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Human Person and Freedom according to Karol Wojtyła

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ABSTRACT: Karol Wojtyła—the future pope John Paul II—chose the human being, especially in its personalistic dimension, as the main point of his philosophical research. In accordance with the metaphysical rule *agere sequitur esse*, he investigated the dynamisms proper to a human being: the reactive dynamism of the human body, the emotive dynamism of the human psyche, and the personalistic dynamism associated with free choice of the will. These allowed him to experience and understand the human being as a complex yet integrated entity. The personal structure of the human being is manifest in terms of self-possession, self-determination, and self-governance. Thanks to self-possession, human beings experience freedom of the will, which expresses itself in each free act. Being endowed with a free will, the human being is able to grow in freedom but can also lose his freedom. Wojtyła's philosophical investigations are innovative by way of the use that he made of the philosophy of being according to Thomas Aquinas and the philosophy of consciousness articulated by Husserl. He not only pointed out man's structure but also presented man as an objective entity in an objective world. Each human being is constituted by his or her inner self, which is absolutely exceptional because it is completely irreducible to anything else in the world.

ALL COMMENTATORS ON the writings of Karol Wojtyła have emphasized that the central point of his philosophy is the notion of "man," especially in his personal dimension.¹ It is not surprising that this topic occupies such a prominent place in his investigations. It is, after all, the basic dilemma of all human searching, and it is manifest in many fields, including philosophy and especially philosophical anthropology and ethics.

Why does this problem arouse so much interest today? It is so, answers Wojtyła, because we are now able to overcome the notion of an irresolvable antinomy between

¹Karol Jozef Wojtyła was born in Wadowice, Poland on May 18, 1920. Having completed his elementary and secondary education, he enrolled at the Department of Polish Literature at the historic Jagiellonian University of Krakow in the fall of 1938. He joined an experimental theater group known as "Studio 38" and continued studying until the German Nazi government closed the university (fall of 1939). In October 1942 he began the study of theology with the intention of becoming a priest. He completed these studies in 1946, and as a young priest he left for Rome, where under the tutelage of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., he began his doctoral studies. He wrote a dissertation on *The Problem of Faith in the Works of St. John of the Cross* in June 1948. In 1954 he accepted a professorship at the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1956 he was appointed to a chair of ethics there. While serving in this capacity he continued to teach and to provide pastoral care for university students. These latter contacts lead him to write his first book *Love and Responsibility*, the result of his reflections on the pastoral experience of often being asked his advice on how to handle, morally and practically, relationships between the opposite sexes. The same year his dissertation on the ethics of the phenomenologist Max Scheler was published by the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1969 he completed and published his principal academic work *The Acting Person*. In this book he explains the philosophical approach to understanding the person and ethics that he had developed, using the phenomenological method of contemporary personalism. On October 16 in 1978 he was elected Pope and assumed the name John Paul II.

the subjectivity and the objectivity of human being, and the correlative division between idealism and realism: "Today more than ever before we feel the need and see a greater possibility of objectifying the problem of subjectivity of the human being."² Wojtyła hopes to find a solution to the problem by resolving the epistemological objections that postulated an uncrossable demarcation line between certain fundamental tendencies in philosophy. The antinomy between subjectivism and objectivism—and the antinomy of idealism and realism that may be discovered within it—created an unpropitious climate for the study of the subjectivity of man.³ The tendencies on each side of this demarcation inclined those thinkers who cultivated realist philosophy to fear that the study of the subjectivity would inevitably lead to subjectivism. Their fears, of course, were not totally unjustified. While remaining on realistic ground, these philosophers were anxious about the results being claimed by the subjectivistic or idealistic philosophers whose analyses were based on "pure consciousness." This historical situation fixed a demarcation line that separated two ways of understanding man: an objectivistic (ontological) conception that treats man as a being, and a subjectivistic (phenomenological) conception in which man seems to be entirely cut off from that reality.

Wojtyła asserts that we are seeing a breakdown of this division. Phenomenological analyses conducted on the ground of "pure consciousness" have contributed to this progress by using Husserl's *epoché*, which consists in bracketing the question of the existence or reality of the conscious subject. He writes:

I am convinced that the line of demarcation between the subjectivistic (idealistic) and objectivistic (realistic) views in anthropology and ethics must break down and is in fact breaking down on the basis of the experience of the human being. This experience automatically frees us from pure consciousness as the subject conceived and assumed *a priori*, and leads us to full concrete existence of the human being, to the reality of the conscious subject. With all phenomenological analyses in the realm of that assumed subject (pure consciousness) now at our disposal, we can no longer go on treating the human being exclusively as an objective being, but we must also somehow treat the human being as a subject in the dimension in which the specifically human subjectivity of the human being is determined by consciousness. And that dimension would seem to be none other than *personal* subjectivity.⁴

In the past, philosophical anthropology was often based on the Aristotelian definition of the human being as a rational animal. Wojtyła notices that this definition, at

²Karol Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible In the Human Being," in his *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Th. Sandok, O.S.M. (New York NY: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 209. Hereafter, *Person* plus the page number.

