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In Search of Conciliar Inspirations in the Study  
*Person and Act*

A Contribution to the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła

**Introduction**

In December 1969, the Polish Theological Society published a book entitled *Person and Act*, considered to be the main philosophical work of Karol Wojtyła. His closest collaborator and successor at the Department of Ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin, Fr. Tadeusz Styczeń, recalls that when he received the manuscript, which did not contain any footnotes, he said to the Master "I am receiving an intricate work of a spider". The words spoken at the time constituted something of a criticism. However, as he admits "Only with the passage of time did I realize that this spider had woven – thanks to the extraordinary gift of intuition - a thoroughly realistic, profound, image of the human being - the person. Wojtyła does not create his own vision here when analyzing other people's views, but reveals the truth about who human beings are as persons, thanks to his insight into the reality of his own inner life, looking from this position at each of us"<sup>1</sup>. Aware of the lack of references and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. T. Styczeń, *Normatywna moc prawdy, czyli być sobą to przekraczać siebie (w nawiązaniu do Karola Wojtyły etyki jako antropologii normatywnej)*, in *Człowiek żyjący drogą Kościoła*, eds. R. Komurka, J.D. Szczurek. Kraków 2008, p. 16.

footnotes, Wojtyła claimed that his study was not so much a work of erudition, but rather a collection of his own reflections on the subject indicated in the title, and any reader familiar with philosophical problems will easily establish to whom these reflections referred and from whom they took their origin<sup>2</sup>.

Since its creation, Wojtyła's treatise has been the subject of discussion among representatives of various academic circles<sup>3</sup>. This was possible due to the complex nature of the book, containing both certain methodological proposals and theoretical-cognitive and metaphysical assumptions, which in turn entail practical ethical, psychological, and pastoral consequences<sup>4</sup>. The study as a whole is a project opening up the perspective of anthropological considerations, whose aim is a common search for the truth about human beings, who must not "lose their proper place in this world which they themselves shaped"<sup>5</sup>. Wojtyła treated the discussion about the human being as still open, and his anthropological work as a sketch requiring further development<sup>6</sup>.

The structure of *Person and Act* is philosophical to the highest degree. As Rocco Buttiglione – an eminent commentator on the thoughts of Karol Wojtyła – notes, philosophical books, seek both to grasp the truth which is timeless, unchanging, and eternally valid, and are always rooted in some historical and cultural particularity in the concrete human existential situation. This is also the case with Fr. Wojtyła's book. On the one hand, it is

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Wypowiedź wstępna w czasie dyskusji nad "Osobą i czynem" w KUL 16 XII 1970 r.*, in „Analecta Cracoviensia”, 5/6(1973–1974), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning here that a discussion on the book took place at the Catholic University of Lublin on 16 December 1970. The opinions of 19 participants reflecting both different philosophical profiles and various academic disciplines were published in "Analecta Cracoviensia". 5-6 (1973-1974), pp. 49-272.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Dyskusja nad dziełem Kardynała Karola Wojtyły „Osoba i czyn”*, in „Analecta Cracoviensia”, 5/6(1973–1974), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, in „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, eds. T. Styczeń et al., Lublin 1994,

<sup>6</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego. Osoba ludzka pasją Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 2014, p. 19.

an invitation to think together with him about this great cognitive process, which can be defined at its core as the human experience,<sup>7</sup> and, on the other hand, it attempts to embed the universal truth in the specificity of the time at which it was written<sup>8</sup>.

The stimulus for the central ideas of *Person and Act* was the Second Vatican Council, in the work on which Wojtyła participated from 4 July 1958. Although no constitution or edict of *Vaticanum II* explicitly takes up the topic of the human person, the teaching of the Council reflects the great topicality of the personalistic issue. The pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – *Gaudium et spes* – points in a special way to the universal significance of this issue in the contemporary world. The extract from paragraph 76 of the Constitution, stating the Church "is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person", was used by Wojtyła as the motto for his reflections. The article will present the conciliar theme of the main theses of *Person and Act*, which constitute a philosophical analysis of the concept of the human being as specifically contained in that study.

