

**The Concept of Philosophical Anthropology in the Thinking of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła  
(An Attempted Interpretation Based on the Study *Person and Act*)<sup>1</sup>**

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“The main slogan repeatedly uttered by Husserl and his colleagues in Göttingen in the first decade of the 20th century was: back to the work!” (R. Ingarden).  
As the main slogan in this case we say here: back to the work as the basic source of its understanding.

I. Preliminary Assumptions

1. The Question of the Primacy of Being in St. Thomas Aquinas and the Field of the Philosophy of Being

The concept of being in St. Thomas, as we know, is an analogical concept, and above all it is an analogy of proper proportionality. Closely related to this is the questions of what constitutes the principal analogy, that is, what being is in the primary sense (*per prius*), and whether there is only one type of primary being, or whether there are different “types” of primary being and what they

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This text was originally published as: “Koncepcja antropologii filozoficznej w ujęciu kardynała Karola Wojtyły (Próba odczytania w oparciu o studium *Osoba i czyn*),” *Analecta Cracoviensia* Vol. 5 (1973), 91-106. The original article can be found at: <https://czasopisma.upjp2.edu.pl/analectacracoviensia/issue/view/214>. The text used by author was the 1969 Polish edition: K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1969). The translation used for this text were taken from Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays*. “The English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II,” Vol. I, ed. Antonio Lopez, trans. by G. Ignatik (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021). Editorial additions to the translation are explained or noted by a footnote.

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are. This issue, as can easily be seen, is fundamental to all philosophy of being. It is impossible to develop it further here. Let us recall that the order of human knowledge of being is, according to St. Thomas, opposite of the primacy of being in itself. That which is being *prius quoad nos* is not being *prius in se*. The concept of substantial being is given us through accidental being and we arrive at the concept of spiritual substances and God through material substances.

The order of cognition of different “kinds” of being determines the fields of philosophical knowledge. First of all, we must distinguish between the philosophical knowledge of material being and the philosophical knowledge of non-material being, meta-physics (divine knowledge, first philosophy).

Both orders of knowledge have, according to the thinking of St. Thomas, their own proper objects and distinct methods.<sup>3</sup> There is also a connection between them, despite their distinctiveness. This relationship is bilateral. Philosophical knowledge of the world of material substances finds its end, as we have already noted above, in non-material beings (*substantiae separatae*). Philosophical knowledge of non-material beings, as those that are *magis entia* and thus possess a greater degree of universality, allows us to consider being as being, and in this light all beings that in some way participate in them.<sup>4</sup> However, this type of procedure (considering different “kinds” of being in the light of the general theory of being) is justified and possible after their existence has been established and adequate knowledge has been obtained.<sup>5</sup> (Otherwise, the general theory of material existence would be “metaphysics,” as it is in materialism, in the sense of a general theory of existence.)

## 2. EXPERIENCE AS A SOURCE OF PHILOSOPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

Another fundamental thesis, which is closely related to what has been said above, is the acceptance of experience as a source of knowledge in the thought of St. Thomas. Experience, of course, can concern entities that are directly given to us, that is, material entities. This does not mean, however,

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<sup>3</sup> I write more about this in the article: “Próba reinterpretacji punktu wyjścia dowodów istnienia Boga,” in: *Studia z filozofii Boga*, Vol. II, Warsaw 1973.

<sup>4</sup> See: *In Boetii de Trinitate*, Lect. II, qu. II, a. 1; Lect. II, qu. I, a. 4, ad 6.

<sup>5</sup> J. Kalinowski, referring to the position of L. B. Geiger, states, among other things: “After all, to claim, for example, that being is not necessarily material, one must first prove, if not that God exists, then at least that the human soul is immortal. And in order to maintain that being can be accidental or necessary, one must inevitably prove the existence of God.” “Ontologia czy aitiologia,” *Znak* 111 (1963), 1070 – M.A. Krąpiec thinks differently, “O rozumienie metafizyki,” *Znak* 111, 1082.

that it is purely sensual, as extreme empiricists maintain. On the contrary, the unity of the cognitive act in man excludes this kind of conception of human experience.<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary philosophical trends,<sup>7</sup> which are increasingly breaking away from the rationalist concept of philosophy, increasingly emphasize the necessity of accepting experience as the source of all philosophical knowledge. The development of an adequate theory of experience and its various varieties is still an open problem.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of these assumptions, which we consider to be correct, we would now like to investigate Cardinal Wojtyła's study *Person and Act*. As can be concluded from what has been said, we are not concerned with the validity of the substantive solutions proposed by him, but with the philosophical character of the work itself.

## II. PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

The subject of analysis in the book *Person and Action* is the “*study [of] the act that reveals the person; ... a study of the person through the act.*”<sup>9</sup> The goal that the author strives for above all is “an understanding of the human person for his own sake” (p. 593). Similarly on page 105 “to understand man precisely as a person. This is the proper end of our inquiries in this study.” With this goal in mind, the author undertakes a study of the act, because in his opinion, it is the act which reveals the person: “For such is the nature of the correlation inhering in experience, in the fact that ‘man acts’: the act constitutes a particular moment of revealing the person. The act allows us to have the most proper insight into his essence and to understand it most fully. We experience that man is a person, and we are convinced of this because he performs acts.” (p. 104).

Cardinal Wojtyła conducts his analyses from the perspective of the philosophy of being. At the same time, He does not want to give up, on the contrary, He wants to take advantage of

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<sup>6</sup> See, among others: K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 102-103.