³*Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 210. Wojtyła refers here to the phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl in its objectivistic stage. In this manner phenomenology was cultivated by e.g., Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Roman Ingarden. See Roman Ingarden, *Wstęp do fenomenologii Husserla*, especially First Lecture, trans. A. Poltawski (Warsaw, Poland, 1974); J. M. Bochenski, *Die zeitgenössischen Denkenmethoden* (Bern, 1954); English edition: *The Methods of Contemporary Thought*, trans. P. Caws (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1965); Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000).

least when read directly and forthrightly, "excludes . . . the possibility of enhancing what is irreducible in man."⁵ Aristotle's definition implies, at least at first sight, a conviction about the reducibility of man to the level of other beings in the visible world, for this definition identifies man as one more thing in the world of things. For this reason we can call it a *cosmological* account.

But there is also a need to express the notion that man is irreducible to anything else at the level of the world. The conviction that man is irreducible to any of the other beings in the world stands at the foundation of the understanding of man as a person. To define man as a person is to assert the subjectivity of human beings. Unfortunately, the classical formulation of this point as it is given in Boethius's definition (*rationalis naturae individua substantia*) only stressed the individuality of man as a substantial being possessed of a rational, that is spiritual, nature. In this formulation the entire realm of subjectivity that is so essential to human being is still unmentioned. In this way the definition of Boethius concentrates on the metaphysical dimension of being in which the personal subjectivity of man is realized. His account creates, so to speak, a space in which one can articulate the grounds of personal experience.⁶

Such a formulation shows the exceptional status of man in the visible world by pointing out his rationality. But, on the other hand, it does not mention the whole "inner world" of man. Nevertheless, such a "cosmological" stance on human nature is very important, even fundamental, for understanding human existence, because it shows each person to be a real, concrete, individual entity.

By making use of the achievements of the philosophy of being according to St. Thomas and the philosophical method of phenomenology in its realist mode, Karol Wojtyła points out the philosophical ground necessary for the proper discussion of the integrated experience of man, who is presented to us not only outwardly but also from the inside. Man is given as an entity, but also as the man-subject in his entire experiential subjectiveness, as the ego.⁷

I

In elucidating the human person, Karol Wojtyła refers, first of all, to the classical definition given by Boethius. In his main work (*The Acting Person*) he writes: "In the first and fundamental approach the man-person has to be somewhat identified with its basic ontological structure. The person is a concrete man, the *individua substantia* of the classical Boethian definition."⁸ Wojtyła designates this fundamental ontological structure by the Latin word *suppositum* (etymologically, what lies underneath and gives support). Under all the dynamisms that we experience in human contact lies man. *Suppositum* thus indicates the existence of a subject, and simultaneously it reveals this subject as an entity. Wojtyła's idea here is to explain the subject or

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 210–11.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 212. Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis et una persona Christi*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 64, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: 1860), 1343 D.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.

⁸Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 73.

suppositum "man" by exploring the experience of the various dynamisms proper to the human being. By tracing these realities carefully, he presents two different types of human dynamism that both belong to human nature even though their dimensions are radically different. On the one hand, a human being is able to perform something that springs from his or her will. On the other hand, man can experience himself as a kind of "territory" where something is "going on." The first activity is something that we experience during each and every one of our choices (every instance of "I want"). In this case the activity springs from a human ego. The second sort of dynamism lacks the willful activity of a human self. In this case we can rightly say that something is "happening-in-me" as opposed to saying that "something-is-happening-with-me" or "something-is-happening-to-me." This group of things embraces every kind of dynamism that is not rooted in my free will and that is not begotten as "my" choice, and yet belongs to me because it occurs within the entity that I am. Under both categories of dynamisms there lies "man." Wojtyła writes:

Within the integral experience of man, especially with the reference to its inner aspect, we can trace a differentiation and even something like a contrast of subjectiveness and efficacy. Man has an experience of himself as the subject when something is happening in him; when, on the other hand, he is acting he has the experience of himself as the "actor."⁹

Thus, to each of these experiences corresponds a fully experiential reality:

Subjectivity is seen as structurally related to what happens in man, and efficacy as structurally related to his acting. When I act, the ego is the cause that dynamizes the subject. It is the attitude of the ego that is then dominant, whereas subjectivity seems to be indicating something quite opposite—it shows the ego as if it was subjacent in the fact of its own dynamization. Such is the case when something happens within the ego. Efficacy and subjectivity seems to split the field of human experiences into two mutually irreducible factors. Experiences are associated with structures. The structure of *man acts* and the structure of *something-happens-in-man* seem to divide the human being as if they were two separate levels.¹⁰

Between existence and acting there is a strict connection that constitutes a subject for one of the most basic insights about human being. Philosophy has expressed this insight in the sentence *operari sequitur esse* (action follows being). One might also express the point here by saying: "something has to exist to be able to act" and "something acts according to its being."¹¹

Even in describing man as a *suppositum*, Wojtyła insists that man is an unusual kind of *suppositum*. In the visible world we encounter many *supposita*. All of them we refer to "something" but only for man do we reserve the term "someone."¹²

⁹Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 83–84. For more information, see Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community" in *Person*, pp. 223–28.

¹²*The Acting Person*, pp. 73–74. For more information see "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" in *Person*, p. 212.

II

The ontological structure of man is composite. We can understand this better in the light of the dynamisms that are distinctly human. The first element is the human body. Wojtyła notes that the classical definition of man stresses his corporal dimension when he observes that the relation of the body "to the human person is absolutely necessary, so much so that it is contained even in that often used definition which sees man as a rational animal; in this definition 'animal' denotes the body as well as corporality. It is the body that gives man his concreteness (this fact is in a way reflected in the classic metaphysical doctrine of man's individualization by matter)."¹³

The human body possesses its proper dynamism, which we can call a "reactive dynamism," and a certain potentiality, that is, a "reactive potentiality." Therefore, the potentiality of the human body, like that of other bodies in nature, includes the possibility of generating physical reactions. Physics or chemistry deal with reactivity at the level of inanimate beings, and at the level of living creatures these reactions belong to biology. The reactivity of the human body includes its powers of existing, shaping itself, maintaining itself, and developing. This field characterizes the human entity in the range of the corporal vitality, beginning at conception and ending at death. The corporal activities make up a sequence of purely instinctive reactions, that is, reactions whose source is entirely in nature. These reactions "take place" or "happen" within a human being without any act of his or her will; they are outside the scope of free-will choices. Consequently, although they happen within an individual, they are not in any way that individual's free actions, for they lack the engagement of the free will.¹⁴

Another constitutive element of human nature is spirituality. To reveal man's structure in its totality Wojtyła analyzes the non-somatic structure of man in its two-folded dimensions, including the human spiritual soul and the "psyche." What is the psyche? The psyche cannot simply be identified as the spiritual soul. The notion "psyche" is comprised of those elements of human nature within a specific individual that are integrated with the body, but yet not the body. Even though the psyche creates a unity in man with his body, it is nevertheless a different reality. We can experience the psyche thanks to its "emotive dynamisms."

An "emotional experience" can initially be recognized as some kind of "affective" experience. Yet, confining ourselves only to such an understanding surely would produce an impoverished and overly simplified description that would not reveal the full range of the necessary content of this term. The realm of emotivity needs to indicate not only feelings but more broadly the whole range of human emotions, feelings, and sensations. We may talk about "moral feelings," "artistic emotions," and so on, as when we say that someone has "a sense of art" or "a moral sense." This range of meaning includes the wide realm of human "emotions."

Emotivity (like the body's reactivity) is strictly connected with our impulses. In the case of emotivity, however, the result is not just somatic but also psychic. Despite

¹³*The Acting Person*, p. 203.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 206–10.

this distinction, a psychic result can find its expression in the somatic layer, in a somatic expression, even though what is psychic cannot simply be identified with corporality.¹⁵ In explaining this, Wojtyła writes:

Feeling or sensation stimuli differ essentially from the motor stimuli, though they very often come together (e.g., the hand is instinctively jerked away from a hot object). Feeling or sensation itself is not a somatic motion or impulse; its relation to the body is similar to that of the subject to an object and though in a feeling as such there is no awareness of this relation, the body—even one's own body—becomes in it an objective sense element that also penetrates into the field of consciousness. Thus feeling and sensations allow man to emerge from and above . . . the "subjectivity of the body."¹⁶

The difference between somatic subjectiveness and psychical subjectiveness consists in this, that the first of them in a considerable measure is not necessarily conscious, while the second one is fully contained in consciousness. If we talk about the human body (especially about its internality), we have to admit that the conscious grasping of one's inner dynamism is "the field of feelings." Basically something is outside the realm of consciousness until it penetrates the field of feelings (e.g., by pain). Usually man possesses only some general feeling of his own body and its internal dynamism.¹⁷