## 1. Freedom - conscience - truth

At the core of the Second Vatican Council was the recognition of the freedom of conscience as a natural and inalienable right of the person<sup>9</sup>. The Constitution *Gaudium et spes* defines conscience as "the most-secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths." (Paragraph 16). It is in conscience that a human being recognizes the law written in his or her heart by God. By staying true to their conscience, irrespective of their faith, people unite in

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. R. Buttiglione, *Kilka uwag o sposobie czytania "Osoby i czynu"*, in "Osoba i czyn" oraz inne studia antropologiczne, ed. T. Śtyczeń et al., Lublin 1994, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. R. Buttiglione, *Myśl Karola Wojtyły*, p. 256.

their search for truth, and in its light resolving the moral problems of both individual and social life. When a man ceases to care for the search for truth, his conscience grows sightless (*Cf.* Paragraph 16). Freedom of conscience is an element in the Declaration on Religious Freedom of *Vaticanum II* and the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. The study *Person and Act* should be regarded as a philosophical commentary on the way of understanding proposed by the Fathers of the Council.

Wojtyła is convinced that in the search for the answer to the question of who a human being is, and who he or she should be, a fundamental role is played by the dispute about the proper sense of the relationship between truth and freedom. Many intellectual misunderstandings of modern times arise from an attempt to reduce these two values to one considered superior. It is not an exaggeration to say that the experiences which ultimately led to the emergence of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century totalitarianisms, with their tragedies of genocide on an unprecedented scale in history, grew out of a disregard for the strength of their mutual relationship<sup>10</sup>. In the personalistic panorama, truth comes before freedom, constituting, as it were, "a lighthouse which enables a human being to use freedom properly"<sup>11</sup>. Any attempts to separate freedom from truth in social life leads to the enslavement of freedom, and thus to the enslavement of the person. Fidelity to truth, on the other hand, makes one authentically free, sometimes even in spite of prison bars. The exemplars of "prisoners of conscience" are the best proof of this. It is enough here to mention Thomas More, Mahatma Gandhi and Stefan Wyszyński.

Wojtyła's personalism is a response to the arrogance of the power of all totalitarian systems towards a person and the truth

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<sup>10</sup>*Cf.* J. Życiński, *Bóg postmodernistów. Wielkie pytania filozofii we współczesnej krytyce moderny*, Lublin 2001, p. 129; in Wojtyła, *Osoba-społeczność-demokracja. W poszukiwaniu personalistycznych podstaw władzy społecznej*, Lublin 2020, p. 218.

<sup>11</sup> W. Chudy, *Społeczeństwo zakłamane*, vol. 2: *Kłamstwo jako metoda. Esej o społeczeństwie i kłamstwie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 157.

about him or her<sup>12</sup>. Truth is what a human being discovers. Conscience is an act proper to a human as a rational and free being, i.e. a being seeking truth, and free through the freedom of its choice. Truth cannot be imposed on anyone by force. All violence is the negation of truth. A subject, in coming to know the truth – in particular the moral truth – with which he or she is bound in his or her conscience, comes to know oneself as a person, that is, as a rationally free being capable of making decisions by oneself. In the act of renouncing the known truth, it is not freedom which is enslaved, but humans of themselves, by acts of their free decisions, make themselves slaves of something within them, or of something external<sup>13</sup>.

In the triad referred to in the title of this section, which constitutes the "skeleton" of the personal structure of man, conscience is placed, not without reason, at its centre – between freedom and truth – as the place where they meet and where they are bound together. Conscience is the human capacity which constitutes the link between freedom and truth. This function of conscience is pointed out by Wojtyła. He wrote "In conscience that particular coupling of truthfulness with an obligation takes place which manifests itself as the normative power of truth"<sup>14</sup>. And he added "The obligation is the experiential form of dependence on truth to which the freedom of the person is subject"<sup>15</sup>. The constitutive moment of the acts of the human will is their conformity to truth. "The transcendence of the person in the act is not only self-dependence, dependence on one's own self. The moment of dependence on truth enters into it at the same time - and this moment ultimately shapes freedom. For freedom is not achieved by subordinating truth to oneself but by subjecting

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. R. Buttiglione, *Mysł Karola Wojtyły*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. Szostek, *Wolność-prawda-sumienie*, "Ethos" 4(1991), No. 3-4 (15-16), p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 205.

