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## On the Sources of Karol Wojtyła's *The Acting Person*

**Abstract:** The paper shows that the critical analysis of Max Scheler's and Immanuel Kant's concepts of moral philosophy was a starting point of Karol Wojtyła's own positive project of anthropology presented in the book *The Acting Person*. Its core lies in the recognition of the significance of human efficacy: human persons express and realize their full subjectivity through their actions. Wojtyła shows that genuine human actions are not motivated only by the emotional power with which particular values are given, but rather by the perception of their being true values. In the last analysis, Wojtyła's theory might be described as transphenomenology, that is, a synthesis of phenomenology and metaphysics. According to him, what is immediately given to the subject can be fully explained by categories that transcend direct experience. In this way Wojtyła incorporates his vision of anthropology into a broader metaphysics, at the same time showing that in philosophy one should move from phenomenon to foundation.

**Keywords:** ethics, experience, metaphysics, morality, phenomenology, person, value

*The Acting Person* penned by Karol Wojtyła is a book of a thinker. A contemporary scholar might be surprised while reading the first Polish edition of this book: there are no footnotes. It does not mean, however, that Wojtyła was not aware of the philosophical tradition proceeding him. His previous works, especially the so-called *The Lublin Lectures*, show that he studied very carefully great philosophers of the past and assimilated their heritage. Yet he tried to express it in his own synthesis and in his own language. In this paper, I try to identify the main sources of Wojtyła's philosophy and show their place in his own original synthesis.

## Experience—The First Source of Wojtyła's Philosophy

To understand the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła, it is not enough to read some of his books. One has to make an effort to truly participate in the experiences that underlie his philosophy. Only in this way will we be able to follow the path that the philosopher pointed out to us. Perhaps it is worth recalling here the words that Jacques Maritain addressed to his friends Jerzy Kalinowski and Stefan Świeżawski, professors of the Catholic University of Lublin and authors of the book *La Philosophie A L'Heure Du Concile*.<sup>1</sup> In his letter Maritain wrote:

The misfortune of ordinary scholastic teaching, and above all of textbooks, was the practical neglect of the essential element of intuition and its replacement by pseudo-dialectics of concepts and formulas. Nothing can be done until the intellect begins to see, until the philosopher or a disciple of a philosopher has acquired the intellectual intuition of being.<sup>2</sup>

I quoted the words of the great French thomist, because they introduce us directly to our subject, namely, the sources of Karol Wojtyła's philosophy. Usually, when we talk about the foundations of a philosophical theory of one or another thinker, we mean philosophers and philosophical trends that have influenced his philosophical system or his proper understanding of a particular fragment of reality. In the case of Karol Wojtyła, this fragment of reality is man himself, as Wojtyła does not build an all-encompassing philosophical system, but focuses on anthropology and ethics. In general, one can say that all his intellectual activity—philosophical, theological, and literary—is characterized by a deep desire to understand the human person. Wojtyła belongs to the great philosophical tradition at the beginning of which we meet the figure of Socrates with his call: know thyself (Gr. *gnothi te auton*). Thus, the first source of Wojtyła's philosophical thought is his contact with the object, its direct experience, and this object is man himself—both the subject and the object of the experience. At the beginning of *The Acting Person* Wojtyła reminds us that while experiencing anything beyond himself, the person experiences his own subjectivity. Hence subjective dimension of experience accompanies any other human experience. *The Acting*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jerzy Kalinowski and Stefan Świeżawski, *Filozofia w dobie Soboru*, trans. M. Gawryś and C. Gawryś (Warszawa: Biblioteka "Więzi," 1995). The book was first published in 1965. Jerzy Kalinowski and Stefan Świeżawski, *La Philosophie A L'Heure Du Concile* (Paris: Fayard, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Maritain, "List do J. Kalinowskiego i S. Świeżawskiego," in *Filozofia w dobie Soboru*, 169.

*Person* is nothing but an attempt to describe and to philosophically explain the human person both in his subjective and objective dimension. On this path towards the theory, which later, as John Paul II, he will call the “adequate anthropology,” Wojtyła encounters phenomenology, whose method he considers to be the best to unveil the human subjectivity.

