

## The Foundations of the Human Person's Dynamism in Karol Wojtyła's Anthropology. A Study in Light of "The Acting Person"

**TOMASZ DUMA**

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

laertios@kul.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-6313-0588

**Abstract:** In traditional anthropology, the problem of the dynamism of the human being was explained by means of human faculties that were seen as distinct from one another on the basis of the activities of man. Having accepted that the traditional approach is well-known and thoroughly elaborated, Karol Wojtyła proposed a complementary approach, enhancing the classical explanation of human dynamism by following the basic intuition of the person who reveals himself in action. In this article, through several steps, the author presents the framework of the basic thesis of Karol Wojtyła's anthropology, which claims that the action performed by man includes the truth about not only his personal dynamism, but also the very subject of that dynamism itself, that is, the human person. The author shows Wojtyła's stance beginning with the distinction of personal action made against the background of other forms of human dynamism. Then, he describes Wojtyła's methods of explanation in reference to the Aristotelian theory of act and potency. Continuing, he analyzes the problem of causativeness of action, which will turn out to be crucial for understanding man as a person. Finally, he sketches Wojtyła's conception of the fulfillment of man through his action.

**Keywords:** action, dynamism, Karol Wojtyła, man, person

The dynamism of the human being in contemporary philosophy is usually explained "from the outside" – that is on the basis of external experience which, additionally, is seen mostly in the light of the natural sciences. Nevertheless, human actions in the spheres of the intellect, morality, art, relations to other people, as well as to society, to the world, to God, and to a spiritual reality, evade narrow scientific explanations. It is needless to say that the experience of man is not limited to the external dimension.<sup>1</sup> There is a huge realm of the human inner experience which escapes the methods of natural sciences. However, few thinkers are able to approach man from both perspectives. In this context, it seems reasonable to follow Karol Wojtyła, who proves that the only way to avoid reductionism in the cognizing of the human

---

<sup>1</sup> For ease of reading and consistency with the text studied, the author has made the conscious decision to use the word "man" and pronoun "his" throughout the article, following the lead of Karol Wojtyła in *The Acting Person*, where "man" (in Polish: człowiek) is used to mean "human being."

person's dynamism, is to rest on the most broadly understood experience. As such, the human action is the crucial area of insight into everything that constitutes the very human being of man. Generally, this action can be described as the "personhood<sup>2</sup> dynamism." The investigation of the foundations of the human dynamism in Wojtyła's theory will be sketched here as this is a huge prevalent theme of his whole anthropology. First, I will try to identify the area of dynamism specific for the human person. Then, I will talk about the method of explaining it and about the source of this kind of dynamism. And later, I will touch upon its role in the fulfilment of the human person.

## 1. Identifying the Dynamism of Person

Wojtyła took the notion of dynamism from the philosophy of Aristotle who had understood the term *dynamis* [Gr. *δύναμις*] very broadly as strength, power, mightiness, ability, potentiality or a potential state.<sup>3</sup> In Latin, the term *potentia* was accepted as the equivalent of Greek *dynamis*; the word *potentia* has basically a narrower meaning, though it also means "power" or "faculty." This was reflected in the Polish understanding of those two terms. According to Wojtyła, one difference between them is that in reference to man the term "dynamism" expresses "actual dynamization of man-subject which issues from within and may have the form either of acting or of happening" while "potentiality" indicates "the source itself of this [actual] dynamization of the subject" that "is inherent (...) in the subject."<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, Wojtyła reminds us, *potentia* described a faculty in the sense of power or else the center possessing this power and having it at its disposal. According to Wojtyła, this problem is well-known and has been thoroughly examined by traditional anthropology. That is why he suggests another way: following "the basic intuition of (...) person as he manifests himself in actions [and through actions]."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The author uses the word "personhood" as an adjective or adjective clause throughout the paper, to better express the full meaning of the Polish word "osobowy," which describes a person more profoundly than "osobowościowy" or "osobowość" (personality). "Personhood" indicates properties that are essential, innate and unreservedly due to the human person.

<sup>3</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1019a15–1019b20; 1045b35–1048a20; Weidemann, "Dynamis," 139–144.

<sup>4</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 86. In square brackets there are words which are missing in *The Acting Person*, but they are present in the Polish edition: *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*; also on the basis of the above-mentioned Polish edition, the English translations taken from *The Acting Person* will be corrected if necessary. About the difficulties concerning English translation see: Jałoch-Palicka, *Osoba i czyn, 'The Acting Person'*, Jaroszyński, *Wojtyła: tomista czy fenomenolog?*

<sup>5</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 88. (In this and other quotations, the article "the" in front of the word "person" is omitted. Since, according to Wojtyła, every man, at each stage of his life, is a person, the word "person" in its general meaning should not be preceded by "the" just like the word "man.")

