

**“Things, Persons, and God” and the full meaning of “Auto-teleology” according to
Karol Wojtyła**

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Abstract

A careful examination of Wojtyła’s concept of transcendence of the person in act through auto-teleology; we lay out Wojtyła’s derivation of the notion auto-teleology from self-determination and its connection to various works of Wojtyła such as *Person and Act* and *Man in the Field of Responsibility*; in addition we carefully explore Wojtyła’s various meanings of the term “telos” as “kres” and “cel” and discuss various translations such as limit/aim and terminus/end; we then analyze a neglected passage from a revised manuscript concerning the fulfillment of transcendence in the attitudes and relationships of the human person to things, people, and God.

Keywords

Karol Wojtyła, auto-teleology, telos, transcendence, person and act, God

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The year 1976 was a milestone for Karol Wojtyła's philosophical development and engagement with various sectors of the cultural world.³ He met with those working on the project to translate his major philosophical work, *Osoba i czyn*, into English, he presented a series of theological meditations for a retreat to Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, and he made an extended visit to the United States as the leader of delegation of the Polish Episcopate for the 41st Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. He traveled across the United States and parts of Canada to visit members of Polonia, often giving significant speeches about cultural, historical, and spiritual topics. But perhaps most significantly, he received invitations from both Harvard University and the Catholic University of America to make major academic presentations.⁴ Invitations to these twin centers of American academia, one secular and the other Catholic, was a clear recognition of the importance of his work for the Church, his witness for freedom and human dignity in communist dominated Poland, and his intellectual prowess as a philosopher and theologian. By all accounts his efforts were quite successful. That being said, and while Harvard professor and friend, George H. Williams, acknowledges his "great charisma, clarity and force" as a preacher, he also expressed his worries that Wojtyła's philosophical work was too bogged down by phenomenological technicality. Nevertheless, his talk at Harvard, entitled "Participation and Alienation," was very well received and eventually published in the *Review of Metaphysics* – a highly reputable and prestigious journal of philosophy – a few years later.

The talk he presented at the Catholic University of America is entitled "The Transcendence of the Person in the Act and the Auto-teleology of Man."⁵ Perhaps also wishing to avoid tamping

³ A. Boniecki, *The making of the Pope of the Millennium: Kalendarium of life of Karol Wojtyła*, (Stockbridge, Mass.: Marian Press, 2000), 713-718; G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 223-225.

⁴ G.H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 200-202. See his own reminiscences of his visit to Harvard in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Vol. 45 (1976), 380f.

⁵ He had submitted this article for the 6th International Philosophical Conference, June 1976. "The Transcendence of the Person in Action and Man's Auto-teleology." Published in *The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology*, ed. A.-T. Tymieniecka, Vol. 9 of *Analecta Husserliana*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979), 203-212. A variation of the talk was delivered in English by Cardinal Wojtyła at the Catholic University of America, July 29, 1976. Author Hittinger retained a copy of the manuscript from the reception on the day it was delivered. We shall designate the first published version as "version A." The version presented at CUA we shall designate as "version B." It was subsequently published in Polish as "Transcendencja osoby w czynie a autoteleologia człowieka," in *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, ed. T. Styczeń et al., (Lublin: TN KUL, 2000) and this is version A. It has been recently retranslated and published as K. Wojtyła, "The Transcendence of the Person in the Act and the Auto-teleology of Man," in *Person and Act and Related Essays*, trans. G. Ignatik, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2021), 555-566. Ignatik uses version B, from a Polish manuscript in the Kraków archives. No date is provided for the archival version

down audience attendance, host Jude Dougherty, Dean of the School of Philosophy, changed the title to “The Use and Abuse of Freedom.” The event was well attended as was a reception held prior to the talk. The faculty and graduate students were deeply impressed by his efforts to overcome the dualism of Kant and his use of “auto-teleology” to restore a sense of teleology to anthropology and ethics.⁶ Wojtyła first submitted a variation of this paper to the 6th International Philosophical Conference, June 1976 in France. And yet, sometime between May and July 1976, Wojtyła made a significant change to the ending of the paper. Curiously the first version was later published both in English and Polish. The revised, or we would suggest, the “enhanced” version, which is to the primary focus of this study, was not published until 2021 with a new translation by Grzegorz Ignatik.⁷ Thankfully Jude Dougherty, Dean of the School of Philosophy at CUA retained the manuscript of it, which he freely shared with faculty and graduate students.

We can appreciate that Karol Wojtyła crafted two versions of the talk. Again, as George H. Williams explains, Wojtyła was “an adroitly polemical man,”⁸ although we would prefer the term “rhetorical.” Thus, for a secular academic meeting of phenomenologists, he may see fit to downplay his references to God, perhaps as advised by Professor Tymieniecka. At the Catholic University of America, on the other hand, he could give his wholistic vision. We would argue that the neglected passages from this enhanced version of the talk by Karol Wojtyła hold the promise of providing us with a glimpse at his comprehensive philosophical account of human responsibility in the world, the tasks of personal growth, and the range of his philosophical inquiry. Here, and to this end, we will proceed as follows: first, we will lay out Wojtyła’s concept of auto-teleology; second, we shall examine Wojtyła’s uses for understanding the transcendence of the human person in auto-teleology; third, and finally, we shall examine the passages added to the original paper concerning things, people, and God.

B. Ignatik reports that version A was reworked by Wojtyła to derive version B. We could call version B the “enhanced version”; but there is also a reason to see version A as the cramped version leading the reader to suspect that version A is that result of self-limitation, excluding references to God, perhaps upon the advice of Professor Tymieniecka.

⁶ The author, a graduate student in philosophy at CUA, was present at the reception and talk on July 29, 1976.

⁷ As Ignatik reports, the translation in volume 1 of the English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła is based on the most recent edition of the article, the English translation of which was delivered by Wojtyła at the CUA in July 1976. The original typescripts (identified here by their archive cataloguing numbers): AKKW CII 11/119b – an earlier version of the article (which was published in the Lublin edition) with the author’s correction; AKKW CII 11/119c – the final version of the article (this version was used for the English translation, both mine and in CII 11/120); AKKW CII 11/120 – the English text of the article delivered by Wojtyła at the CUA, containing his own accent marks etc.

⁸ Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 202.

On the idea of Auto-Teleology

Wojtyła's self-declared purpose for this presentation on "The transcendence of the Person in Act and Man's Auto-teleology" is that of deepening certain themes of *Person and Act* on the transcendence of the human person and making more explicit the concept of auto-teleology; he also wishes to provide a critique of the Kantian exclusion of teleology from ethics through a non-utilitarian account of teleology, which he calls "auto-teleology."

