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## THE COMMUNIONAL RHYTHM OF LIFE.

# THE PERSONALISTIC MEDITATION ON HUMAN LIFE ACCORDING TO KAROL WOJTYŁA/JOHN PAUL

II \*

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*Mas cómo perseveras,  
¡oh vida!, no viviendo donde vives,  
y haciendo por que mueras  
las flechas que recibes  
de lo que del Amado en ti concibes?<sup>1</sup>*

*Gloria Dei vivens homo,  
vita autem hominis visio Dei.  
(...) Haec enim gloria hominis,  
perseverare ac permanere in Dei servitute<sup>2</sup>*

*Zapoczątkował w nich miejsce urodzin  
i miejsce życia odstąpił w każdym człowieku,  
które przerasta nurt mijania,  
które przerasta śmierć<sup>3</sup>*

**Abstract:** In this brief paper I attempt to focus our attention on some of the main thematic lines concerning Karol Wojtyła's meditation both on man's personhood and man's life. I especially wish to investigate the meaning of the term «life», such as it is used in the thought and the *teachings* of the man who became John Paul II.

**Keywords:** Karol Wojtyła; personalism; nature; person; life.

**Resumo:** Neste breve ensaio, pretendo prestar atenção a uma das principais linhas temáticas da meditação de Karol Wojtyła sobre a personalidade humana e a vida do homem. Almejo especialmente investigar o significado do termo “vida”, tal como é usado no pensamento e nos ensinamentos do homem que se tornou João Paulo II.

**Palavras-chave:** Karol Wojtyła; personalismo; natureza; pessoa; vida.

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<sup>1</sup> ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Cântico spiritual. Canciones entre el alma y el Esposo*, VIII, BAC, p. 463.

<sup>2</sup> IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Adversus haereses*, in MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. VII, Book IV, 20, 7; Book IV, 14, 1.

<sup>3</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Rozważanie o Śmierci (Meditation on Death)* in *Tutte le opere letterarie*, (original Polish text and Italian translation), Bompiani, Milano 2001, p. 96-97: «Egli ha aperto negli uomini uno spazio alla nascita, / ha rivelato in loro uno spazio di vita / che sovrasta alle correnti che passano, / che sovrasta alla morte» («He has opened in us a space to birth / revealing in each man a space of life / which exceeds the flowing currents / which exceeds death»).

## 1. The rhythm of human life. The dramatic tension between «nature» and «person»

In this brief paper I attempt to focus our attention on some of the main thematic lines concerning Karol Wojtyła's meditation both on man's personhood and man's life. I especially wish to investigate the meaning of the term «life» which emerges in the thought and the *teachings* of the man who became John Paul II.

Without the gift of life the person, as an earthly being, simply could not be there. For the participation in being and the dynamism of existence, which is given to every living creature by nature, would be otherwise precluded. Aristotle has already observed that «vivere viventibus est esse»<sup>4</sup> (for living beings to live is to be): Life is the being of the living. This definition to some measure also concerns the peculiar living beings that we are - men, in so far it places man in the field of ontology, together with the other living beings [*Lebewesen*]. But if one searches for the deeper meaning of man's life, then he is mysteriously attracted toward a more essential question: “*who is man?*”<sup>5</sup> In fact, only by answering this question it is possible adequately to understand the life of such a being. The question “who is man?” is also source of wonder, because it exceeds the boundaries of metaphysics and ontology leading to the threshold of the mystery of person. Christian Revelation supplies the answer to this question, contending that it is through the Incarnation of Christ, the Son of God [*Λόγος*] that man is known to be a person<sup>6</sup>, as such as he is created by God, redeemed by Christ and destined for the communion with Him. Wojtyła has contemplated the mystery of Christ and the personal being of man during his entire life, as man, priest, poet, philosopher and theologian. In light of the revealed truth he could deeply meditate on the mystery of man's personhood and life.

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<sup>4</sup> ARISTOTLE, *De anima*, II, 4, 415b 13: «τὸ δὲ ζῆν τοῖς ζῶσι τὸ εἶναι ἐστίν». This sentence is repeatedly quoted by Robert Spaemann as a “dominant note” in his main philosophical-anthropological work, *Personen*, in order to affirm that life is not a mere property of living beings, but it rather denotes their existence: for example a lion exists in so far as it lives. But with reference to man the word “being” begins to become more problematic. R. SPAEMANN, *Personen. Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen „etwas“ und „jemand“*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1996, p. 40: «Sein im Sinne von Existenz wird von verschiedenen Wesen auf verschiedene Weise ausgesagt. Aristoteles schreibt: “Für Lebewesen heißt Leben Sein”. Ein Löwe existiert nicht und lebt außerdem, sondern er existiert, indem er und solange er lebt. Wir verfügen nicht über ein analoges Wort für das Sein von Personen. Und wenn wir es einführen wollten, würde uns dies sofort in eine kontroverse Situation führen».

<sup>5</sup> THE HOLY BIBLE, *Psalms* 8, 4-5: «What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor» (King James Version).

<sup>6</sup> The thesis «every man is person» belongs to the field of meta-anthropology and requests an obedient readiness to listen and accept the revealed truths on man (i.e. the gift of faith), in order to be fully understood. Cf. M. SERRETTI, *L'uomo è persona*, Lateran University Press, Roma 2008, pp. 171-172. The title of Serretti's work is drawn from a speech by Karol Wojtyła, delivered at the Vatican Radio in 1964, during the third session of the Ecumenical Vatican II Council, then published in the Krakow's newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny* (n. 52, p. 2), precisely with this title: *Człowiek jest osobą* (The man is person).

I now examine how the pulsating kernel of the thesis that «man is person», as a Wojtyła's "hidden theological tendency"<sup>7</sup>, irradiates a special light upon the problems of man's life - conferring it full meaning. Every life is grafted into a nature and it transmits to nature a peculiar dynamism, whose meaning is implicitly recognizable in the ancient terms "nascor", "φύω/φύομαι", which refer to generation, birth as well as a principle of organic growth, typical, for example, of the trees (φυτόν as derived from φύω); on that score nature possesses a rhythm of birth, growth and development, movement and disruption. The vital energy emanating from the instant of generation carries out a cycle, which is different in times and modes of development according to the different living species, subject in any case to disruption of the matter. This dynamic law is also valid to a certain extent for the particular living being "man", since he is situated in a nature, specifically the "human nature", and derives from there his rhythm of birth, growth, development, maturation, ageing and death.