Referring to a broadly understood experience, in the spirit of Aristotle, Wojtyła conceives dynamism as any form of act, movement, change, passing from one state to another, self-realization or self-fulfillment of being. It seems that Wojtyła shares with Aristotle the view that dynamism is one of the basic manifestations of the beingness of things, so in the light of that, the analysis of dynamism appears as the adequate way of cognition of the nature of beings which is revealed exactly by the acts characteristic of a given being. However, unlike Aristotle, Wojtyła was focused on the dynamism of man – in this dynamism, he saw the right way to pierce into the inward dimension of the human being. At the beginning the field of analysis should be precisely defined, the more so as man shares many aspects of dynamism with the world of nature and within such a wide scope the insight into the inner dimension of man would be virtually impossible.

The proper field of analysis is encircled with what Wojtyła calls “the experience of man.” In his view it is the richest of all human experiences but at the same time – the most complex. This experience is based on the cognitive contact with oneself, which is present in any other experience, since man “never experiences anything external without having at the same time the experience of himself.”<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that such experience is limited to solely subjective insight into his own inwardness. Thanks to objectivization, which embraces mental acts of distinguishing and classifying, such experience can be enriched by the experience of other people and thus it is possible to arrive at “the stabilization of the object of experience” which makes it possible to extract from the innumerable multiplicity of facts whereby “man acts” their basic sameness described as “the same person–action relation.”<sup>7</sup> The “experience of man” engages both the senses and the mind and it includes simultaneously, at least at its initial stage, the inner as well as the outer experience – both make up the whole of realized cognition.<sup>8</sup> Man’s apprehension of himself in such cognition has a character of the Aristotelian induction (Gr. *ἐπαγωγή*)<sup>9</sup> that makes it possible to grasp in complex and rich multiplicity what is essential for a being under scrutiny.

Wojtyła claims that in so-conceived total experience, man’s subjectiveness is given and it reveals a close relation between efficient cause and action, person and action.<sup>10</sup> The revealing takes place in consciousness within which there comes the objectivization of the efficacy-subjectiveness relation. By “consciousness” we mean, first of all, (a reflective) self-knowledge whose character is “intentional, ob-

<sup>6</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 14: “The transition from the multiplicity and complexity of ‘factual’ data to the grasping of their essential sameness (...) is achieved by induction. (...) Induction consists in grasping mentally the unity of meaning from among the multiplicity and complexity of phenomena.”

<sup>8</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 105a10–19.

<sup>10</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 19.

jectivizing, oriented towards 'I' as an object in its particular contents, potentials and qualities."<sup>11</sup> In contrast to self-knowledge, a person's consciousness as such in its act of self-reference (called by Wojtyła "self-consciousness") is non-objectivizing, non-intentional, not oriented towards "I" as object, but it is experiencing and accompanying any act in or of "I"; thanks to consciousness and self-consciousness subjectivization takes place, which means the operation strictly connected with one's own *ego* as the subject that is the core of lived experience. In the lived experience, the fact "I act" is given and, according to Wojtyła, this fact includes the whole experience of action.<sup>12</sup>

The fulfillment (performance) of action by a person is called by Wojtyła the "basic personalistic value" which contains all that constitutes a doer of action – that is a person. The author of *The Acting Person* does not mean here axiology (that is a moral value of the performed action) but the ontology of person who actualizes himself through action. Though the experience of morality is considered by Wojtyła an integral part of the experience of man, he consciously takes into parentheses this aspect (explained by ethics) and concentrates on the reality of person.<sup>13</sup> The experience of efficacy of the human acts makes it possible to distinguish two basic kinds of acts – *actus hominis* and *actus humanus* – known as Wojtyła's own equivalent distinction between "something is happening in man" and "man acts." Although both types of acts are subjected in man, they differ: the first one is based exclusively on the ontic, substantial subject (*suppositum*) while the second one enters this level of subjectiveness which is called "conscious 'I'." So there is a basic difference between those two kinds of human dynamism. Only in the case of "man acts" dynamism we have to do with the fact of man being the efficient cause of his own action, which means that only such action should be taken up as the proper field of investigation of the dynamism characteristic of the human person. The basic distinctive feature of the human person's dynamism is the primacy of consciousness in relation to action, which amounts to the fact that any dynamism bearing a character of personhood is reflected in consciousness.<sup>14</sup> However, this does not mean that consciousness is the starting point of explaining the human acting – such a procedure, as Wojtyła claims, "would from the first be doomed to inadequacy."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Chudy, *Rozwój filozofowania a „pułapka refleksji,”* 81.

<sup>12</sup> See Jaworski, "Koncepcja antropologii filozoficznej," 117–120.

<sup>13</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 91. See also Maryniarczyk, "Spór o rozumienie człowieka," 93–96.