<sup>15</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 199.

oneself to truth".<sup>16</sup> Wojtyła draws attention to the difference between the transcendence of the human being, which occurs "by subordinating oneself to the truth", and the concept of freedom in the name of which

a subject wants to subordinate the truth. What defines the limits of human autonomy characteristic for a person is the dependence on the truth. It is the truth which constitutes the person in transcendence characteristic only for him or her<sup>17</sup>.

The emphasis which the Cardinal from Kraków placed on the normative power of truth, read by man in conscience, is explained not only by the internal logic of the structure of human freedom, but also by the philosophical, and, more broadly, the civilizational, context in which he conducted his analyses. In his reflection on the issue of freedom and its profound relationship with truth, the author of *Person and Act* wished to distance himself from that variety of "personalism" which, by seeing freedom as the main basis of personal dignity, seeks to free it from the obligation to respect the truth, which a human is capable of knowing, and by which he or she must be guided in his or her decisions and choices. Jean-Paul Sartre explicitly postulated the liberation of a human being from all norms. The continuators of Immanuel Kant's thought expressed this postulate indirectly, by questioning whether it were possible for a human being to come to know the truth, or by emphasizing that there was no truth defined in terms of its content, especially the truth about humans, which could constitute a moral norm binding on them<sup>18</sup>.

The transcendence of freedom in truth, manifested in human conscience, is realized in morality. By performing an act, a human fulfills itself, that is, as a human becomes *someone*, becomes morally good or evil. This fulfillment takes place on the

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<sup>16</sup>K. Wojtyła, „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, p. 199.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego*, p. 50.

basis of self-determination. In Wojtyła's personalism this notion occupies a key place. He notes that, acting consciously and freely, a person is not only the author of an act and its transitive and non-transitive effects, but at the same time he or she decides about him or herself. Therefore, agency, which is revealed in the field of the experiencing of an act, is not only agency, but also self-determination. Wojtyła writes "Self-determination is the deeper and more-fundamental dimension of the agency of the human self; a human in an action reveals him or herself as a personal subject"<sup>19</sup>. The structure of self-determination is the key to understanding the issue of human freedom. A human being, in his or her very-personal structure, possesses a quality which enables him or her to want to be free in an action. This quality is will, which Wojtyła understands specifically as self-determination. It is, as it were, the alternative name for will, in which the structural self-possession and self-control of the person is revealed. The person is the one who possesses and controls him or herself. To be self-determined is at the same time to possess and control oneself. Thanks to self-determination the person has power over him or herself which no one else has or can have. He or she is a being *sui iuris et alteri incommunicabilis* being<sup>20</sup>.

Self-determination brings a kind of "verticality" to the dynamism of human nature. Due to self-determination, dynamism at the level of the person is characterized by dependence on one's own self. The lack of dependence on one's own self in the dynamizing of one's subject amounts to the lack of freedom. Here lies the boundary between the person and nature – between the world of persons and the world of specimens, i.e. animal entities in the structure of which the structure of self-determination is

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<sup>19</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota*, in „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 152-153.

absent<sup>21</sup>. The culmination of human freedom in the face of truth is opening up to the encounter with another person – it is transcending oneself towards the other. According to Wojtyła, the full expression of the "logic of freedom" understood in this way is contained in the words contained at the end the paragraph 24 of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, according to which “man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself”. It is difficult to find a quotation to which Wojtyła, also as Pope, would refer more often in his speeches. According to him, these words sum up Christian anthropology. Making oneself an unselfish gift for others reveals the ultimate perspective of human freedom, for which the most choice-worthy virtue is the autotelic value of a human being itself, who as such "demands" respect corresponding to his or her dignity<sup>22</sup>.

## **2. The human person as a gift and an asset of the community**

The issue which determined the theme of both the Second Vatican's Council documents, i.e. the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, was that of the human community<sup>23</sup>. The first document, according to Wojtyła, is an exposition of Catholic social ethics. The main principle of this ethic is the Commandment of love, which, as he explains, must be constantly confronted anew with that reality to which it refers, which is the reality of the person and of the community<sup>24</sup>. *Gaudium et spes* discusses such communities as marriage and the family, as well as some of the problems and challenges of socio-economic, political, and cultural life facing both individual States and international communities. Each time, as the basis for the communities created

<sup>21</sup>Cf. I. Dec, *Transcendencja człowieka w przyrodzie*, p. 163.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego*, p. 82.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Wspólnota ludzka w oczach Soboru*, in *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL R. 22:1979*, No. 1–3 (85 – 87), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Wspólnota ludzka w oczach Soboru*, p. 11.

by man, the document points to the human being him or herself as a person, and his or her vocation, which is social in nature. *Gaudium et spes* identifies the Commandment of love as the fundamental normative principle of every community<sup>25</sup>.

