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**FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**



**THE PERFORMING PERSON**  
**JUDITH BUTLER AND WOJTYŁA**  
**ON GENDER**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Research Master: Master of Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion

Supervisor

by

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## SUMMARY

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Over the last thirty years, gender has become an increasingly hotly debated topic within the Roman Catholic Church. The core of the debate seems to revolve around the nature of gender. On one side stand gender-scholars such as de Beauvoir, Wittig, and Butler who regard gender as socially constructed. Butler as the most influential philosopher of gender suggested that gender is performative. It has no particular basis in nature but it is rather in performing acts that the reality of gender comes to be. On the other stands a reading of gender as undetachable from biological sex. Readings of the latter sort often draw upon John Paul II's complementarian anthropology as sketched in his *Theology of the Body*. However, as an academic in philosophy, Karol Wojtyła developed an understanding of the human person as constituted through their acts in his book *Person and Act*. Due to the similarity in the concept of performed gender and that of the enacted person, the following question arises: how does gender fit within Wojtyła's understanding of the person and how does this add up to John Paul II's later complementarian anthropology?

To answer these questions, the first chapter will outline gender performativity as Judith Butler understands it. However, the emphasis is placed on performativity rather than gender per se. Therefore, the chapter first explores the roots of Butler's gender performativity in the performative speech theory of J.L. Austin. Thereafter Butler's own contributions and adaptations to Austin's framework are explored. The main takeaways constitute the definition of performativity as a new reality established through acting act as well as the insight that any performance is by definition rooted in social conventions.

In the second chapter, the primary findings of Karol Wojtyła in *Person and Act* are examined in relation to Butler's concept of performativity. Wojtyła presents an analysis of the human person in which the person itself is constituted, changed, even "made", through acts. The chapter goes on to illustrate just how similar Butler's concept of performativity really is to Wojtyła's understanding of the establishing of the person through the act. From there on several other similarities and differences between both authors are explored, showing them to be better read in tandem than as opposed to one another.

In the third and final chapter, we explore where performative gender would fit in Wojtyła's framework established in *Person and Act*. This exploration results in the finding that gender is more properly understood as part of the acting, personal capacities of the human person rather than their biological nature. From this intermediary conclusion, the chapter shifts focus to John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* to see whether *Person and Act*'s personalistic framework is applied correctly when it comes to gender. The thesis concludes that it is not because *Theology of the Body* intertwines biological sex with gender, thereby not doing justice to gender as part of the person and as constituted in the act.

The entire thesis comes together in a brief conclusion about the performance of drag, summarising the main points and showing how drag is met with different responses by Karol Wojtyła and John Paul II.



## **FOREWORD**

I would like to use this foreword to simply thank my supervisor, Dr. Nikolaas Cassidy-Deketelaere for his professional assistance as well as his emotional support. It makes researching fun to know that when you inevitably get stuck and all hope seems lost, there is someone there to tell you that there is yet hope and to show you a way forward. Additional thanks go out to my partner Celien Govaerts who despite working a fulltime job was still there to support my studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to understand how the performance of gender as explored by Judith Butler relates to the act in Karol Wojtyła's *Person and Act* in order to critically evaluate the reading of gender in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.<sup>1</sup> Gender has become increasingly controversial within the Roman Catholic Church over the last thirty years. The work of philosophers of gender such as de Beauvoir, Wittig and Butler have been framed as mere "theory" or "ideology" in an effort to theologially and practically devalue their insights of gender as rooted in culture rather than nature ever since the mid-90s.<sup>2</sup> In recent times, documents such as *Male and Female He Created Them* (*MAF*, 2019) and *Dignitas Infinita* (*DI*, 2024) are proof of the continuing malaise regarding gender.<sup>3</sup> In the former, gender theory supposedly "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family".<sup>4</sup> The latter document even treats gender theory in the section "grave violations of human dignity", right alongside war, human trafficking and sexual abuse.<sup>5</sup> What is it about gender then which evokes such grave responses?

The central issue for both *MAF* and *DI* appears to be the infringement of gender theory upon their shared anthropological framework: John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.<sup>6</sup> As per *MAF*, gender itself, understood as how the difference between biological men and women is culturally valued need not be an issue.<sup>7</sup> For the authors, gender only becomes an issue when it is separated from biological sex since this would go against John Paul II's assertion that "man and woman constitute, so to speak, two diverse ways of 'being a body'".<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, perhaps the most influential philosopher of gender of the last thirty years, has sealed that separation through their analysis that gender is performative rather than expressive. According to them<sup>9</sup>, gender can be compared to acting as in a play or a movie. It is precisely by acting out gender that it gains its existence rather than it constituting the expression of a sexed nature. As such, regarding gender as performative in the way Butler does is out of the question for John Paul II. This opposition to the performativity of gender however may be rather unjustified. After all, Pope John Paul II,

<sup>1</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *'Person and Act' and Related Essays*, The English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021); John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, ed. and trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Sara Garbagnoli, "Against the Heresy of Immanence: Vatican's "Gender" as a New Rhetorical Device Against the Denaturalization of the Sexual Order", *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (2016): 187–204, <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10156>.

<sup>3</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, "*Male and Female He Created Them*" *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2019), [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20190202\\_maschio-e-femmina\\_en.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_en.pdf); "Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Dignitas Infinita" on Human Dignity, 08.04.2024," Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, published April 8, 2024, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/04/08/240408c.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, "*Male and Female He Created Them*", 3.

<sup>5</sup> Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dignitas Infinita", sec. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Dignitas Infinita* refers to the sexual difference between men and women as a "foundational difference" and as "the greatest imaginable difference." Furthermore, it mentions that "In the male-female couple, this difference achieves the most marvellous of reciprocities." The magnitude of sexual difference clearly echoes *Theology of the Body*'s ontological division of man and woman. The reciprocity between the sexes is a reference to the complementarity between the sexes and the dynamic of self-gift as recounted by John Paul II in *Theology of the Body*. Combining both references into one sentence, *Male and Female* speaks of "Man and woman in their created state as complementary versions of what it means to be human."

<sup>7</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, "*Male and Female He Created Them*", 8.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 179.

<sup>9</sup> I refer to Judith Butler through "they" and "them" because they have indicated that these are their preferred pronouns.



himself developed a performative anthropology in *Person and Act* (1969) in the time before his ascension to the papacy.

Karol Wojtyła, as he was then known—just like Butler in her theory, himself enthralled by the performing arts—, develops in this philosophical treatise a theory of human activity in which acts not only impact the material world but also spiritually alter the person performing them. Given his later opposition to gender as a performative reality, this apparent convergence between Butler and the early Wojtyła on the centrality of performance or activity in the constitution of who we are, raises the question whether gender in Butler’s sense might not be a natural extension of Wojtyła’s philosophical account. If so, this would suggest that the later Pope’s essentialisation of gender is grounded in a political preference, rather than a sound anthropological analysis. Therefore, the central question to answer is in what sense does Butler’s understanding of gender as a performative reality fit within Wojtyła’s understanding of the person as constituted by acts.

This thesis develops an answer to this question over the course of three chapters. Collectively, the first two chapters test the hypothesis proposed here that Butler’s concept of performativity is structurally similar to Wojtyła’s understanding of the “*fieri*” of the person through the act. To that end, the first chapter gives an overview of Butler’s famous notion of the performativity of gender. Butler’s initial contribution to the study of gender was revealing gender’s performative nature. However, they did neither invent nor fully develop the notion of performativity themselves. Instead, in order to understand gender as performative, they initially relied upon the theory of performative speech acts proposed J.L. Austin within the philosophy of language. Only when armed with the necessary background knowledge of the linguistical roots of Butler’s concept of performativity can we acquire a thorough understanding of it. The chapter concludes by illustrating the differences between Butler’s and Austin’s understandings of performativity, thereby making plain how Butler innovates on Austin.

The second chapter develops an understanding of the act in Wojtyła’s *Person and Act*. The central premise of this philosophical treatise is the understanding that the person becomes who they are through consecutive acts. Although a human might do something and thereby influence the world around them, the act simultaneously is registered internally as “my act”. As a result, the person continually learns about themselves but also grows in a moral character through acting. In a sense, every act is a new coming into being of the person. To grasp Wojtyła’s framework, several other philosophical concepts he puts to work are first clarified. Subsequently, the interplay between the person and the act in Wojtyła and gender and the performance in Butler are juxtaposed. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the performativity of gender (Butler) is highly compatible with the fulfilment of the person in the act (Wojtyła), or that Butler and Wojtyła’s work can thus be seen to complement each other.

The third and final chapter provides a first indication of the potential significance of gender as understood by Butler from the perspective of Wojtyła’s philosophical framework. It does so on two issues: first, the chapter considers whether gender ought to be understood as part of the human person or rather as part of human nature; second, it considers what Butler describes as “the subversion of gender” from the perspective of *Person and Act*. The chapter concludes by relating the newly developed understanding of gender from Wojtyła’s perspective to gender as it occurs in John Paul II’s later influential text, *Theology of the Body*. Through this comparison it will become evident that gender ought to have been included in *Person and Act* and that the reading of gender as it appears in some of John Paul II’s papal documents runs contrary to the principles of *Person and Act*.

## CHAPTER I. PERFORMATIVITY FROM SPEECH TO GENDER: AUSTIN AND BUTLER

Although Judith Butler is widely lauded as the author of the theory of gender performativity, they did not develop it in a vacuum. Instead, Butler is influenced by French phenomenologists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty, psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, as well as of course French feminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Monique Wittig. However, the nucleus of Butler's concept of *performativity* lies elsewhere, namely in the philosophy of language and J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech acts. Therefore, I will first examine Austin's understanding of performativity and illustrate how Butler adapts linguistic performativity to the performativity of gender.

### § 1. AUSTIN ON THE PERFORMATIVITY OF SPEECH ACTS

In their first breakthrough essay, the 1988 article entitled 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology' (significantly published in the *Theatre Journal*), Butler briefly mentions "John Searle's 'speech acts'," but doesn't explicitly engage with his work.<sup>10</sup> In later works, including *Bodies That Matter* (1993) and *Excitable Speech* (1997), however, Butler does discuss the work of Searle's close British collaborator J.L. Austin. It is nevertheless already clear from the account she develops in 1988 that the performativity of gender according to Butler must be understood along the lines of those linguistic expressions that Austin describes as "performative acts". He defines them first of all as "forms of authoritative speech," and illustrates: "most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power."<sup>11</sup> Austin sets out his theory of the performativity of speech acts most extensively in *How To Do Things With Words*.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.1. CONDITIONS FOR THE PERFORMATIVITY OF SPEECH ACTS

Central to the British philosopher's work is the desire to correct "the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely."<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Austin says, statements are often times not meant to purely convey information, they can also *do* something.

"Suppose, for example, that in the course of a marriage ceremony I say, as people will, 'I do' [...] Or again, suppose that I have the bottle of champagne in my hand and say 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth. Or suppose I say: 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow'. In all these cases it would be absurd to regard the thing that I say as a report of the performance of the action which is undoubtedly done the action of betting, or christening, or apologizing. We should say rather that, in saying what I do, I actually perform that action. [...] Now these kinds of utterance are the ones that we call performative utterances."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Routledge Classics (London/New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 171.

<sup>12</sup> J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>13</sup> Austin, 1.

<sup>14</sup> J. L. Austin, J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, eds., *Philosophical Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 222; Besides *How to Do Things with Words*, Butler also explicitly refers to *Philosophical Papers* when discussing Austin.

In other words, according to Austin, utterances can shape the world around us. Two separate individuals become one married couple, a lump of iron and steel becomes a vessel ready for introduction to the water, and in the case of a bet a few words create a relationship of obligation between people. As such, utterances must wield a certain level of power.

Yet, Austin discovers, they do not always do so. For example, when a passer-by smashes a bottle against a ship's hull, the ship is not christened and if I am already married, saying 'I do' will not instantiate a second bond of marriage. In such examples, the act which the utterance is meant to perform is not enacted and thus the speech act is "unhappy".<sup>15</sup> From this, Austin concludes that performativity is bound to certain conditions that determine whether the speech act is truly happy, i.e., properly performative. He has listed six factors which affect the happiness of a speech act.