## 2. The Method of Explaining the Dynamism of Person

According to Wojtyła, the experientially given fact “man acts” includes in itself the truth about the personhood dynamism of man and about the human person himself. Therefore the correlation between the efficient cause (person) and his acting (action) should be analyzed, because the experiential fact of acting discloses the truth about the author of the acting – that is about person. That’s why Karol Wojtyła considers “a study of person through his action” to be the primary objective of his main anthropological work *The Acting Person*. First of all, it is crucial to establish the efficacy of action, which will make it possible to discover the truth about man as the subject of conscious and free action (*actus humanus et voluntarius*). The moment of efficacy, given most fully in the lived experience “I am the efficient cause,” uncovers both the structure of the action itself and the structure of the subject of action – the structure in turn reveals the causal relation between person and his act; the sign of this causal relation is a person’s lived experience of owning his action and being responsible for it.<sup>16</sup> In order to identify the moment of efficacy Wojtyła, just as when analyzing the “experience of man,” refers to Aristotelian induction which he complements with phenomenological analysis, and on the basis of that, he arrives at the objectivization of the experientially given fact “man acts,” extracting from it regular immutable components.<sup>17</sup> Thus achieved “data” describing the human action are then subjected to metaphysical reduction which makes it possible to discover the reasons that stand at the basis of the human dynamism.<sup>18</sup> For Wojtyła, the Aristotelian category of *actus et potentia* is the most adequate method to grasp the basic features and structures of any form of dynamism, as this category embraces the states of being without which any real dynamism could not exist. “Indeed – says Wojtyła – we do not know and we do not have as yet any other conceptions and any other language which would adequately render the dynamic essence of change – of all change whatever occurring in any being – apart from this only conception and this only language that has been given to us by the philosophy of *potentia-actus*.”<sup>19</sup>

The category of *actus* means realization (actualization) of dynamism – that is an actualization of a potency – as well as achievement of a given perfection of a being; also it means the causal factor of dynamism – that is, in the ultimate sense, a given being in act. The category of *potentia*, in turn, means a potential state of a being which can be realized and which is indispensable for any dynamism to take place. For dynamism is nothing else but a being’s passing from the state of potency to the state of act. The two moments of the dynamism of being – act and potency – are strictly

<sup>16</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> See Duma, “Personalism in the Lublin School of Philosophy,” 373.

<sup>18</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 113. (The translation of the quotation comes from Jałocho-Palicka, “Thomas Aquinas’ Philosophy of Being,” 145.)

correlated, so one cannot be understood without the other and one explains the other. The basic laws which rule those two factors of being (act and potency) were discovered by Aristotle. These laws include the following: the primacy of act before potency (temporal, conceptual, substantial), the limitation of act by the correlated potency, and belonging of act and potency in the same category of being.<sup>20</sup>

Not going into a detailed explanation of the human action by act and potency theory, Wojtyła recalls the main principle that results, as St. Thomas Aquinas proved, from actual-potential structure of the dynamism of being – this principle says that acting follows being (*doing follows being*) – *operari sequitur esse*.<sup>21</sup> Thus Wojtyła stresses the existential aspect of being and acting which is conceptualized and expressed by *actus* and *potentia* categories. They are the names of the “two different states of being correlative to the two different forms of existence”; also the very process of actualization is grasped by those two categories – this process consists in a change in the order of existence, it is “some *fieri*, or in other words, some becoming, not in the absolute sense – this is possible only when something comes into being out of nothingness – but in the relative sense, that is to say, becoming based on an already existing being and from within its inner structure.”<sup>22</sup>

The connection of the dynamism of being with its existence is even more clearly stated in Wojtyła’s further words of the above fragment in *The Acting Person*: “The dynamism of being is intrinsically connected with its very existence and is also the basis for, and the source of, all the structures that may be distinguished in it. Every actualization contains in itself both the potency and the act which is the real fulfillment of the potency; hence it contains them not as two essences but as two interrelated forms of existence. Actualization always implies the following pattern of existences: what exists as a potency may, because it thus exists, come into existence *in actu* and what came into existence *in actu* did so thanks to its previous existence as potency. In actualization potency and act constitute, as it were, the two moments or the two phases of a concrete existence joined together in a dynamic unity.”<sup>23</sup> What follows from this is that there is exclusively one existence of a being, but it has a dynamic character, hence it always finds its “extension” in the being’s acting. In other words, acting (doing) is a secondary act in relation to the act of the existence of a being and therefore a being is the ultimate ground and the indispensable fundament for acting (doing). On the other hand, in the light of act and potency theory, the immediate direct cause of acting must be some potency correlated to the first act of being which is the act of existence, so the actualization of this potency is nothing else but the realization of the existence of a being.

20 For a detailed analysis of that see Krąpiec, *Struktura bytu*, 126–152.

21 S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae*, p. I, q. 75, a. 3.

22 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 64 (corrected trans.).

23 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 64 (corrected trans.).

The ontic connection of acting (doing) with existence makes it necessary for us to concentrate on the analysis of the human *operari* when we want to explain the specificity of the human being. As it was pointed out, the human *operari* not only contains everything that constitutes the dynamism specific to the personal being, but also the basic ontic structure of the human person. We must therefore have a look at how Wojtyła extracts structural moments – first from *operari* itself and then from the subject-person who is the proper efficient cause of the fact “man acts.” Those structural moments make the foundation of the dynamism of the personhood of man.