The concept of auto-teleology, the germ of which is found in *Person and Act*, took on an increasingly important stature in the philosophy of Karol Wojtyła. In his last work before becoming Pope, Wojtyła sketched a series of essays in the hope of making it a book. Entitled "Man in the Field of Responsibility" this book gives the clearest explanation of Wojtyła's project to overcome the Kantian proscription of teleology and the stale philosophic deadlock between deontology and utilitarianism.⁹ Kant assumed that teleology is simply a form of utilitarianism and entails always a motive of selfishness. The achievement of the moral good, to act by the personalistic norm for example, "corresponds to his autorealization [or self-realization] and serves the fulfillment of the person. In this case, morality does not clash with teleology; on the contrary – it as it were grows on its foundation."¹⁰ Wojtyła agrees with Kant that the moral norm has a certain primacy in the evaluation of human action; so he notes, that the "norm determines the end (and perhaps within the limits one must accept in ethics the position of Kant); however, the primacy of the norm grows at the same time on the basis of teleology, and above all the auto-teleology of man."¹¹ Wojtyła uses the term auto-teleology to indicate that within moral action there is a sense in which the agent both intends the rectitude of the action, but also the subjective dignity of the agent himself. In the subsequent paragraphs Wojtyła puts the idea simply and directly: "This dynamism of duty (deontic dynamism) draws its strength from the elementary axiology of the person's being. 'I want to be good—I do not want to be evil' – that is not only an ordinary intentional act of the will, but it is the very reason for the being of the person in the axiological order."¹² In commenting upon this

⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Man in the Field of Responsibility*, trans. K.W. Kemp, & Z. Maślanka Kieroń, (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2011).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 45. See *Karol Wojtyła*, ed. G. Hołub et al., (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ignatianum, 2019), 96-100.

passage, Hořub explains that the “person’s auto-teleology is based on the teleology of nature, but the truth about the good introduces a new dynamism, which is the dynamism of moral obligation, personal duty, the duty of conscience, the dynamism of which is not found at the level of nature itself.”¹³ So, indeed, in the paper “The Transcendence of the Person in Act and Man’s Auto-teleology,” Wojtyła admits that he seeks to develop a teleological ethics continuing the work of Aristotle and Aquinas, but to do so in light of a validity of the Kantian critique of teleological ethics and using the new method of phenomenology to better and more deeply identify and articulate the “cognitive manifestation of man’s transcendence in the ethical dimension of his action and existence.”¹⁴ Wojtyła credits phenomenology more so than Kant for “perceiving anew and for expressing in philosophical categories the transcendence of the human person.” Wojtyła references, above all, the work of Scheler, and the influences of Husserl and Nietzsche. Of course, there are a variety of aspects to transcendence such as attraction to values, benevolence, creativity, and accountability to truth. Wojtyła explains that his talk is designed to bring to bear this new phenomenological methodology on “perennial topics” in anthropology and ethics. The notion of auto-teleology is precisely the notion he brings forward to renew and deepen our understanding of human freedom and transcendence.

We discover auto-teleology through an analysis of self-determination. Wojtyła claims that we need this new interpretation through the notion of auto-teleology in order to better understand human transcendence because, the “traditional interpretation” of human acts, though true, was insufficient. It only focused on the will as the power of striving for the end, a good or a value (“a spontaneous turning toward value”), without enough emphasis upon necessity of choice.¹⁵ Values are the “reason” or rationale of volitions. As such, values are the *ends* for which we choose and volition presupposes the prior cognition of values. However, freedom of will is actualized and accomplished by the need for “choosing among values and deciding.” Because values are various and diverse in content and quality there is a necessity to choose. This issue was neglected by Scheler, who, therefore, did not understand will.¹⁶ The will is not itself the intentionality of volitions: “The dynamic essence of the act is not constituted by volition alone [...] but by self-

¹³ *Karol Wojtyła*, 97.

¹⁴ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 556. Typescript 1976 translation is: “cognitive visualizing of man’s transcendence in the ethical dimension of his action and existence.”

¹⁵ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 558.

¹⁶ See K. Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Will in the Analysis of the Ethical Act,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Th. Sandok, (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 3-23.

determination, connected with that turning [toward values] and engaging the personal subject in its own way.”¹⁷ Therefore, the “proper” *Voluntarium* (re: willing, an act of voluntary nature) is “not contained in the very experience of willing something but in the experience of determining one’s self.”¹⁸

In reference to this experience of self-determination Wojtyła develops the concept of auto-teleology:

The term “self-determination” indicates both that the personal subject, or the personal I is determining and acting, but also, that this personal ‘I’ is determining about himself as a subject. In this dynamic relation this ‘I’ becomes an object for itself, an object of will considered as the faculty of the determining subject. The nucleus as it were of man’s auto-teleology is contained in this relation.¹⁹

Wojtyła thus far has come upon an experiential datum – that a decision must be made about competing values and goods. Yet, through the point of decision not only does one understand the aspect of personal freedom in the act of decision – it is mine and no one else’s – the agent also decides in who one is or who one will come to be: the personal agent in the moral act “through willing any kind of values, through their definite choice, both determines himself and in some fashion wills and chooses himself.”²⁰ The agent becomes somebody, a responsible person with the immanent and persisting reality of his or her character. Every human action has both a transitive and intransitive dimension to it and it is the intransitive shaping of the agent that is the point of auto-teleology. For the action in a way does not cease, but persists in the character of the agent. As John Finnis wisely observes, in Wojtyła’s work a very distinctive theme is “the persistence of actions” as this theme is found in *Person and Act* as well as his encyclical on Work, *Laborem exercens*.²¹ Finnis cites this passage:

¹⁷ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 559. In the note to this claim, Wojtyła states that “My study *Person and Act* is built precisely upon this conviction,” note 9.

¹⁸ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 559.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ J. Finnis, “John Paul II and the Foundation of Ethics,” in *Thinking with St. John Paul II: JP2 Lectures 2020/2021*, ed. D. Karłowicz, (Rome-Warsaw: Angelicum University Press/Fundacja Świętego Mikołaja, 2021), 30.

In the inner dimension of the person, human action is at once both transitory and relatively long lasting [...] human actions do not vanish without a trace: they leave their moral value, which constitutes an objective reality intrinsically cohesive with the person, and this a reality profoundly subjective.²²

Finnis shows how this notion is brought forward into the notion of the “subjective dimension of work” in *Laborem exercens*.²³ The fundamental idea of auto-teleology highlights the reality of this interior perfection of the person achieved in both work and action. In each choice we choose ourselves as a certain somebody in accomplishment or aspiration. How to explain the way in which this self-perfection is a proper end of action without tipping into subjectivism or solipsism is a major burden of this essay. Auto-teleology presupposes teleology, for all personal choices turn on the values and goods chosen. In an important clarification Wojtyła explains that:

Man’s auto-teleology does not signify in the first place a closing up within himself, but a living contact with the whole reality and a dynamic exchange [...] with the world of values, hierarchized and differentiated within itself. The auto-teleology of man indicates only that this contact and this life-giving exchange are accomplished on the level and by the standards of the personal “I”; in him it finds its starting point and its goal; to a certain extent it begins with him and is ultimately founded in him; it is from him that it takes shape, and also shapes him.²⁴

The notion of auto-teleology does indeed posit the agent as an end, but we must understand this end as a “limit” constituting the shape of his life as whole. Wojtyła says: “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

²² Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 151.