The question of feeling our own body allows us to make a very important point about the integral subjectivity of a human being, for in our consciousness we can exercise the unity of our body and our psyche:

Our above differentiation indicates the experimentally intuitive basis of our conception of the "psyche" and the adjective "psychical." It draws upon intuitive insights close to a phenomenological approach in which we may distinguish clearly, on one hand, their separateness from is usually called "somatic" and, on the other, their specific unity with it. The disclosure of what is distinctively psychical but simultaneously related to what is somatic in man provides the groundwork for conclusions to be drawn first, about the relation between soul and body and second, on a still more distant plane between spirit and matter.¹⁸

Yet, in taking into account the presence of dynamisms both on the somatic and the psychic levels, there is still no adequate way to account for human freedom. For this reason, when discussing the matter of the ontological structure of a human being, we cannot pass in silence over the question of the immaterial, spiritual soul. How do we know about its existence? Wojtyła says that we can recognize a "spirit" in man when he exercises his personal free acts in truth and goodness.¹⁹ Hence, human spirituality reveals itself in human rational and free actions (actions

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 220–28.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 228–29.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 221–22.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 181. "Good and true and being are one and the same thing in reality, but in the mind they are distinguished from each other." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 29, a. 5.

conformed to truth and goodness). In this way the truly personalistic structure of man reveals itself to us.

To be a person one does not have to manifest or consciously experience the personal structure that is present in every human being. A human being is a personal entity. This means that it is *someone* as opposed to *something*, from the very beginning moment of conception, precisely because he or she possesses his or her personal structure and has the potential for its further manifestation and development over the course of time.²⁰ We will discuss this structure below.

III

Man is a person precisely because he reveals himself to be a structure of self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination.²¹ This is a distinctive structure that constitutes man in his essence and that has a proper dynamism, a personal dynamism. Its source is the personal structure of man mentioned above.

Self-possession means that a human being possesses himself or herself in a single, exceptional, unique, and unrepeatable way. We encounter this reality in the experience of "I want." This act springs from my "I." I (and only I) am able to "produce" an act of "I want." Nobody can take it from me. Nothing else about me belongs to me in quite the same way. At least in principle, everything else could be taken away from me, everything except the act of my will—"I want." It expresses my act of personal choice. In fact, sometimes my choice ("I want") could be made under a request or under the pressure of someone or something, but even in such a case it is my personal choice. I can want to choose what someone else chooses, but nobody and nothing can force me to want what I do not want or to not want what I do want. Obviously, as we pointed out above, someone or something can induce me, condition me, try to force me to change an act of my free will, yet no circumstance has the power to execute such a radical determination so to be able, without my agreement, to change the act of my wanting, an act of my free will, i.e., "I want." This act belongs to my "I" and reveals my self-governance, which is a result of my self-possession. Medieval philosophers discussed this self-governance by describing the person as *incommunicabilis*. Hence, the consequence of self-possession is self-governance. Wojtyła writes: "Self-possession has as its consequence still another relation that occurs in the very structure of man as a person and is most strictly connected with the will. It is the relation of self-governance, which is indispensable for the understanding and the interpretation of self-determination. Self-governance may also be expressed in terms of a specific complex whole: the person is, on the one hand, the one who

²⁰"In virtue of his self-governance and self-possession man deserves the designation of 'somebody' regardless whether he has this distinctive structure actually or only virtually. Thus man is somebody from the very moment of his coming into existence as also when and if something intervenes and prevents his fulfillment of himself in actions, that is to say, if his mature actualization of self-governance and self-possession was to be prevented. That the designation 'somebody' is appropriate to man can be deduced also in an analysis of man's being and not only from the experience of the person's transcendence." *The Acting Person*, p. 180.

²¹*The Acting Person*, p. 151. For more information, see "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" in *Person*, pp. 214–15, and "The Person: Subject and Community," pp. 228–32.

governs himself and, on the other, the one who is governed."²² Self-possession is the fundamental structure. Self-governance is realized only there where we encounter self-possession; after all, governing is conditioned by possessing. Self-determination, however, requires both self-possession and self-governance.