### 3. The Sources of the Dynamism of Person

In the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic approach, which refers any matter, first of all, to metaphysics, the sources of dynamism were searched in the nature of a given being. In such explanation, based also on act and potency theory, philosophers indicated the necessity of the existence of some definite potencies-faculties, from which there emerges acting (doing) determined by the essence of this being. In this way they discovered the specificity of the personal being who appeared to be the most perfect being in the order of nature – as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out.<sup>24</sup> The specificity was expressed, on the one hand, in the Boethian definition of person – *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia*<sup>25</sup> – which emphasized the individuality and rationality of the human being; and on the other hand, for the same purpose they used a maxim of Roman law, according to which *persona est sui iuris and alteri incommunicabilis*<sup>26</sup> – this sentence indicates the existence of person which is autonomous and nontransferable (incommunicable) to anybody else.<sup>27</sup> Those expressions describe well the natural qualities of the human being; nevertheless, according to the majority of contemporary anthropologists-personalists, they do not grasp well enough the interiority of the personal being, because they are basically founded on the external experience. For this reason, philosophical explanations of the human acting encounter more and more criticism or even marginalization from the particular sciences.

Wojtyła notes that a thorough investigation of the *operari* proper to man makes it possible to show that the experience of the human action includes much more information about the action itself and about its subject than an extensive analysis of the “natural efficacy” mechanism undertaken by the traditional Aristotelian-Thomis-

<sup>24</sup> See S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae*, p. I, q. 29, a. 3, resp.: “persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura.”

<sup>25</sup> Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, ch. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” 192.

<sup>27</sup> See Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, 24–25.

tic anthropology, although that does not mean that Wojtyła undermines the achievements of that anthropology – he simply considers his endeavors as the supplement to it.<sup>28</sup> The author of *The Acting Person* proves first of all that the experience of the *operari* proper to the human person directly indicates personal *esse* which reveals itself in the action as the sole and exclusive efficient cause of the fact “man acts.” This conception does not question but confirms systematic explanations of that anthropology, which, among others, makes it possible to discover a spiritual soul as the reason explaining both the existence of the human being and the actions proper to him, especially those actions which cannot be reduced to organic functions. Profound (mainly reductionistic<sup>29</sup>) analysis of the human action enables us, according to Wojtyła, to learn a lot about the personal *esse*, that is about the very fact of being a person.

Firstly, we learn that the personal *esse* constitutes *sui generis* the particular subjectiveness in which *de facto* there takes place the integration of the ontic subjectiveness – that is of what in classical tradition was called *suppositum* characterized by a unique unrepeatable individuality and the autonomy of existence – with the subjectiveness of the conscious “I” which of its own “power” is capable of acts composing an autonomous action and those acts are not only the direct expression of the subjective “I” but also they constitute this “I.” In the full picture of the human subjectiveness, which reflects the complexity of the human nature, somatic and psychic aspects cannot, of course, be omitted, and especially we cannot skip the whole sphere of emotiveness which is the property of an individual concrete man.<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, together with the discovery of the subjectiveness characteristic of the human “I,” we find out the transcendence of this “I” over all actions caused by it. Transcendence expresses itself not only in the possibility of realizing various actions but also in the irreducibility of this “I” to action; this indicates that the subjectiveness of “I” is precedent over any action done by it, which is revealed to the fullest in the subject’s capability of self-governance that is the crucial feature of personal existence.<sup>31</sup>

Thirdly, the very fact of transcendence called by Wojtyła “vertical” transcendence leads to the conclusion that the mode of existence of personal *esse* is spiritual and thus personal *esse* turns out to be more than an individualized nature (as Boethi-

<sup>28</sup> See Wojtyła, “The Person. Subject and Community,” 274.

<sup>29</sup> The term “reductionistic,” as here used, “has no limiting or diminishing implications; ‘reducere’ [reduce] means to convert to the appropriate ratios or foundations – that is to reason, explain, interpret.” See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 17 (corrected trans.).

<sup>30</sup> See Wojtyła, “The Person. Subject and Community,” 276.

<sup>31</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 119: “Thus conceived transcendence as a property of the dynamism of person can be best explained by comparing it to the dynamism of nature. Self-governance brings in here, first of all, the superior position of one’s own ‘I’. This superior position springing up from self-governance constitutes, as it were, a vertical line. In contrast, there is no such a superior position in an individual who is but the subject of activations coordinated by instinct” (corrected trans.).



us expressed it in his definition of person<sup>32</sup>). Specific fullness ascribed to the notion of person should be understood, according to Wojtyła, “not only [as] concreteness, but rather [as] uniqueness and unrepeatableness.”<sup>33</sup>

Fourthly, a unique character of personal *esse*, as Wojtyła points out, is best expressed in everyday language by the words: “person is somebody,” which brings about a comparison and a juxtaposition to “something” and thus emphasizes a complete difference of person from all the other beings. This difference “penetrates to the very roots of the being who is the subject,” to his very existence (*esse*) which is a personal existence.<sup>34</sup> Since this personal *esse* stands at the foundations of the whole dynamization of the personal being, the *operari*, following it, is marked with the same unique character as *esse* – this *operari*, this action is personal as well.

Ultimately the analysis of the personal action leads to the discovery of the potentialities inherent in the personal existence, which are the basic plane of the personal being's fulfillment.<sup>35</sup> These potentialities are called by Wojtyła the ontic structure of personhood which is the efficient cause of action. At stake here are, first of all, potentialities connected with the faculty of the will which, in the conception of Wojtyła, plays the crucial role in man's efficacy.<sup>36</sup> So let us have a look at it.