On the other hand Wojtyła is deeply conscious of the truth according to which the man is person and cannot be essentially reduced to it. The "dramatic tension" between the person and his nature thus represents the specific rhythm of human life. The person *has* a nature, but he *is not* simply his nature<sup>8</sup>: that's the reason why a peculiar "potential difference" springs up and flows between person and nature. Such a dynamic tension discretely pervades Wojtyła's understanding of man, as it is formulated in his main philosophical work, *Osoba i czyn* [*Person and Act*]<sup>9</sup> and reveals dramatic features, for the dynamism flowing between person and nature is conditioned by the activity [*Wirkmacht*] of the person, by the willing and conscious energy

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<sup>7</sup> G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, HarperCollins, New York 1999, pp. 177-178: «The Italian philosopher Rocco Buttiglione, one of the most insightful commentators on Karol Wojtyła's philosophical project, suggests that there is a "hidden theological tendency" in Wojtyła's personalism. His method of analysis, in *Person and Act*, was strictly philosophical, but the inspiration was Christian. It is in God the Holy Trinity, a "community" of self-giving "persons" who lose nothing of their uniqueness in their radical self-giving, that we see confirmed the Law of the Gift and the truth about freedom as freedom-for-self-donation. Wojtyła's philosophy, like every other aspect of his life, was touched by his ongoing dialogue with God in prayer. As his life unfolded, that "theological tendency" in his philosophical thought became more and more explicit». Cf. also R. BUTTIGLIONE, *Towards an Adequate Anthropology*, in «*Ethos*», special edition, 2, 1996, p. 243.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. SPAEMANN, *Personen*, p. 40: «Menschen [hingegen] existieren, indem sie Sein unterscheiden von ihrer bestimmten *Weise* zu sein, also von einer bestimmten "Natur". Sie *sind* nicht einfach ihre Natur, ihre Natur ist etwas, das sie haben. Und dieses Haben ist ihr Sein. Personsein ist das Existieren von "rationalen Naturen"».

<sup>9</sup> On the history of *Osoba i Czyn*'s editions and translations see: G. WEIGEL, *Witness to Hope*, pp. 174-175. A revised Polish text was translated into English by Andrzej Potocki and sent to Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka – a former student of Roman Ingarden living in Boston and active in the world of phenomenological circles – in the United States for publication. But, at this point «Dr. Tymieniecka significantly changed the Potocki translation, confusing its technical language and bending the text toward her own philosophical concerns, to the point where the reader is, on occasion, not really in contact with Wojtyła's own thoughts». Because of the Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's interpolation in the English translation of Karol Wojtyła's masterpiece, we refer to the German translation of the book: K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau 1981 (Übertragung aus dem Polnischen von Herbert Springer).

[ἐνέργεια] of the «personal-I». Such rhythm exceeds the limits of every dynamic, either physical or metaphysical, for it possesses eminently *personalistic* features and is defined by Wojtyła as *actus personae*, which consists in the self-possession and, ultimately, in the self-donation for love.

Wojtyła finds the spark of this potential difference in the field of human experience and human act, which is deeply connected with the «self-conscious I»: in self-experience and self-knowledge [*Selbsterkenntnis*] constantly emerge two irreducible elements of consciousness. These elements show the existence of two different dimensions in the life of person. The first element can be described with the expression “something happens in man” [*Etwas geschieht im Menschen*]. This is the observation of a process which does not require man’s free will to occur within him. Wojtyła classifies these processes as “activations” [*Aktivierungen*], i.e. the complex of psychosomatic reactions which simply happen in man, without his assent. This peculiar experience discloses to man the consciousness of a natural dimension in his own existence. Such dynamisms, in fact, have a bio-physiological basis and are deeply rooted in the *physis* of the personal being. These reactions are also not chaotic, but rather possess a natural orientation. This is the case of sexual impulse, which tends *per se* to the intrinsic aim of conservation of the species *homo* [*Selbsterhaltung*] and provides matter for love between man and woman, but only *per accidens*, because love of persons is essentially *per se*, the fruit of man’s free will<sup>10</sup>. Wojtyła’s analysis of natural impulses and dynamisms explicitly speaks of a *teleological order* inscribed in the human nature: in the animal it is regulated by instinct, whereas it brings into the man an energy by virtue of which he can deliberately orientate and shape his life: the course of life can be disrupted, or can be elevated to a higher order, if compared to the previous one, concerning the mere natural (non-human) kingdom. I am talking about man’s operative energy, of which the “personal-I” becomes conscious in a specific lived experience [*Erlebnis*], which Wojtyła formulates as follows: «I act – man acts». As soon as the “I” becomes conscious of acting – and knows that he consciously acts – he discovers in the experience an absolutely new and unexpected movement, which is irreducible to any biochemical process. This process is the moment of decision, which anticipates a choice – really a *new birth* according to Wojtyła<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Liebe und Verantwortung*, Kösel-Verlag GmbH&Co., München 1981<sup>2</sup>, p. 46: «Daraus erhellt, dass die Liebe zwischen Mann und Frau für die innere Zweckbestimmung des Triebes nicht bestimmend ist. Sein eigentliches Ziel, sein Ziel *per se*, ist etwas, was über das Individuum hinausgeht; die Existenz der Spezies *homo*, ihr Weiterbestehen».

<sup>11</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Radiation of Fatherhood*, in *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, University of California Press, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1987 (translated with introductions by B. Taborski), p. 354: «We are born also through choice – then we are born from within, / and not at once but bit by bit... / So we are not born but rather become. / But at a particular moment we may not become, may not be born. / This depends on us. And that is