²³ Finnis, “John Paul II and the Foundation of Ethics,” 23-35. See John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, § 4, 6, 9.

²⁴ This passage is from the CUA typescript (1976), 7; it is similarly found in the version published in *The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology* (1979), 206-207. Ignatik translates the last sentence as follows: “In it they find their point of departure and arrival. They in a sense, originate from it and are ultimately grounded in it, they draw their form from it and confer a form on it.” (Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 560). We chose this version because of the issue of the meaning and translation of end (“kres”) and the meaning and translation of shape (“kształt”) to which we will now turn.

tending intentionally, but in the subjective ‘I’ himself.”²⁵ The notion of end, properly understood as limit (*kres*), keeps open the horizon of personal transcendence and dispels any form of solipsistic interpretation of the notion of auto-teleology and the emphasis upon the subjective meaning of human work and the moral act. Wojtyła at the very outset seeks to clarify the meaning of “telos” in order to clarify in what way the self is an “end” in the phrase “auto-teleology.”

On the Teleology of the Limit (“Kres”)

At the outset of his lecture Wojtyła refers to Aristotle’s philosophy as the source of discussions of teleology in ethics and anthropology and makes an important distinction between the two aspects of teleology. The Greek word *τέλος* (end) as used by Aristotle is the root of the word “teleology” and the origin of its application to understanding human action. Here, in a parenthetical note, he says, “*nota bene*, *τέλος* means not only ‘end’ or ‘aim’ but also ‘terminus’”²⁶ Ignatik has rendered the Polish words *cel* as “end” and *kres* as “terminus.”²⁷ Although Wojtyła seems to think the meaning is obvious once the distinction has been pointed out, this is not altogether clear to the reader, at least in the English translation. Consider how “terminus” may refer to the end of the trajectory of a train, for example, while “end” can equally mean the endpoint of a movement—“end of the trip”. How, then, would they differ? To complicate the matter, in a prior publication of the same lecture, *cel* becomes “aim” and *kres* becomes “limit.” Now, here there is a clearer difference between the two words: an aim is something toward which one’s actions are directed (e.g., a target, a goal), whereas a limit imposes a boundary or restriction. We may call this the “aim/limit translation,” and the other the “end/terminus translation.”

Recall in the previous section we examined the critical text introducing auto-teleology in which Wojtyła returns to the distinction and makes the case that the limit/terminus is none other than man himself:

²⁵ CUA typescript, 7 and *The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology*, 206. Ignatik translation: the voluntarium “finds its proper ‘terminus’ not in the values to which human volitions are intentionally turned, but in the subjective ‘I’ itself.” (Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 559)

²⁶ Such translation is used in version B, the CUA typescript, 1, and the version published in 1979, 203.

²⁷ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 555.

We have stated above that τέλος means not only ‘end’ or ‘aim’ but the ‘limit.’ The analysis of self-determination indicates that *voluntarium* as the interior dynamic structure of the person who constitutes the act, finds its proper ‘limit’ not in the values to which human willing is tending intentionally, but in the subjective ‘I’ himself, who through willing any kinds of values, through their definitive choice, both determines himself and in some fashion wills and chooses his own self.²⁸

The agent in choosing himself in the act in some way is the “limit” or the “terminus” of the action. But this needs clarification. Here Wojtyła invokes the two meanings of τέλος and claims that the person’s act of willing has its terminus, limit or conclusion in the person himself, rather than anything outside him which he wills. In the next paragraph, Wojtyła clarifies this idea insofar as the agent wills both the good and himself when he says that “man does not become the terminus/limit of self-determination [...] independently from all values to which these choices and volitions turn.” A few paragraphs later he writes, “Man is an end for himself inasmuch as [...] his acts [...] find in man himself their terminus/limit.”²⁹ Wojtyła seems clear, at least here: *man himself* is the terminus referred to in the auto-teleology of the terminus, but the agent’s relation to truth as an end is more like a limit, since it would be awkward to say that man is his own limit or restriction on himself.

A further doubt about the rendering of telos (“kres”) as terminus arises when Wojtyła begins to discuss man’s relation to truth. He says: “The relation to truth contains in some way the ‘terminus’ of the personal structure of self-determination,”³⁰ or alternately, “in the reference to truth there is to a certain extent the ‘limit’ of the personal structure of self-determination.”³¹ Similarly, in the paper’s conclusion he writes: “This terminus is the truth of human acts. Conscience constitutes the fundamental condition of self-fulfillment,”³² compared to “It is this limit which is the truth of human acts. Conscience is fundamental condition of the fulfillment of

²⁸ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 1979, 206; the Ignatik translation: “We said already that τέλος denotes not only ‘end’ but also ‘terminus.’ The analysis of self-determination indicates that *voluntarium* as the interior dynamic structure of the person, constituting the act, finds its proper ‘terminus’ not in the values to which human volitions are intentionally turned, but in the subjective ‘I’ itself, which both determines himself and in a certain way wills and chooses himself through the volition of any values, through the definite choice of them.” (Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 559-560)

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 562.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Version published in 1979, 208.

³² Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 565.

self.”³³ From these statements, one might be led to conclude that Wojtyła considers the auto-teleology of the terminus to refer to the truth serving as a kind of limit or restriction on man’s actions. Such an interpretation would yield “limit” as the better translation. But as we shall see, limit, is a more specific aspect or meaning of “terminus.”³⁴

The Polish word *kres*, translated as “terminus” by Ignatik, can mean either a limit or a termination.³⁵ Polish usage seems to yield the same confusion already noted: either concept, limit or terminus, is a valid acceptance of *kres*. In some way, both dimensions are required; and yet Karol Petryszak advised me that “limit” is the best translation.³⁶ There is also the reason to adopt the first version of the translation as limit/aim rather terminus/end because this was after the translation that Cardinal Wojtyła took out on the road through the English speaking world and to which he agreed to for publication. We would propose that we think above all that this *limit* is not primarily a restriction as such but a culminating point of the agent’s moral endeavor: to fulfill the task of being a good person. Further, it is like “endurance” – it is a limit we may keep testing and expanding. Indeed, Wojtyła will often say in this text and others that “man surpasses himself” or “rises above himself” by which he means precisely the human person often surpasses what he or

³³ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 1979, 210-211.