In the structure of the person, especially in its fundamental layer, i.e., in self-possession, we can experience our free will. Each act of "I want" is experienced in a lived experience (to use the German term, *Erlebnis*), and is placed between "I can" and "I do not have to." Thus the whole arrangement of lived experiences could be described according to the pattern: "I can" although "I do not have to," but "I want." In such an experience free will expresses itself. Each choice is my sovereign decision and springs out of a personal human I.²³ In *The Acting Person* we read: "Indeed, it is impossible to understand or interpret the will except within the personal structure. It is only in this structure that it operates and can manifest its true nature. In non-personal beings, whose dynamism is achieved solely at the level of nature, there are no reasons for the existence of the will."²⁴

Therefore, in a human being only the personal dynamism reveals freedom. "Reactivity"—a dynamism proper to the human body—and "emotivity"—a dynamism proper to the human psyche—are not subject to human free will. By no act of free will can one, for instance, change his or her high blood pressure or stop some longing for something. One can say: these are my acts, but they are not generated by my human I, although they belong to a concrete human I. A human entity is a "territory" in which they can occur, but they do not spring from that person. It is very difficult to translate this thought into English because of the different structure of sentences. In the original language Wojtyła uses the first person pronoun ("me"). In order to explain this specific human experience, it may be necessary to bend the rules of grammar. To illustrate this point, let us use the image of someone who tries to give up smoking. After a certain amount of time he could have such an experience: there is a strong desire to smoke within me, and yet I do not want to do it and decide not to do it. The first experience we can name by using the term "an actual inclination" but the second one we will describe as an "actual human act." Acts are identified with my free decisions "I want" and "I choose," whereas various actual inclinations occur within "me" without engaging my free will. In actual inclinations (of body and psyche) the personal dynamism is absent, but in an actual human action ("I want" and "I choose") the personal dynamism reveals itself. Hence, the dynamisms of "reactivity" and "emotivity" we can describe as actual inclinations, but personal dynamisms we should describe as "actual human acts."²⁵

²²*The Acting Person*, p. 106. "'Self-governance' is here used in a different sense than the 'self-control' of colloquial speech; self-control is the power to control oneself and applies only to one of the functions of the dynamism appropriate to man, to one of his powers or virtues, or to a set of these. Self-governance, on the other hand, is something far more fundamental and far more strictly related to the inner personal structure of man who differs from all other structures and all other existents in that he is capable of governing himself. Thus self-governance is man's power to govern himself and not only to control himself." Ibid., pp. 106–07.

²³Ibid., pp. 105–07.

²⁴Ibid., p. 107.

²⁵Ibid., esp. chap. 5: "Integration and the Soma," and chap. 6: "Integration and the Psyche."

What we here call a "human free act" and the action of deciding ("I want," "I will," "I choose") is the same act; it is a consciously made choice. Not every act, however, can be observed from outside. Thus, we have to distinguish two types of human acts: an inner (internal) act (*actus internus*), and an outer (external) act (*actus externus*).²⁶

Another important aspect that characterizes a human act is its simultaneous transitivity and intransitivity. On the one hand, a human act is transitive because it takes place in time; e.g., an act of theft may take ten minutes, or an act of rescuing a child from a fire may take up twenty minutes; the act is then over and gone. On the other hand, each of these acts remains within the one who does them. Through the first deed one constitutes himself or herself as a thief, and through the second as a hero. A human being, in an ethical sense, constitutes himself or herself by his or her acts ("I want").

Self-fulfillment of a human person is achieved with each of his or her acts. It is so in the field of ontology. However, when we enter into the domain of axiology, that fulfillment would come about only by the realization of a positive value; by contrast, the realization of an evil (i.e., a negative value) would lead to non-fulfillment of the self. To be fulfilled, after all, is possible only in a positive way; the negative way, on the contrary, brings contradiction to self-fulfillment and is self-non-fulfillment. Man, when acting in a good manner "constitutes" himself as a good man; by doing evil deeds he becomes wicked. This is achieved on the basis of self-determination.²⁷

What is a true good to man is revealed to him by conscience. Conscience, however, is no lawmaker; it does not create the moral norms, as Kant argued. The duty of conscience is to discover genuine moral values in the objective order of morality or law.²⁸

IV

Now we may ask: What does freedom mean for a personal being? Taking into account what was said previously we must state that we cannot talk about freedom on the level of the corporal or the psychical, that is, within the realm of somatic and psychic dynamisms. Man is free as a person and he reveals his freedom within the domain of the personal dynamism of "I want." Where there is freedom, there is also responsibility; these two realities are strictly connected. Hence, we speak

²⁶Ibid., pp. 114–15.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 150–55. "This is a very real problem. In some sense, it is even the most profound and basic of all the problems that must be addressed in an analysis of the personal subjectivity of the human being. In the dynamic structure of this subjectivity the tendency toward the fulfillment of oneself, a tendency that lies at the root of all human *operari*, particularly actions, testifies simultaneously to contingency and auto-teleology. The tendency toward the fulfillment of oneself shows that this self is somehow incomplete, and although the incompleteness and contingency of this being are not synonymous, the former may be reduced to the latter. This same tendency also points to auto-teleology, because the aim of this being—a *suppositum* that experiences itself as incomplete—is the fulfillment of itself; self fulfillment." "The Person: Subject and Community" in *Person*, pp. 232–33.