The experiences of “self-possession” and “self-determination” introduce the “I” into the awareness of man’s own personal being – which is eminently trans-natural and trans-phenomenal (though it is rooted in his own nature). On that score the transcendence of person through his act and the integration of nature into the person is made possible. Man has the capability of possessing himself, as deeply as his self-consciousness and his willing energy are condensed in the kernel of the “I” and they are not carried away towards the periphery of the self neither by alienating influences of the “world” nor by inner thoughts in one’s own mind, some of which can be insinuated by the Enemy of man<sup>12</sup>. By virtue of man’s self-possession – whose exercise also involves an increase of self-consciousness (indeed consciousness can “go in depth” more and more) – the “personal-I” is able to determine himself, by choosing to act in conformity with a specific aim: choice and action are always directed toward the affirmation of a certain “good”, recognized as a *true* good. In this sense the action has a “transitive meaning”, because it allows the agent to leave himself in order to affirm the transcendentality of a specific good. This act which tends toward the truth of good has likewise a vertical dynamism, defined by Wojtyła as transcendent, by means of the nexus which binds it to the truth. Through this act the person also fulfills himself, i.e. he transforms himself in the light of the «truth on good» which is met (particularly through other persons) and chosen. Such dynamism is the peculiar “intransitive dimension” of acts<sup>13</sup>. In this reflexivity – whose nucleus still resides in the self-determination of the person – the agent so to speak *takes himself in hand* and *transforms himself*. What part of the agent can be transformed by the agent himself? This question can be answered by commenting on Wojtyła’s anthropology, which implicitly states that the person gradually appropriates his own nature, integrating it. Such a dynamism does not alter human nature at all, it just allows the agent to become more integrally himself than before the action. Indeed it is defined by Wojtyła as “integration”<sup>14</sup> and presupposes a possibility of unity and interpenetration

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why – bit by bit – I try to find credibility / in the word “mine”. Do you also try to find it, child? / Giving birth begins with unity and aims at unity. In this love consists».

<sup>12</sup> Satan’s projections in the mind of man are so pervasive and thin that they can mingle themselves with the man’s thoughts, if he allows them to penetrate the heart. The Church Fathers spoke about «*loghismois*». This dynamic is well described by F. O’Connor in her novel *The Violent Bear It Away*, in F. O’CONNOR, *Collected Works*, The Library of America, New York 1988, pp. 329-479 (for example pp. 429-430).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, in *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, Peter Lang, Wien 1993, pp. 263-275. (This paper was presented at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Wojtyła’s concept of *integration* seems to enter in deep resonance if compared with the ancient concept of *enhypostasis*, worked out in Christological field by the Greek Fathers (in this context the meditation of Maximus Confessor is extremely meaningful: H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus’ des Bekenner*, Johannes-Verlag, Einsiedeln 1988<sup>3</sup>, pp. 227f.). The background of the thesis «Every person precisely exists in one nature» (R. SPAEMANN, *Personen. Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen „etwas“ und „jemand“*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart

between person and nature and also between the parts which compose the human rational nature itself (i.e. body, psyche and spirit).

Consciousness in this context has a very important function, for it supports the assimilation of the psycho-somatic dynamisms, conferring them a higher tonality, with which the personal act becomes “clothed”<sup>15</sup>. This is the peculiar case of love, which integrates the sexual impulse, *orientating* it toward the affirmation of the absolute value of the beloved person<sup>16</sup>. In this perspective man can love the woman *not notwithstanding*, but *through* the natural sexual impulse, which, properly personalised, provides matter for spiritual love, directed towards the person in his or her totality. The structure of self-possession and self-determination, which primarily reveals the essence of the “personal-I”, testifies to the transcendence of the person, who is able to orientate and lead the teleological order inscribed in his nature. In this perspective the Humean claim - «We never really advance a step beyond ourselves»<sup>17</sup> - is radically false. This experience, which man can recognize and judge in his life, is defined by Wojtyła with the two terms of “self-transcendence” and “self-teleology”. The man, taking himself in hand, is able to «outgrow himself». With regard to this Wojtyła distinguishes two different meanings of “self-teleology”, i.e. the self-teleology of “limit” and the self-teleology of “aim”. He states that the will’s kernel is not situated in the intentionality of the acts, but rather in the personal structure of self-determination. Man’s capability in determining himself, would therefore be the basis of man’s self-teleology. From this point of view the limit (*telos*) to which man tends is not represented by the values to which the intentionality of willing is orientated, but it is the “personal-I” himself<sup>18</sup>. This reflexivity of the acts of willing - from the outset - could signify a

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1996, p. 42: Sie sind Individuen, die «in einer solchen Natur existieren. Das heißt: Sie existieren als Personen») can be found in the Christological controversies concerning the relation between the Person and the *two* natures in Christ. With regard to this are of great importance the meditations carried out by Byzantine Christology, which asserts the idea of an «essentialized person» (ἐνοούσιος) and an «enhyposatized nature» (ἐνυπόστατος). This conceptual couple allows also to think of an interpenetration without any mixture (ἐνωσις ἀσύγχυτος). About this question I refer to the important considerations of M. SERRETTI, *L'uomo è persona*, Lateran University Press, Vatican City 2008, pp. 111-114.

<sup>15</sup> A deep emotion, sprung up thanks to the experimental contact with the transcendentals of being, can lead a man to an act, which would be impossible and inconceivable only considering the natural dynamisms. In this perspective the sacrifice of Saint Maximilian Kolbe’s own life, in order to save an unknown’s life (beloved as a close friend), would be a pure *non-sense* from the point of view of the self-preservation’s impulse. But what a deep sense this sacrifice – *usque ad mortem* - had to have for the man who survived!

<sup>16</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Liebe und Verantwortung*, p. 60: «Die Sexualmoral, und mithin die Ehemoral, besteht in einer beständigen, tiefreichenden *Synthese zwischen der naturgegebenen Zielbestimmung und der personalistischen Norm*».

<sup>17</sup> D. HUME, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part II, Section VI.

<sup>18</sup> CARD. K. WOJTYŁA, *The Transcendence of the Person in Action and Man’s Self-Teleology*, in *Analecta Husserliana*, v. IX, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht 1979, pp. 203-212: «The analysis of self-determination indicates that the *voluntarium*, as the interior dynamic structure of the person who constitutes the act, finds its proper “limit” not in the values toward which the human willing is tending intentionally, but in the subjective “I” himself, who through



*closed circle*, which would confine man to a rather gloomy solipsism. On the contrary, man's self-teleology presupposes teleology, i.e. it «does not signify in the first place a closing up within himself, but a living contact with the whole reality and a dynamic exchange, characteristic of the structure of self-determination, with the world of values, hierarchized and differentiated within itself»<sup>19</sup>. Every authentic disclosing of man's self-teleology imprints in the act a dynamism which goes *against the stream*, for the truth is always “within-above” man (E. Przywara). In any case this vertical transcendence is opened for man only “from above”, it is not to be understood as the mere achievement of man's voluntaristic effort (“from below-upwards”).