K. Wojtyła developed his personalistic interpretation of the foundations of social life in the context of the tension between individualism and collectivism, characteristic of modern philosophy. Individualism holds that the good of the individual is the supreme and fundamental good, and that the good of society must be subordinated to this good. Collectivism, on the other hand (which Wojtyła called objectivist totalism), completely subordinates the individual and his good to society<sup>26</sup>. According to the author of *Person and Act*, both these positions are based on an erroneous conception of the human being, treating him or her as an individual totally or partially deprived of the capacity for personal being in a community. This error has its manifold implications in the conceptions of social life, making it impossible to find the foundations for building an authentic interpersonal community. Both individualism and collectivism "block" the perspective of the subjective fulfillment of the person in acting together with others<sup>27</sup>. Wojtyła identifies both these systems of thought as anti-personalistic.

Wojtyła entitled the last part of his work *An Outline of a Theory of Participation*. It is significant that after the first three parts devoted to the reality of the person (entitled respectively *Consciousness and Agency*, *Transcendence of the Person in Action*, and *Integration of the Person in Action*), in the final part the author addressed the issue of community. This outline is an attempt to present his own reflections on the issues connected with the relationship of a human being-person to other persons, in

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<sup>25</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Wspólnota ludzka w oczach Soboru*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, p. 313.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego*, p. 63.

the context of their common existence, and especially of their actions. The tentative term "outline" suggests that it is merely a sketch of social philosophy. However, the study *Person and Act* would be incomplete without it. At this point a stronger thesis can be put forward, according to which all the considerations contained in this study lead to a theory of community, and that it is so important that it appears as the last part, constituting an important, in Wojtyła's words, "thinking to the end" of the whole of the analyses contained in the study. The personalistic social philosophy appears not as an add-on to the philosophy of the person, but as its essential development, resulting from the social and communal nature of the person itself<sup>28</sup>. It also provides a stimulus for the further development of these issues by specialists in social ethics, sociology, and political science.

By introducing the concept of participation into the field of social thought, Wojtyła gives it a specific meaning, deeper than the participation commonly associated with joint undertakings with others. Participation, understood in the most general and static senses as the membership of a community, relates only to the simple fact that man exists and acts together with others. It does not reach to the foundations of this participation. Instead, the philosophical meaning of participation searches for these foundations<sup>29</sup>. By means of the notion of participation, Wojtyła wants to point to the basis of participation in various dimensions, and types of community, which is present in the very-subjective structure of the person. By participation he means "what corresponds to the transcendence of the person in an act, when this act is performed together with others in various social or

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<sup>28</sup> It also provides a stimulus for the further development of these issues by specialists in social ethics, sociology, and political science. A.M. Wierzbicki, *Karola Wojtyły filozofia osoby ludzkiej jako podstawa obrony praw człowieka*, in *Jan Paweł II. Postługa myślenia*, eds. J. Kupczak, D. Radziechowski, Kraków 2011, p. 159.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, pp. 308-309.

interpersonal relations".<sup>30</sup> It means "a characteristic of the person him or herself (...) which determines that, by being and acting together with others, a person lives and acts as a person, (...) fulfills an act and fulfills him or herself in it" <sup>31</sup>. Accordingly, the participation of the person in a community is primarily determined by interpersonal subjective relations.

It is difficult here to recount Wojtyła's theory of participation in its entirety. However, it is possible to point to those elements to which he seems to attribute a key role. For the thinker from Kraków the notion of participation has two interrelated meanings. First, to participate means to engage in the humanity of the other person, and second, to participate is to realize the common good together with others. Both meanings express the difference between seeing communities and societies from the point of view of the social nature of man alone, and seeing them as diverse communities of persons, as the Council does<sup>32</sup>. In Paragraph 25 of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* we read: "Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life." This is a classic vision of the person-community relationship, based on the assertion that a human being is a person and that he or she has a social nature. The Council also draws attention to the primacy of the person over the community. It is persons who make up society, and it is therefore a community which is defined by persons, not persons by the community (communities) to which they belong. It is not so much the objective and external relations between individual members of a community which create the community

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<sup>30</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 309.