## An Encounter with Phenomenology

At the beginning of the 20th century, it was the phenomenological movement to defend the original character of experience, understood as direct contact with various types of objects. For a phenomenologist the object of experience is everything that is given directly, bodily given (German *leibhafti*), as they used to say. Therefore, there is not only the sensual experience (as claimed by sensualism), but also other types of experience: aesthetic, moral or religious. These last two types of experience were of particular interest to Wojtyła from the very beginning of his academic career. In his doctoral dissertation on the subject of faith in the writings of St. John of the Cross, Wojtyła studied religious experience, observing closely—through the analysis of the writings of one of the greatest mystics in the history of Christianity—how the value of *sacrum* is given directly in experience.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising that he was also interested in phenomenology, especially the phenomenology of moral experience developed by Max Scheler.

How did Wojtyła encounter the philosophy of Scheler and what were the fruits of that meeting? First of all, we must remember that during his studies at the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Wojtyła gained a solid knowledge of the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas of Aquinas, which can be seen in the text of his doctoral dissertation. At the same time, however, his dissertation shows that its author is primarily focused on the subjective aspect of the experience of faith. It seems that at that time Wojtyła realized that fundamental metaphysical categories are a valuable tool for the interpretation of the objective dimension of faith, but he also noted that in such an interpretation its subjective dimension remains somewhat in the shadow. The same is the case with the whole subjective reality. In other words, St. Thomas shows that both God and man are persons, but in his philosophy we do not find any complete description of how one is a person, and how one lives his or her personality from within. Such a description can be given because man is the only being that we know not only from the outside, but also from the inside. Therefore, we can show that man is a subject (a person), but we can also develop categories in which we describe

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, trans. Jordan Aumann (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

the way the human person experiences his or her subjectivity from within. In this context, it is worth noting that in his dissertation on God, Wojtyła does not want to use the term *object* (the choice that was criticized by one of the reviewers of his doctoral thesis, the famous thomist Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP), as he probably does not want to do so because, in his opinion, this term would not reveal the personal reality of God, but rather obscure it.

After having completed his studies in Rome, Wojtyła returned to Cracow, where he began his pastoral work. Soon, however, his bishop asked him to prepare his postdoctoral dissertation and to devote himself to the academic career. In this way Wojtyła meets with phenomenology, which had a profound influence on his original philosophy of the person, developed in the following years and presented above all in his main philosophical work *The Acting Person*.

According to some sources, the discussion of Scheler's ethical theory and its relation to the Christian ethics was suggested to Wojtyła by a professor of dogmatic theology at the Jagiellonian University, Fr. Ignacy Różycki. One of the main figures in the intellectual life of Cracow of those years was Roman Ingarden, a great disciple of Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology.

According to Husserl, the phenomenological method is used to describe what is directly given in consciousness, that is, phenomena. Phenomenology differs from psychology in that it tries to reduce phenomena to what is essential to them through the so-called eidetic reduction. This type of reduction requires the purification of phenomena from what is random, from influences of theories and traditions, and even the suspension of the spontaneous conviction of their real existence (i.e., the application of the so-called phenomenological *epoché*). However, the mere application of the phenomenological method does not yet determine the question of what the ontological status of the described phenomena is. I think that even *epoché* can be understood as a purely methodical procedure that can be used and then revoked. The ontological question is Husserl's next step, a justified step, since the phenomenological description itself leaves the ontological question open. As we know, this question ultimately led Husserl to a certain version of transcendental idealism, in which phenomena are considered to be the product of transcendental consciousness.

However, many of Husserl's eminent followers did not share this idealistic turn of their master. Among them were Roman Ingarden, Max Scheler, and Edith Stein (by the way, it is worth noting the parallelism of the philosophical paths of Wojtyła and Stein—in both cases there is a meeting of Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics with phenomenology, with the difference that the directions of their paths are opposite: Wojtyła starts from St. Thomas and goes towards phenomenology, whereas Stein commences with phenomenology and then discovers the metaphysics of St. Thomas).

In his research Ingarden was primarily interested in ontological, epistemological and aesthetic issues, although he devoted one of his most important

works to the phenomenon of responsibility (an analogy between the method of Wojtyła in *The Acting Person* and the method of Ingarden in his treatise *On Responsibility*<sup>4</sup> was analyzed by Tadeusz Styczeń, SDS<sup>5</sup>). During his academic career Ingarden also lectured three times on ethics: for the first time in the 1930s at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv, and twice after the war at the Jagiellonian University. It is interesting in the context of our deliberations that part of the lectures in Lviv was devoted to Scheler's concept of ethics. In the post-war years, despite strong pressure from Marxist ideology, the very presence of Ingarden, who never succumbed to this pressure and never embraced Marxism, was the point of reference for all those who were interested in phenomenology.