³⁴ Blaise Ringor identifies the auto-teleology of the limit (“kres”) with a kind of limiting of human actions by conscience, in relation to moral truth. For Ringor, the auto-teleology of the end is man’s aiming to fulfill himself. Ringor bases his work on the prior translation, using the limit/aim distinction. Thus, as noted above, for the sake of consistency with one translation, when I say “end” here I mean what Ringor calls “aim” and “terminus” as what Ringor calls “limit”. See: B. Ringor, “The Necessity of Auto-Teleology in Achieving Moral Life according to Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophy,” *Lectio* Vol. 1, No. 1 (August 2021): 88. On the other hand, Pollini, in keeping with Wojtyła’s earlier statements in the text, concludes that the terminus is the “personal-I’ himself,” although Pollini does refer later to a “boundary” which man reaches in relation to truth. Pollini, “The Communion Rhythm of Life: The Personalistic Meditation on Human Life According to Karol Wojtyła,” *Synesis* Vol. 6, No. 2 (2014): 127-128. This ambiguity in the text and in the scholarship, specifically about Wojtyła’s use of the word terminus (*kres*) in his twofold distinction of auto-teleology, necessitates not only an investigation of the text, but especially of Wojtyła’s philosophical foundations in order to establish more clearly what he means and so better understand his concepts of auto-teleology and self- fulfillment.

³⁵ “Kres” could mean either end or finish, like “koniec” or limit, like “granica.” See *Oxford-PWN Polish-English Dictionary*, chief editor J. Linde-Usiekiewicz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 404.

³⁶ Here is Petryszak’s treatment of the key words in translation (paraphrased): The best translations of these key terms are as follows: *telos* = aim; *kres* = limit. I think this because “kres” has more literary than scientific or philosophical connotations. It is normal to use words for Wojtyła in his lectures in that way. But we have to remember that *telos* and auto-teleology (and “kres” in their context) have roots in the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition, so (for me) “terminus” (which, on the other hand, has strong and quite different connotations because of its Latin etymology – which Wojtyła, we can be sure, knew) is quite strange and imprecise. Also, “kres” in its very first and fundamental meaning is – as, you pointed out – a culminating or defining end. But in other (very popular) uses like: *kres możliwości*, *kres sił*, *kres wytrzymałości*, its meaning emphasizes the depletion of some resources which can be recovered (like “kres siły” – I have no power anymore, but I will have new power). Also “kres” in this meaning does not determine one direction of action (i.e., “jestem u kresu wytrzymałości” – it does not mean you have to use all your “endurance”/“power”; you just fill where your limit is, but you can move back or just stop.

she may think is the “limit” especially in light of the action of divine grace.³⁷ There are allusions to Pascal in the *Person and Act*: Wojtyła speaks of the transcendence of the person in the action as a “transgressing of oneself in truth” or an “out growing” of oneself or a surpassing of oneself. There is here a distinct echo of the words of Pascal: “Man infinitely surpasses man.”³⁸ The translation of “kres” by limit better captures this dimension of surpassing a limit.

However, we should also explore Wojtyła’s specific references to Aristotle and not ignore the clear influence of Thomas Aquinas, the Aristotelian, on Wojtyła’s understanding of teleology. Wojtyła wrote his first doctoral thesis under the direction of the Thomist, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and he references approvingly the thought of Thomas Aquinas in his main philosophical work *Person and Act*. He also stated that Aquinas’s is the only adequate ethics and, as Pope, he named Aquinas the “Doctor of Humanity.”³⁹ Accordingly, and returning to the text that is the focus of this study, Wojtyła does make a subtle but clear connection to Aquinas in the very next paragraph after the distinction of terminus/end: “It seems that it is impossible to question the rightness of the principle *omnis agens* (and not only *omne agens*), *agit propter finem*.”⁴⁰ Though he does not cite Aquinas here, he has repeated a basic scholastic axiom which is supported in various texts of Aquinas, especially at the very beginning of the *Prima secundae* wherein he discusses human acts and argues that every man acts for an end.⁴¹ On these grounds, it seems reasonable to consider that a proper understanding of Wojtyła’s distinction will come from reading him in the light of both Aristotle and Aquinas.

First, in reference to Aristotle, Wojtyła cites Aristotle’s *Physics* II and *Metaphysics* I and V in his footnote on the distinction between terminus and end.⁴² In each of the cited texts Aristotle explains the four kinds of causes: formal, efficient, material, and final. Wojtyła’s lecture refers to this last kind of cause, final or the end, which is “that for the sake of which a thing is done.”

³⁷ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 563, 565.

³⁸ Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Chevalier, 438; ed. Brunschvicg 434. Rocco Buttiglione notes that Wojtyła account of human transcendence and contingency is similar to Pascal. R. Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 61, 74, 186.

³⁹ J. Hittinger, “Why John Paul II named St Thomas Aquinas the ‘Doctor Humanitatis,’” in *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher of Humanity*, ed. J.P. Hittinger & D.C. Wagner, (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), xiv-xx.

⁴⁰ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 555.

⁴¹ “Wherefore it is necessary that all human actions be for an end.” “Unde oportet quod omnes actiones humanae propter finem sint.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae I-II*, q. 1, a. 1, co. Aquinas also argues that all things (*omne*), not just human persons, act for an end: “omne agens agit propter finem, et intendit bonum quod est finis.” Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2. Also Aquinas, *De principiis naturae*, especially chaps 3-5.

⁴² He cites: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3.983a24–33; *Physics* 2.3.195a; *Metaphysics* 5.2.1013a–1014a. Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 555, footnote 3.

Unfortunately, Wojtyła's precise distinction of end and terminus cannot be found in any of these texts. However, reading Aquinas's commentary on these key Aristotelian texts will prove more fruitful. In his commentary on Book V of the *Metaphysics* Aquinas uses both Latin words *terminus* and *finis* to refer to the end: "For the efficient cause and the final cause [*finis*] correspond to each other, because the efficient cause is the principle of movement, while the end [*finis*] is the stopping point [*terminus*] of movement."⁴³ Here, Aquinas refers to the movement of something toward some goal: *finis* as the principle and *terminus* as the endpoint. Throughout this part of his commentary, Aquinas uses the Latin word *terminus* to refer to an endpoint of some movement or change, whether it be the starting or the stopping point of that movement.⁴⁴

Looking in Aquinas's commentary beyond his treatment of the section of the *Metaphysics* which Wojtyła cites, one finds Aquinas explaining how Aristotle defines a terminus: it is "the last of any thing, so that nothing of what was first limited lies outside the *terminus* and all that pertains to it is contained in it."⁴⁵ He then goes on to give four senses of a terminus in regard to the perfection of things. For our purposes, two will prove useful (the second and third):

- (a) one extreme of movement or action is called a terminus, namely **that toward which there is movement**, and not that from which: just as the terminus of generation is being, and not non-being;⁴⁶
- (b) that **for the sake of which** something comes to be; for this is the last of an intention, just as the terminus in the second way was said to be the last of movement or of operation.⁴⁷

⁴³ "Nam efficiens et finis sibi correspondent invicem, quia efficiens est principium motus, finis autem terminus." Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* V, lectio 2, n. 13. It should be remembered that Aquinas is reading Aristotle in a Latin translation, and so questions of whether Aristotle uses *τέλος* or some other term are less relevant than which term Aquinas uses in his own commentary. What we mean to say is that when discussing Aristotle's teleology, Aquinas uses the words "terminus" (often translated as either end or terminus) and "finis" (often translated as end or goal).