First, there must be "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances".<sup>16</sup> In other words, without a commonly understood and valued tradition undergirding a particular speech act, the act itself lacks the cultural meaning and support for to exert any power. As such, the performativity of speech acts is conditional upon both the historical and relational context. Uttering the words of taking the other as one's spouse are only able to induce a new reality because the words are part of a ritual that goes back thousands of years and is still regularly performed today. Furthermore, the marriage is only able to hold and have an impact on daily life because the environment of the spouses acknowledges their union. Through legislation specifically aimed at wedded couples regarding taxation and laws of inheritance, the speech acts uttered in the marriage ceremony also establish a new socio-economic reality. Indeed, within the couple's social environment, the reality of marriage is continuously reinforced through subtle acknowledgements such as using 'missus' instead of 'miss' to address a married woman or asking, 'how is your wife/husband?' rather than 'how is your partner?'

The second condition is closely related to the first. Just as there is a particular conventional procedure (e.g., a particular phrase that must be uttered, placing one's hand on one's heart or on a bible) there may also be requirements concerning the status of the acting subject, or who may enact such a procedure. The christening of the ship is a good example: only a captain or some other official invested with the power to christen the ship is able to actually do so. When performed by a person without the sufficient authority, the speech act of christening is unsuccessful. Therefore, Austin concludes: "the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked."<sup>17</sup>

Third, Austin continues, "the procedure must be executed by all participants correctly".<sup>18</sup> Again, taking the christening of a ship as an example: if the bottle of champagne is thrown against the hull but bounces off it rather than being smashed to piece, the christening has not been performed. The same is true when the one residing over the christening mispronounces the intended name of the ship. The fourth condition expands on the third in that the procedure must not only be executed correctly, but also "completely".<sup>19</sup> This condition simply entails that all the necessary elements of the speech act are performed fully and not prematurely interrupted.

The fifth and the sixth conditions are somewhat different according to Austin. Whereas failure to fulfil the four conditions discussed so far would result in a "misfire", failing the last two conditions results in "abuses".<sup>20</sup> The difference between these failures is noticed in their performative power. A misfire results in the speech act being void. In this case the speech act is effectively not enacted at all. Austin adds an important caveat here: indeed, in a misfire the

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<sup>15</sup> Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Austin, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Austin, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Austin, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Austin, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Austin, 16.

intended effect is not achieved, however that does not mean there is no effect. As he illustrates, the performance of a marriage ceremony whilst already being married effectively performs bigamy. When it comes to abuses, “the performance is not void, although it is still unhappy”.<sup>21</sup> The conditions which may result in abuse when they are not met are as follows:

Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves and further must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.<sup>22</sup>

Without the proper intentions a marriage or a bet can still be enacted but they will inevitably be of a lesser quality and may in time still amount to the rendering void of the performance as in an annulment of marriage or the refusal of the bettor to come through on their pledge. The conditionality that speech acts are marked by will feature extensively in Butler’s use of performativity for gender, both in how gendered acts come to wield power and in how gender norms can be subverted. However, thus far we have only described the conditions for speech acts to be performative. It has not yet been explained how speech comes to do anything at all or what sorts of things they can do, or where the difference lies between performative speech acts and those which merely seek to make a truthful statement.

## 1.2. TYPES OF SPEECH ACTS

First, it may be beneficial to investigate what distinguishes a performative speech act from constative speech. To think this distinction Austin develops three forms of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Austin introduces the locutionary act as the combination of

“the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain ‘meaning’ in the favourite philosophical sense of that word, i.e. with a certain sense and with a certain reference.”<sup>23</sup>

In this definition, Austin merges three different levels of speech. The first, the utterance of certain noises, is the “phonetic act”. One acts merely by creating sounds which may or may not be coherent. For example, both the uttering of “I like apples” and of the meaningless “m jusr lioqpp” are phonetic acts. The second level is that of the phatic act. Here, sounds are uttered but in accordance with existing grammatical rules and vocabulary consensuses. “I like apples” for example adheres to proper grammatical form and vocabulary as developed within the English language tradition and thus is deemed a phatic act whereas “Apples tea pep” is not. However, the question of meaning is still dubious within a phatic act. Although I might say “I like apples”, do I also know what it means to like something and what apples are? The question of meaning is addressed in the “rhetic act”. Given that I understand what it is to like and what apples are, “I like apples” is also a rhetic act. A rhetic act, since it entails the meaningful employment of a language system, requires a phatic act and since it is a speech act also requires the production of sounds and thus is also a phonetic act. Human vocal communication then is predominately enacted through acts which are simultaneously rhetic, phatic and phonetic because such acts are understandable to others and carry a certain meaning. These basic forms of speech which combine all three forms of acts, such as “the table is round” and “I like apples”, are also called locutionary

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<sup>21</sup> Austin, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Austin, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Austin, 94.

acts. According to Austin, a locutionary act is what we in everyday life would simply describe as “saying something”.<sup>24</sup>

There seems to be nothing particularly exceptional about the locutionary act, but Austin portrays it as such intentionally. Austin regards the locutionary act as the lens through which philosophers before him have conceived of speech, i.e., as saying rather than doing, and now intends to show how there are two further, entirely different levels to speech.<sup>25</sup> The first additional level is that of the illocutionary act. Although we perform many locutionary acts, seldom are these acts without purpose. We may say something to warn someone, or to bid them to do something, to question something, or to assert it. As a consequence, Austin says, “to perform a locutionary act is in general, we may say, also and *eo ipso* to perform an *illocutionary* act, as I propose to call it”.<sup>26</sup> An illocutionary act is the exertion of a particular *force* through the locutionary act. It is the “performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something”.<sup>27</sup> Austin discerns five ways in which English verbs may apply some sort of force in using them: verdictives (e.g. “to ascertain”), exercitives (e.g. “to appoint”), commissives (e.g. “to promise”), behabitives (e.g. “to apologise”), and expositives (e.g. “to argue”).<sup>28</sup> As the third level of speech, Austin discusses perlocutionary acts. These acts centre around the effect of an act rather than the performance of one. It is about “*the achieving of certain effects by saying something*” (his emphases).<sup>29</sup> Expressions such as “He persuaded me to shoot her.” or “He annoyed me.” go beyond the illocution of the speaker because they illustrate that the illocution of “persuading” or “taunting” has achieved its effect.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.3. PERFORMATIVITY BEYOND LANGUAGE

Austin’s linguistic distinctions between phonetic, phatic, and rhetic acts, as well as between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, at first sight seems rather far removed from a contemporary debate on gendered acts as instigated by Judith Butler. However, in these linguistic distinctions we can already see some crucial ideas which will lend themselves to Butler’s reading of performativity in gender. Take for example the layered nature of speech acts. By making a distinction between the locutionary and the illocutionary layer, Austin is already implying that there is a significant gap between an act and its interpretation, meaning, or force. Although the meaning of speech is already established through grammar and vocabulary as described in phatic and rhetic acts and thereby appears objective, the force which the speech act exerts varies wildly and again shifts its meaning. If one were to apply this to gender for example, the speech act “he is a man” could be an act of recognition or even admiration when uttered in reference to an adolescent boy who has shown a strong sense of responsibility, courage, or initiative. That same sentence is at times used among women to express in a concise form that the person shows toxic masculine traits.

Austin’s analysis of the layers of speech acts has allowed him to answer the two questions raised earlier. Regarding how declarative speech differs from performative speech, he concluded that through illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, speech acts are shown to be “doing” something in addition to “saying” something. Herein lies the distinction between performative speech acts and constative speech. With regards to *what* speech may do, Austin showed speech to wield five forms of illocutionary forces as well as having further effects within the hearers of speech as in the case of perlocutionary acts. Despite these conclusions, Austin tempers the desire to clearly

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<sup>24</sup> Austin, 94.

<sup>25</sup> Austin, 100.

<sup>26</sup> Austin, 98.

<sup>27</sup> Austin, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Austin, 150.

<sup>29</sup> Austin, 120.

<sup>30</sup> Austin, 101–2.

delineate one sort of speech from another, realising that the distinctions he has made between phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts as well as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts remain abstractions. Firstly, it was believed that performative statements are characterised by their capacity for misfire or abuse. However, Austin discovers that declarative statements may just as well be less happy when uttered without the speaker believing in them. Additionally, declarations can also misfire through verbal slip-ups or when they refer to something which does not exist as exemplified in the statement: “The current king of France is bald.” Besides their capacity for misfire, the phrases we use as examples of declarations on paper in reality always have a particular context of utterance which determines the performative nature of the sentence more so than its linguistic contents. This can be observed in the phenomenon of declaratives so often gaining a certain illocutionary force in real life situations. For example, stating “the door is open” could mean beckoning for someone to come in or rather requesting for someone to shut the door. Austin thus concludes that: “Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act.”<sup>31</sup> Some key elements here will again return in Butler such as the often implicit nature and the pervasiveness of gendered acts in addition to the significance of context in determining the gendered value of the same physical act over various performances.

As an additional result of transposing his performative speech acts into everyday life, Austin discovers two more consequences of speech acts which are of interest to Butler and to us. First, Austin finds that any statement one makes, however descriptive rather than performative it may be, also has an impact with regards to one’s personality, for “if I have stated something, then that commits me to other statements: other statements made by me will be in order or out of order”.<sup>32</sup> Although Austin does not expand on this idea further, he seems to be implying that one’s (speech) acts together form a somewhat coherent whole perceived by others as one’s person or identity. This will resonate strongly with Butler’s intuition that people inscribe themselves into chains of gender performance and the policing of sticking to one chain. Finally, in response to the fixation with statements which are either true or false, Austin responds that:

“The truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words but on what act you were performing in what circumstances. (...) It is essential to realize that 'true' and 'false', like 'free' and 'unfree', do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions.”<sup>33</sup>

In Butler’s work, it will be shown that even in gendered acts which do not traditionally bear the philosophical burden of truth-telling as declarative statements do, the question of truth nevertheless pervades those acts. It is to Butler’s expansion on Austin we now turn.

## § 2. BUTLER ON THE PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER

Judith Butler’s central claim which made them rise to international fame and which forms a guiding principle through over 30 years of career, is that gender is performative. What do they mean by that? Its implications are twofold.

First and foremost, gender can be considered performative in a theatrical sense. Being a man or being a woman in life is similar to how an actor portrays a particular character in a play.

“The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as

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<sup>31</sup> Austin, 138.

<sup>32</sup> Austin, 138.

<sup>33</sup> Austin, 144.

a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.”<sup>34</sup>

Essentially, over time and through culture there has developed a concept of manhood and womanhood complete with conventions about how to act in various situations. For example, take the somewhat stereotypical notion that it is unladylike for a woman to burp whereas it is decidedly masculine, although boorish, for men to do so. This is a way in which the roles of “man” and “woman” are divided. For a woman to then burp means falling out of that role, not performing it properly. However, at the end of the day it remains only an act, a set of rules which we decide to play by. This is in contrast with the notion that gender is the expression of a biological essence. Let us take a look at another everyday example which shows just how detached gender can be from biology.

Imagine two babies, one dressed in pink and the other in blue. When strangers or family members approach them, they might say things like “What a sweet little girl!” to the baby in pink and “What a strong little boy!” to the baby in blue. However, there is no way of telling the sex of either baby. Rather, due to their clothing, the babies are in a sense performing a gender. It is only because we have a culturally constructed association between girls and the colour pink and boys and the colour blue that we instantly think of the baby dressed in pink as a girl and the baby dressed in blue as a boy. Furthermore, we have no way of knowing the “girl” is actually sweet and the “boy” is quite likely just as strong as the “girl”.

This example illustrates that there exists a set of societal conventions and expectations which are interwoven with the performance of certain acts, e.g. wearing coloured clothing. In addition, such acts make us make claims about the nature of the performer. However, it is not in the nature of the “girl” or the “boy” to *wear* pink or blue, nor to be sweet or strong, for they are, quite simply, babies. It is to capture this concept of gender performativity that Butler has adapted Austin’s theory of speech acts from language pragmatics to a theory of acts in general, and the performance of gender through those acts in particular. This adaptation is characterised by five elements.

## 2.1. BEYOND COMMUNICATIVE ACTS

First and foremost, Butler expands speech acts to non-verbal communication. Their reasoning is quite simple and is never developed in any great detail: “If one wonders how a linguistic theory of the speech act relates to bodily gestures, one need only consider that speech itself is a bodily act with specific linguistic consequences.”<sup>35</sup> For Butler we do not only speak using our vocal cords, but through our entire body. There are examples abound: sign language, beckoning, bowing, and nodding as a form of greeting, winking, or brushing someone’s arm when flirting, shrugging to convey ignorance or indifference, and many more.