Wojtyła did not deal with Scheler's thought in all its aspects and did not follow all of its—sometimes radical—turns. The main subject of his studies was the work *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*.<sup>6</sup> As the title suggests, Scheler's work is dedicated to the discussion with Kant's ethical concept, although it also contains a positive ethical proposal based on a direct perception of values. We can describe the essence of Scheler's proposal in this way: Scheler contrasts the formal ethics of Kant with the ethics of “non-formal,” “material” values. Let us recall that Kant's epistemological assumptions did not allow him to consider ethics as a discipline based on experience; nevertheless, he did not consider the field of morality to be an entirely subjective or arbitrary sphere. For Kant, the objectivity of ethics and its normative character are not derived from experience, but are guaranteed by the categorical imperative given a priori to every rational being (according to Kant, morality is the *Faktum der Vernunft*—the fact of reason which cannot be deduced from any empirical data<sup>7</sup>). On the other hand, moral norms are formulated according to the procedure of universalization of the maxim of action, which also has a strictly formal character: it is a kind of deduction of moral norms, whose starting point is not the content but the form of a moral norm. In this way the problem of normativity of ethics is completely detached from its empirical character. In the case of Kant's ethics—at least in the dimension of its justification, which we find in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*—we are dealing with a normative ethics, but such an ethics is not of an empirical nature. Perhaps the evaluation of Kant's ethics would be somewhat

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Roman Ingarden, “O odpowiedzialności i jej podstawach ontycznych,” in *Książeczka o człowieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972), 71–169.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Tadeusz Styczeń, “O metodzie antropologii filozoficznej,” in *W drodze do etyki* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1984), 131–138.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward Foundation of Ethical Personalism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 19228), 40–41.

different if we also considered his *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* [Metaphysics of Morality], a work which in Wojtyła's analysis is rather overshadowed (but then the problem of the relationship between Kant's theoretical philosophy and his practical philosophy arises, as well as the problem of the relationship between his general ethics and his applied ethics).

It was precisely this separation of ethics from experience in Kant's philosophy that caused Scheler's reaction and criticism. In a sense, Scheler's proposal can be described as the exact opposite of Kant's ethics. Scheler defends the empirical character of ethics, but rejects its normative character.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, however, we can point to the element that connects Scheler's concept with Kant's concept. Although Scheler wants to base ethics on experience, he shares Kant's conviction, which David Hume formulated earlier in his own concise and captivating way of expressing the essence of things: reason is blind to values. If, however, this thesis is correct, can the empirical character of ethics be preserved? Scheler believes that this is possible because ethics is based on a different type of cognition than intellectual intuition. In his analyses, he tries to show that both values and their hierarchy are given in the experience of the emotional type. Scheler's phenomenological analysis shows that emotions are of intentional nature: thanks to them we come into direct contact with their proper objects, that is, values.

However, the consequence of defending the empirical character of ethics in this way was to deprive it of its normative character. In fact, emotions cannot be subjected to any norm, no one can be obliged to feel them. They appear in the subject spontaneously. Using the language of Wojtyła from *The Acting Person*, we can say that emotions belong to the sphere of what happens in the human being, and not to the sphere of his actions. In this way Scheler becomes convinced that in the field of moral experience, there is no place for what, according to Kant, was its very essence—the experience of moral obligation. In one of his articles on the comparison of the concept of Scheler's ethics with that of Kant, Wojtyła writes: “Scheler goes so far that he rejects duties in ethics at all as a fundamentally negative and destructive factor. Only the value as the subjective content of the experience has an ethical meaning.”<sup>9</sup>

It is precisely because of this “emotional assumption” that Wojtyła believes that Scheler's ethical system cannot be an adequate tool for the scientific interpretation of the Christian ethics. We will not present in detail his arguments, which can be found in the book *Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing*

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Tadeusz Styczeń, *Problem możliwości etyki jako empirycznie uprawomocnionej i ogólnie ważnej teorii moralności. Studium metaetyczne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1972), 109–126.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, “Problem oderwania przeżycia od aktu w etyce na tle poglądów Kanta i Schelera,” in *Zagadnienie podmiotu moralności*, ed. Tadeusz Styczeń, Jerzy W. Gałkowski, Adam Rodziński, and Andrzej Szostek (Lublin, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1991), 172.