In man's reference to truth man comes into direct contact with the transcendentals of being (*Bonum, Verum, Pulchrum*), which do not remain an *abstracted dimension* of the human spirit, but enter the real structures of the acting and existing of the person<sup>20</sup>. In his reference to truth man thus meets the adequate “boundary” of self-determination's personalistic structure. To the extent that man sights this boundary (as if it would be the horizon of his experience), he directs his steps towards it and he reaches it, he fulfills himself. In this movement man's self-teleology finds its experimental actualisation. The self-fulfillment which underlies this dynamic, though it is not absolute (for it remains susceptible of further perfection), has “something absolute”, in so far as it comes true on the basis of the «absoluteness of good». Man participates in this by orienting his act to transcendent truth: «The greatness of consciousness stems from its being righteous and telling the truth. If such a consciousness is called “the voice of God”, it is because it reveals in what way man not only “transcends” the horizontal limits of his subject, but also “outgrows himself”, thus attaining simultaneously a profound conformity with himself. And precisely this conformity with oneself, which is realized on the basis of the transcendence of the person, of the transcendental relation to truth, enters as it were the definition of self-fulfillment, or in other words, the self-teleology of man»<sup>21</sup>.

In this sense the subject does not put himself “beyond good and evil” through his self-transcendence, but rather he “outgrows himself”, by possessing himself through the relation with the truth<sup>22</sup>. Man's self-teleology, far from implying a solipsistic closing up of the “I”, like

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willing any kinds of values, through their definite choice, both determines himself and in some fashion wills and chooses his own self» (p. 206).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibi*, p. 208. See also K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, p. 177 (*Die Transzendenz der Person und die Wahrheit, das Gute und das Schöne*).

<sup>21</sup> CARD. K. WOJTYŁA, *The Transcendence of the Person in Action and Man's Self-Teleology*, p. 209.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*. «Man is constantly an assignment to himself; he is imposed upon himself as a task, and each time, in every action, willing, choice, and decision are imposed upon himself anew. On the basis of the whole human experience,

an «intransgressible monad», reveals itself as a structural opening to values which permeate reality<sup>23</sup>. The self-fulfillment on the basis of self-teleology occurs when the person transcends himself towards another person or towards community: it is in this sense that man fulfills himself “through others”, by realizing his own self by living “for others”.

The self-teleology as a personal mode of the subject’s opening towards reality seems to “resonate” with the ancient concept of *tropos* [τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως]: this concept describe a peculiar *mode of existence*, a kind of fundamental attitude [*Grundhaltung*] of man, through which he can decide to turn [τρέπειν] either into a fundamental opening or to a radical closing. The single expressions of self-teleology are certainly multiform, yet they seem to spring and receive their orientation from this fundamental option. The boundary of the personal structure of self-determination is founded on truth. In so far as man, as subject of action, achieves this boundary to some extent he fulfills himself, for it is the truth of human acts.

There seems also to be in man the experience of a deceptive boundary, which could be recognised as a Satan’s evil projection in the heart of man: it possesses a specific disruptive law, namely it can not essentially be a place where man can rest, but it is rather a point or a line which can be sighted and which exerts a deceptive fascination. From this first sight two possibilities follow: either man keeps a safe distance from it, staying within the perimeter marked out by the boundary of truth, or man approaches the evil boundary in order to cross it. The decision of coming nearer seems already to contain *in nuce* the decision of crossing it. Dostoyevsky reflects on this law, when he states in his novel *Demons*: «Those who come always nearer to the last boundary always surpass the limit». If the fundamental attitude of man tends to an illusory good, and he comes nearer to the evil horizon, to a certain extent he has already decided in his heart to cross that boundary. The misleading limit of evil exerts a fascination, which tempts man to surpass it. Differently from the limit of good and truth, however, it builds its attractive power upon untruth, producing illusion. There exists a “training”, an “exercise” [ἀσκησις] of man’s self-determination in his relation with truth, which is supported by God’s grace, as well as exists a sinking of man into untruth, from a deceptive boundary to another one, and so on, if man refuses God’s grace.

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and especially of the fundamental content of the fact of action (“I act – man acts”), we arrive at the conviction that above all the “self-teleology of the limit” which conditions all the “self-teleology of the aim” is proper to man».

<sup>23</sup> «Self-teleology signifies only a personal mode (*modus*) of that opening. This mode be many-sided, and so, e.g., different toward things and toward persons». (*ibi*, pp. 209-210).

At the end of his paper on self-teleology Wojtyła states that «the “self-teleology of the limit” is first of all existentially proper to the man who exists and acts in the world. It is this limit which is the truth of human acts. Consciousness is the fundamental condition of the fulfillment of self. “The world” signifies for every man the necessity of a judgement, which arises from the very depth of his personal being»<sup>24</sup>. The analysis of self-transcendence and self-teleology carried out by Wojtyła stresses the great importance of “consciousness”, through which man recognizes the transcendent truth, formulating a judgement - spring of new action. John Paul II’s exhortation to young men in 1985 becomes more comprehensible in the light of Wojtyła’s concept of self-teleology: «Take your life in hand and transform it into a masterpiece!»<sup>25</sup>.

## 2. The rhythm of “new life” in Christ. “Inhabitatio” and “communio personarum”

The newness of the judgement formulated by the “self-conscious I” in the light of truth could not be adequately understood if one does not recognize its source in the radical newness that the communion with Christ introduces in man’s life. The outcome of such personal communion is testified in man’s life through a double profile, an intra-personal and an inter-personal one.