However, performativity is not even limited to communication. Even acts which have no explicit or primary communicative purpose such wearing certain clothes, going to the gym, or taking care of children nevertheless perform gender. Because Austin worked within a paradigm primarily concerned with meaning-making of semantics and syntax, his take on performativity did not consider that every physical act in some way or another either communicates something or at least exerts a certain force. When wearing my particular clothes, going to the gym, or taking care of children, I am at the very least communicating that it is okay for me to do so and thereby exerting a verdictive illocutionary act.

If we take Butler’s claim that performativity is not unique to speech but is present within all actions seriously, then the logical conclusion is that performativity is inescapable. Every action can in theory perform something and in practice it appears that nearly all actions in fact do perform

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<sup>34</sup> Butler, “Performative Acts”, 526.

<sup>35</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxvii.

something—notably gender. Despite the performative nature of gender and its reliance upon the continual reiteration of it, Butler however believes gender will not evaporate when one consciously rejects gender. Even in acting as to avoid performing gender, one is still performing gender all be it a different kind of it. The rise of a non-binary gender may serve as an apt example. Out of a certain malaise with existing male and female gender structures, some people have performed a gender which does not unambiguously resonate with a male or female gender. However, rather than escaping genders labels, they have performed a new variety of gender termed “non-binary”. By expanding Austin’s speech acts to all human acts, Butler has cemented the pervasive nature of gender.

## 2.2. THE META-LEVEL OF IDENTITY

Second, gender is added as an additional layer of performance. Butler has expanded Austin’s speech acts to include corporeal acts and, in this way, has opened the way to think of gender as performative. She writes:

“The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one’s body.”<sup>36</sup>

Gender, here described as the meaning ascribed to corporeal materiality is itself perpetuated through *doing* certain things with one’s body, that is, to *perform* it. Butler does not go into detail about which particular acts produce what sort of gender and how they do so. However, from their expansion of speech acts to corporeal acts and consecutively claiming that one continually does one’s body it can be deduced that in fact every corporeal action is in some way performing gender. However, when one attempts to read gender as performative, it seems that gender does not nicely fit Austin’s scheme. Gender cannot properly be deemed an illocutionary act as ‘gendering’ is not one of the five illocutionary categories presented by Austin. Gender is not established by saying: “I gender you.” Nor is gender merely a perlocutionary act as it is not only a consequence on the side of the hearer of gendered speech. Rather, it seems that it is in the performance of illocutionary acts such as exercitives and behabitives that an additional layer of gender is effected.

It is in pronouncing judgments about societal matters and in expressing attitudes and feelings that gender is strongly performed. As such, a hypothetical category of ‘genderitives’ cannot reside on the same level as other illocutionary forces, rather it appears as an entirely different layer which is established through the performance of those illocutions. Consequently, Butler’s understanding of the performativity of gender shows that there is a meta-level of performativity. There is a set of meta-realities which we perform precisely trough the performance of Austin’s categories of illocution. Butler has shown gender to be one of those realities but perhaps any sort of identitarian formation should be included here.

## 2.3. SUBVERSION

Third, Butler deepens the understanding of the conditions for performativity and their influence on it. Although Austin clearly delineates six conditions which influence the performative capacity of a speech act, he does not investigate where these conditions originate and what consequences that may have for our understanding of performativity. Butler is specifically interested in the first of Austin’s conditions: “There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain

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<sup>36</sup> Butler, “Performative Acts”, 521.



conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances”<sup>37</sup>

After all, Austin’s latter five requirements all build upon the first. The conventional procedure linked to a performance will also determine what circumstances are suitable, what a correct and complete execution of the procedure is, and what constitutes the appropriate feelings, thoughts, intentions, and what composure is supposed to accompany it. If gender, as it is performative, is reliant upon “an accepted conventional procedure”, then a thorough investigation into those conventions, their origins and their meaning is required. Thinking back upon the example of the babies, how and why is it that we read something as banal as the colour pink as “for girls” and blue as “for boys”? Why do we regularly call girls sweet but use the term more sparingly for boys? Can boys not be sweet? Can girls not be strong? As is obvious from attributing these gender characteristics to infants, gender seems to be quickly linked to biology. And yet, from what we can gather in everyday experience, there are plenty of women who wear blue, men who wear pink, women who are strong and men who are sweet.

Consequently, Butler criticises the naïve assumption that conventions for the performance of gender are rooted in biological differences. Based on Simone de Beauvoir’s assessment that one *becomes* a woman rather than being *born* one, Butler asserts that there is no by nature instilled male or female essence which one merely expresses.<sup>38</sup> In their own words: “Because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all.”<sup>39</sup>

As gender is not rooted in some essence but rather in the performance of acts that are enabled through conventions, this raises the question: where *do* those conventions originate? Butler answers:

“‘Sex’ is always produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms. This productive reiteration can be read as a kind of performativity. Discursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make. Paradoxically, however, this productive capacity of discourse is derivative, a form of cultural iterability or rearticulation, a practice of resignification, not creation *ex nihilo*. Generally speaking, a performative functions to produce that which it declares. As a discursive practice (performative ‘acts’ must be repeated to become efficacious), performatives constitute a locus of discursive production. No ‘act’ apart from a regularized and sanctioned practice can wield the power to produce that which it declares.”<sup>40</sup>

Essentially, Butler believes that the conventions required for the enactment of performative force are not the expression of ontological sexed essences, but that instead it is rather the reiteration of an act through time which adorns these conventions with a “naturalized effect”.<sup>41</sup> That naturalised effect in turn grants those conventions authority and stability. However, “it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labour of that norm.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, it is precisely because the authority of conventions for performance rests on the iterability of those conventions, that they are perpetually at risk. As soon as conventions cease to be reiterated, they start losing their performance-enabling ability. Alternatively, conventions may also be reiterated with a higher degree of discontinuity with previous iterations and thereby significantly alter the convention.

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<sup>37</sup> Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Butler, “Performative Acts”, 519.

<sup>39</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 190.

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, xix.

<sup>42</sup> Butler, xix.

This process of changing the conventions underlying certain performances Butler calls “subversion”.<sup>43</sup>

#### 2.4. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Fourth, Butler addresses the ethics of performativity. Gender, as it is performed, relies upon prior conventions and their reiteration for its continued existence. Earlier, we saw that all acts, not just speech, are potentially performative. If all acts may be performative and performativity relies upon conventions, then the conventions codetermine which acts we may engage. Through the conventions of performativity certain acts are closed off from, or made available to, people depending upon their gender. For example, conventionally, men cannot attend a formal party in a dress and women may be barred from speaking their mind. Of course, “cannot” is not meant in a strict fashion. A man in a dress will most likely not be bounced from a ball, but rather be met with an abundance of weird looks; nor will a woman’s mouth be forcefully closed in a business meeting, but she may instead receive a negative evaluation. Still, there are invisible forces exerted in both examples that may steer our behaviour. As such, conditions for performativity both restrict and grant us freedom as human persons.

The conditions for performativity as Austin described them then are not merely neutral or amoral traditions, in the enabling and restricting of enacting one’s personal freedom they are ethical by nature. The ethical character of gender is amplified by Butler’s dissection of the origin of the conventions which enable the performance of gender. Butler is criticising the belief that those conventions are rooted in a biological essence. Men should not wear dresses because men by their nature are rugged, sturdy, not elegant. Women should not speak their mind because they are by their nature submissive, supportive, and peace-loving. However, when the biological essence underpinning gender conventions is disproved, those conventions are exposed to be human-made and therefore all the more morally qualifiable.

If one takes seriously Butler’s analysis that gendered conventions are the result of a process of naturalisation through reiteration, then the management of those conventions suddenly shifts from a relation of submission to a shaping relationship. Instead of accepting gender as something which lies outside of our control because it is determined by nature, we can relate to gender as something which we can actively shape. However, this is a complex relationship since we are in a position to shape gender and are simultaneously ourselves shaped by gender. For instance, simply by being a body and controlling it in an intentional way, we are embodying some possibilities of embodiment. These possibilities are always “both conditioned and circumscribed by historical conventions”.<sup>44</sup> Since our performance of gender is restricted by the gender norms which precede us, our style is “never fully self-styled, for living styles have a history, and that history conditions and limits possibilities.”<sup>45</sup> Even from a point of radical self-consciousness then, our history determines the ways in which we may choose to embody ourselves. And yet, from within that historical context it becomes possible to consciously shift gender in some way. Moreover, every embodied act automatically does so. Any act performed by an individual inherently becomes political as it forms the latest contribution to the long chain of historically sedimented possibilities of embodiment called gender. Butler explains it succinctly: “Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of doing one’s gender, but that one does it, and that one does it in accord with certain sanctions and proscriptions, is clearly not a fully individual matter.”<sup>46</sup>

Every act we perform, be it consciously or not, further shapes, i.e., reinforces or subverts, gender norms which affect the freedom of ourselves and others. An act for Butler then is always both individual and communal. This will prove drastically similar to Wojtyła’s understanding of

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<sup>43</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 107.

<sup>44</sup> Butler, “Performative Acts”, 521.

<sup>45</sup> Butler, 521.

<sup>46</sup> Butler, 525.

the act in the following chapter. By showing performativity to have real consequences, as is the case in the construction of gender, and by reiterating that performances require human-made and upheld conventions, Butler introduces ethics into the performativity of gender. Important for our investigation now into performativity and later in Wojtyła into personhood is that indeed there appear to be some aspects of personality which are performative in nature and therefore inherently morally relevant. Because of this, that which is performative, such as gender, warrants treatment with the utmost awareness rather than being treated as a natural law.

## 2.5. GENDER IMPLIES CONTINUITY

Fifth, not only are our statements in or out of order with our previous statements, they are also in or out of order with our person. Earlier it was briefly touched upon that Austin had an understanding that every performative speech act is inherently part of a chain of speech acts and therefore is continuous or discontinuous with the rest of the chain. For example, offering someone flowers and subsequently telling them you hate them would result in discontinuity and render both acts less happy. Butler expands on Austin's intuition and illustrates how people's identities are wound up with this chain of acts both externally and internally. Externally, acting according to conventions of a certain gender performs that gender and thus creates an expectation that further acts will continue to perform the same gender. Internally, gender is "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, *including the actors themselves*, come to believe, and to perform in the mode of belief."<sup>47</sup> One's (gender) identity is thus at least partially established performatively through acting. "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means."<sup>48</sup> As "fabrications", gendered acts may be seen as an illusion and thus not as "real" identity. However, Butler disputes this. Even though gender is a construct and therefore has no natural basis, they claim that "constructs are [...] 'real' to the extent that they are fictive phenomena that gain power within discourse."<sup>49</sup> Gender, as something which impacts our self-understanding and our actions thus nevertheless is a reality although not being rooted in a material reality. This means that not only the force of speech acts but also the identity construction of a person is facilitated by performativity. It is the assumed continuity of the person over the course of various performing acts that undergirds the point made earlier that performances also function on a meta-level by creating identities.

## 2.6. GENDER AS TRUTH

Finally, the obsession with truth works through into gender performance. When Austin presented his theory of speech acts, he explicitly mentioned the folly of his contemporaries of regarding every sentence of speech as a true or false statement. Performative language after all, besides at times having a literal true or false nature, was not primarily concerned with determining truth but with "doing something". However, Butler's foray into gender performativity illustrates that in the performance of gender the question of truth again takes centre stage despite its performative nature. Butler gives an example:

"The sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence. [...] In the theatre, one can say, 'this is just an act,' and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. [...] on the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts", 520.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 185.

<sup>49</sup> Butler, 162.

<sup>50</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts", 527.

Performativity then cannot be totally decoupled from truth-speaking. Every act remains, without the context indicating otherwise, a performance of implicit statements of truth about oneself.

The exploration of J.L. Austin's performative speech and Butler's transposition thereof to performative gender now comes to a close. We have developed the insights necessary to be able to compare Butler's concept of performativity to other readings of the interplay between gender and human action. However, the second pole of the comparison, Wojtyła's *Person and Act*, remains unexplored. It is to this book that the next chapter shift its focus.