⁴⁴ For example, in lectio 1, n. 2: "[...] just as the principle of movement is called the terminus from which." "[...] sicut principium motus dicitur terminus a quo." and later in n. 5: "a man does not always begin to move from the beginning of the road, but sometimes from the middle, or at whatever point from which it is opportune for him to begin." "non semper incipit homo moveri a principio viae, sed quandoque a medio, vel a quocumque termino, unde est ei opportunum primo moveri," *Ibid.*, lectio 1, n. 2 & n. 5.

⁴⁵ "Primo ponit rationem termini; dicens, quod terminus dicitur quod est ultimum cuiuslibet rei, ita quod nihil de primo terminato est extra ipsum terminum; et omnia quae sunt eius, continentur intra ipsum." *Ibid.*, lectio 19, n. 1. "[...] secundum quod unum extremum motus vel actionis dicitur terminus, hoc scilicet ad quod est motus, et non a quo: non a quo: sicut terminus generationis est esse, non autem non esse." *Ibid.*, n. 3.

⁴⁶ "[...] secundum quod unum extremum motus vel actionis dicitur terminus, hoc scilicet ad quod est motus, et non a quo: non a quo: sicut **terminus generationis est esse**, non autem non esse." *Ibid.*, n. 3.

⁴⁷ "[...] dicitur terminus, cuius causa fit aliquid; hoc enim est ultimum intentionis, sicut terminus secundo modo dictus est ultimum motus vel operationis." *Ibid.*, n. 4.

This account by Aquinas does very much seem to approach Wojtyła’s twofold distinction. In defining terminus following Aristotle, Aquinas distinguishes “that toward which there is movement” from “that for the sake of which” the action is performed. On this reading, if man is his own τέλος, as auto-teleology asserts, then he is both (a) the terminus—that toward which he moves—and (b) the end—that for the sake of which he brings something into being.

A look into Aquinas’s account of human action seems to strengthen this reading. At the very beginning of the *Prima secundae*, while arguing that human acts receive their species from their end, he writes:

[A]cts are called human insofar as they proceed from a deliberate will. But the object of the will is the good and the end. And thus it is manifest that the principle of human acts, insofar as they are human, **is the end**. And similarly **it is their terminus**, for that at which a human act terminates is that which the will intends as an end.⁴⁸

Here, like in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Aquinas distinguishes two “ends” of human acts: the end (*finis*) as that for the sake of which an act is done, and the terminus (*terminus*) as that at which the act terminates. Given that the end is the principle in human operations,²⁹ Aquinas has made the very distinction that Wojtyła seems to make: an end can be understood as either the *finis* or the *terminus* of a human act.³⁰ But behind both meanings is the deeper third meaning of *finis* according to William Wallace, OP.⁴⁹ The end is perfective, the realization of a higher degree of being. And this meaning gets us even closer to Wojtyła’s account of the significance of auto-teleology and the transcendence of the human person. And we might add, it also returns us back to an understanding of end as “limit.” The end and the terminus both build up the human agent as a good or a bad person. And action does so precisely because of the “moment of truth” and the nexus of personal conscience. But in a way, this meaning is already contained with the notion of end as terminative. Recall that Aquinas stated that end designates “the last of any thing, so that

⁴⁸ “[...] actus dicuntur humani, in quantum procedunt a voluntate deliberata. Obiectum autem voluntatis est bonum et finis. Et ideo manifestum est quod principium humanorum actuum, in quantum sunt humani, est finis. Et similiter est terminus eorumdem, nam id ad quod terminatur actus humanus, est id quod voluntas intendit tanquam finis.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 1, a. 3, co.

⁴⁹ Wallace, however, notes not two but three meanings of end: both (1) terminative and (2) intentional as we have already noted in Aquinas, but also (3) perfective—as the realization of a higher degree of being. This third meaning of end assist our understanding of the fulfillment of the person in relation to objective truth. W. Wallace, *The Modeling of Nature: Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Nature in Synthesis*, (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1996), 15-17.

nothing of what was first limited lies outside the *terminus* and all that pertains to it is contained in it.⁵⁰ What is generated or caused by human efficiency is “more being” if the act is morally good and a deficit of being if the act is bad. The limit therefore does not primarily indicate a restriction or an exclusion but rather a plenitude and a perfection. Limit is a stopping point or termination. In Aristotle, Thomas, and Wojtyła, it is clear that this means (i) the culmination stopping point of an act; (ii) the perfection of the act (and the being), as when the act is good and the functional completion of the agent in virtuous agency.

As we shall see Wojtyła will often use the term shape, as in the shape of transcendence. In some crucial passages of *Person and Act* Wojtyła uses the term “shape,” such as follows: “This shape (*kształt*), the shape of transcendence, is in concrete that of human existence: it is the shape of human life itself. Man as the person both lives and fulfills himself within the perspective of his transcendence. Is it not freedom, obligation, and responsibility which allows us to see that, not only truthfulness, but also the person’s surrender to truth in judging as well as in acting constitute the real and concrete fabric (*osnowa*) of the personal life of man?”⁵¹ This so-called “shape of transcendence” is the container or embodiment of human perfection; the limit is not simply a restrictive boundary but the space for fulfillment through the human realization of the truth of the good. This is moment of truth that comes through the exercise of the judgment of conscience and serves as a limit or end of action. In this case the translation of *kres* as limit makes more sense.

In this case, limit refers to the boundary of a shape indicating its embodiment, fullness and expansiveness. In his *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Aquinas states that the first meaning of *terminus* is that of a “surface being the limit of a body,” indicating its “shape.”⁵² There is an analogous application of terms of quantity to the soul and spiritual values. When Wojtyła says that

⁵⁰ Aristotle, in *Poetics*, speaks about “action as the limit of tragedy” in the sense that the drama terminates in the consideration of an action, but more importantly that the plot must have a reasonable length of time and action – and that is the limit within which a drama is written. Limit means an end as a container. See 1450b29 wherein end as limit is defined and the surrounding text.