*a. The intra-personal rhythm of the “I”.* Wojtyła dedicates great attention to the problem of consciousness and to the complex dynamics subtended to this sphere of personal-being. His analysis of consciousness is able to elucidate the inner life of person and the dynamics which precede the action, constituting its presupposition. This dimension was only implicitly contained in the Thomistic concept of «actus humanus», carried out on the basis of the category of «voluntarium». In this perspective Wojtyła refers to modern philosophy, which from Descartes to Husserl has displayed and deepened the meaning of man’s consciousness. We would like to note briefly that Wojtyła performs a critical reception of the Husserlian phenomenology, without assuming it as an “untranscendible horizon” of thought<sup>26</sup>. In this sense the person is

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibi*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>25</sup> Man is a peculiar being which can take in hand his life (and his nature), transforming it to a certain extent as the artist creates his masterpiece. See: *Incontro di Giovanni Paolo II con i giovani della Sardegna*, Cagliari, 20th October 1985.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *The Person: Subject and Community*, in *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, (translated by Theresa Sandok, O.S.M.), p. 226: «After Descartes [...] the aspect of consciousness eventually assumed a kind of absolutization, which in the contemporary era entered phenomenology by way of Husserl. The gnosiological attitude in philosophy has replaced the metaphysical attitude: being is constituted in and somehow through consciousness. The reality of the person, however, demands the restoration of the notion of conscious being, a being that is not constituted in and through consciousness but that instead somehow constitutes consciousness.

irreducible to his consciousness, even if without consciousness the metaphysical subjectivity [*suppositum*] can not constitute itself as “I”<sup>27</sup>. In a paper on Karol Wojtyła’s philosophical anthropology Josef Seifert speaks about the «ontological constitution», with regard to the constitution of “personal-I” through consciousness in Wojtyła’s thought: with this expression Seifert intends to show the conscious distancing of Wojtyła from the Husserlian «pure-I». The «constituted ego» is not confused by Wojtyła with the ontological and substantial reality of our personhood; rather it is shown by him as that level of man in which he becomes “conscious” and “conscious of acting”. Therefore consciousness possesses a constitutive function within the integral image of person focused by our Author. According to Seifert the ontological constitution of person as “I”, to which Wojtyła refers in *Person and Act* implies that the «conscious awakening» is an «ontologically constitutive actualization of the person»<sup>28</sup>. Nevertheless Wojtyła refuses an hypostatization of the consciousness, which is always consciousness of somebody instead. Wojtyła also keeps distance from Husserl stating that consciousness does not possess an objectifying intentional energy, which would decisively constitute the object through its knowledge. According to Wojtyła consciousness rather reflects and enlightens what has previously become object of intentionality. By the virtue of its function consciousness is defined as «comprehension of what is already comprehended». Therefore in Wojtyła’s thought emerges the essential distinction between self-knowledge [*Selbsterkenntnis*], equipped with intentionality, and consciousness [*Bewusstsein*], which possesses two different functions, the «mirroring-illuminating» [*Widerspiegelung - Durchleuchtung*] and the «reflexive»

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This also applies to the reality of action as conscious activity. While it may be granted that the person and action – or, to put it another way, my own existing and acting self – is constituted in consciousness to the extent that consciousness always reflects the existence (*esse*) and activity (*operari*) of that self, still the experience of the human being (and especially the experience of my own self) clearly reveals that consciousness is always subjectified in the self and its roots are always the *suppositum humanum*.

<sup>27</sup> «Das Bewußtsein ist nicht nur ein Aspekt, sondern auch eine wesentliche Dimension bzw. ein reales Moment des Seins, das “ich” bin, da es die Subjektivität dieses Ichs im Sinn eines Erlebens konstituiert. Wenn dieses Sein und folglich der reale individuelle Gegenstand in seiner grundlegenden ontischen Struktur dem entspricht, was in der traditionellen Philosophie als “suppositum” bestimmt worden ist, dann könnte sich dieses “suppositum” ohne das Bewußtsein auf diese Weise in die reale Konstitution des Seins, das der Mensch ist, eingehen, wenn wir die Subjektivität dieses Seins verhältnismäßig, das heißt in der richtigen Proportionen, hervorheben wollen. Mit dieser Subjektivität ist gerade die Subjektivität gemeint, aufgrund der jeder konkrete Mensch ein einzigartiges und unnachahmliches Ich ist» (K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, p. 57).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. SEIFERT, *Truth and Transcendence of the Person in the Philosophical Thought of Karol Wojtyła*, in *Karol Wojtyła Filosofo Teologo Poeta*, Atti del I Colloquio Internazionale del Pensiero Cristiano (ISTRA), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1984, p. 100: «The meaning of Wojtyła’s term “constitution” – and this is decisive – is not the same as Husserl’s meaning which refers to *noemata* and aspects (intentional *objects* of consciousness) which originate in the *noesis* (intentional thinking activity). Wojtyła’s concept of constitution comes closer to Hengstenberg’s notion of *ontological* constitution. The ego as conscious subject is not constituted (transcendentally) as object of consciousness. Rather, consciousness is an *ontologically constitutive* actualization of the person».

[*Reflexivität*] one<sup>29</sup>. The mirroring function of consciousness enlightens its contents and itself, as it is objectified by the self-knowledge. Through this mirroring function the consciousness is examined in an objective sense [*self-consciousness, Selbstbewusstsein*]: the self-knowledge contributes to form the self-consciousness. The reflexive function introduces into the «experience of the man's own ego» [*das Erleben des eigenen Ich*] and allows man to experiment particularly his own subjectivity. The Wojtylian analysis of consciousness seems to point out a *ternary rhythm* of the inner experience of person, according to the scheme: self-knowledge – self-consciousness – lived experience. These three moments lend themselves to be interpreted in accordance with the category of *simultaneity*, rather than with the “before-then” temporal logic. In this perspective the tissue of consciousness is *polyphonic*, for it presents a multiplicity of thin levels and dynamisms which are superimposed, alternating in a unique and unrepeatable rhythm and dance in everyone, in accordance with the contents of consciousness's discrete form. The inner dialogue between self-knowledge and consciousness is always re-activated by the knowledge, which furnishes to consciousness its “plastic boundaries”<sup>30</sup>, like the fundamental note of a chord, on whose basis the other ones are harmonized. Moreover the self-conscious “I”, held up by self-knowledge streams through time as a “flowing river”<sup>31</sup>.

In the light of these brief remarks we can see how consciousness, according to Wojtyła, does not have a radically closed monological structure, but it rather presents an essentially dialogic conformation. In this perspective the inner dialogue between self-knowledge and consciousness is originally open to receive the voice of God<sup>32</sup>, who *can* speak in man's consciousness, revealing and throwing light on dimensions and profundities of the personal “I” otherwise inaccessible. Thus consciousness is structurally open towards the Spirit of God and can receive Him: «For he is absolute Spirit, "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24); and also, in such a marvelous way, he is not only close to this world but present in it, and in a sense immanent, penetrating it and giving it life from within. This is especially true in relation to man: God is present in the intimacy of man's being, in his mind, consciousness and heart: an ontological and psychological reality, in

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<sup>29</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, pp. 51-56.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibi*, p. 48-49 (*Die Selbsterkenntnis als Grundlage des Selbstbewusstseins*).