## CHAPTER II. BRIDGING PERFORMANCE AND ACT: BUTLER AND WOJTYŁA

In 1954, twenty four years before his election to the papacy, Karol Wojtyła became a professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin.<sup>51</sup> Inspired by his Thomistic education as a priest, his scholarship on Max Scheler, along with the general impact of Roman Ingarden on Polish academia at the time, Wojtyła developed a philosophical style that combined Thomistic metaphysics with phenomenology.<sup>52</sup> The crowning jewel of this philosophical work is *Person and Act*, which seeks to arrive at the metaphysics of personhood through a phenomenological analysis of the act. The core method consists of starting from the experience of the act and seeing where it leads to. As Acosta and Reimers put it: “It is the lived experience itself that brings me to understand what there is in me and who I am.”<sup>53</sup> It leads Wojtyła to the constatation that the acting “I” is “fulfilled” as a person in the act. In other words, the person gains some degree of being through an act. Must this not constitute some agreement with Butler that gender, as part of the person, is not expressed but rather performed in the act? In order to answer this question, in this chapter several of Wojtyła’s concepts will first have to be fleshed out. Later on, the comparison between Butler’s performativity and Wojtyła’s act can be made in earnest, showing a profound similarity. This will give rise to new questions concerning the relationship between Wojtyła’s personalist framework and John Paul II’s complementarian anthropology, which I will touch on in the final chapter.

### § 1. PERSON AND ACT ACCORDING TO WOJTYŁA

What does Wojtyła mean when he says that “the act constitutes a particular moment of revealing the person”?<sup>54</sup> What is an ‘act’ or ‘the person’ and how do they relate to each other? Before reaching the crux of the relationship between performing an act and the revelation of a person, several other terms are presented, all of them somehow relating to each other. To properly grasp the person and their act, first one must understand consciousness, efficacy, freedom, nature, body, fulfilment, truth, and the relational aspect of the act. Perhaps it is best, before delving into the particulars of the act and the ways in which it reveals the person, to give a brief overview of what Wojtyła’s goal, that is the person, is.

#### 1.1 THE PERSON

Wojtyła starts his search for the person from Boethius’ definition of the person: “*homo est animal rationale or persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia* (his emphases)”.<sup>55</sup> However, does not deem this definition satisfactory, for

“neither the concept of (rational) nature nor its individualization seems to render the specific fullness that corresponds to the concept of the person. This fullness is not merely concreteness, but rather uniqueness and unrepeatability.”<sup>56</sup>

The concept “person” for him “considers not only the exceptionality of the human species but the exceptionality of ‘each’ human being with his individual characteristics and his unique interior

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<sup>51</sup> Miguel Acosta and Adrian J. Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła’s Personalist Philosophy. Understanding Person & Act* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Acosta and Reimers, 20.

<sup>53</sup> Acosta and Reimers, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Wojtyła, ‘*Person and Act*’, 104.

<sup>55</sup> Wojtyła, 176.

<sup>56</sup> Wojtyła, 176.

world.”<sup>57</sup> This is the person of which Wojtyła is searching the characteristics through a series of phenomenological reductions and metaphysical constructions. Further elements of the person, such as consciousness, efficacy, freedom, nature, body, fulfilment, truth, and the relational aspect of the act, are progressively unveiled throughout *Person and Act*. We now turn to Wojtyła’s further unravelling of these concepts through the act.

## 1.2. CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is the first key characteristic of what Wojtyła understands as ‘act’ or ‘action’: “What we call act [czyn] is exclusively man’s conscious action. No other action deserves this name.”<sup>58</sup> Thereby Wojtyła firmly roots the act exclusively within the human realm. Animals might do things, but they do not ‘act’ because they lack self-consciousness. Furthermore, Wojtyła also narrows the definition of an act down to a subset of all human activity. For example, moving your body in your sleep, acting out of reflex such as when a doctor strikes your knee or things we do unthinkingly such as biting our nails or fidgeting would not constitute a proper act. Being conscious of something, properly experiencing it, however, does not by itself make for an action. An action implies oneself instigating something or as Wojtyła says: “man *experiences his action as something utterly different from anything that ‘happens’ in him.*”<sup>59</sup> I may be conscious of my heartbeat for example, however I have little control over it and it is more so something that I experience as happening to me rather than something done by me. Still, even when “something happens in man”<sup>60</sup> rather than “man acts”, this gives rise to a certain self-consciousness. In undergoing something I still experience myself as the one undergoing it, thereby engaging in self-consciousness which is properly human. However, such a happening does not “reveal” or develop the person for it “occurred without the efficacious contribution of my ‘I.’”<sup>61</sup>

However, being conscious of my action, I also experience myself as the cause of my action. Therefore, the analysis of conscious action leads into the concept of efficacy:

“The first form of man’s dynamism is the one in which he himself appears as the agent, that is, as the cause conscious of his causation—and this form we describe by the statement ‘man acts.’ The second form of man’s dynamism is the one in which man is not conscious of his efficacy, in which he does not experience it—and this form we describe by the statement ‘something happens in man.’”<sup>62</sup>

Efficacy then is precisely the experience of being the cause of one’s actions and serves as the defining characteristic to differentiate between acting and something happening in man. Because one experiences oneself as the one acting through it, efficacy also provides one with a feeling of responsibility for their actions. Responsibility simultaneously implies morality<sup>63</sup>: “The fruit of this causation, the homogeneous *effect of the efficacy of the personal ‘I,’ is morality.*”<sup>64</sup> However, this is not a fleeting sort of morality as if Wojtyła was regarding merely one instance of efficacy and the corresponding responsibility. Rather, since he is engaging with the fundamental efficacious structure of the person, he also pays attention to the long-term consequences of this

<sup>57</sup> Acosta and Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła’s Personalist Philosophy*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 121.

<sup>59</sup> Wojtyła, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Wojtyła employs “man” in a general sense as meaning “mankind”. The 2021 translation has kept this element of gendered language because of their goal to the original terms used by Wojtyła in Polish.

<sup>61</sup> Wojtyła, 168.

<sup>62</sup> Wojtyła, 168–69.

<sup>63</sup> Of course, the statement that efficacy leads to morality can only be true if one assumes actions to have a moral character. Wojtyła does indeed assume this but as *Person and Act* is specifically intended to not be an ethical analysis of the person, he does not render explicit which acts are of a moral nature and in what way.

<sup>64</sup> Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 202.

morality. Those consequences are that “through his acts, through conscious action, man becomes good or evil.”<sup>65</sup> The person’s becoming is however not restricted to the moral sense. Taken more broadly, “Man becomes ‘somebody’ and ‘of some sort’ [...] through his acts, through conscious action.”<sup>66</sup> The act thus seems to form the person both qua ethical character but also as a particular individual with a particular identity. The “becoming” or “fieri” of the person will be expanded upon when discussing the concept of “fulfilment”.

### 1.3. FREEDOM AND DISINTEGRATION

Third, in order to speak of a personal act, the act must be performed in freedom. For Wojtyła, “freedom is most properly made manifest to every man in the lived experience that can be summarized as ‘I can but do not have to.’”<sup>67</sup> renders freedom quite simple, it is the ability to do something and yet choose not to. However, as with many of Wojtyła’s concepts it is more complex. First and foremost, the reason that the person can be free is because they have a will, without a will they wouldn’t be able to choose anything in the first place. Secondly, there are plenty of factors which may impede freedom. Wojtyła mentions “totalism”<sup>68</sup>, as in the case where a community or a regime forces you to act against your own will. This external inhibition of freedom is obvious but there are also internal inhibitors such as addiction or a general lack of self-control which Wojtyła refers to as causes of the “disintegration of the person”.<sup>69</sup> This disintegration is a very broad concept for it includes “that which is manifested in the structures of self-possession and self-governance—the structure proper to the person—as a lack or deficiency of this structure.”<sup>70</sup> Essentially, it includes everything which may hinder the person in their proper internal functioning. As we will see later, gender runs the risk of becoming a factor of disintegration.

### 1.4. NATURE

Fourth, person and act stand in a particular relationship with nature. However, this is a complex one. On the one hand, it lies within the nature of humanity to be a person and to act. However, at the same time, humanity qua animal has certain instincts and biological processes which may cause the person to act in a particular way. This difference is understood by Wojtyła through the distinction between nature in a “metaphysical”<sup>71</sup> and a “phenomenological”<sup>72</sup> sense. Nature in a metaphysical sense denotes everything which lies within the person’s possibilities due to the fact of being born or as Wojtyła puts it: “‘nature’ literally signifies all that is to be born or that is contained in the very fact of birth as its possible consequence.”<sup>73</sup> As such it includes the ability to perform acts, to be conscious... However, it also includes everything that one can possibly do. For example, taking on a non-binary gender, as we can experientially confirm that people have done so, is also part of the metaphysical human nature. Phenomenological nature on the other hand is a subset of nature in the metaphysical sense and denotes that which we are in a sense determined by, such as our biology. Metaphysical nature, as it is such a broad term, serves little use. However, phenomenological nature is important to discuss in relation to acts and that which happens in us. Indeed, “the causation of nature [...] differs from the causation of the person”<sup>74</sup> as

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<sup>65</sup> Wojtyła, 202.

<sup>66</sup> Wojtyła, 202.

<sup>67</sup> Wojtyła, 203.

<sup>68</sup> Wojtyła, 389.

<sup>69</sup> Wojtyła, 300.

<sup>70</sup> Wojtyła, 300.

<sup>71</sup> Wojtyła, 181.

<sup>72</sup> Wojtyła, 180.

<sup>73</sup> Wojtyła, 178.

<sup>74</sup> Wojtyła, 193.

actions caused by our nature such as coughing, sleeping, or using the toilet often do not respect human freedom and efficacy and thus are not properly acts: “There is no action, there are no acts, on the level of nature alone, for there are only, strictly speaking, ‘actuations’”.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, Wojtyła recognises humanity’s rational nature but the person, as per definition individual and unrepeatable, employs its rational nature in a unique way and thus cannot be reduced to its rationality alone: “The very statement that man possesses a rational nature [...] does not yet determine how we will grasp and interpret the person’s participation in the act: the way in which he himself performs it and, at the same time, fulfils himself in and through it.”<sup>76</sup> In summary, since “Nature is made manifest exclusively in actuations of the subject ‘man,’ whereas acts reveal this man as a person”,<sup>77</sup> the personal act then resides on a different, higher level than that of nature.

### 1.5. THE BODY

Fifth, the body takes up a crucial role within the dynamic of person and act as the enabler of both. Wojtyła says: “As everyone understands, the human body in its visible dynamic is the terrain and, in a sense, even the means of expression for the person.”<sup>78</sup> By stressing that “everyone understands”, Wojtyła is indicating the somewhat automatic recognition of bodies as person. When I see someone walking, I do not wonder whether it is an animated husk, rather I know that it houses a person. The same reasoning applies in the opposite direction. I have never seen a person without a human body, I know by looking at the body of my dog that there is not a person behind the body. Just as there can be no person without a body, there can be no act without a body. This is true both for external acts, i.e., acts in which one uses one’s limbs, as for internal acts, e.g., resolving to do something, praying for someone, ... Despite the importance of the body for person and act, the body is by its association with things which “happen in the person” such as sensations, instinct, and emotions, at times quickly separated from the “higher realm” of cognition which personhood is so often characterised by.<sup>79</sup>

However, Wojtyła places extraordinary value on the body even and especially when it comes to its role within the development of the person.<sup>80</sup> Instincts to procreate and self-preserve are rather interpreted as drives which do “not seem to govern the person absolutely”<sup>81</sup> but propel them towards the worthwhile goals of life and “to be with another person on account of a deep likeness”.<sup>82</sup> Sensitivity, or “the ability to spontaneously feel values”<sup>83</sup>, is presented as a “a great endowment and richness of human nature”<sup>84</sup> which lies at the roots of lived experience: “*Only on the basis of such a lived-experience can authentic decision and choice be shaped.*”<sup>85</sup> Finally, emotions, in the form of passions, are on the one hand associated with a loss of mental control and thus regarded as an enemy of authentic personhood.<sup>86</sup> However, Wojtyła deems such cases the exception and rather characterises emotion as something which “confers a particular vividness on efficacy and, with efficacy, on the entire personal structure of self-governance and self-possession.”<sup>87</sup> In conclusion, “The body in the most common sense of the word is thus the terrain

<sup>75</sup> Wojtyła, 218.

<sup>76</sup> Wojtyła, 213–14.

<sup>77</sup> Wojtyła, 180.

<sup>78</sup> Wojtyła, 312.