*a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the Assumptions of Max Scheler's System of Philosophy.*<sup>10</sup> We are more interested here in the positive project of ethics (and finally also of anthropology), which Wojtyła starts from his discussion with Scheler. In fact, his assessment of Scheler's ethical system is not entirely negative. To the negative thesis we mentioned above, Wojtyła adds two positive theses in which he expresses his approval for the phenomenological method, and sees the source of the deficiencies of Scheler's system in its nonphenomenological assumptions. First of all, Scheler has definitely obliterated the normative character of ethical values in his system, which is an understandable consequence of the separation of these values from the causality of the person. This is all the more striking because the very act of conscience as an experience of the person is an object of phenomenological experience. When Scheler, the phenomenologist, does not reach the causal relationship between the person and ethical values through the analysis of an act of conscience, it must have some reasons beyond his phenomenology. These reasons lie in his emotional assumptions.<sup>11</sup> And second, "although the ethical system created by Max Scheler is not fundamentally suitable for the interpretation of the Christian ethics, it can help us in our scientific work on the Christian ethics. It makes easier for us to analyze ethical facts on the phenomenal and experimental level."<sup>12</sup>

As we can see, the assessment of the phenomenological method is unequivocally positive here. What is more, Wojtyła thinks that Scheler has gone too far in his dispute with Kant, neglecting the normative moment of the experience of morality, which can be described by means of the phenomenological method itself and which is available primarily in the phenomenon of conscience. Therefore, Wojtyła agrees with Scheler's fundamental postulate that ethics should be an empirical science. The defect of Scheler's concept is that he did not fully exploit the possibilities of the phenomenological method in the field of the analysis of moral phenomena. Wojtyła's project, whose first sketches we find in his studies on the ethical concepts of Kant and Scheler, can therefore be described as an attempt to preserve and integrate valid intuitions found in both Kant and Scheler. In this way the concept of both empirical and normative ethics is born, a concept which in the years to come was developed by Wojtyła and his students and which is known today as the personalistic ethics of the Lublin school.

It is worth noting here that some of the key concepts of Wojtyła's philosophy of the person, developed later in *The Acting Person*, appear already in his studies on Scheler's ethics. First of all, these are notions of causality and acting; the act will become for Wojtyła a kind of a window through which he will look at the interiority of the person. Through his or her acts, the person reveals who he

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, "Ocena możliwości zbudowania etyki chrześcijańskiej przy założeniach systemu Maxa Schelera," in *Zagadnienie podmiotu moralności*, 11–128.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 120–121.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.



or she is (as Wojtyła puts it—an act is an externalization of the person) and, at the same time, he or she realizes (or does not realize) what he or she is called to be as a person. In the language of the metaphysical tradition, we will say: through its acts a being realizes its potentialities. It is true that Scheler also speaks about the act of the person—in his opinion, the person is the center of acts—but he speaks about the intentional act, and not about the act understood as the realization of the inner capacity of the person. The intentional act presents us with an object that transcends our subjectivity—in the case of an emotional intentional act, this object is a value. The idea of the intentional act was a great achievement of phenomenology (which at this point, through Franz Brentano, was akin to medieval philosophy) in its polemics with subjectivism.

