

Abstract

This dissertation analyzed the problem of secularism in Western culture in light of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II's personalist anthropology. The research aimed to uncover the essential features of Western secularism, particularly those that seem to contradict the natural dispositions of the human person and thus prevent the optimal fulfillment of the personal nature of man. One of the essential features of this nature is religiosity. As a result, the elimination of religion from human life, or its relegation to the private sphere -- contrary to the communal character of the phenomenon of religion -- is not without significance, both for the understanding of the human person, and for their optimal fulfillment in the cultural environment.

A second important goal of the research was to demonstrate the close correlation between the concept of culture and the understanding of the human person. Ambiguity, fragmentation, and, above all, the related separation of culture from human nature have led to the relativization of culture's essence and, ultimately, to its negation. As a result of this reinterpretation of culture, its fundamental dimensions were marginalized, including those related to the transcendence of human being, the community-based realization of the human person, the objective moral order, and the religious nature of man, expressed in openness to the supernatural world. In this way, secularist ideas, initially socio-political in nature, gained a rational theoretical justification, described by Max Weber, among others, as the "disenchantment of the world." Culture began to be explained exclusively from a sociological and anthropological perspective, rejecting any metaphysical foundations. This led to a dichotomy between culture and the human person (nature), and consequently, to a reductionist vision of the person.

Meanwhile, the personalist approach draws on metaphysics, through which it overcomes this dichotomy, pointing to the close interdependence between the understanding of culture and the person. Demonstrating this personalist approach was therefore another important goal of the research. In this light, as Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II noted, the human person is the center, subject, object, and purpose of culture. Personalism thus appears as a rational and realistic approach to the foundations of human culture, defined by a non-reductionist understanding of the human person, which Karol Wojtyła positively calls an adequate approach, taking into account both the metaphysics of the human person and the

theology that explains its supernatural dimension, while also appropriately considering the findings of research in the particular sciences.

The achievement of the intended research goals determined the structure of the research, which comprises five chapters of inquiry. The first chapter offers an analysis of the ambiguities surrounding the concept of culture, presented in the form of a review of the principal interpretations of the fact of culture within the major disciplines, including the philosophy of culture, cultural anthropology, and the sociology of culture. Furthermore, a metaphysical concept of culture is presented, which emphasizes the search for essential properties within the pluralism of cultural phenomena and the subjectivation of cultural expression in the human person. This chapter also analyzes the classic domains of culture—*theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*—while also taking into account religion as a unique and integral cultural phenomenon. The discussion concludes with a philosophical analysis of secularism as a contemporary cultural experience, clarifying its conceptual meaning and outlining its principal assumptions.

The next chapter focuses on the manifestations of contemporary Western secularism as the dominant cultural paradigm. These manifestations include: the decline of lived religious experience, the denial of transcendence, moral relativism, the absolutization of freedom, the fluidity of human personal identity, and the emergence of the so-called “culture of death,” exemplified by practices such as abortion, contraception, euthanasia, and suicide. The anthropological implications of these phenomena and their consequences for understanding human dignity and moral responsibility are critically analyzed.

The next chapter is devoted to the foundations of Karol Wojtyła's/John Paul II's personalism, which involves a phenomenological and metaphysical analysis of the human person, who reveals their specificity in action, given in its original sense within inner experience. The original nature of Wojtyła's personalism is presented with particular emphasis on conscious action, self-determination, self-possession, and self-governance. The subsequent discussion addresses the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human person's transcendence and the integration of nature into the person as the foundation of moral normativity. By referring to Thomistic metaphysics, this chapter highlights the realism of Wojtyła's anthropology in contrast to the idealistic tendencies characteristic of secularist thought.

Chapter four analyzes the moral dimension of human action as a fundamental path to the truth about the human person. The focus is on the moral structure of the human experience of action, the axiological nature of moral goodness, and the normative and teleological dimensions of moral obligation. The role of conscience as a guardian of moral conduct and

the understanding of the human person as a responsible moral subject are also considered. The culmination of this investigation was the portrayal of the person as *capax veritatis et boni*, that is, as capable of apprehending truth and goodness through the agency of will guided by reason. It is emphasized that, unlike the Wojtyła/John Paul II approach, ethical positions invoking secularism are typically relativistic or *a priori*.

The final chapter presents a constructive approach to personalist culture, based on an adequate anthropology of the human person. This approach is derived from the immanent property of the human subject, identified as the source of personal transcendence and moral action. Personalistic, existential, and theological analyses of the personal subject, and in particular the concept of *imago Dei*, allowed Wojtyła to justify human dignity, which underlies personalist culture. An important aspect of human agency is the relationship between truth and freedom, a necessary condition for authentic personal and communal life. The discussion concludes by presenting the human person in the context of a community of persons realized in the “I-Thou” and “Us” relationships.

In light of the analyses conducted, personalist culture appears to be a proposal that better reflects the personal nature of man than the one formulated by the anthropological reductionism of contemporary Western secularism. The results of the undertaken research confirm that Wojtyła's/John Paul II's personalist vision of culture, based on a realistic understanding of the human person, appears to adequately address the anthropological shortcomings of contemporary Western secularism, given its individualistic assumption of a culture devoid of a true sense of community, the relativism of cultural values and truth, and the marginalization of the importance of religion in culture and an objective sense of morality. These shortcomings do not create an appropriate environment for cultural experience that corresponds to the truth about the personal nature of man. Meanwhile, the personalist approach realistically considers the correlation of all fundamental dimensions of culture with human nature, thanks to which culture, thus understood, encompasses the indispensable conditions for the fulfillment of the human person, who is the subject, object, and purpose of culture.

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