<sup>79</sup> Wojtyła, 313.

<sup>80</sup> Wojtyła, 344 and 351.

<sup>81</sup> Wojtyła, 327.

<sup>82</sup> Wojtyła, 327.

<sup>83</sup> Wojtyła, 345.

<sup>84</sup> Wojtyła, 345.

<sup>85</sup> Wojtyła, 344.

<sup>86</sup> Wojtyła, 357–58.

<sup>87</sup> Wojtyła, 358.



and, in a sense, the means of performing the act—and, with this, the means of the person’s fulfilling himself in and through the act.”<sup>88</sup>

## 1.6. FULFILMENT

“‘To fulfil’ means ‘to make full,’ or ‘to bring to fullness.’” Therefore, fulfilling seems to correspond most properly to the term *actus*, which particularly indicates the fullness corresponding to a given potency or potentiality.”<sup>89</sup>

Fulfilment has now already appeared in the elucidation of two of the previous concepts. This illustrates the centrality of the concept within Wojtyła’s view on the relationship between person and act. As such, it will also constitute the most meaningful link with Butler’s performativity. But what is fulfilment exactly? The above quote already provides a preliminary definition and shows that Wojtyła’s understanding of fulfilment can be regarded as an interplay of *potentia* and *actus*. Thereby Wojtyła relates act to being. As he explains, the human act “stems from the entire conception of being, and directly from the conception of *potentia-actus*, by means of which the Aristotelians and Thomists explain the changeable and dynamic character of being.”<sup>90</sup> The fulfilment of the person is wound up with a metaphysical understanding of being. The being and fulfilment, or ‘becoming’, of the person are somewhat synonymous for they both constitute a shift in being of which one does so in an absolute and the other in a relative sense. “For ‘to become’ is the same as ‘to begin to exist.’ The first dynamization through existence, by ‘esse’, is simultaneously the first ‘fieri’ of the human being, his coming into existence.”<sup>91</sup> Any further dynamization through “operari” or acts is

“a becoming—not in the absolute sense, for such belongs only to the fieri-becoming out of nothing, but in the relative sense, namely, that of the fieri relying on a being that already exists, the fieri within a being’s own internal structure.”<sup>92</sup>

Nonetheless, with every such dynamization, something new begins to exist in the already existing subject ‘man.’<sup>93</sup> In summary, human being is made of *potentia* and *actus* whereby every *actus* (the personal act) enacts something which up until the enactment only existed in *potentia*. Every such enactment means the ‘filling’ of a particular *potentia* and thereby the bringing into existence of a new way of being. It is important to note that this fulfilment of *potentia* in the act ought not to be read consecutively but simultaneously. “For the one always contains correlated content without the grasp of which the other remains unintelligible, and vice versa. Thus, *actus* cannot be understood without *potentia*, nor *potentia* without *actus*.”<sup>94</sup> To act then means to fulfil the person, that is to bring the person into a fuller being. This fulfilment has thus far also been called “becoming” and “fieri”. Especially Wojtyła’s use of “fieri” is fascinating for it translates from Latin to “being made”, emphasising that fulfilment does not subsist in a sort of self-developing enactment of some potential but rather that the act itself shapes the person. This is an internal effect of the act upon the person, which run in addition to every act of course also having an external effect. For example, when offering alms to the poor there occurs a shift in being of the person to a more charitable person and there occurs a change of possession of goods. Wojtyła calls the former the “intransitive” and the latter the “transitive” effect of the act. This distinction

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<sup>88</sup> Wojtyła, 313.

<sup>89</sup> Wojtyła, 252.

<sup>90</sup> Wojtyła, 121.

<sup>91</sup> Wojtyła, 199.

<sup>92</sup> Wojtyła, 166.

<sup>93</sup> Wojtyła, 199–200.

<sup>94</sup> Wojtyła, 165.

will prove instrumental in the comparison with the elements of performative speech later in this chapter.

There is one important caveat to be made with regards to acts fulfilling the human person. According to Wojtyła, “moral evil determines non-fulfilment, even though the person is still performing an act.”<sup>95</sup> This may seem strange for if one is performing an evil act, surely one is still fulfilling *potentia* albeit in a bad way. However, Wojtyła considers this non-fulfilment because he regards “all evil—including moral evil—as a lack”<sup>96</sup>. As a consequence, to do evil cannot result in the creation of being and thus cannot mean fulfilment. Despite evil acts constituting non-fulfilment, they still do constitute fulfilment in an ontological sense. The distinction between moral and evil acts is already a further division of the axiological fulfilment of the person: “As we said, the man-person fulfils himself in both the ontological and the axiological, that is, the ethical, senses. In the latter case, fulfilment occurs through moral good and non-fulfilment through moral evil.”<sup>97</sup> The ontological sense corresponds to the person as a being in all its complexity whereas by the axiological sense Wojtyła refers purely to the moral character of the person. Through evil acts the person still fulfils themselves *qua* individual, unrepeatable person since the act forms the latest in a chain of activation of the person’s will. At the same time, the person’s moral character remains non-fulfilled, undeveloped.

The distinction between the moral character of the person and their ontology also returns in Wojtyła’s valorisation of the act. According to him, the act has both a personalistic or personal value and a moral value. The personalistic value he describes as follows: “The personalistic value inheres in the very performance of the act by the person, in the very fact that ‘man acts’ in the way proper to him—that is, that this action is characterized by authentic self-determination, that the transcendence of the person is realized in it.”<sup>98</sup> Fulfilment then seems valuable to Wojtyła by itself, regardless of the moral character of the act. Merely exercising our personhood and acting in accordance with ourselves is valuable. Despite Wojtyła’s earlier insistence on the importance of the morally good nature of the act, Wojtyła recognises a separate personalistic value which “*fundamentally differs from moral values* *stricto sensu, that is, the values of the performed act that result from relation to the norm.* (his emphases)”<sup>99</sup> What is more, the “‘personalistic’ value of the act precedes and conditions all moral values.”<sup>100</sup> After all, Wojtyła says, you cannot quantify any act morally if it is not first and foremost an authentic personal act. If it were no personal act, then there would be no responsibility and thus no morality involved. The conclusion that personal fulfilment is valuable in itself regardless of the act’s moral value again adds to the tension between “truth” and personal development and will play a significant role in the discussion on the performativity of gender.

### 1.7. TRUTH

“For freedom is not realized through the subordination of truth to oneself, but through the subordination of oneself to truth. The dependence on truth defines the boundaries of the human autonomy proper to the person.”

The concept of truth returns at numerous points of Wojtyła’s discussion of person and act. It emerges in his analysis of the will, human sensitivity, and the fulfilment of the person. As evident from the quote above, Wojtyła prioritises truth over human autonomy. His concern is obvious, without objective truth there arises the danger of “subjectivism” which “would consist in

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<sup>95</sup> Wojtyła, 255.

<sup>96</sup> Wojtyła, 255.

<sup>97</sup> Wojtyła, 262.

<sup>98</sup> Wojtyła, 380.

<sup>99</sup> Wojtyła, 381.

<sup>100</sup> Wojtyła, 381.

completely separating lived experience from act and in reducing moral values [...] to the very contents of consciousness.”<sup>101</sup> Therefore Wojtyła regards truth in a classical sense, as our understanding of something corresponding to reality.<sup>102</sup> Truth thus understood determines freedom. Freedom is characterised the ability to say “I can but do not have to” as mentioned earlier. However, that would leave one free to perform all sorts of morally suspect acts. Furthermore, humans often do exercise their freedom in such a way: “Man often wills what is not a true good, and such a good he often chooses.”<sup>103</sup> After all, many acts present themselves as good to the person, e.g. eating a lot of candy, but they are not always good in reality. The dependence of freedom upon truth thus “*makes the will independent from objects and their presentation while giving the person superiority over his own dynamism*” (his emphases).<sup>104</sup> Freedom means a freedom from the deception of acts regarding their moral value. When freedom is dependent upon truth, truth allows us to see through all sorts of (self-)deception and therefore in fact makes us more free than without this dependence.

The same reasoning is applied by Wojtyła to sensations. Through our feelings and emotions, we get into contact with value. For example, standing in awe before a mountain brings us into contact with the value of beauty. However, our feelings may also deceive us as when we confuse lust for love and “At times it [truth] even requires action against provisional feelings.”<sup>105</sup> Therefore, Wojtyła repeats, our sensations must equally stand in a constant with truth. The reliance of freedom and sensations upon truth also has consequences for the fulfilment of the person. Since fulfilment requires the personal act, which in turn requires freedom, which itself relies on truth; fulfilment without truth is impossible: “This action, or act, as the realization of freedom is either in conformity with conscience, that is, with truth in the normative sense, or lacks this conformity with truth. In the former case, man as a person fulfils himself, whereas in the latter case he does not.”<sup>106</sup> Here conscience is regarded as the person’s faculty for truth.

In a sense, reliance upon conscience offers Wojtyła’s line of thought a certain flexibility. It facilitates the important role truth plays within the person without imposing a particular view on truth. However, Wojtyła grounds conscience in an objective order of morality: “Conscience is not the legislator; it does not create norms by itself. Rather, it finds them in a sense ready-made in the objective order of morality or law.”<sup>107</sup> He thereby again subverts the flexibility of conscience and opens his thought up to postmodern criticisms. Although Wojtyła’s intuition to incorporate truth in his analysis of the person is understandable, for it is clear that acting out of delusion should not be accredited the same value as one in correspondence with truth, it remains quite odd to see Wojtyła emphasise on the one hand the unicity of the person and simultaneously rely upon an external, objective order of morality. There is a case to be made that if the person is truly unique, then the person themselves in most cases has the most accurate knowledge of oneself as they have knowledge of their own interiority. If that is the case, from an understanding of truth as correspondence between an object and one’s understanding of this object, the best guarantor about the truth of their person is the person themselves.

## 1.8. PARTICIPATION

“Acts are performed by people ‘together with other’ people. The expression ‘together with others’ is neither precise nor sufficient. However, it seems at this point to be most proper with respect to the various relations of a communal or social character in which human acts

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<sup>101</sup> Wojtyła, 158.

<sup>102</sup> Acosta Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła’s Personalist Philosophy*, 67.

<sup>103</sup> Wojtyła ‘*Person and Act*’, 242.

<sup>104</sup> Wojtyła, 241.

<sup>105</sup> Wojtyła, 345.

<sup>106</sup> Wojtyła, 279.

<sup>107</sup> Wojtyła, 267.

most often take place. This is a simple and natural consequence of the fact that man exists ‘together with others.’ The feature of community—the social feature—is impressed upon human existence itself.”<sup>108</sup>

Wojtyła is sensitive to the fact that a person does not act in a vacuum but that acts are always “performed in various inter-personal and social relations.”<sup>109</sup> As a consequence, our acts have an influence *on* others, and we are influenced *by* others. This influence can endanger the act for it may impede our freedom in several ways. “Objective totalism [...] fully subordinates the individual and his good to the community and society.”<sup>110</sup> “Crowd psychology”<sup>111</sup> can inhibit our action as in the case of the bystander effect. “Conformism”, although it shows a certain solidarity with the community, contains a “submission, a specific variation of the *pacti* in which the man-person is only a subject of ‘happening’ and not an agent of his own attitude and his own commitment in the community.”<sup>112</sup> Lastly, “avoidance”<sup>113</sup> constitutes a withdrawal from community. Although there may be good reasons as to why one is avoidant, the proper thing to do according to Wojtyła is instead to still participate within the community through opposition. Opposition does not mean that one wishes to break from one’s community but quite on the contrary means that they precisely “seek their own place in this community—thus, they seek participation and an understanding of the common good by which they can better, more fully, and more effectively participate in the community.”<sup>114</sup> As such, opposition is a proper way of fulfilling the person.

Aside from the social relations impeding the person’s ability to act, the person may also act as if they are not fundamentally part of such relations. This is the case in “individualism” which “advances the good of the individual as the principal and fundamental good to which every community and society must be subordinated.”<sup>115</sup> As the act is inherently social, individualism undermines the personal value of the act. The way of acting which properly avoids all these pitfalls of communal action Wojtyła calls “participation”. In essence, participation is properly acting in a community and toward the common good but without impeding the fulfilment of the person as it was discussed in the previous sections. Ultimately, participation, or acting in relation with others, must still derive from one’s own freedom and consciousness.