The will is “something that allows man to want,” as Wojtyła says. The will's function, as far as the efficacy of action is concerned, is so important, because thanks to it man's freedom exists. For the proper action of the will is the human “I want” located between “I can” but “I don't have to.” Freedom, on the other hand, is this moment which decides not only about the lived experience of efficacy, but also about the constitution of action.<sup>37</sup> This is because freedom plays the role of the center of person's efficacy which conditions self-governance and self-determination – that is, the dependence of the will on one's own “I” or, as Wojtyła puts it, “man's use of

---

<sup>32</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 181: “The notion of spirit and spirituality is often, somewhat one-sidedly, identified with some antithesis to materiality. (...) The interpretation of spirituality through the negation of materiality presupposes, however, a positive view of the spirituality itself. And it is exactly in the transcendence of person that we can find such a view. Everything of which person's transcendence in action consists, and which constitutes it, is the disclosure of his spirituality” (corrected trans.); 131: “Person is not merely an ‘individualized humanness.’ But it is the mode of being that is proper only to humanness (among all other beings of this visible world). This mode of being stems from the fact that the individual existence proper only to humanness is the personal existence” (corrected trans.).

<sup>33</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 123.

<sup>35</sup> See Jastrzębski, “Kardynał Karol Wojtyła koncepcja człowieka,” 131.

<sup>36</sup> Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 100: “The discovery of freedom at the root of the efficacy of person allows us to reach an even more fundamental understanding of man as the dynamic subject. Conformably with our basic experience the totality of the dynamism proper to man is divisible into acting and happening (actions and activations). This distinction rests on the difference between the real participation of the will, as in conscious acting or actions, and the absence of the will. What only happens in man lacks the dynamic element of freedom and thus lacks the experience ‘I can but I don't have to’” (corrected trans.).

his will.”<sup>38</sup> This dependence (on one’s own “I”) is the key moment of the efficacy of the human action – the moment in which not only the action itself is constituted, but also the efficient cause – that is a person – constitutes himself through his action. In the dependence of the will of one’s own “I” it is, first of all, revealed that freedom is the basic structure of the personal being, which is called by Wojtyła “self-governance.” Needless to say, the “I” is not some “self in itself” or some “ego” emanated from consciousness, but it is the personal “I” conditioned by a concrete human nature (that is by humanness).

Thus Wojtyła tries to connect a phenomenological conception of person with the metaphysical concept of nature, proving that the efficacy proper to man is performed in the order of person rather than in the order of nature.<sup>39</sup> In the personal acting there takes place a specific integration of natural acts which are thus subordinated and included into the fulfillment of the personhood of man. We mean here the acts rooted in the psycho-emotive and somato-vegetative potentialities which, thanks to the integration of nature in person, become human actions.<sup>40</sup> Because of the subjection of the personal “I” in nature, “self-governance” needs grounding in other ontic structures of person also connected with the will, in which the will has different functions. These structures are called by Wojtyła “self-owning” and “self-ruling.” Since one can only govern what one really owns, and one can really own what one rules.<sup>41</sup> In the case of self-owning, the will appears as the quality of person while in self-ruling it plays the role of the faculty which man uses. Both aspects make up the moment of decision: “I want,” in which man decides about (governs)

<sup>38</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 121.

<sup>39</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 83–84: “The dynamization of the personal *esse* must lie at the roots of the integration of humanness by person. (...) The human nature constitutes the direct basis for the cohesion of, dynamized in any way from within, man-subject with any kind of his dynamization. Of course, the human nature, as the direct basis of such dynamic cohesion, is the reality that inheres in the subject. But the very subject itself is a person, because it has the personal existence (*esse*). (...) The integration of the human nature, of humanness, in and by person has as its consequence the integration of all the dynamism proper to man in the human person” (corrected trans.).

<sup>40</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 84–85. See also Pala, “Struktura dynamizmu człowieka-osoby,” 143–144.

<sup>41</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 152. Following the suggestions of Jałoch-Palicka (“Thomas Aquinas’ Philosophy of Being”) I have chosen to use her translation of K. Wojtyła’s key concepts such as “self-governance” (samostanowienie), “self-owning” (samo-posiadanie) and “self-ruling” (samo-panowanie). I find them more adequate to their Polish equivalents than the respective translations in *The Acting Person* (in *The Acting Person* “self-determination” is used for “self-governance,” which, among others, obscures the fact that “self-determination” is a separate concept in Wojtyła’s thought and should be used for the Polish “autodeterminacja” – self-determination is but a part of self-governance i.e. sort of the result of the decision taken during the rational and volitional process of self-governance, in self-determination a person determines himself to realize in action his rational and volitional decision; also “self-owning” and “self-ruling” seem more adequate translations than “self-possession” and “self-governance” – “self-ruling” means the ontic structure through which person rules himself and is ruled by himself whether he wants it or not by virtue of this very ontic structure, while self-governance engages conscious cognition and conscious volition; of course, self-governance is made possible due to the ontic structure of self-ruling which in turn rests on self-owning).