Wojtyła fully adopts the idea of the intentional act but, at the same time, he is convinced that in the field of ethics the understanding of the personal act cannot be limited to the act that is only cognitive. A moral act engages the whole person, not only his or her cognitive powers, but also emotions and, above all, the will. The culmination of moral deliberation is, as Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec perfectly shows, the decision. This was the moment where Scheler's concept lacked in what became the subject of Wojtyła's analysis in his monographic lecture entitled "The Act and Ethical Experience."<sup>13</sup> Scheler analyzes the way in which a person experiences values, but does not examine deeply enough how the person responds to them. What Scheler's ethics lacks is an adequate analysis of the person's causality. In face of value, the person is not only a subject of cognition, but also a subject of action. In fact, the person expresses and fully realizes his or her subjectivity when he or she acts, when he or she experiences himself/herself as the subject of his or her own acts. In addition to the experience of "something happens in me," in which we live ourselves rather as a "territory" for activating certain potentialities, there is also the experience of "I act," in which we live ourselves as the efficient cause of our own acts. Let us refer once again to the category of Aristotle: The transition from potency to act, provided that the appropriate conditions are met, is not spontaneous here, but is mediated by an act of the will, by a "yes, I want to act this way." By developing these analyses, however, Wojtyła tries to remain—at least at the starting point—in the area of phenomenology, that is, in the area of direct experience. For both the experience "something happens in me" and the experience "I perform an act" are the objects of direct experience and may become the object of phenomenological description. If in Scheler the second experience remains in the shadow, it results from his epistemological assumptions and not from the limitations of the phenomenological method itself. What is more, as Wojtyła's second thesis concerning Scheler's phenomenological method indicates, this method is an extremely useful tool for describing *how* (not only that) the human being is

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1986), 19–73.



a person. This leads to a postulate to combine metaphysics with phenomenology, which is then implemented in Wojtyła's main philosophical work—in *The Acting Person*. By looking at metaphysics in the light of human experience Wojtyła can take advantage of the categories that have already been present in Aristotelian and Thomist metaphysics; however, these categories in Wojtyła gain a new, experiential dimension. In fact, it is one thing to claim that every act realizes a potency inherent in the nature of a given being, and another to describe this transition on the basis of one's own experience. The latter is possible because the person experiences this transition in his or her own interior. This is the only case in which we can, in a way, watch the metaphysical categories of act and potency in action, because the person—that is, my own self—is the only being that we experience from within (referring to Thomas Nagel's well-known article, we can say: We do not know what it is like to be a bat, but we know what it is like to be a human person<sup>14</sup>). The same thing that we said with regard to the categories of act and potency, we can repeat with regard to the notion of the cause. From the outside we see only a series of consecutive events; however, we know what it means to “be a cause,” because we experience ourselves as efficient causes of our acts (Bertrand Russell, who belonged to a different philosophical tradition than Wojtyła, claimed that the concept of the cause only makes sense for us by analogy with our own experience: according to him, we understand what causality means, because we experience ourselves as causes of our actions).

The phenomenology applied in this way ceases to be a pure phenomenology and transforms into transphenomenology which, starting from what is directly given, leads us to discoveries that go beyond what is directly given but, at the same time, the realities discovered in this way adequately explain what we experience.

Let us return to Scheler's ethics in order to try, together with Wojtyła, to discover the moment in which normativity appears in moral experience. Our problem can be expressed in this way: While we can agree with Scheler that emotional experience refers us to values through intentional acts that are specific to that experience, at the same time we have to say that emotions do not yet tell us what attitude we should adopt towards values. It can happen, and in fact it happens many times in our lives, that in our emotional experience we are attracted by a value that for one reason or another we should not choose as a rule of our actions. Such a value does not cease to be an authentic value, and our experience does not cease to be an authentic experience of this value. However, it appears that the criterion of authenticity alone is not sufficient.

So what is the criterion that we follow, or at least we should follow, in our choices? In order to obtain a precise answer to this question, we refer to Wojtyła's analyses from the second part of *The Acting Person*, entitled “Tran-

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Thomas Nagel, “How It Is Like to Be a Bat?” *Philosophical Review* 83 (October 1974): 435–450.

scendence of the Person in Action.” Of course, here we can only present a very brief summary of them. Wojtyła’s analysis of moral experience shows that we do not make our decisions on the basis of the emotional impact which a given value makes on us, but on the basis of the belief that a value is true and right for us. The place where the translation of what is given into what is morally binding happens is the moral conscience. I feel obliged to be faithful to a value that I have recognized as true in a particular situation. According to Wojtyła, it is here that the normative dimension of ethics appears. Without taking into account the normative moment that flows from the knowledge and recognition of truth, our description of moral experience is incomplete and ultimately inadequate. Wojtyła says that this special coupling of truth with moral obligation is carried out in conscience, which manifests itself as the normative power of truth.<sup>15</sup> This *moment of truth* as a source of normativity of ethics was lacking in Scheler’s concept. In his analysis, Wojtyła shows that normativity is not something that is imposed on the human person from the outside, but that it is born inside him, and it is a moment that, with all its objectivity, remains at the same time subjective. Thus, in Wojtyła moral obligation is not merely a “fact of reason,” but turns out to be an experiential expression of man’s dependence on truth. As it will be later expressed in a short formula by Tadeusz Styczeń: “I can’t deny what I have experienced without denying my own self.”<sup>16</sup>