## § 2. PERSON AND ACT IN RELATION TO PERFORMATIVITY.

The key characteristics of the relationship between act and personhood have now been listed and explained. The opportunity now presents itself to 1) draw parallels between Wojtyła’s act and Butler’s performativity, and 2) to see what novelty Wojtyła’s analysis brings into our understanding of performativity. It is through these two steps that the relationship between act and performance will be made clear. The chapter concludes by asking several newfound important questions regarding gender.

### 2.1 THE PARALLELS BETWEEN ACT AND PERFORMANCE.

In order to properly show the similarities between Butler’s performativity and Wojtyła’s act, it is best to briefly recall the characteristics of the former as detailed in the last chapter. Performativity was there shown to be the effect whereby words in Austin and deeds in Butler established a new

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<sup>108</sup> Wojtyła, 378.

<sup>109</sup> Wojtyła, 379.

<sup>110</sup> Wojtyła, 390.

<sup>111</sup> Wojtyła, 387.

<sup>112</sup> Wojtyła, 405.

<sup>113</sup> Wojtyła, 406–7.

<sup>114</sup> Wojtyła, 402.

<sup>115</sup> Wojtyła, 390.

reality rather than merely conveying information. Despite there being many more qualifications to performativity, the establishing of a new reality is the most central one. Interestingly, Wojtyła's act has proven to be highly similar. The act, when it fulfils the conditions described above, indeed seems to establish a new reality, that is, the reality of the person. Interestingly, the conditions raised by Wojtyła leave the form of the act wide open. The act could be speaking some words to someone, or it could be tilling a field, it could even be an internal act such as praying. In this sense Wojtyła's act shares Butler's intuition that not only speech but all corporeal acts can wield performing power. In a reflection on Butler's use of performativity to describe the workings of gender it was suggested that there is a meta-level of gender identity and potentially other identitarian characteristics which is established performatively. Wojtyła's analysis of the act and the person seems to confirm this since it is permeated with the implicit presence of performativity. As the person itself is formed, experiences a shift in being, and becomes more himself through the act, personhood appears as performatively constituted through acts. Besides this ontological development of the person, Wojtyła even explored an additional way in which the act wields performing power. The moral character of the person, too, is performatively established in the act. In performing good or bad acts the person becomes a good or bad person. In essence then, the act may be regarded as that specific sort of activity which checks the requirements to performatively establish various aspects of the person. Personhood may as a result be properly called performative.

Secondly, in the last chapter, I illustrated that Butler attributes an ethical character to performativity, for every act is simultaneously a performance of gender which affects others of the same gender. In *Person and Act*, morality pervades Wojtyła's analysis of the person. Although he is unwilling to overly specify his moral framework, several key assumptions closely correspond to those of Butler's. Firstly, every act is regarded as morally relevant. However, some of the reasons as to *why* they are morally relevant are similar whereas some are different. When it comes to similarity, both Wojtyła and Butler recognise that one's acts inherently impact others. In Butler they affect others because they contribute to gender norms which enable and restrict the actions of others. Wojtyła on the other hand regards the act as an inherently social happening which is inherently related to a community of people in which the act takes place. Because of the personalistic value of the act however, it is in some sense one's duty to act authentically to themselves for even if this were to clash with the reigning convictions of the community, to deny the community your authentic opposition constitutes an impoverishment of yourself and of the group. However, it is clear that Wojtyła both considered ethics to a greater degree and more explicitly in his analysis of person and act. Especially his consideration of the internal ethics, the ethical consequences of the act for the person themselves rather than their environment, is characteristic of Wojtyła. This will be discussed in greater detail when discussing Wojtyła's additions to performativity.

Third, the emphasis on truth which Austin pivoted away from through performativity, but which nonetheless seemed to return in Butler's assessment of gender as performative, is equally present in person and act. Whereas one could derive from Butler's example of the difference between gender performance in theatre and on the bus that a performance (of gender) is always in some sense an implicit statement of truth about oneself, Wojtyła goes perhaps a step further in saying that every performative action *should* be in accordance with truth as mediated through one's conscience. As a result, every act is in fact also a statement of truth. Simultaneously, since the act depends upon truth, without truth there could be no act. Despite the similarities with regard to truth, there are also significant differences. Whereas truth is a requirement for an action to performatively constitute the person, Butler places no such requirement on the performance of gender. Any action appears to perform gender for Butler, it is an inescapable category. However, one might make the argument that in order to subvert gender norms one requires a dependence upon truth for the subversion to have the longevity and sincerity to be efficacious. This thought is picked back up in the next chapter when the consequences of *Person and Act* for the subversion of gender are explored.

## 2.2 THE NOVELTY OF ACT AND PERSON

From the comparison between Wojtyła's act and person and Butler's reading of gender, we have gleaned that in fact the person is performatively constituted through acts quite similarly to how gender is. However, Wojtyła's understanding of the act offers something novel compared to Austin's and Butler's performativity. That novelty consists in examining the *interior* performative processes of the human person. When discussing the performativity of gender, Butler's focus is without a doubt on the context of the person rather than on the person themselves. The person is figured almost as a mere plaything of great social structures and traditions which are outside of any individual's control. Our socio-historical context has laid out the conditions for performativity and we are thrown into that context and forced to use those conditions in order to make the best of it. With a great deal of luck and effort, we might be able to subvert some of those conditions; but even then, there is no guarantee that our efforts will result in a better, more just society. Additionally, the conditions for subversion themselves are equally out of our control. As Butler summarises: "There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains 'integrity' prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there."<sup>116</sup>

Butler's focus on forces external to the person is also repeated in their emphasis on the first of Austin's conditions for performativity, which is the existence of a pre-existing set of conventions. However, in doing so, Butler neglected the internal dimensions of performativity. On how gender comes to be internalised they merely commented that gender is something people "come to believe, and to perform in the mode of belief".<sup>117</sup> However, they did not at all interrogate how and why people come to believe this, through what internal processes gender becomes part of identity. Wojtyła approaches the person from the completely opposite end. Although he of course points out several ways in which external factors may hamper the person's ability to fulfil themselves, such as totalism or the lack of being able to say: "I can but I do not have to", Wojtyła does not seem particularly concerned with these external sources. His main worries rather constitute internal failures, such as not acting consciously, not acting in a morally good way, acting individualistically... Through this focus on the internality of the person we discover how the person is performatively enacted. As gender appears to be a part of the human person, it may be possible to regard the internalisation of gender as a way in which the person is fulfilled. Perhaps it is precisely when gender is performed in freedom and consciously as a part of one's self-fulfilment that gender transforms from a social construct, as Butler has shown it to be, into a proper ontic characteristic of the person. If so, this would also enable a more optimistic view on gender than that of Butler. Gender from a Wojtylian perspective need not be correlated to oppression, for gender as an authentic part of the person is per definition performed in freedom, and therefore without any coercion, and in a community. Any gender which is not performed according to the norms set out by Wojtyła for the act could not be a proper fulfilment of the person and therefore amounts to an external exertion of force on the person rather than authentic gender.

Just as Wojtyła adds something of value to our understanding of performativity, so too can Butler's analysis of performativity add something to Wojtyła's understanding of act and person. Take for instance Butler's unveiling of the fact that the range of acts available to any given person is culturally determined. This insight is very relevant to Wojtyła's understanding of the person for if the acts available to a person are reduced then indeed the person itself is reduced, for a particular way of fulfilling the person is thereby taken from them. Furthermore, is the freedom of the person not in danger when they are culturally determined from birth? Even Wojtyła's reliance upon truth and conscience as a guarantor of freedom stands at risk for our conceptions of truth are equally bound to culture. These are very concerning elements for the relationship between person and act which Wojtyła, due to his fascination with the internal person chose not to address

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<sup>116</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 199.

<sup>117</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts", 520.

or missed. Butler has made explicit the external shaping power of performativity which can now be integrated in Wojtylian personalism to develop a more complete understanding of the relationship between person and act. It would seem then that Wojtyła's internal reading of performative personhood and Butler's focus on external forces on the person offer a better view on the person when employed in tandem than either one by itself.

### **§ 3. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US?**

Now that both Butler's concept of gender performativity and Wojtyła's understanding of person and act have been analysed and their compatibility illustrated, what questions arise with regard to gender? First and foremost an important question to answer is where gender sits in relation to the person. More specifically, should gender be considered a part of nature or of the person? Second, how should the concept of gender subversion as presented by Butler be evaluated from a Wojtylian understanding of the person? Thirdly, how does gender regarded from the framework of *Person and Act* relate to John Paul II's later *Theology of the Body*?

## CHAPTER III. GENDER AND ESSENCE: FROM WOJTYŁA TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

In his characterisation of the personal act, Wojtyła made a distinction *between things that happen in us*, of which the majority is caused by nature, and proper *acts* which reveal and fulfil personhood. Gender has traditionally been associated with nature because it was believed that gender was rooted in, or even synonymous with sex, which as a biological phenomenon was part of our uncontrollable nature. It is this sort of thinking that Butler sought to disprove by showing gender to be performative and socially constructed in nature. However, where does gender fit according to the framework of person and act as previously explored? Gender itself, or even sexual difference, is not touched upon in *Person and Act* and therefore an answer to the question of gender's personal or natural character must be derived by combining knowledge of the phenomenon of gender on the one hand and a proper understanding of person and act on the other.

### § 1. GENDER IN THE ACT

Gender is something that happens to us as Butler has made clear by highlighting that the social conditions which allow for the performance of gender precede any particular individual's existence: "There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there."<sup>118</sup> Still, despite the fact that we are thrown into a world of gender and thus gender happens to us from the day of our naming, we are still able to *take up* the tools and *do* something with them. It is possible to shape gender and therefore gender is also an effect.

For an identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary. That the constituted status of identity is misconstrued along these two conflicting lines suggests the ways in which the feminist discourse on cultural construction remains trapped within the unnecessary binarism of free will and determinism. Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible.<sup>119</sup>

Despite the inherent cultural influences, there remains agency to be had in the procedural construction of one's gender. One should also recall that in Butler's analysis of gender, it was said that "performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms."<sup>120</sup> Gender only exists in so far as it continues to be performed. That means that without human actions gender simply would not be. This is a first reason why gender seems to be wound up more with act than it does with happening, and thus with nature. Now, whether we mindlessly behave as expected of our assigned gender or whether we are conscious of our gender and employ our freedom and efficaciously subvert, or simply adhere to our gender makes no difference for Butler. Some form of gender is performed either way. However, from a Wojtyłian point of view, the way we interact with gender matters. To not engage with gender consciously, or better personally, is to not properly fulfil one's personhood. Rather, it would constitute some form of conformism to the surrounding community.<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, since gender and its associated norms have a real influence on our freedom, to not engage with it personally could make gender into a disintegrative factor of the person,

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<sup>118</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 199.

<sup>119</sup> Butler, 201.

<sup>120</sup> Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 60.

<sup>121</sup> The difference between conformism and participation is key here. If one were to consciously, as their own person, adopt the gender norms that precedes them, that is fine for it would constitute participation because one acts in good conscience in accordance with the group. However, to mindlessly assume the norms or to accept them out of a tendency to avoid conflict, would constitute conformism and would mean depriving the group of one's own person.



making the person less “person” in all other facets of their life. As we recall, in the section on freedom we learnt about “disintegration of the person” as broad term capturing all sort of ways in which the internal workings of the person may be influenced to work sub-optimally or stop working altogether. An example could be a boy who despite ample talent and a strong desire to, chooses not to get into ballet because “it simply is not for boys”. In this case gender negatively impacts the capacity of the boy to fulfil himself. However, through a more conscious engagement with one’s gender and the gender norms externally imposed on oneself, the ability arises to engage in ballet without it altering one’s own sense of gender, that is to engage in it whilst maintaining a male identity. Due to the workings of social norms, the boy may still be called girlish for his participation in ballet. Internally however, the boy’s performance of ballet may even fulfil a male gender in the form of a masculinity which stands up to restrictive societal norms from a deep dependence on one’s own conscience and sense of self. Such would constitute a proper personal masculinity.