his action. So free choice is not only an intentional act, but it is much more the act of self-governance assuming the consciousness of who one is – that is the cognition of the truth about oneself – and the disposition of the will to choose the value which is proportional to this consciousness.<sup>42</sup>

Thus freedom, conceived as self-governance, stands at the basis of person's dynamism. In self-governance the autonomy of person is revealed, and this autonomy is what makes a radical difference between the person and all the other beings of nature. This means that the personal being does not actualize himself only through “reactive” dynamism which consists of the actions resulting exclusively from vegetative or emotional activations, but first of all he actualizes himself through the dynamism of the will that comes from the person himself and could be called, as I. Dec proposes, “being-from-himself” or “belonging-to-himself.”<sup>43</sup> This is why the “fulfillment of action” is closely connected with the “fulfillment of man,” for it is through actions that he realizes his personhood potentialities.

#### 4. Self-fulfillment of Person through Action

The fulfillment (performance) of action by person, being a result of self-governance, involves motivation which is constituted by the value of the good for person as recognized by him and in this way it becomes the object good enough to be desired. The act “I want” appears here as the answer to this value which is determined by the truth about its goodness – and that indicates the will's dependence on the truth.<sup>44</sup> Thus a “new” dynamic factor life of personhood enters a person's realization of his subjectiveness – traditionally this factor is called “reason” and it “directs the person toward his fulfillment in the action not through emotional spontaneity alone but by means of the transcendent relation to [the] truth.”<sup>45</sup> This is why the fulfillment of action always has a moral character where conscience plays the crucial role because in

---

<sup>42</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 109–110: “In self-governance we do not turn to our own ‘I’ as the object, we only actualize, so to speak, ready-made objectiveness of this ‘I’ which is contained in the intra-personal relation of self-ruling and self-owning. (...) The most direct and innermost is the objectiveness of one's own ‘I’ – that is of one's own subject. This subject is made ‘such and such’ by man, because he wants ‘such and such’ object, ‘such and such’ value. At this point we touch the innermost personal reality of action. By forming one's own ‘I’ in one way or another man becomes ‘such and such’ and simultaneously he becomes someone” (corrected trans.).

<sup>43</sup> Dec, *Transcendencia człowieka w przyrodzie*, 189.

<sup>44</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 249: “Efficacy and with it also personhood self-governance are formed through choice and decision, and these presuppose a dynamic relation to [the] truth in the will itself” (corrected trans.).

<sup>45</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 249.

conscience the dependence of action on the truth is revealed.<sup>46</sup> Relation to the truth, which conditions the moral value of action, releases obligation and responsibility and these make up a strictly connected structure “I should – I respond.” Obligation is an expression of the “normative power of the truth,” so it is manifested in a response to (and “for”) values and thus responsibility arises.<sup>47</sup> This is why, as Wojtyła says, “my sense of efficacy as an acting subject in relation to my activity is intimately connected with a sense of responsibility for that activity.”<sup>48</sup> Responsibility is the structure characteristic of the human person solely and it is most intimately woven into man’s acting. First it is characteristic of person from his inside as a responsibility to himself, and then in co-existence and co-acting with others it becomes a responsibility “to somebody.”<sup>49</sup>

The personhood character of action makes the whole man engaged in it and thus integration of various aspects of the human being takes place. The integration is first revealed on the plane of correlation between person and act, where action is not a simple sum of dynamisms but the effect of self-governance. Next there come two other areas of integration – namely psyche and somatics; they are also included into the structure of self-governance and, thanks to that, the “unity” of person and action embraces the whole psyche and somatics of the acting man. As far as the psychic aspect is concerned, integration includes the emotive sphere and the sphere of psychic subjectiveness. On the basis of various forms of emotions – such as desire (concupiscent and irascible appetites), excitement, “stirring emotions” – psychic subjectiveness is created as a result of the integration of those emotions. Wojtyła appreciates the role of emotiveness, because its highest expression is the sensitivity to values. Additionally, the integration of somatics causes the body, together with its reactivity and drives, to become the expression of person.<sup>50</sup> This kind of integration is first of all manifested as the unity of being and the unity of bodily functions.

Thus integration embraces the whole being of man and this is why the fulfillment of actions allows the acting man to realize felicity in the inner and intransitive dimension. For between person and his felicity there is a specific dynamic correlation which is realized through action. The foundation of this correlation should be sought, according to Wojtyła, “within the person himself, in the freedom and truthfulness that are the person’s constitutive features.”<sup>51</sup> Since the fulfillment of person through action “depends on the active and inwardly creative union of

---

46 See Wojtyła, *The Person. Subject and Community*, 286.

47 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 170–171: “Because of obligation the response to values characteristic for the will assumes in [...] person and his actions the form of responsibility for values.”

48 Wojtyła, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” 189.

49 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 174.

50 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 196.

51 Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 176 (corrected trans.).