Man is a person because he or she is not completely “integrated” into his/her nature: being a person means possessing one’s own nature. Therefore, the person is free, that is, not determined by instincts, not dependent on the objects given to him/her in his/her intentional acts. However, personal freedom does not mean complete independence. The very dynamics of human freedom, the freedom of a being that is rationally free, is such that the person spontaneously, pre-reflectively, recognizes his/her dependence on truth. Therefore, if we try to deny something that we previously considered to be true, we see that in this way we introduce a contradiction, an inner division within ourselves: We try to deny something that at the same time we recognize. Of course, sometimes it happens that we actually do this, for example, when such a negation brings us a benefit. However, if we feel remorse afterwards, it means that we have already recognized our dependence on truth. In the language of the philosophical tradition we would say that the recognition of our dependence on truth happens in *actu exercito* (i.e., spontaneously, without an explicit reflection).

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn i inne studia antropologiczne* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2000), 205. Translated by the author of this article from the Polish edition of the book.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Tadeusz Styczeń, “Etyka jako antropologia normatywna. W sprawie epistemologicznie zasadnego i metodologicznie poprawnego punktu wyjścia etyki, czyli od stwierdzenia: ‘jest tak’ – ‘nie jest tak’ do naczelnej zasady etycznej. Quaestio disputata,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 45–46 (1997–1998), no. 2, 5.

In this way, Wojtyła introduces a normative dimension to ethics, which was excluded from it by Scheler. However, this does not mean a return to Kant's a priori. Since the phenomenological method makes it possible to discover normativity within experience itself, the moral obligation ceases to be a form a priori of practical rationality and transforms itself, if we may say so, into a "material obligation." Thus, Wojtyła manages to avoid the one-sidedness of both Kant's and Scheler's concepts, while preserving what he thinks is right in both of these concepts.

## Towards the Metaphysics of the Person

The problem of ethics leads us by its own logic to the problem of the human being, to which, according to Kant, all philosophical problems ultimately come down. Philosophy, Kant writes, can be reduced to the following questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What should I do? (3) What can I hope? (4) Who is the human being? The first question is answered by metaphysics, the second by ethics, the third by religion, and the fourth by anthropology. In fact, however, all these questions can be attributed to anthropology, because the first three problems boil down to the fourth.<sup>17</sup> Scheler posed the question of the human being in his famous book *The Human Place in the Cosmos*.<sup>18</sup> Wojtyła also saw the need to move from moral issues to anthropological issues, and he realized this move in a systematic way in *The Acting Person*. Of course, the responses of each of these three thinkers to the question of the human being are different. While Kant remains essentially within the framework of transcendental idealism, and Scheler advocates a kind of pantheism, for Wojtyła the problem of the human being is the starting point for the rediscovery of metaphysical categories. Indeed, the metaphysical problem does not usually appear as an abstract theoretical problem, but in its starting point it is identical with the anthropological question. The human being asks who he or she is and where he or she is going, so first he or she asks about his/her own being. However, in order to be able to answer this question adequately, he or she must pose a question about being as such, that is, he or she must pose the metaphysical question. Although none of his studies was directly devoted to metaphysics, both in *The Acting Person*, and even more so in the first part of the so-called *Theology of the Body* of

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, "Logik," in *Werke*, Akademie-Ausgabe, Bd. IX (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 968.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Max Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

John Paul II, which is a commentary on the first chapters of Genesis and which was written even before Cardinal Wojtyła was elected pope, we find numerous comments clearly indicating the type of metaphysics that Wojtyła is referring to. John Paul II writes:

The first account of the creation of man, which, as we have observed, has a theological character, contains hidden in itself a powerful metaphysical content. One should not forget that precisely this text of Genesis has become the source of the deepest inspirations for the thinkers who have sought to understand 'being' and 'existing' [...]. Despite some detailed and plastic expressions in this passage, man is defined in it primarily in the dimensions of being and existing ('*esse*'). He is defined in a more metaphysical than physical way.<sup>19</sup>