However, Wojtyła indicated that disintegration may occur in “various degrees of intensity”.<sup>122</sup> From this perspective it allows us to think not only of situations wherein the person completely avoids an act but also of more nuanced influences of gender. Gender may influence one’s choice of clothes, determining whether and in which company one speaks freely, or generally how one acts towards those of similar or different gender. This seems to correlate closely to Judith Butler’s association of gender with a role. A role in theatre not only determines what is out of character and therefore off-limits to the actor, it also determines what is in character, ways in which one can perform their gender well. For example, although I am free to wear what I want, as a man I am slightly drawn to more neutral colours. In summary, in order for a gendered act to constitute a proper fulfilment of the person and in order to safeguard the integrity of the person, requires one equally *acts* when it comes to gender. This is a first sign that the performance gender, although it also happens to the person, is more properly considered an act of the person than an element of its nature.

Secondly, the performance of gender must constitute a personal act rather than merely being part of the person’s nature because of the precedence of the personalistic value of the act over the moral value of the act. As Wojtyła explained, there is a specific value inherent to the performance of a proper personal act for in it the person is fulfilled. A personal act also has a moral value but without the personalistic value of the act, there can be no moral value accredited to the act. If one does not act consciously and wilfully, the act has no moral value. This situation is akin to when an animal does something that it is determined that their act has no moral value. This means that according to Wojtyła’s understanding of act and person, the performance of gender either constitutes a personal act, rather than being caused by nature, or has no bearing on morality. The latter simply cannot be the case in the light of the proportions the gender debate has taken on in the last thirty years, *Dignita Infinita*’s association of gender theory with grave violations of human dignity.

Closely related to the previous argument stands the issue that gender being a part of nature would constitute gender being a static and binary thing. Nature, as that which “implicates the dynamism that is the direct and exclusive effect of birth itself”<sup>123</sup> and that which “is made manifest exclusively in actuations of the subject ‘man,’ whereas acts reveal this man as a person”<sup>124</sup> is something which we have little control over. It is already there at birth and it causes “actuations”<sup>125</sup> in *us* whereas *we* cannot change nature. From this perspective gender could not shift except by its own natural processes. Just as the body grows and develops over time, so too may gender. However, the way in which it develops would, similarly to our bodies, be largely outside of our conscious engagement. That would mean that the way we think about and live out

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<sup>122</sup> Wojtyła, ‘*Person and Act*’, 301.

<sup>123</sup> Wojtyła, 180.

<sup>124</sup> Wojtyła, 180.

<sup>125</sup> Wojtyła, 182.

our masculinity or femininity would not change over time. And yet, people's gendered identity changes all the time. After having a child, the parents' concepts of gender may change. The mother might think of their womanhood as more interwoven with motherhood, the father's concept of masculinity might come to be more heavily coloured by responsibility. In puberty some boys start associating masculinity with machismo, whereas girls may start to correlate womanhood with attractiveness. Finally, songs like Shania Twain's *Man! I Feel Like A Woman!* illustrate a shift from a concept of woman as one who subscribes to lady-like behaviour to one who is free, rejects stifling conventions, and speaks their mind.

Gender then appears to be quite flexible and thereby more proper to the person than to nature. If gender were part of the level of nature it would also imply that gender were binary, or at least it would when considering gender as a product of sex.<sup>126</sup> All men would think of themselves as men in the same way and like for women, with no alternative gender expressions being available. However, as reality teaches us, gender does not work that way. There are people who embrace a non-binary or intersexed gender, there are transpeople who take on a gender distinct from their gender of rearing, there are drag performers who take on multiple genders, and even within what is regarded as uncomplicated "masculinity" or "femininity" there is a great diversity. There are butches and femmes, tomboys and femboys, bears and twinks, chads and nerds.

We might do well to again reiterate Butler's constation that the performance of gender relies on iterability. This is not only relevant because it means that gender always requires new acts to be performed, but also because reiterations, in contrast with repetitions, "are never simply replicas of the same"<sup>127</sup> since "one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well."<sup>128</sup> Gender is therefore always slightly different and somewhat unique in every person. The flexibility of gender and the varieties of its occurrence illustrate that is not part of the nature of man but is more properly understood as part of the person.

## § 2. GENDER SUBVERSION AND ITS VALUE IN A WOJTYLIAN FRAMEWORK

It is now fair to conclude that within the Wojtylian framework of person and nature that gender in its performative sense belongs more properly to the level of the person than to that of nature. This conclusion however has significant implications for the assessment of Butler's concept of gender subversion. Therefore, it would be best to briefly recapitulate what gender subversion means. Through their analysis of how gender comes to be performed, Butler discovers that every act of a person contributes to the performance of their gender in some way. Humans are embedded in a particular history and culture with corresponding gender norms. Most people, be it consciously or unconsciously, conform to these norms and perform the acts expected of them. However, due to the iterability of gender, gender always remains open to change for no person acts precisely in the way another does. Although gender is only changed in a minute way through such reiterations, it lays bare the possibility for more significant change through a conscious and communal shift in actions. That process of significantly deviating from the existing gender norms is what Butler calls subversion. However, where norms are rebutted or violated there arise tensions. Furthermore, it is not always clear what subversion leads to. According to Butler, it opens a horizon of endless possibilities of which some good and some bad. As such, gender subversion due to its upheaval-inducing and unpredictable character is at times regarded as

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<sup>126</sup> Even when considering gender a product of sex, thinking gender to be binary is not self-evident. Even within "the" male or female sex there are plenty of differences of sex-characteristics between individuals. Furthermore, sex remains a human concept which somewhat arbitrarily bundles together particular corporeal traits.

<sup>127</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 172.

<sup>128</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts", 521.

controversial. Now that it is clear where to situate gender within the person, it proves interesting to regard the personal value of gender subversion. Gender subversion will be examined on the basis of its goal, its communal character, and its potential for fulfilling the person.

Firstly, we would do well to keep in mind the driving force behind gender subversion. The purpose of subversion is not simply to cause havoc, to be contrarian, or to place the wishes of one above the common good. Rather, the main purpose is for the body of gender norms to break away from “gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality”<sup>129</sup> and “be liberated, neither to its ‘natural’ past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities.”<sup>130</sup> The purpose of gender subversion consists in minimising the restrictions imposed on people due to their gender in order to arrive at “a prior ontological reality, that reality being the equal opportunity of all persons”.<sup>131</sup> This goal as postulated by Butler correlates to Wojtyła’s emphasis of freedom as conditional for the person, freedom again understood as the ability to say “I can but I do not have to”. As mentioned earlier, Wojtyła did not seem aware of the potentially restrictive nature of gender. However, based on Wojtyła’s unambiguous rejection of objective totalism, it becomes clear that anything which may impede the person’s freedom in the authentic pursuit of truth is to be avoided, most of all when such impediments are human made. Wojtyła says:

although man is not the creator of nature [przyroda], he is its master. He is also the creator of the relations of production and the creator of civilization. Hence, he can fundamentally prevent them from having a ‘dehumanizing’ character and thus from leading to alienation.<sup>132</sup>

Wojtyła warns against the danger of dehumanising, of impeding the humanity of other through “the system of things”, that is in a systemic rather than accidental fashion. Based on Butler’s assessment of gender norms as ever-present and pervading our lives from birth, gender norms may be properly thought of as a flaw in our creation of civilisation of a systemic nature. As such, the aim of the subversion of gender resonates deeply with Wojtyła’s desire for a well-shaped society which allows for personal freedom.

Second, the communal aspect of gender subversion must be examined. Wojtyła described the act as always constituting an act “together with others”. The act is inherently social and therefore the person must not be understood as “*an individual concentrated on himself and his own good*, which is also understood in isolation from the goods of others and from the common good.”<sup>133</sup> Consequently, gender subversion ought to be in accordance with the common good rather than merely constituting the satisfaction of a personal want. If not, gender subversion would merely be a product of individualism. However, as has become clear from the discussion of the goal of gender subversion in the previous section, gender subversion is aimed at equal opportunity for all and is therefore in accordance with the common good. Still, Butler is aware that gender subversion need not necessarily lead to equal opportunity for all as they criticise the feministic tendency to universalise womanhood. Part of the third feminist wave, Butler echoes the criticism that feminism prior has had a tendency to universalise one particular form of womanhood, thereby again excluding people, most notably women of colour and of lower economic classes.

Indeed, the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxx.

<sup>130</sup> Butler, 127.

<sup>131</sup> Butler, 159–60.

<sup>132</sup> Wojtyła, ‘*Person and Act*’, 412–13.

<sup>133</sup> Wojtyła, 390.

<sup>134</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.

Furthermore, not all that seems subversive actually subverts:

Thus, there are forms of drag that heterosexual culture produces for itself—we might think of Julie Andrews in *Victor, Victoria* or Dustin Hoffmann in *Tootsie* or Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* where the anxiety over a possible homosexual consequence is both produced and deflected within the narrative trajectory of the films. [...] I would be reticent to call them subversive. Indeed, one might argue that such films are functional in providing a ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness, and that this displaced production and resolution of homosexual panic actually fortifies the heterosexual regime in its self-perpetuating task.<sup>135</sup>

The proper characteristic of subversion for Butler is then a subversion that has in mind the goal of equality for all and actually achieves that goal despite of this achievement being anything but self-evident. Finally, Butler's subversion is not only aimed at the common good of the community; they also believe that it can only be achieved through the community. Any individual act of subversion is hard-pressed to produce a significant change in gender norms. As gender is performative and performativity relies on social conventions, a subverted form of gender needs its own socially born conventions to have any staying power. Butler explains it by examining where the power of judges originates: "if the judge is citing the law, he is not himself the authority who invests the law with its power to bind; on the contrary, he seeks recourse to an authoritative legal convention that precedes him."<sup>136</sup> This is why communities are crucial. By subverting gender together, the subversion gains the social undercarriage to not crash nose-first into the ground after a single subversive act. Butler writes:

"Significantly, it is in the elaboration of kinship forged through a resignification of the very terms which effect our exclusion and abjection that such a resignification creates the discursive and social space for community, that we see an appropriation of the terms of domination that turns them toward a more enabling future."<sup>137</sup>

Butler's characterisation of subversion as a necessarily community-driven event stands in complete parallel with Wojtyła's act as an inherent "acting together with others". Subversion screams "participation" as it is a communal effort driven through individual personal acts. Still, one might make the argument that gender subversion, even when performed in a (small) community, risks a secession from a larger group which does not agree with the need to subvert gender. Here Wojtyła's own concept of opposition proves crucial. Opposition, understood as the disagreement with the community whilst relying upon one's own consciousness, is in fact a proper way of acting in accordance with one's personhood and one's community. Gender subversion, when figured as authentic opposition in pursuit of equal opportunity, in fact constitutes one's duty as a person in community. Of course, it is important that such subversion never result in total secession for then one no longer participates in the community and flees their responsibility to conduct opposition. In light of the analysis of gender subversion on account of its goal, its communal character, and its potential for the fulfilment of the person within the community, gender subversion when properly understood may constitute a proper fulfilment of the person and therefore a morally desirable act.

### § 3. GENDER ACCORDING TO WOJTYŁA AND JOHN PAUL II

Having set out how Butler's understanding of gender ought to be approached from Wojtyła's personalist framework, we now turn to John Paul II's assessment of gender. In *Theology of the*

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<sup>135</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 85–86.

<sup>136</sup> Butler, 70.

<sup>137</sup> Butler, 95.

*Body*, his most famous and most extensive work on sexual ethics, John Paul II is concerned with rooting the human person—including its sex—within a theological framework. As we will see, this causes significant tension between Wojtyła’s understanding of the person and John Paul II’s essentialist reading of sex. The two primary concepts which correspond to the two sides in this tension are “original solitude” and “the spousal meaning of the body.” As the former also precedes the latter in the structure of *Theology of the Body*, it is best to start there.

### 3.1. ORIGINAL SOLITUDE

John Paul II commences his analysis of original solitude as follows: “we will reflect on the meaning of man’s original solitude. The following words of Genesis directly give us the point of departure for such a reflection: ‘It is not good that the man’ (male) ‘should be alone; I want to make him a help similar to himself’ (Gen 2:18).”<sup>138</sup> At this point in the narrative, the first human has just been introduced to a wealth of animals but could not find a help fit for them. Rather than immediately moving on to the creation of man and woman from the first human being, John Paul II pauses, and first further investigates what it means for the first human being to be alone. Here the continuity between the philosopher Karol Wojtyła and Pope John Paul II becomes crystal clear:

Man is alone because he is “different” from the visible world, from the world of living beings. When we analyse the text of Genesis, we are in some way witnesses of how man, with the first act of self-consciousness, “distinguishes himself” before God-Yahweh from the whole world of living beings (animalia), how he consequently reveals himself to himself and at the same time affirms himself in the visible world as a “person.”<sup>139</sup>

From the terminology of “act”, “self-consciousness”, and “person” alone, the continuity of the *Theology of the Body* with *Person and Act* is immediately evident. Indeed, John Paul II appears to be interpreting the first human being’s naming of the animals through the framework of *Person and Act*: the naming of the animals as a proper personal act results in self-consciousness. It is furthermore striking how he again employs the passive “reveals himself to himself,” mimicking the passive “being made” of *fieri*. The person-character of the human is again figured as that which sets the human apart and makes them unique.