²⁸*The Acting Person*, p. 165. For more information see "The Person: Subject and Community" in *Person*, pp. 232–36.

about responsibility for the acts that are our choices ("I want"). Nobody, however, is thought responsible for having a particular longing for something or for having high blood pressure (unless he or she made it high on purpose, for instance, by making a certain free decision). We are responsible for the choices that result from what "I want," and these choices are the fruits of human personal dynamism.

In the personal structure of man we recognize self-possession, which is experienced in the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of "I want." At the same time, the act that flows from "I want" reveals to us a free will that is proper to the human being. We face, then, the problem that is essentially connected with the question of whether possessing a free will is equal to being free? The answer to this question that is given by Wojtyła seems to be negative. This solution appears very sensible. Otherwise neither freedom nor constraint could be explained. Asserting that freedom consists solely in possessing a free will does not allow for the possibility of showing the difference between freedom and constraint, because according to this understanding, when one chooses "A," he is free because in this choice free will manifests itself, and when one chooses "B" he is also free. Choosing goodness is free, and choosing evil is free as well. Thus, there arises the question: When is man not free, and when does man lose his freedom? According to this way of thinking, man is compulsorily free, and such a statement is a contradiction in itself.

Wojtyła's doctrine says that man is endowed with a free will, which is a means through which man can achieve either a state of freedom or of constraint. Thus, freedom is not something that one can obtain once and for all. It is rather something that an individual has to struggle for constantly. What we possess is a free will; freedom is a state that we can achieve by constant striving for what is genuinely good, since freedom is strictly connected with the truth. Man's duty is to find the truth about the good and to follow it, while rejecting any and all falsehood. Choosing the truth, man is actually choosing goodness, and by choosing goodness he becomes good. In this way man confirms himself in his humanity—he becomes more fully himself. By taking care of her child, for instance, a mother confirms herself as a mother and becomes "more" of a mother; on the contrary, a woman who would neglect her child would, in effect, deny her motherhood and would become "less" of a mother. Thanks to free will one has the opportunity to confirm oneself and thereby attain to one's fullest humanity, one's true essence. Wojtyła writes:

For human freedom is not accomplished nor exercised in bypassing truth but, on the contrary, by the person's realization and surrender to truth. The dependence upon truth marks out the borderlines of the autonomy appropriate to the human person. But, in addition, the human person has the "right" to freedom, not in the sense of unconditioned existential independence, but insofar as freedom is the core of person's self-reliance that essentially relates to the surrender to truth. It is the moral freedom that more than anything else constitutes the spiritual dynamism of the person. Simultaneously it also shows us the fulfilling as well as the non-fulfilling dynamism of the person. The criterion of division and contraposition is simply the truth that the person, as somebody equipped with spiritual dynamism, fulfills himself through reference to, and by concretization within himself of, a real good a not otherwise. The dividing line, the line of separation

and contraposition between good as a positive moral value and evil as a negative moral "countervalue" is marked out by "truth," the unique type of truthfulness of the good of which man has the experience in his conscience. It is this truth that constitutes the person in his transcendence with respect to the reality of his own existential conditions; thus the transcendence of freedom with respect to the various existential conditions passes into such a transcendence of morality itself.²⁹

Human freedom is not simply freedom "from" but freedom "towards" because in this understanding freedom is not mere independence; it is rather dependent on truth, and one finds knowledge of this truth in one's conscience. The dynamic structure of self-determination discloses the fact that man is given as a task to himself.

The fact that man is subordinate to truth testifies that man is not only a physical entity but also a spiritual being.³⁰ The connection and subordination of man to truth, to responsibility, to goodness Wojtyła calls the transcendence of man. It is by the discovery of this transcendence that we discover the spiritual element constituting a human being. In *The Acting Person* we read:

Thus we come to the conclusion that the evidence of the spiritual nature of man stems in the first place from the experience of the person's transcendence in the action. . . . By "spiritual" we mean indeed an immaterial factor which is inherently irreducible to matter. The interpretation of spirituality through the negation of materiality presupposes, however, also a positive view of spirituality itself, to be found in the idea of the transcendence of the person. In point of fact, we may easily observe that everything of which the person's transcendence in the action consists, and which constitutes this transcendence, is in this sense spiritual. Since this, as we saw, is within the reach of the phenomenological insight, the acceptance of the spiritual nature of man in its authentic manifestations is not a result of some abstraction but, if one may say so, has its intuitional shape; spirituality is open to intuition as well as to an unfolding analysis. This shape, the shape of transcendence, is in concrete that of human existence: it is of human life itself. Man as the person both lives and fulfills himself within the perspective of transcendence. Is it not freedom, obligation, and responsibility which allows us to see that not only truthfulness but also the person's surrender to truth in judging as well as in acting constitute the real and concrete fabric of the personal life of man? Indeed, it is on them that . . . the entire phenomenological structure of self-governance and self-possession is based. In tracing that expressive whole of the experience of man we cannot limit our quest to an acknowledgment of the manifestations of spirituality without seeking to reach its roots. In point of fact, it appears that all manifestations of the spiritual nature of man lead by the thread of their genesis to show the real immanence of spirit and of the spiritual element in man. Man could not exhibit the spiritual element of his nature had he not in some way been a spirit himself. This viewpoint refers to the fundamental principles of understanding the whole of reality: the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.³¹

²⁹*The Acting Person*, pp. 154–55.

³⁰E. Stein wrote: "And when we called the person a carrier of a rational nature, we evidently also claimed for it a spiritual nature, for *spirit* and *reason* seem to be inseparably linked." Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: an Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. K. F. Reinhardt (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), p. 360.

³¹*The Acting Person*, pp. 181–82.

Agere sequitur esse proclaims classical metaphysics and anthropology. By exploring the experience of the free human act Wojtyła defends the spiritual element of a human being.³²

V

Although man regularly experiences his ontological complexity, he can simultaneously experience his unity. Man manifests himself as a unity and at the same time as a complexity in his dynamisms. The data coming from the experience of his dynamisms tell him of both: that under his personal dynamism, which reveals itself in each act of "I want" and in each inclination of his nature ("something-happens-in-me") lies one and the same *suppositum*, a human being. The two-fold dynamism does not testify against man's unity; rather, it proves his complexity. Complexity does not necessarily mean disintegrated plurality; on the contrary, in the experience of a human being we can recognize an integrated unity. Although only acts of "I want" (springing from a human I) come from the personal source and all other inclinations ("something-happens-in-me") do not spring from this I, nevertheless the latter group also belongs to a certain individual human being and not to any other concrete human I. These are my longings for something, my process of digestion, the activity of my lungs, and so on. Wojtyła writes:

Man experiences himself as the agent of his action and is thus its subject. He also has the experience of himself as the subject, but the experience of subjectiveness differs from that efficacy. Moreover, the human being also experiences all that only happens in him. While in the experience of subjectiveness there is certain passivity, the experience of efficacy—being intrinsically active—determines the human action. Nevertheless, every action contains a synthesis of efficacy and the subjectiveness of human ego. Insofar as efficacy may be viewed as the domain where transcendence manifests itself, integration is manifested in subjectiveness.³³

The dynamism "of the element of spirit" (the dynamism of the personal "I" compared with the somatic dynamism and the psychological dynamism) appears to be transcendent as well as integrating. Thanks to this both the somatic and psychic dynamisms, although in different ways, belong to one and the same individual human person. Therefore, although the results of psychological dynamism and somatic dynamism are not identified with a specially human act, they are in a certain way contained in a human person and can be integrated into the specifically human acts of that person. They testify to an individual's unity as a single human being. On this theme Wojtyła writes:

The crucial fact in the total experience of man is that it is in action that the whole psychosomatic complexity develops into the specific person-action unity. This unity has precedence relatively to both that complexity and the psycho-physical unity, if the somatic unity is understood as

³²For more information, see Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, 75–89; Edith Stein, especially chap. 4 and chap. 7; M. A. Krapiec, *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, especially chap. 4, trans. M. Lescoe, A Woznicki, Th. Sandok et al. (New Britain CT: Mariel, 1983).

³³*The Acting Person*, p. 191.

a kind of sum total of the somatic and the psychical as well as of their appropriate natural dynamisms. Action comprises the multiplicity and diversity of the dynamisms that belong to the soma and to the psyche. In relation to them action constitutes that superior dynamic unity. This is, in fact, what the integration of the person in the action—as the complementary aspect of transcendence—consists in; for the human action is more than a sum of those other dynamisms; it is a *new and superior type of dynamism*, from which the others receive a new meaning and a new quality that is properly personal. They do not possess this meaning and this quality on their own account and, insofar as they are but the natural dynamisms of the psyche and the soma, they attain these only in the *action of the person*.³⁴

In this description, it could seem that the dynamisms belonging to man's psyche and soma disappear. But such an opinion would be a misunderstanding, because it is simply that these dynamisms are truly together in one and the same person. It does not mean that either of them ceases to be distinct. On the contrary, each exists in its own right and together they contribute to the reality of the human person's action. The dynamisms of psyche and soma participate in a different way in each specific human action. To explain this problem Wojtyła writes:

For instance, when an action involves a definite movement of the body as the visible element of its individual character, then the somatic dynamisms, without which the movement would be impossible, collaborate to produce the action. On the other hand, we know from experience that when the action is wholly internal and consists, let us say, in making the final decision on some important issue, then the different psychical dynamisms of an emotional nature play their role in the individual character of the action and determine its concrete form.³⁵

To conclude, we may add that the psyche and soma dynamisms being integrated with the personal dynamism receive a new person dignity. Belonging, although in different ways, to a particular human I, they constitute, in this sense, a three-folded human dynamism; they establish the dynamic make-up of a human entity.