[the] truth with freedom,” because it is this union that creates the state of the felicity of person.<sup>52</sup>

The fulfillment of action, and the more so the fulfillment of person, is not carried out without relating to other persons who, among other things, help man to read the truth about the good proper to him. Wojtyła talks here about co-acting of persons, describes it as “participation” and he sees in it an important moment in which the connection between person and action is revealed. And he does not exactly refer here to different forms of human relationships, but rather to their basis which inheres in person and is expressed in self-governance resting on transcendence and integration of person in action.<sup>53</sup> Participation, according to Wojtyła, is the feature “in virtue of which man, while existing and acting together with others and thus in various configurations of interhuman and social relations, is able to be himself and fulfill himself.”<sup>54</sup> Thanks to participation, that which decides about the personalistic value can be realized – that is the very fulfillment of action and, contained in it, the simultaneous realization of transcendence and integration of person.<sup>55</sup> Thus participation means, as Wojtyła says, “a property of person himself, that inner and homogenous property which determines that person existing and acting together with others still exists and acts as person.”<sup>56</sup> It is manifested, among others, in choice: “man chooses what others choose and indeed often because others choose it.”<sup>57</sup> He does so, because he recognizes in it his own good through which he can fulfill himself.

Ergo, participation is about such forms of societal life which are shaped through transcendence and integration of person in his action, and that guarantees the community of subjects, which is not only the realm of “acting with others” but also of authentic “co-acting” (cooperation in acting). Those forms of societal life are called “personalism” by Wojtyła and he distinguishes them from individualism and collectivism which, *de facto*, cause the alienation of person. The basis of community within the framework of personalism is common good which integrates it through creating it as a personalistically orientated community with the human person as the center and the purpose of communal life. That is why common good is the only guarantee of the realization of personalistic good of the individual members of a given community. The recognition of common good and accepting it as one’s own

<sup>52</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 175.

<sup>53</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 270: “Acting ‘together with others’ (...) corresponds to (...) transcendence and integration in the action, when man chooses what is chosen by others or even because it is chosen by others – he then identifies the object of his choice with a value that he sees as in one way or another homogeneous and his own. This is connected with self-governance, for self-governance in the case of acting ‘together with others’ contains and expresses participation” (corrected trans.).

<sup>54</sup> Wojtyła, *The Person. Subject and Community*, 289.

<sup>55</sup> See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 326: “participation [as a property of person himself] is responsible for the fact that the person acting together with others fulfills an action and fulfills himself in it.”

<sup>56</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 326.

<sup>57</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 336.

can be carried out only within the framework of transcendence and integration of person in action, thanks to which “man-person is capable not only of partaking in the life of a community, to be and to act together with others; he is also able of participating in the very humanness of others.”<sup>58</sup> In this way, within man the need for love is constituted, which transcends the limits of the relationship towards oneself or even towards one’s relatives and loved ones, and it acquires a universal character of love towards any other person just because he is a human person. Thanks to that, in a personalistic community there can be realized what in Christianity is described as the “love of one’s neighbor.”<sup>59</sup> This means that man fulfills himself as person only through a broadly understood participation thanks to which he can develop his personhood potentialities.

In the light of what has been said, the proper way for man to fulfill himself as person is action whose source is freedom conceived as self-governance. The will, which conditions action, should be submitted to a “mechanism” of self-determination because of its necessary relation to the truth of the good that is the object of choice. This means that reason is an indispensable element of the human dynamism, since it is reason that recognizes the truth (also the truth about the good to be chosen). The relation to the truth decides about the moral character of the human acting whose constitutive properties are: obligation and responsibility. Thanks to transcendence and integration of person in action, somatic and psychic factors are included in the act of choice. The fulfillment of man through action cannot be carried out without relating to other persons, because it is through being and acting together with others that man realizes himself as person.

## Conclusion

The analysis above shows that man’s efficacy is an immensely rich reality. To avoid reductionism and give a full picture of the personhood dimension of human life and man’s efficacy, Wojtyła not only emphasizes the factors that transcend the materiality of man, but also takes into consideration psycho-somatic factors, which do not act for themselves, but enter the structure of the integrated human action both on the plane of the substantial subjectiveness (*suppositum*) and on the personhood plane of causing actions (*actus humanus et voluntarius*). Only from the perspective of the transcendence of the personal subject can we perceive accurately what Wojtyła

---

<sup>58</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 294.

<sup>59</sup> This kind of analysis is also present in the ethical thought of Wojtyła who considered so-called “personalistic norm” as the key principle to guide human morality. In the light of this principle, “the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love” (Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 41).

calls the integration of nature in person and the integration of person in action. Taking this into consideration, Wojtyła does not see any reason why the human action should be narrowed down to the “natural” sphere alone and man deprived of his personhood dimension which decides about his specificity and individuality. And above all, why should the personhood-based character of human action be refused and thus deprived of such distinguishing marks as freedom, obligation and responsibility?

As Wojtyła indicates, in order to avoid reductionism, appropriate methods should be used that would enable us to draw out the wealth of the human efficacy given in everyday human experience. The author of *The Acting Person* is very efficient in connecting the insightful phenomenological analysis of a broadly understood experience with a rational discipline of metaphysical explanations providing the necessary reasons which determine the analyzed states of being. In this way, he describes the specificity of the acting person, which is realized through self-governance, resting on two crucial determinants, or as Wojtyła says, on the two structures of the person's acting, namely on self-owning and self-ruling. The picture of the human dynamism, which emerges from Wojtyła's studies, is thoroughly convincing mainly because of its realism. The richness and depth of the human action expose the richness and depth of the one who causes it – that is of the man-person. The transcendence of man-person, revealed in the human action, finds its completion, not only in man's openness to some everlasting dimension, but also in his conscious relationship to the Absolute Being. It is this relationship that gives the ultimate sense to his existence and acting.