<sup>31</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 310.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Wspólnota ludzka w oczach Soboru*, p. 11 – 12.

but subjective relations experienced internally. This is both a metaphysical and methodological primacy, As Wojtyła argues, people exist and act together as a multiplicity of personal subjects. At the same time, one cannot say anything about this co-existence and cooperation in the personalistic sense if the analysis does not start from the human being as a personal subject<sup>33</sup>.

According to the author of *Person and Act*, the deepest dimension of interpersonal relations is a positive relation to the humanity of others, where humanity is understood as a personal "self", always unique and unrepeatable<sup>34</sup>. Wojtyła calls this relation "participation in the humanity of others". On this participation he wrote "To participate in another person's humanity is to remain in living relation to the fact that he or she is that human being, and not only in relation to what makes him or her (*in abstracto*) a human person"<sup>35</sup>.

The ability to participate in the humanity of the "other" is the core and original basis of any participation, and the only adequate system of reference for the construction of a personalistic community of existence and action is that of the "neighbor". In contrast to a "member of a community", the "neighbor" system transcends any kind of community. It is related to a human being as such, and to the very value of a person, regardless of any reference to one or another's community or society. The concept of neighbor "thus creates the widest level of community, reaching beyond any otherness – including that which results from membership of different human communities"<sup>36</sup>. The neighbor makes all human beings related to one another on the basis of their very humanity, and therefore the basis of every community which is authentically

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<sup>33</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota*, p. 393.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota*, p. 392.

<sup>35</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Osoba: podmiot i wspólnota*, p. 392.

<sup>36</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 331.

being built must be the recognition of the humanity of the "other". This is emphasized by the evangelical Commandment of love, recalled by *Gaudium et spes* in the context of the reflection on the communal dimension of human vocation, which Wojtyła analyzes not in a theological but in an anthropological dimension, and which, as he claims, remains in direct opposition to the contemporary experience of alienation. The danger of alienation arises "when participation in the community itself obscures and limits participation in the humanity of others<sup>37</sup>, when the basic reference system of the *neighbor* is violated. Closing oneself off from one's neighbor, a human being deprives him or herself of the possibility of experiencing communion with the "other" on the foundation of common humanity.

In Wojtyła's personalistic anthropology, the way to overcome alienation is not, as in Marxist ideology, through class struggle, but through finding the authentic sense of participation and its realization in being and acting with others. The Commandment of love of one's neighbor transfers in a special way to the love of one's enemies. The Council document also points this out in the following words. "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political, and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them"<sup>38</sup>.

This is how we come to the common good. The Constitution *Gaudium et spes* defines this concept in the following way. "The common good – that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which enable either groups or their individual members to attain their own perfection more fully and

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<sup>37</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 334.

<sup>38</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis Gaudium et spes* (7.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 28.

faster". This definition overcomes any contradictions between the classical idea of the common good and the modern concept of the subject. The Council's understanding of the common good does not refer to specific persons, but to all without exception. It is common because it is a human good, and concerns the human being in his or her entirety<sup>39</sup>. This subjective aspect of the common good is emphasized by Wojtyła, who claims that it is closely related to participation as a quality of the person, and therefore corresponds to the social nature of human beings. He writes "The common good is not only the goal of an action carried out in a community, understood in a purely objective way, but it is also, and even above, all that which conditions, and in, a way, causes, participation in persons acting together, and therefore shapes the subjective communion of action in them<sup>40</sup>. Only the common good understood in such a way can provide an adequate basis for common action and community. The moment of participation released in persons existing and acting together means that the community, directed towards the realization of an external goal, becomes a community of subjects of this activity. In this way, each person, by taking up specific actions within the community, finds and confirms his or her own subjectivity in it. Any created social entities should therefore be organized in such a way that the processes taking place in them lead to the development of the subjectivity of those who belong to them.

The common good cannot be achieved without persons and their participation. Wojtyła claims that the greatest good of every social entity is the human being, with all the richness of his or her personality. It is expressed both in human ability to take creative initiatives and in human creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as in the expertise and experience of individuals, with they can serve the community to which they belong, and which they

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<sup>39</sup>Cf. V. Possenti, *Zarys filozofii polityki*, Lublin 2012, p. 114.