<sup>31</sup> We can find the metaphor of the flowing torrent as the self-conscious “I” in John Paul II's poetry *Roman Triptych: GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Trittico Romano. Meditazioni*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2003, pp. 13-15.

<sup>32</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et vivificantem*, Part II, n. 43: «For the consciousness is "the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths." It "can ...speak to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that." This capacity to command what is good and to forbid evil, placed in man by the Creator, is the main characteristic of the personal subject. But at the same time, "in the depths of his consciousness, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience" (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, 16)».

considering which St. Augustine said of God that he was "closer than my inmost being" (Confess., III, 6, 11: CCL 27, 33)<sup>33</sup>.

Consciousness, from the faith's standpoint, thus constitutes the specific battle-field where man is called to struggle against sin, in the drama of his conversion [*μετάνοια*]: «Conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of the consciousness, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time a new beginning of the bestowal of grace and love: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). Thus in this "convincing concerning sin" we discover a double gift: the gift of the truth of consciousness and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Counselor»<sup>34</sup>.

Consciousness is structurally open and predisposed to receive the gift of the Spirit, but nevertheless it is able to close itself with a rebellious resistance, making itself impermeable to grace (that is *the sin against the Holy Spirit*). The Holy Spirit, in man's inner conflict, due to the radical opposition between the carnal and the spiritual desires, calls man to take a stand, between the *tropos* of a deep opening and the *tropos* of an essential resistance to Him: «In the texts of St. Paul there is a superimposing - and an interpenetration - of the ontological dimension (the flesh and the spirit), the ethical (moral good and evil), and the pneumatological (the action of the Holy Spirit in the order of grace). His words (especially in the Letters to the Romans and Galatians) enable us to know and feel vividly the strength of the tension and struggle going on in man between openness to the action of the Holy Spirit and resistance and opposition to him, to his saving gift. The terms or poles of contrast are, on man's part, his limitation and sinfulness, which are essential elements of his psychological and ethical reality; and on God's part, the mystery of the gift, that unceasing self-giving of divine life in the Holy Spirit.- Who will win? The one who welcomes the gift»<sup>35</sup>.

Insofar as man bends his knees, ready to receive the Holy Spirit's gift, a *new life* springs and the «inner man», the "spiritual" one, strengthens: «Under the influence of the Holy Spirit this inner, "spiritual," man matures and grows strong. Thanks to the divine self-communication, the human spirit which "knows the secrets of man" meets the "Spirit who searches everything, even the depths of God." (1 Cor 2:10f). In this Spirit, who is the eternal gift, the Triune God opens

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<sup>33</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et vivificantem*, Part III (*The Spirit who gives Life*), n. 54. Consciousness is here joined to heart: we can state, to a certain extent, that it supports the «thoughts' descent into the heart», as it is intended according to the beautiful expression of the Orthodox tradition (cf. J. SERR – O. CLÉMENT, *La prière du coeur*, éd. Bellefontaine 1977).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibi*, Part II (*The Spirit who convinces the world concerning sin*), n. 31.

<sup>35</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Dominum et vivificantem*, Part III, n. 55.

himself to man, to the human spirit. The hidden breath of the divine Spirit enables the human spirit to open in its turn before the saving and sanctifying self-opening of God. Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a "new life," is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a living temple of God (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19). For through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up their abode with him. In the communion of grace with the Trinity, man's "living area" is broadened and raised up to the supernatural level of divine life. Man lives in God and by God: he lives "according to the Spirit," and "sets his mind on the things of the Spirit"»<sup>36</sup>.

Man as person is destined to the relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit: the unity with Christ transforms man from within, according to the logic of the resemblance with God, which is not only simply *intentional*, but also *vital*<sup>37</sup>. The progressive realization of the image into resemblance, allows man to comprehend himself and discover his humanity in a deeper way. Thus what in man is irreducible to his nature begins to reveal itself inch by inch: This reality is the *inner man*, the irreducible kernel which grounds the *humanum* in man, placing him in an interpersonal (asymmetrical) relation with God, his Creator. Wojtyła arrives at the «irreducible in man» through a *personalistic comprehension of man*, which interrupts the process of cosmologic and transcendental reduction: «We must pause at the irreducible, at that which is unique and unrepeatable in each human being, by virtue of which he or she is not just *a particular human being* – an individual of a certain species – but *a personal subject*. Only then do we get a true and complete picture of the human being. [...] For the irreducible also refers to everything in the human being that is invisible and wholly internal and whereby each human being, myself included, is an “eyewitness” of his or her own self – of his or her own humanity and person»<sup>38</sup>. The Christian Orthodox tradition uses an extraordinary expression to indicate what in man avoids every reduction: «inner face»<sup>39</sup>, the place where the resemblance with God is deeply impressed. Such an interior face is often obscured and made opaque by the “idols of self-knowledge”: a conversion of man’s own look is required in order that self-consciousness clearly reflects the inner face. In this level of depth and commitment with his own “I”, man can realize that he is inhabited by a «Presence-in-absence», who transforms him from within: «Because You execute

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibi*, Part III, n. 58.

<sup>37</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *La dottrina della fede in S. Giovanni della Croce*, in *Metafisica e persona. Tutte le opere filosofiche*, Bompiani, Milano 2003, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being*, in *Selected Essays*, Peter Lang, Wien 1993, p. 214.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. O. CLEMENT, *Le visage intérieur*, Stock, Paris 1978.

Your plan. You are determined and Your plans are irreversible. The strangest thing always transpires in the end: that You are never against me. You enter into what I call loneliness, and You overcome my resistance. Can one say that You force Your way in or only that You enter through a door that is open anyway? You did not make me closed; You did not quite close me. Loneliness is not at the bottom of my being at all; it grows at a certain point. The fissure through which You enter is far deeper. You enter – and slowly begin to shape me. You shape and develop me in spite of what I imagine about my ego and about other people, yet You do it in harmony with what I am. This I cannot deny. Yet can I wonder that You are stronger in me than myself?»<sup>40</sup>.