The words quoted above come from the theological work of John Paul II, which, due to its theological character, goes beyond the methodological framework of our reflection in the field of philosophy. This is undoubtedly the case from the point of view of context of justification, although not necessarily from the point of view of context of discovery. St. Thomas, as Étienne Gilson perfectly shows, made his greatest philosophical discovery under the influence of the book of Genesis; faith was instrumental in making a philosophical discovery. Similarly, in the case of Karol Wojtyła, we can reasonably suppose that his philosophy of the person would not be what it really is if its creator had not met the person of Jesus Christ in his life. I think that when speaking about the sources of Wojtyła's philosophy, we cannot ignore this meeting, although strictly speaking, its analysis does not belong to philosophy. As the Second Vatican Council states, Christ, by revealing the truth about God, also reveals the truth about the human being.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Christ's incarnation is nothing more than God's own act in relation to the human being, an act by which God reveals himself, his inner life, an act which, in this case, too, is a kind of a window through which we can know who its subject is. However, this act is also intended to convince the human being of his extraordinary dignity, a dignity so great that it justifies this kind of intervention by God himself. All these contents, which are the very center of the Christian faith, Wojtyła experienced in a particularly profound way. It is no coincidence that the first encyclical of John Paul II, called *Redemptor Hominis*, was considered by some as a manifesto of his theological anthropocentrism.

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<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael M. Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 136.

<sup>20</sup> "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" on the Church* (December 7, 1965), no. 22.

Nor is it by chance that on the front page of his philosophical work, *The Acting Person*, we find words taken from the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council which speak of the Church as “a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person.”<sup>21</sup> A genuine Christian experience helps to understand human experience and leads to the final dimension of this understanding: it secures us against the temptation of skepticism that is widespread in today’s world and convinces us of the need and necessity to move “from phenomenon to foundation.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (September 14, 1998), no. 83.

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Jarosław Merecki

## Sulla creazione della *Persona* e dell'*atto* di Karol Wojtyła

### Sommario

L'articolo mostra che l'analisi critica dei concetti di filosofia morale di Max Scheler e di Immanuel Kant è stato il punto di partenza del progetto positivo dell'antropologia di Karol Wojtyła presentato nel libro *Persona e atto*. Il suo nucleo sta nel riconoscimento del significato dell'efficacia umana: gli esseri umani esprimono e realizzano la loro piena soggettività attraverso le proprie azioni. Wojtyła spiega che le azioni umane autentiche non sono motivate solo dalla forza emotiva con cui vengono dati particolari valori, ma piuttosto dalla loro verità. In ultima analisi, la teoria di Wojtyła potrebbe essere descritta come una transfenomenologia, cioè una sintesi della fenomenologia e della metafisica. Secondo lui, ciò che viene immediatamente dato al soggetto può essere pienamente spiegato da categorie che trascendono l'esperienza diretta. In questo modo, Wojtyła incorpora la sua visione dell'antropologia in una metafisica più ampia, mostrando allo stesso tempo che nella filosofia si deve passare dal fenomeno al fondamento.

Parole chiave: etica, esperienza, metafisica, morale, fenomenologia, persona, valore

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## A propos de la création de la *Personne* et de l'*acte* de Karol Wojtyła

### Résumé

L'article montre que l'analyse critique des concepts de philosophie morale de Max Scheler et d'Emmanuel Kant a été le point de départ du projet d'anthropologie positive de Karol Wojtyła présenté dans le livre *Personne et Acte*. En substance, le livre réside dans la reconnaissance de la signification de l'efficacité humaine: les êtres humains expriment et réalisent leur pleine subjectivité à travers leurs actions. Wojtyła explique que les actions humaines authentiques sont motivées non seulement par la force émotionnelle avec laquelle des valeurs particulières sont données, mais plutôt par leur vérité. En définitive, la théorie de Wojtyła pourrait être décrite comme une transphénoménologie, c'est-à-dire une synthèse de la phénoménologie et de la mé-

taphysique. Selon lui, ce qui est immédiatement donné au sujet peut être pleinement expliqué par des catégories qui transcendent l'expérience directe. Ainsi, Wojtyła intègre sa vision de l'anthropologie dans une métaphysique plus large, montrant en même temps qu'en philosophie, il faut passer du phénomène au fondement.

Mots-clés: éthique, expérience, métaphysique, morale, phénoménologie, personne, valeur