## Bibliography

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (trans. W.D. Ross) <https://emory.instructure.com> [access: 20.11.2019].
- Aristotle, *Topics* (trans. A.W. Pickard) <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/topics.html> [access: 28.11.2020].
- Boethius, A.M.S., *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* (PL 64).
- Chudy, W., *Rozwój filozofowania a „pułapka refleksji”. Filozofia refleksji i próby jej przezwyciężenia* [*The Development of Philosophizing and the 'Trap of Reflection'. The Philosophy of Reflection and the Attempts to Overcome It*], 2 ed. (Lublin: RW KUL 1995).
- Crosby, J.F., *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America 1996).
- Dec, I., *Transcendencja człowieka w przyrodzie. Ujęcie Mieczysława A. Krąpca OP i kard. Karola Wojtyły* [*The Transcendence of Man in Nature. The Conceptions of Mieczysław A. Krąpiec OP and card. Karol Wojtyła*] (Wrocław: PWT 2011).
- Duma, T., “Personalism in the Lublin School of Philosophy (Card. Karol Wojtyła, Fr. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec)” *Studia Gilsoniana* 5/2 (2016) 365–390.

- Jałoch-Palicka, M., “Osoba i czyn, ‘The Acting Person’ – ingerencje redaktorskie i problemy przekładu [Osoba i czyn, *The Acting Person* – Editorial Interferences and the Problems of Translation],” *Wokół antropologii Karola Wojtyły [Around the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła]* (ed. Maryniarczyk et al.) (Zadania Współczesnej Metafizyki [Tasks of the Contemporary Metaphysics] 18; Lublin: PTTA 2016) 155–188.
- Jałoch-Palicka, M., “Thomas Aquinas’ Philosophy of Being as The Basis for Wojtyła’s Concept and Cognition of Human Person,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014) 127–153.
- Jaroszyński, P., “Wojtyła: tomista czy fenomenolog? [Wojtyła: A Thomist or Phenomenologist?],” *Wokół antropologii Karola Wojtyły [Around the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła]* (ed. Maryniarczyk et al.) (Zadania Współczesnej Metafizyki [Tasks of the Contemporary Metaphysics] 18; Lublin: PTTA 2016) 73–88.
- Jastrzębski, A., “Kardynała Karola Wojtyły koncepcja człowieka [Cardinal Karol Wojtyła’s Concept of the Human Being],” *Teologia i Człowiek* 12 (2008) 123–137.
- Jaworski, M., “Koncepcja antropologii filozoficznej w ujęciu Karola Wojtyły [Cardinal Karol Wojtyła’s Conception of Philosophical Anthropology],” *Wokół antropologii Karola Wojtyły [Around the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła]* (ed. Maryniarczyk et al.) (Zadania Współczesnej Metafizyki [Tasks of the Contemporary Metaphysics] 18; Lublin: PTTA 2016) 103–125.
- Krapiec, M.A., *Struktura bytu. Charakterystyczne elementy systemu Arystotelesa i Tomasza z Akwinu [The Structure of Being. Characteristic Elements of the System of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas]*, 2 ed. (Lublin: RW KUL 1995).
- Maryniarczyk, A., “Spór o rozumienie człowieka [Controversy in Understanding Man],” *Wokół antropologii Karola Wojtyły [Around the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła]* (ed. Maryniarczyk et al.) (Zadania Współczesnej Metafizyki [Tasks of the Contemporary Metaphysics] 18; Lublin: PTTA 2016) 89–100.
- Pala, A., “Struktura dynamizmu człowieka-osoby w antropologii adekwatnej Karola Wojtyły [Structure of Man-Person Dynamism in the Adequate Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła],” *Logos i Ethos* 47/1 (2018) 131–151.
- S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae* (cura et studio P. Caramelli) (Torino: Marietti 1963) I-II.
- Weidemann, H., “Dynamis,” *Aristoteles-Lexikon* (ed. O. Höffe) (Stuttgart: Kröner 2005) 139–144.
- Wojtyła, K., *The Acting Person* (trans. A. Potocki) (Analecta Husserliana 10; Boston: Reidel 1979) (the Polish editions: *Osoba i czyn* [Kraków: PTT 1969]; *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 3 ed. [Lublin: TN KUL 1994]).
- Wojtyła, K., *Love and Responsibility* (trans. H.T. Willetts) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1981).
- Wojtyła, K., “The Person. Subject and Community,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 33/2 (1979) 273–308.
- Wojtyła, K., “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,” *Person and Community* (trans. T. Sandok) (Catholic Thought from Lublin 4; New York: Lang 1993) 187–195.
- Wojtyła, K., *Wykłady lubelskie [The Lublin Lectures]* (Lublin: TN KUL 1986).