⁵¹ Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, 181. Ignatik translation: “This form, the form of transcendence, is the concrete form of man’s existence, indeed it is the form of his life.” Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 2021, 284. In this case the previous translation seems more accurate – Polish “kształt” is translated as “shape” because it is less sharply defined and it suggests the filling of the shape in a variety of ways, whereas form is more structured and defined.

⁵² This interpretation is confirmed by Aquinas’s *Commentary on the Metaphysics* as he outlines the various meanings of *terminus* “The first of these applies to any kind of continuous quantity insofar as the *terminus* of a continuous quantity, or of a thing having continuous quantity, is called a limit; for example, a point is called the limit of a line, and a surface the limit of a body, or also of a stone, which has quantity.” *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Book V, lectio 19. “*primus est secundum quod in qualibet specie magnitudinis, finis magnitudinis, vel habentis magnitudinem, dicitur terminus; sicut, punctus dicitur terminus lineae, et superficies corporis, vel etiam lapidist habentis quantitatem.*”

we must not seek to have more but to be more he has in mind this self-development of interior personal existence. Auto-teleology requires a continual self-education to develop the person as such.⁵³ Wojtyła has insisted that man's self-fulfillment comes about in direct relation to his conformity to the true and the good. Thus, we can see all the more why Wojtyła is emphatic that his notion auto-teleology is not a closed loop resulting in a kind of solipsistic account of the human person. Instead, there must be something real and outside the person to which he relates and from which his acts derive their ability to be perfective of him. In the "professional" version of the paper he mentions things and people as those areas of human concern. But as he sat down to consider his full philosophical account that he would present to the School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America he significantly changed the ending of the paper substituting three newly written paragraphs. He added three times the statement that the human agent must develop appropriate attitudes and relations to "things, people and God."⁵⁴ And, as if to speak over his shoulder to the professional handlers of the conferences of philosophy, he adds, "it is known that this view is under fire by the modern criticism of religion. It seems however that we cannot seek the grounds for explaining it primarily in this criticism, but in religious experience, which is simply one of man's fundamental and essential experiences."⁵⁵

Things, People and God

As we discussed at the outset, the conclusion of this talk exhibits a very curious development in the typescripts and manuscripts. It appears to be the case that Wojtyła was cautioned to leave out references to God which he then "restored" in his preparation for his later presentation. The conference paper does contain one reference to God and that is in quotation marks, conscience as "the voice of God,"⁵⁶ which is only "a manner of speaking," perhaps acceptable to anyone in the age of Tillich wherein God maybe posited as "ultimate concern." In the new six paragraph conclusion the references to God flood back in nine times. Most striking of all, Wojtyła thrice uses the phrase containing the triad "things, persons, and God." This phrasing "things, people, and God"

⁵³ See D. Radziechowski, "'Culture of the Person' and 'Culture of Works' According to Karol Wojtyła," *Logos i ethos* Vol. 56, No. 1 (2021): 87-100.

⁵⁴ Wojtyła, "Transcendence," 2021, 564-566.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 565. See A.A. Bello, *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*, *Analecta Husserliana* XCVIII, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

⁵⁶ Wojtyła, "Transcendence," 1979, 209.

has the ring of completeness to it, as if they thereby constitute the world of human experience and frame the existential situation of the human person. Indeed, Wojtyła will repeat the term *world*⁵⁷ as well in the revised manuscript, beginning with his revision of the ending of the previous section. The following is absent from the earlier manuscript, save the notion of the two teleologies:

In this way the whole existence of man in the dimension of the “world” is constantly accompanied, in a sense, by the auto-teleology of the terminus (limit) which conditions the auto-teleology of the end (aim). Through this auto-teleology the man-person, in a sense, constantly inscribes himself in the structure of the “world,” permeates it, so as to surpass it at the same time.⁵⁸

In this added text, Wojtyła provides an incisive summary of his keys ideas of the two aspects of auto-teleology of limit and aim; but he also introduces the notion of the world which man transcends through his conscience and vertical transcendence of moral judgment. Wojtyła now returns to the theme he introduced previously, viz., that “auto-teleology” is not a proposal for “a solipsistic closing up, as if he were an intransgressible, closed up monad,” but to the contrary it signifies that the human person must open towards values and “potentially all of them.”⁵⁹ We must note that previously he said that the person must maintain “living contact with the whole reality” and a dynamic exchange with the “world of values, hierarchized and differentiated within itself.”⁶⁰ Clearly, Wojtyła for both philosophical and theological reasons⁶¹ would envision that the “all” or the “whole” of reality includes God as a things and persons.

⁵⁷ We recall that the document of most interest to Cardinal Wojtyła, *Gaudium et spes, on the Church in the Modern World*, explains the term world as follows: “Therefore, the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the *whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theater of man’s history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs*; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker’s love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and reach its fulfillment.” (*Gaudium et spes*, §2 – emphasis added).

⁵⁸ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 563. The CUA manuscript uses the term “penetrate” rather than “permeate.”

⁵⁹ CUA manuscript, 11; Ignatik translates as follows: it “does not mean a solipsistic closing in the likeness of an impassable monad.” Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 563.

⁶⁰ CUA manuscript, 7; Ignatik: a “vital contact with all of reality” and a dynamic exchange with “the world of values diversified and hierarchized in itself.” Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 560.

⁶¹ Wojtyła does indeed state that the relationship emerges both from an “organic reflection on the Word of God and the philosophy of religion.” Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 565. Modern criticism of religion seeks to exclude God from the world but this goes contrary to a “fundamental and essential” experience of human beings.

With the restoration of the full set of relationships – to things, people, and God, Wojtyła briefly discusses each in turn. We could also note that the Polish term for relationship, “stosunek,” could also designate the attitude developed and cultivated by the human person towards things, people, and God.⁶² We could say that a relationship derives from a prior attitude toward things, people and God. In other words, not only the rightness or justice of the relationship to each but also the interior ethos is also at stake. John Paul II spoke about the priority of ethos over techne, indicating the importance of the interior attitude towards the world. Wojtyła’s use of the trilogy things, people and God, with the corresponding emphasis upon ethos, suggests that he may have been influenced by Romano Guardini. Guardini made masterful use of the concept of “things, people, and God” to approach questions about the meaning of the kingdom of God, in contrast with the kingdom or rule of things and people. Of particular interest, because of its affinities to Wojtyła’s account of the loss of a sense of God in modern secular society, is Guardini’s explanation how things and people readily come to shut out the concern for God. Similarly in his account of the beatitudes, marriage, virginity, and poverty we discover a great emphasis upon the cultivation of ethos and heart.⁶³ Wojtyła introduces this set of relationships in order to better understand the aims of the human person and the “auto-teleology of the aim” (end) precisely as “conditioned” by the auto-teleology of the limit. How are we to understand this “condition” or influence of the “limit”? If the limit of auto-teleology is “relation to truth,” the “auto-teleology of the aim” pertains to fulfillment, or personal perfection, ultimately even “happiness.” Each human act is realizing the good in the world, but it is partial. The theme of the professional conference was “teleologies” (plural) or “telos’ as a pivotal factor of contextual phenomenology.” Wojtyła thus explains that the personal mode of “auto-teleology,” disclosed phenomenologically, must be “many sided” and include the person’s multifarious relationship to things, to persons, and to God.