John Paul II continues his analysis of the person in Genesis 2:

When God-Yahweh gives to the first man, formed in this way, the commandment concerning all the trees that grow in the “garden in Eden,” above all the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, this adds the aspect of choice and self-determination (that is, of free will) to the outline of man described above.<sup>140</sup>

In the commandment not to eat from the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, John Paul II discerns that the first human must possess free will. Indeed, if they did not possess free will, they would simply execute the will of their creator and there would be no need for such a commandment. Furthermore, the commandment regarding the trees in Eden introduces morality into the narrative: with the commandment in play, there arise the possibility of adhering to or infringe upon it, thereby suffusing the human’s act with a moral character. Consequently, the possibility of self-determination is opened up, of shaping oneself towards the sort of person one wishes to become, particularly a good or a bad person.

Next, the corporeality of the person is discussed. Just as in *Person and Act*, the body is figured in *Theology of the Body* as what enables both the person and the act. Without a body, the

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<sup>138</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 146–47.

<sup>139</sup> John Paul II, 150.

<sup>140</sup> John Paul II, 151.

human person can have no being: “Man, [...], belongs to the visible world; he is a body among bodies.”<sup>141</sup> Personhood requires materiality to work in tandem with it for without a body there can be no “self” which experiences “being ‘alone.’”<sup>142</sup> The same goes for the act. John Paul II reasons that in the naming of the animals (and thereby differentiating their human body from animal bodies), the tilling of the earth (Gen. 1:28), and the ability to subdue it (Gen. 2:5), that is, in a variety of acts, the body is instrumental in revealing the personhood of the human being.<sup>143</sup> He even explicitly frames it as such: “The structure of this body is such that it permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity. In this activity, the body expresses the person.”<sup>144</sup>

### 3.2. THE SPOUSAL MEANING OF THE BODY

In his analysis of original solitude, John Paul II is without a doubt basing himself on the Wojtyłian structures of the person to commence constructing his theological anthropology. However, having wrapped up the analysis of original solitude, John Paul II moves on to develop the concept of the “spousal meaning of the body”. Essentially, this concept revolves around the idea of gift. Both man and woman are a gift in that “the Creator willed each of them ‘for his own sake’ (see *Gaudium et Spes*, 24:3).”<sup>145</sup> Additionally, due to the original solitude of the first human, which is understood as a metaphysical solitude which affects both men and women, the first man and woman are a “reciprocal gift”.<sup>146</sup> In the reciprocal gift of themselves, the solitude is broken. This call towards self-gift John Paul II finds manifested in the body for “The body, which expresses femininity ‘for’ masculinity and, vice versa, masculinity ‘for’ femininity, manifests the reciprocity and the communion of persons.”<sup>147</sup> More specifically, “Masculinity-femininity—namely, sex—is the original sign of a creative donation”.<sup>148</sup> Not only is sex a sign of man and woman being a gift for each other, it is also itself part of the gift. John Paul II characterises sex as a masculinity and femininity that constitute “two reciprocally completing ways of ‘being a body’ and at the same time of being human”.<sup>149</sup> Since they complete each other, the femininity or masculinity of the person is itself part of that which is given to, and embraced by, the other.

Sex is important for this study as it is the term in *Theology of the Body* which most resembles gender. However, John Paul II’s use of “sex” is somewhat odd. On the one hand, the sexes are described as “two different ‘incarnations,’ that is, two ways in which the same human being, created ‘in the image of God’ (Gen 1:27), ‘is a body.’” Here it is implied that sex is a difference between men and women in their nature, nature understood as the phenomenological, passive, inborn nature previously described in opposition to the person. However, John Paul II also says “sex is not only decisive for man’s somatic individuality, but at the same time it defines his personal identity and concreteness.”<sup>150</sup> Sex, in John Paul II’s use of it, thus seems to encapsulate both biological sex *and* a part of one’s *personality*. It is sex in this latter, more gender-like, capacity that we will focus on. Now that we have found some concept of gender in *Theology of the Body*, what can be said about it from the perspective from *Person and Act*?

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<sup>141</sup> John Paul II, 152.

<sup>142</sup> John Paul II, 151.

<sup>143</sup> John Paul II, 154.

<sup>144</sup> John Paul II, 154.

<sup>145</sup> John Paul II, 187.

<sup>146</sup> John Paul II, 183.

<sup>147</sup> John Paul II, 183.

<sup>148</sup> John Paul II, 183.

<sup>149</sup> John Paul II, 166.

<sup>150</sup> John Paul II, 208.

### 3.3. WOJTYŁA AND JOHN PAUL II DIVERGE ON GENDER

From the perspective of gender as it fits in Wojtyła's framework, the main issue appears to be the binary of sex and gender in combination with its pre-givenness. Looking back at *Person and Act*, Wojtyła employed a methodological rigour in his quest for the person. Every observation about the person, be it their will, consciousness, conscience, or fulfilment, was rooted in the act and afterwards he arrived at a metaphysics of the person. For example, Wojtyła's discovery of the person is rooted in the experience of efficacy, that is of being the one acting, and the experience that although the act was fleeting, its intransitive effect linger within me. Only in a secondary movement does he then akin the discovery of the person's fulfilment in the act in a metaphysics of being. However, John Paul II's reading of sex employed a different method. First John Paul II asserted the creation of man and woman with a particular masculinity and femininity. Afterwards, they were able to engage in the act self-gift precisely because of their inborn masculinity and femininity. There is a masculinity/femininity already there to be given and it merely comes down to the person to give it. However, from a Wojtylian perspective, gender, as it is part of the person, would be constituted through the act. In Wojtyła masculinity or femininity is not merely something bestowed upon the person but is something which the person can actively shape. Consequently, gender would be constituted through the act of self-giving rather than the other way around.

Next, due to the conflation of the biological dimension of sex in *Theology of the Body* with sex as part of the "identity and concreteness" of the person, John Paul II arrives at an overly binary view on gender. Gender in a Wojtylian framework as a part of the person rather than a part of the natural body, is not determined by the body. In *Person and Act* the body is of course considered to be part of the person and the influences of the body on the person is also acknowledged through what happens in it, such as hormonal fluctuations for example. However, gender was shown to be performative and therefore subject to the fulfilment of the person through the act. Therefore, there is no reason within the framework of *Person and Act* to regard gender as wound up with sex. Where John Paul II is restricted to thinking in terms of masculinity and femininity, the framework of *Person and Act* considers gender against the broad horizon of the person's *potentia*. Despite there being similarities between the gender of various people, gender as part of the person and constituted through acts is as unique as the person itself. For example, I may describe myself as a man, but the chain of acts which I have performed and have therefore shaped my gender will not be identical to any other man's. Additionally, the reality of people taking on a non-binary gender makes sense from a Wojtylian understanding of the person but cannot be understood within John Paul II's binary framework.

Finally, John Paul II seems to overemphasise what one externally gains from reciprocal self-gift. Depicting men and women as complementary implies there to be an inherent lack within the person. Such a lack was however never discussed in *Person and Act*. Wojtyła did however stress that acting is always an "acting together with others" and that the fulfilment of the person, and performance of their gender, were necessarily social. However, the emphasis was not on what others do for the person, rather it was about how the person fulfils themselves through acting with others. Consequently, the gender of those persons one acts with would in fact matter little in terms of the fulfilment of the person. Therefore, the reciprocal self-gift described in *Theology of the Body* is important from the perspective of Wojtyła's person in that one acts out their gender with an "other", regardless of that other's gender.

In summary, gender ought to have featured in Karol Wojtyła's *Person and Act* because it can influence the entire working of the person as a form of disintegration and because it is *enacted* and therefore a part of the person. If it had been included however, gender could not have been regarded as part of nature due to the person's capacity to perform it. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* is unmistakably rooted within the framework of *Person and Act*. This is evident both from the similarities in terminology between the two works and from the concept of original solitude resembling a small summary of *Person and Act*. However, the depiction of gender in *Theology of the Body* therein contradicts the principles set out in Wojtyła's earlier work. Gender

is conjoined with biological sex and deemed to entirely precede the act rather than being constituted by it. Furthermore, gender is restricted from a dynamism of *potentia* and act to a rigid binary. Finally, *Theology of the Body* infringes upon *Person and Act*'s concept of participation by overemphasising what one gains in the experience of the acts of others at the cost of acting together with others.



## CONCLUSION

Over the course of three chapters, this thesis has sought to make clear how gender ought to be conceived of from a Wojtyłaian, *Person and Act*-based framework and how this relates to the vision of gender in John Paul II's later *Theology of the Body*. Specifically, we have discovered that gender in Butler's sense as performative remains unthought by John Paul II, whereas Wojtyła nevertheless developed the necessary tools to properly theologise it with his theory of the act. I have showed as much by exposing the interesting similarities between Butler's performativity and Wojtyła's act. These similarities implied that, within the framework of *Person and Act*, gender ought to be regarded as a constitutive, constantly developing part of the person rather than a fixed attribute of its nature. Interestingly, these findings contradict the way in which John Paul II speaks of gender, despite the Pope's continued reliance upon his own prior philosophical framework and terminology.

In order to show the significance of Wojtyła's and John Paul II's perspective on gender, it is perhaps fitting to explore the phenomenon of drag. It is fitting because it has functioned as Judith Butler's primary example to show gender to be performative due to its inherent combination of both the dimension of theatricality and gender norms. Drag is a performance in which mostly men, but also women, perform a heavily caricaturised form of the opposite gender. Although the most well-known form of drag consists of men donning a flamboyant female alter ego (known as drag queens), there are also women who take on an exaggerated female persona and the same is done to a lesser degree by women with a male alter ego (drag kings). How would Butler, Wojtyła, and John Paul II come to terms with this phenomenon?

Butler, who without a doubt is most familiar with the scene, considers it a parody which "mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity."<sup>151</sup> It is a parody of expressive gender, illustrating how artificial gender truly is if it can be mimicked with such ease by donning a wig and fake eyelashes, stacking layers of foundation, and going out in a dress and high heels and acting in a womanly fashion. Simultaneously, it mocks the concept of true gender identity for in the act of drag it becomes impossible to say whether before us stand a feminised man or a masculine woman. During this parody, the performer's gender is effectively altered through the performance and may as a result constitute a subversion of gender norms.

Wojtyła for one, would emphasise the personal initiative in the act of drag. As an authentic person the performer has engaged their will and determined themselves to engage with gender consciously. In performing that gender, the person becomes more fully themselves *because* for the duration of their performance, their gender is truly altered. Even after the night passes and the act is over, the person continues to carry that experience for the rest of their life, shaping any and all of their future human acts and strengthening them against the encroachment of an overly rigid gender identity which, if left unchecked through personal action, may fundamentally hamper the workings of the person. Relinquishing their everyday gender and participating in something new in camaraderie with the other drag kings and queens of the show, the person finds themselves enriched with a newfound consciousness of their everyday performances of gender and a better understanding of who they are.

John Paul II, however, cannot value, or indeed conceptualise the performance that happens in a drag act. Since men are men and women are women by nature, the appropriation of the opposite gender merely constitutes a sort of lie and an obfuscating of the intended gift of their proper masculinity or femininity. Thought through, in John Paul II's theological framework drag constitutes sin. Rather than an authentic enactment of the person, drag becomes an act of rejection one's created nature. As a consequence, there is nothing new to learn in the experience of drag. Neither do male drag kings and female drag queens have anything interesting to teach about the person. Either you are man or a woman, what point is there in being a *different sort* of man or

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<sup>151</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 186.

woman? Because of his focus on what gender is being performed, the person performing it seems to slip from sight.

The point of this example was to illustrate especially how far apart a reading of gender performativity from the perspective of Wojtyła's broad framework of the human person deviates from John Paul II's later take on it. However, the gap between the two is perhaps not insurmountable. A *Theology of the Body* which starts from the acting person rather than a male and female nature would already make quite some headway.