The Presence of God in man paradoxically remains even after His departure, continuing to act and establishing in heart a tension, which is spring of restlessness and longing for peace, for He remains nearby though in detachment. This is the peculiar form of Veronica's *cor inquietum*:

Vicinanza che ridona la forma. / Lui è partito. Se un uomo parte, la vicinanza s'invola come un uccello: nella corrente del cuore resta un vuoto dove irrompe la nostalgia. // Nostalgia: fame di vicinanza. // Non basta più l'effigie, è un segno del distacco. // La Redenzione è la continua vicinanza di colui che è partito. // Distacco: / rimanere con l'inquietudine della forma / che nessuno sguardo può raggiungere dentro, / nessun Volto. // Vicinanza: / sei partito, eppure ancora mi attraversi, con lo sguardo lontano, / che irraggia dal Volto impresso nel panno fai sorgere la pace di cui va sempre in cerca la mia forma inquieta. // Pace: unità dell'esistenza.<sup>41</sup>

*b. The inter-personal rhythm of «communio».*

Wojtyła's deep meditation on the inner life of man, far from closing the perspective in a hopeless solipsism, opens it wide to the interpersonal rhythm of *communio personarum*: on closer inspection interpersonality and – more originally – “communio” (understood as the origin of relationship between persons, “grafted” in the communal rhythm of the Holy Trinity) constitutes the theological and ontological ground of Karol Wojtyła's philosophy of man<sup>42</sup>. The

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<sup>40</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Radiation of Fatherhood*, in *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1987 (translated with introductions by B. Taborski), p. 338.

<sup>41</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *La redenzione cerca la tua forma per entrare nell'inquietudine di ogni uomo*, in *Tutte le opere letterarie*, (translated by Aleksandra Kurczab and Margherita Guidacci), p. 157. An English translation of this poem is contained in: K. WOJTYŁA, *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, translated by Jerzy Peterkiewicz, Random House, New York 1982 («Redemption Seeking Your Form to Enter Man's Anxiety»).

On the «Presence-in-absence»'s paradox about the relation between man and God cf. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Human Capacity and Human Incapacity. A Theological Exploration of Personhood*, pp. 412-415.

<sup>42</sup> This particularly emerges in Wojtyła's work *The Person: Subject and Community*, in K. WOJTYŁA, *Person and Community. Selected essays*, p. 246: «By “community” I understand “that which unites”. In the *I-thou* relationship, an authentic interpersonal community develops (regardless of its form or variety) if the *I* and the *thou* abide in a mutual affirmation of the transcendent value of the person (a value that may also be called *dignity*) and confirm this by their



person is originally placed into communion: thus there could not exist a person without other persons: “there are only *persons*, in the plural” - we can observe, echoing Robert Spaemann<sup>43</sup>. Wojtyła particularly discovers the main rhythm of communion in the self-donation of conjugal love and the ternary relation between father, mother and child in the family<sup>44</sup>. The man’s capacity of coming out himself in order to donate himself to another person (as *alter-ego*) is inscribed in the structure of personal-being, in his own ontology.

The normative power of truth is able to orientate the personal dynamism of the act towards the others’ good, not only towards himself. If the personal *tropos* is open to truth, humbly accepting it as the concrete and exhaustive shape of his own action, then man grows up and transforms himself through love, transcending the dynamisms of his own nature, but – at the same time – without violating it. This obedience of human nature to the person does not entail a repression of natural dynamisms nor of the faculties of man’s rational soul, but rather their invigoration and hypostatical integration (*enhypostatization*) within a higher unity.<sup>45</sup> Such a dynamic of progressive *appropriation* which the person exerts on his nature thus represents a real dynamization of the superior faculties of human nature (knowledge, will, consciousness, affectivity, memory...). This transformation happens ultimately in man if he accepts the gift of love: in this way the person con-forms his act to “the truth on good”, imprinting in it the form of love, which explodes the natural boundaries of intentionality, biological life and even self-consciousness: «But if there is inside me the truth – then it must explode. / I can not refuse it, I would refuse myself».<sup>46</sup> The prerogative of love consists in a continuous and progressive shifting of limits [*Grenzen*], for the “last limit” is not static, rather it is inexhaustible dynamism: the *Communion of God*, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is also the rhythm of ascension and spiritual progress which tends towards ever more intimate union with Christ: it passes by the way of the Cross and entails the spiritual battle, asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes, so that every boundary (*peras, finis*) which is discovered becomes a new beginning (*arché, principium*) towards higher beginnings: «He

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acts. Only such a relationship seems to deserve the name *communio personarum*». Cf also K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, VII Kapitel, pp. 302-347 (*Abriß einer Theorie der Teilhabe*).

<sup>43</sup> R. SPAEMANN, *Personen*, p. 9: «Personen gibt es nur im Plural». See also pp. 36, 78.

<sup>44</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *The Family as a Community of Persons*, in *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, pp. 315-327; IB, *Parenthood as a Community of Persons, ibi*, pp. 329-342.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. M. SERRETTI, *L'uomo è persona*, p. 114.

<sup>46</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Nascita dei confessori (The Birth of Confessors)*, in *Tutte le opere letterarie*, Bompiani, Milano 2001, pp. 86-87: «Ma se c'è in me la verità – deve esplodere. / Non posso rifiutarla, rifiuterei me stesso».

who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows».<sup>47</sup>

Although Wojtyła explicitly states that he does not want to elaborate a “metaphysics of person” in his work *Person and Act*<sup>48</sup>, he nevertheless seems to prefer metaphysics of *existentia*<sup>49</sup> – undoubtedly deduced from Thomas Aquinas – rather than metaphysics of *substantia* [ὀυσία], Boetian in its Western background. In the light of these brief remarks we can observe how Wojtyła seems to lead his reflections on man within a dynamic ontology of person, which derives the energy of his activity from the *esse-existentia*, as first act of every being. From a metaphysical point of view the person has to be interpreted as *ekstasis* and *hypostasis*, rather than as *substantia*, which really suffers the Aristotelian metaphysics’ influence and can not adequately explain the transcendence of the person<sup>50</sup>.

What does “life” mean according to John Paul II? We can answer the crucial question by recollecting Aristotle’s adage again: «vivere viventibus est esse». Then we could thus synthesize the meaning of life in John Paul II’s thought, modulating the previous expression as follows: *vivere personis est communio*. The question “Which sense has human life?” is always preceded by another one: “*Cur homo?*”, and “*Cur Deus homo?*”. Confronting these questions Wojtyła tirelessly asserts that only the mystery of the Embodied Verb, the Resurrected Christ, clarifies the mystery of man<sup>51</sup>. Man can either disobey God, forgetting his origin and his end, or he can follow Christ, discovering and fulfilling in Him his very humanity. The original attitude of rebellion,

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<sup>47</sup> ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Hom. in Cant.* 8, in: MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeca*, v. 44, 941C; see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part III, section 1, chapter 3, art. 4, n. 2015.