Concerning the world of things, Wojtyła is very brief. As the world of work now is embedded in a technological environment, he recommends the notion of auto-teleology to remind us that the enormous growth work, economics and even culture must not neglect the person as person. There is the ever menacing threat of alienation in both work and social-political life. Just

⁶² Karol Petryszak points out that the phrasing “stosunek do rzeczy, do osób, do Boga” could typically indicate the translation “attitude” although “relation” is appropriate. See *Oxford PWN Polish English Dictionary*, 1069.

⁶³ R. Guardini, *The Lord*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1954/1982), 45, 83, 312-313. *Der Herr* was published in Germany in 1937. Guardini says that the kingdom of people and the kingdom of things, as well as earthly kingdoms and “powers” “stifle God and crowd him out of our lives. Only in the pauses of our existence, or on its fringes, do they allow him to come into his own.”

three years after he delivered this paper/talk, Wojtyła would argue for the “priority of people over things,” the “priority of ethos over technology” and develop his notion of the subjective meaning of work and solidarity.⁶⁴

About the world and the experience of personal relationships, Wojtyła refers to “auto-teleology” as a threshold or a condition for a correct formation of any community. This pertains, we assume, to the fundamental dignity of the person as self-possessed and self-governing, as well as to the importance of fulfillment of the person in social life. As we come to know that “man fulfills himself ‘through others’ and realizes his own self by living ‘for others’” we find an additional reason to understand that auto-teleology is not solipsistic, but eminently “an opening of the subject” and another instance of “surpassing oneself” and “rising above oneself” in transcendence.⁶⁵ The self-realization of the person at the core of auto-teleology serves as check against excessive socialization and highlights the need for greater efforts at “personalization.” This building from within to grow personally and thereby surpass oneself is a theme for his many writings on culture and self-education.⁶⁶

Finally, we must briefly consider the new material introduced into this version concerning relationship or attitude towards God. He queries: “what should man’s mode of opening himself up to God be like, proper to personal auto-teleology of man?” He notes that both ancient and contemporary philosophy ask important questions about the human person. Both older and more recent theological teachings also seek answers to the questions about the human person. Not surprisingly, he cites those key passages from *Gaudium et Spes*: “Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”⁶⁷ Wojtyła here briefly expounds upon the universal “law of the gift”: “we know from the

⁶⁴ *Redemptor Hominis* (“The Redeemer of Man”) (1979) and *Laborem Exercens* (“Engaging in Work”) (1981).

⁶⁵ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 564; Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 1979, 210. Here Wojtyła references his own work entitled “Participation or Alienation,” a talk he presented at Harvard University previously in the month.

⁶⁶ Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Construction of Culture Through Human Praxis,” in *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 266. See Radziechowski, “Culture of Person”; and Hittinger, “John Paul II’s Core Teaching on Culture,” *Communio* Vol. 48 (Summer 2021): 247-279.

⁶⁷ “God, Who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, Who ‘from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth’ (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself. For this reason, love for God and neighbor is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor: “If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself [...]. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law” (Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1 John 4:20). To men growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance. Indeed, the Lord Jesus,

same source that this ‘gift of one’s self’ is offered by man not only to the world or to men in the world, but finally to God himself. That is what man has been called for and invited to, and that is the deepest substance of the revelation and the covenant.” Both reason and revelation indicate the central role of auto-teleology in human life in this law of the gift which is the “mature fruit” of the transcendence of the person. Not only therefore does the relationship to God complete the opening of the person to “all” or the “whole” of reality, it actually brings to the apex of love the human person “who in the fullest degree surpasses and outgrows himself in his personal relation to God.” Wojtyła suggests that there is confirmation for this assertion in religious experience and the discovery of the religious principle is open to inner experience and phenomenological analysis.⁶⁸

In the penultimate paragraph of the revised version Wojtyła provides a very useful summary and formula of his notion of auto-teleology of the limit/terminus and the aim/end. In fact, he claims that “the more the relation of man to things, persons and God the relation is mature, that is, the more it is based on truth about them, the more man fulfills himself.”⁶⁹ Further, through these aims of cultivating the best relationship to things, people, and God the more he becomes the good which he constantly “is” and constantly “should be.” Auto-teleology provides us with a new way to describe the root of human dignity, or “man as a value.”

We can still come a more profound grasp of Wojtyła’s philosophy in the argument on the person’s transcendence in auto-teleology. The personalist dimension is rooted very deeply in an account of human existence. He speaks of an important conclusion to draw from the previous analysis: the “auto-teleology of the limit” is existentially proper to man existing and acting in the world.⁷⁰ In order to unpack this statement he explains first of all that “truth of human existence is that limit.” In *Redeemer of man*, John Paul II says that truth serves as a requirement and as a warning for freedom of the person. As a requirement, it is essential to good human action and as a limit it contains the various possibilities for good human action. As a warning, it is a boundary for

when He prayed to the Father, “that all may be one [...] as we are one” (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” *Gaudium et spes*, §24. Also §22.

⁶⁸ Augustine, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Maximilian Kolbe come to mind as witnesses to the experience of God as love that would be of interest to Karol Wojtyła. In his interview with Frossard, *Be not Afraid!*, 95, Pope John Paul II aligns Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and John of the Cross as thinkers who draw upon inner experience and consciousness to explore the existential “breach” in human awareness of limit and the call to transcendence. He refers to a demonstration of God through historicity: man “must live through his own history” and discover a “sort of memory, reflection, and seed of eternity.” *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁹ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 565.