VI

Andrzej Poltawski, a great Polish philosopher, a student and colleague of Roman Ingarden, and a friend of Karol Wojtyła, writes that fundamental to Wojtyła's philosophy there are two realities: "I am acting" and "something-is-happening-in-me." These realities are, more or less, present in the philosophy of Aristotle as *agere* and *pati*, but his philosophy does not fully take into account the lived experience of these phenomena.³⁶ The "I am acting" experience is something that Karol Wojtyła calls, in accordance with the Thomistic tradition, a specifically human act, and thus he differentiates it from the experience of "something-is-happening-in-me."

Another important aspect of Wojtyła's philosophy lies in pointing out that human acts spring from a human I, while other actual inclinations occurs within a man, so

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 197.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 198.

³⁶A. Poltawski, *Realizm fenomenologiczny. Husserl-Ingarden-Stein-Wojtyła. Odczyty i rozprawy* (Torun, Poland: Rolewski), pp. 295–98.

they belong to him but are not produced by the human I. This distinction is crucial. Wojtyła discerns a difference between two things: one is "I want" (in Polish: "ja chce") and the other "a-wanting-that-occurs-in-me" (in Polish: "chce mi się"), e.g., "a desire to smoke occurs in me" but it is not my personal choice; I do not want this, but it does occur in me. We can easily see that in one sentence the term "I" is present, but in the other the personal pronoun "me" is the object and not the subject of the sentence.³⁷ Admittedly, in this short article I do not try to take into account the role of conscience, although that is a related topic in the thought of Wojtyła.

Often we philosophers try to make careful distinctions, but we are invariably under the influence of language. We may not discern certain realities because of the structure of our own language. This seems to have happened to Husserl, whose intention was to "put into brackets" all extraneous influences, including cultural factors. Yet he said that in every lived experience the "pure ego" (*reine Ich*) is present.³⁸ His assistant, Edith Stein, wrote:

Husserl says of the pure ego that it has no content and cannot be described as it is in itself. . . . This means, then, that the pure ego is alive in every such statement as "I perceive," "I think," "I draw conclusions," "I am experiencing joy," "I desire," etc. and, furthermore, that the pure ego in one way or another tends toward what is perceived, thought, desired, etc. . . . Right now the important thing is to make it clear that the pure ego is alive in every experience and cannot be eliminated from it. . . . Every experience is part of the pure ego; the pure ego is alive in every experience.³⁹

Hence, I cannot agree with Husserl. Karol Wojtyła has disclosed some experiences in which the pure ego is absent, even though these inclinations do belong to the same ego. Let us take a final example. I might be sitting and thinking about a plan for a family vacation. I might describe this action thus: "I am thinking." Yet, after a few moments, unknowingly I become immersed in thoughts about my childhood, my school vacations, my parents, my friends. After a certain time, as if woken up, I ask myself: what am I doing? Different thoughts occurred in me, different from what I intended to have. During this specific time I was seized by thoughts. They were not the result of my personal acts, for they did not come from my free choice but simply occurred in me; nevertheless they belong in a certain way to me.

In conclusion, we can state that Wojtyła's keen mind allowed him to discern something that is very difficult to describe but extremely important for appreciating the structure of personal freedom.

³⁷In the English edition of *The Acting Person* the chapter entitled "Roznorodność przeżyć 'ja chce' i 'chce mi się'" was translated as "Self-Determination and the Distinction between the Experience of 'I will' and 'I am willing.'" In the English text "I" is present in both parts of the sentence: "I will" and "I am willing," whereas in the original text "I" is present in only the first part ("ja chce" = English: "I will" [in my translation instead of "I will" is used "I want"]). In the second part of the sentence in Polish, instead of "ja" = "I" the phrase "mi" = "me" is used. In the English translation, however, in both parts "I" is used. (The Polish phrase "chce mi się" is translated as "I am willing"). See *The Acting Person*, p. 110.

³⁸Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zur einer Reiner Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Halle, 1913), p. 160.

³⁹Edith Stein, p. 48.