<sup>48</sup> «Im Lichte dessen, was bereits in der Einladung gesagt wurde, ging es in der Studie darum, aus der Erfahrung der Tat das zutage zu fördern, was vom Menschen als Person zeugt, was diese Person gleichsam zur Anschauung bringt; hingegen ging es nicht darum, eine Theorie der Person als Sein aufzustellen, also nicht um eine metaphysische Konzeption des Menschen. Nichtsdestoweniger bestätigt der Mensch, der sich als Person so, wie wir dies in den vorangegangenen Analysen zu zeigen versuchten, zur Erscheinung bringt, zugleich zur Genüge, daß sein ontischer “Status“ nicht aus den Grenzen der Kontingenz, des ens contingens, heraustritt» (K. WOJTYŁA, *Person und Tat*, Herder, Freiburg 1981, pp. 346-347).

<sup>49</sup> «Das esse-Existieren befindet sich am Ursprung des Handelns, es befindet sich auch am Ursprung des ganzen dem Menschen eigenen Dynamismus. [...] Das Existieren ist in der Konzeption des hl. Thomas von Aquin der erste Akt (actus) jedes Seienden, das heißt der erste und grundlegende Faktor seiner Dynamisierung. Der ganz auf dem Handeln und Geschehen beruhende Dynamismus, der im dynamischen Subjekt vorkommt, ist sekundär in Bezug auf diesen ersten Dynamismus: *operari sequitur esse*. Unter *operari* ist gerade der ganze sekundäre Dynamismus zu verstehen, nicht nur das Handeln selbst, sondern auch alles, was im Subjekt geschieht» (*Ibi*, p. 88).

<sup>50</sup> Wojtyła’s thoughts on man finds here a deep resonance with J. D. Zizioulas’s philosophical and theological analyses: «The identification of hypostasis not with “ousia” but with Personhood means that the ontological question is not answered by pointing to the “self-existent”, to a being as it is determined by its own boundaries, but to a being which in its ekstasis breaks through these boundaries in a movement of communion» (J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Human Capacity and Human Incapacity. A Theological Exploration of Personhood*, in «*The Scottish Journal of Theology*», 28 (1975), p. 409).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *L’uomo in prospettiva: sviluppo integrale ed escatologia*, in *Metafisica della persona*, p. 1502.

permeating human nature as a wound which can not heal (*status naturae lapsae*), however does not preclude to man the possibility of turning himself (*trepein*) towards the spring of life and - in a paradoxical way “against the stream” - of outgrowing himself in obedience to truth. The relationship which God establishes with man essentially determines the process of *personification*, which is ultimately inscribed into the mystery of man’s *sanctification* in Christ. The transformation in Christ possesses a double rhythm: 1) being brought in God and 2) God’s coming and inhabiting in ourselves [*inhabitatio*].

But man has the capability to rebel against the inhabitation of God, preferring his own solitude. This is the drama of Adam, who unifies all men, isolating them in their solitude: «I find it difficult to think about this. [...] Although I am like the man who can be placed apart and made a common denominator for all men, I am still lonely. [...] “Ah,” he said then about himself, “I could not bear fatherhood; I could not be equal to it. I felt totally helpless – and what had been a gift became a burden to me. I threw off fatherhood like a burden. For that matter, was I to be a father, or would people merely associate me always with the idea of the Father?»<sup>52</sup>.

Refusing to enter the radiation of Fatherhood, man also refuses to become son and, at the same time, father. Notwithstanding Adam’s decision for solitude and his refuse of God’s Fatherhood, the Mother enters man’s solitude taking him to the «inner Adam’s» death, in order that he can return to (new) life: «You want so much to be lonely that the words “sister” and “Bride” are strangers to your lips. Yet I am she. I constantly watch over the quiet flow of life in you; I constantly bend over it: my substance is the life I give you, thug I do not take it from you. And you know about it. You know where there is life, there must be a bride, a mother. I am she. [...] I gather in me the RADIATION OF FATHERHOOD – and the dying of fatherhood: when a child is born, you are born in it anew, and I rejoice in that birth. At the same time – Adam, Adam – *I desire you to die in it*. I desire your death, and in that wish I find the very nucleus of life. Because of that wish, you bear a grudge against me, and that is why you cannot understand my love for you. It is a love that outgrows you, and I keep coming back to you with that love: to you and your children I return with the *Bridegroom’s death*. You resist it. My Bridegroom does not want to remain lonely in his death! [...] In me will survive the heritage of all men, implanted in the Bridegroom’s death»<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Radiation of Faterhood*, p. 336.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibi*, pp. 363-364.

The existential condition which allows man to come out his solitude consists in the acceptance of the *specific weight* of his own cross. Man's personal cross implants his pain in the Christ's Cross: this is the *Mysterium paschale*, which is sung by Wojtyła. Christ's death and Resurrection are able to transform the human death in a "crossing" toward the other shore of life. The death – as "autumn shore" [*brzeg jesieni*] thus mysteriously enters the definition of life itself: «*Mysterium paschale / mystery of the Passage / through which the way changes its course. / From life proceeding to death - / this is the experience and the evidence. / Through death moving to life - / this is the mystery*»<sup>54</sup>.

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Saint John Paul II has deeply lived and born witness in an exemplary way to the drama of man, who is called to serve God and to be holy, recognizing his origin and his destiny in Christ: He is the beginning, the promise of fulfillment and the *telos* of man's life, who is originally placed into the ocean of Being and called to participate with all the saints in the glorious and communal rhythm of Life.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Meditazione sulla morte (Meditation on Death)*, in *Tutte le opere letterarie*, pp. 94-95: «*Mysterium paschale / mistero del Passaggio / in cui / il cammino s'inverte. / Dalla vita passare nella morte / è questa l'esperienza, l'evidenza. / Attraverso la morte passare nella vita / questo il mistero*».

<sup>55</sup> «True and subsistent life consists in this: the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, pouring out his heavenly gifts on all things without exception. Thanks to his mercy, we too, men that we are, have received the inalienable promise of eternal life», ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catech. illum.* 18, 29, in: MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeca* 33, 1049 (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part I, Section II, ch. 3, art. 12, n. 1050).