⁷⁰ Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 1979, 13; Wojtyła, “Transcendence,” 2021, 565.

what is authentically human and what is only an illusory and superficial human fulfillment. It is proper to man acting in the world because of the necessity of judgment concerning what is fitting for human life as a whole. Conscience is said to be a fundamental condition of self-fulfillment because the judgment of conscience lights up and opens the path to what good is to be done and what evil is to be avoided. Finally, the teleology of the limit, relation to truth and transcendentals, is proper to man existing in the world because of human contingency and the fundamental emptiness of our being. Truth and the transcendentals fill the paltriness of existence and provide a lure to our love. As Aquinas said, “human nature and soul are not full, but in potential to fulness [in potentia ad plenitudinem].”⁷¹ In this talk, and also in more detail in *Person and Act*, Wojtyła speaks briefly about the absoluteness of the “teleology of the limit” in contrast to human contingency. In some early speeches, such as one to Brazilian men and women of culture, John Paul II would state the law of a two-fold transcendence of the human person: the transcendence of the person over the world and the transcendence of the person under God (July 1, 1980).⁷²

Wojtyła refers to the dimension of the auto-teleology of the limit/terminus as “wonderful.” But to appreciate the existential situation of the human person he speaks of the teleology of the aim/end as another dimension “constantly revealed” in tandem with the teleology of the limit. The auto-teleology of the aim/end he associates with things, people, and God: “the more good and beauty he draws out – of course in the light of the truth from his relation to things, persons and God, the more he fulfills himself.” Human happiness is derived ultimately from this pattern of aims/ends towards things, persons and God. Wojtyła is suggesting that the existential situation of the person in act is like that of weaver who must constantly choose his aims and fashion his

⁷¹ Aquinas is commenting on the *kenosis* of Philippians 2:5-8, states: “Whereas divine nature is sufficiently full, because every perfection of goodness is there, human nature and soul are not full, but capable of fulness [in potentia ad plenitudinem]. Thus it is said that Christ emptied himself because he assumed a human nature.”

⁷² The speech may be found in John Paul II, “Man, Culture and the Apostolate to Culture,” in *Apostolate of Culture*, Vol. 28 of *The Laity Today*, Review of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, (Vatican City 1981), 8-14. See his speech given two weeks earlier to the Italian Ecclesial Movement of Cultural Commitment, on the two fold transcendence, especially with reference to his assertion that there is a need to recognize and live “God’s transcendency over man.” He references a speech commemorating Albert Einstein, given to the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences on November 10, 1979: “This threefold superiority is maintained to the extent to which the sense of the transcendence of man over the world and of God over man, is preserved. Exercising her mission of guardian and advocate of both transcendences, the Church considers she is helping science to keep its ideal purity in the aspect of basic research, and to carry out its service of man in the aspect of its practical applications.” The three fold superiority is the priority of ethics over technology, persons over things, and spirit over matter. See *Redeemer of Man*, §16. See also, my comments on this three-fold superiority in “Ethos, Person and Spirit – Principles of Social and Cultural Renewal,” *Człowiek w Kulturze: Pismo Poświęcone Filozofii i Kulturze* Vol. 26 (2016): 161-72. “The Springs of Religious Freedom: Conscience and the Search for Truth,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (2017): 4-24.

relationships in accord with conscience, that is, in light of the truth about the human good. We propose to glean a final insight about the two aspects of auto-teleology by using a passage from *Person and Act*, previously cited:

This shape, the shape of transcendence, is in concrete that of human existence: it is the shape of human life itself. Man as the person both lives and fulfills himself within the perspective of his transcendence. Is it not freedom, obligation, and responsibility which allows us to see that not only truthfulness but also the person's surrender to truth in judging as well as in acting constitute the real and concrete fabric of the personal life of man?⁷³

This passage gives us an idea of the existential whole in which Wojtyła understands moral decision making and moral character. He views the life and the fulfillment of the person “within the perspective of transcendence.” That requires a concern for the truth of the good and living life by the demands of conscience.⁷⁴ The term he uses for fabric is “osnowa,” which means more specifically, the warp of the fabric or the vertical more stable part of the weave and loom.⁷⁵ Thus, the existential situation of the human person requires, first of all, a stable shape constituted by the warp of the loom, which is the *telos* of limit. But the concrete existential life of the person also demands the constant weaving of the woof or weft through the loom, and this would be the relation to things, persons, and God along which constitutes the *telos* of the aim.

This shaping of human life through transcendence and constant growth and self-surpassing is essential to the historical fabric of human life. In his important interview with Andre Frossard, John Paul II spoke of the approach to God through the historicity of the human person. He describes history as the natural abode of the human person – historicity is not simply the limitation of time but the consciousness of the passage of time “which he must fill by fulfilling himself.”⁷⁶ While

⁷³ Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, 181; Wojtyła, “Person and Act,” 2021, 284.

⁷⁴ Wojtyła briefly mentioned the transcendentals truth, goodness, and beauty as points of reference within this perspective transcendence. He explains that traditional metaphysics and phenomenology of experience overlap: “For the transcendence of the person understood metaphysically is no abstract notion; the evidence of experience tells us that the spiritual life of man essentially refers to, and in its strivings vibrates with, the reverberations with the experientially innermost attempts to reach truth, goodness, and beauty. We may thus safely speak of the role of these absolute modes of values that accompany the experience of the personal transcendence.” Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, 155-156.

⁷⁵ *Oxford PWN Polish English Dictionary*, 688. The term could mean fabric or background but it is specifically the warp or vertical thread, which is immobile and more firm. The weft or woof is the thread that is woven horizontally to make the full fabric. *Osnowa* and *wątek* make the full fabric.

⁷⁶ Frossard, *Be not Afraid!*, 58.

enmeshed in impermanence, the human person creates history “through the element in him which resists and overcomes the fleeting character of his existence.” The “innermost, transcendent, final thread in the history of each man and humanity as a whole” is a reflection of eternity in our own soul. This is why, according to Wojtyła, we are prompted to “seek a Being who resists everything in him that resists transitoriness.” In other words, auto-teleology does not assume the existence of God, but rather becomes a reason for seeking the truth about God and the reason for faith itself in response to divine revelation. There are hints that Aquinas himself indicates that self-determination entails a type of “auto-teleology” in moral decision making. In his account of the moment of the child’s first efforts at moral reasoning the child must consider whether he will be ordered to himself alone or to God. Aquinas uses the phrase *deliberare de seipso*.⁷⁷ In this argument for auto-teleology Karol Wojtyła provided a fine example of Thomistic personalism, supplementing a Thomistic account of the human person through the phenomenological method he adapts from Scheler.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Aquinas *STh* I-II, q. 89, a. 6, & especially ad 3. Thomas points out that an unbaptized youth could be without mortal sin since, at the moment that the child begins to reason, the first thing he does is *deliberare de seipso*. In this moment he does not simply order other things to himself but has the opportunity to consider himself as something to be ordered to some *further* end beyond himself. If, in doing so, he immediately turns and orders himself to the proper end (i.e., God, or for Cajetan, the *bonum honestum*). See S. Jensen, *Sin: A Thomistic Psychology*, (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 2018), ch. 5. See also, J. Maritain, “The Immanent Dialectic of the First Act of Freedom,” in *Range of Reason*, (New York: Scribner’s, 1952), 66-85.

⁷⁸ “I wrote on the contribution which Scheler’s phenomenological type of ethical system can make to the development of moral theology. This research benefited me greatly. My previous Aristotelian-Thomistic foundation was enriched by the phenomenological method, and this made it possible for me to undertake a number of creative studies.” John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, (New York: Image, 1996), 93-94.

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