only in post-history, where for that acceptance all possibilities relating to the growth of personal being are closed; but never in history, where there always exists the possibility of changing the personal meaning.

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