<sup>40</sup> K. Wojtyła, „*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 320.

co-create. This conviction determined the main direction of the social thought of the author of *Person and Act* as Pope. In each of his three social Encyclicals, the "personalistic argument" recurs, in the name of which John Paul II calls for the subjective nature of participation in every kind and dimension of human social involvement.<sup>41</sup> As Pope, Wojtyła argued that a human is alienated when he or she does not want to go beyond him or herself, to make a gift of him or herself self to others, in building an authentic human community. Alienated is also a society which, through its many social mechanisms, hinders or prevents the full personal development of those who create it<sup>42</sup>. At the basis of this thesis, we can hear a clear echo of the already-quoted Paragraph 24 of *Gaudium et Spes*, according to which "Man (...) cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself". Undoubtedly, this sentence captures the deepest essence of Karol Wojtyła's personalism.

## Conclusions

The apologia of the person and his or her dignity is a task which the Council and the Church undertook in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, seeing in them the fundamental good of individual and social life. They are not only at the heart of the Council's thinking, but a universal element common to all people of good will. In the discovery of the essential dignity of every human person, the Council's openness to the idea of human freedom found its foundation. But, contrary to the relativistic concept of freedom which dominates contemporary philosophy and theology, the Council stresses that the value of the person and his or her dignity lies not in freedom alone but in the learning of

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. A. Szostek, *Śladami myśli świętego*, p. 72.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Joannes Paulus PP., Litterae encyclicae Venerabilibus in episcopate Fratribus Clericisque et Religiosis Familiis, Ecclesiae Catholicae Fidelibus universis necnon bonae voluntatis hominibus saeculo ipso Encyclicis ab editis litteris »Rerum novarum« transactco *Centesimus annus* (1.05.1991), AAS 83 (1991), p. 36.

and respect for truth, which the person does not create but discovers. The study *Person and Act* is an attempt at such an approach and analysis of the relationship between freedom and truth, and, consequently, between human conscience and truth. It is also an attempt to discover the truth about every other person, in relation to whom the deepest plane of man's horizontal transcendence is revealed.

Summing up his final speech after a discussion on *Person and Act*, Karol Wojtyła noted that this discussion "reveals once again the entire weight of the problem of the human being, its entire gravity (...) It is necessary to get to know the human being better and better, to understand the reality of the person more and more comprehensively (...) and the paths to grasp all this richness still call on us to embark on them"<sup>43</sup>. The book, which is the culmination of the philosophical activity of its author, appears to be a publication which is very up to date.

A careful reading of the book still allows us to pose new questions on the way to a better understanding of the human person in the realities of the contemporary world. Undoubtedly, the study *Person and Act* – a fruit of Wojtyła's participation in the Second Vatican Council, despite the shortcomings signaled at the beginning of the article – is a civilizational work - It is the key not only to the correct reading and understanding of the message of the Council, but also to reaching the integral truth about the human being as a person, and his or her place in the world, and his or her role in actively shaping various dimensions of culture through the *praxis*. Experts in Wojtyła's thought point out that this work has remained unfinished in many aspects, and requires creative continuation. This is not a criticism, but rather an encouragement to follow the Master, to practice the philosophy of the person more deeply and comprehensively with him. This

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<sup>43</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Słowo końcowe po dyskusji nad "Osobą i czynem"*, "Analecta Cracoviensia" 5-6 (1973-1974), p. 262.

article should also be treated as an encouragement to follow this path.

### **In Search of Conciliar Inspirations in the Study**

#### ***Person and Act***

#### **A Contribution to the Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła**

#### Summary

The intention to write *Person and Act* (in Polish, *Osoba i czyn*) – a study considered to be Karol Wojtyła's most-important philosophical book – emerged during the Second Vatican Council, in which he participated as Bishop Wojtyła. It is the author's philosophical reflection on the fundamental themes of the Council, which embrace the concept of freedom's constituting the basis of the essential dignity of every human being, and the problem of the human community. The article traces the roots of the main theses of *Person and Act*, as originating in the Council. These theses constitute a philosophical analysis of the concept of the human being, which is contained especially in *Gaudium et spes* – the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

**Keywords:** freedom, the dignity of the person, community

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