<sup>7</sup> See: R. Ingarden, *Z badań nad filozofią współczesną*, Warsaw 1963, 294; A. Dondeyne, “L’expérience préphilosophique et les conditions anthropologiques de l’affirmation de Dieu,” in: *L’existence de Dieu*, Tournai 1963, 149-150.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John E. Smith, *Experience and God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). In particular chapter 1 “Healing Experience.”

<sup>9</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 103. Translator’s note: please note that the translation is altered slightly from the Ignatik translation to better fit the original text of the author which is as follows: “Przedmiotem analiz w książce *Osoba i czyn* jest „studium czynu, który ujawnia osobę; studium osoby poprzez czyn.”

the enrichment that we owe to the philosophy of consciousness, namely the more thorough knowledge of man “in the context of consciousness” (p. 112). According to the author “[a]n attempt to correctly unify in the conception of the person and the act the understandings that emerge from the experience of man in both its aspects *must in some measure become an attempt to unify two philosophical orientations, in a sense, two philosophies*” (p. 112).

In connection with the subject and purpose of the research set by Cardinal Wojtyła, the following types of questions arise: 1) how should we understand his commitment to the philosophy of being, or more precisely, in which field of the philosophy of being does he place his study of man as a person, 2) how does he understand the attempt to merge two philosophical orientations, and 3) to what extent has he shown it in the concept of person and act, thereby indicating that it is possible, at least within certain limits.

1. Philosophical anthropology as a presentation of the specific categories of human existence.

For Cardinal Wojtyła, the human person, being the object of experience, is not only the content of consciousness, is not just something thought, but is a concrete reality that really exists: “*this study aims in the broadest sense to explicate the reality that the person is*” (p. 106). “*For we are not concerned with the abstract but with a penetration into the actually existing reality*” (p. 110). And in yet another place: “*In the present reflections – in accord with the cognitive presuppositions made in the introductory chapter – we do not intend to sever the ‘I’ from its ontological implications. Every man is given in integral, that is, simple, experience as a *suppositum* – as a being that is the subject of existence and action*” (p. 596).

Cardinal Wojtyła distances himself from all types of positions: idealistic, phenomenalist, actualistic, and, therefore, the emphasis on his philosophical orientation is clear and unambiguous and requires no further explanation.

However, in our opinion, it should be noted that the author places his reflections on the human person in the perspective of his *own* human existence; he is concerned with categories that are proper to the human person, which, it seems to me, has not been adequately addressed by many discussants who see the study *Person and Act* as a kind of phenomenology and deny it a strictly philosophical character.

There is no doubt that Cardinal Wojtyła, to a large extent, uses the phenomenological method, and a realistic type,<sup>10</sup> similar to, among others, the phenomenological method of Max Scheler, by treating direct data (and therefore phenomena) not as functions of consciousness, but as entities that actually exist.<sup>11</sup> He therefore uses the method of description, reduction and observation, so well known to those who have encountered the phenomenological method. He also emphasizes the direction of phenomenological explanation, noting that: “*The reasons that explain this reality (i.e. a human person - my addition) are contained in experience*” (p. 110).<sup>12</sup> But He does not stop there. Phenomenology implies, in Cardinal Wojtyła’s work, as well as for many other representatives of contemporary philosophical reflection, to mention only Heidegger and Dondeyne here, ontology.<sup>13</sup> This is consistent when one takes into account that he wants to remain on the basis of the philosophy of being,<sup>14</sup> and from the philosophy of consciousness he wants to retain what it actually provides in human cognition from the side of consciousness, and therefore the starting point is the data of consciousness, or more precisely, the consciousness of action, the act. We read, among other examples: “*Man not only acts consciously but also has the consciousness that he acts and, moreover, that he acts consciously*” (p. 125). He does not “intend an absolutization of consciousness. *Our goal is only to open an aspect that was too confined and that remained only an implication in the traditional conception*” (p. 593). Thus, according to Cardinal Wojtyła, the experience of “I” carries ontological implications.

This ontology, as we understand it, is not yet metaphysics *sensu stricto*. Nor is it an ontology in the sense of a theory of possible beings. It is rather a philosophical reflection that has as its subject the category of human existence as a person. Philosophical reflection of this type aims, first of all, at understanding this being in itself by discovering its constitutive features.<sup>15</sup> As the author points out, and as we have already quoted in another context, it is about how “*to understand the human person for his own sake*” (p. 117). This can only be done by identifying those “moments” that constitute a person. The way to this is through the explication of what

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<sup>10</sup> The realistic position was represented by Husserl’s students from Göttingen, who were influenced by A. Reinach. R. Ingarden believes that Husserl, in his early period, also took a realistic position with regard to the real world. See: R. Ingarden, *Z badań*, 552-553.

<sup>11</sup> See, among others: Maurice Dupuy, *La philosophie de la religion chez Max Scheler*, Paris 1959, 248.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. A. Dondeyne, “L’expérience,” 151.

<sup>13</sup> See: A. Dondeyne, “L’expérience,” 151.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Dupuy, *La philosophie*, 248.

<sup>15</sup> Whereas: „metaphysicus considerat etiam de singularibus entibus, non secundum proprias rationes, per quas sunt tale vel tale ens, sed secundum quod participant communem entis rationem.” *In Boetii de Trinitate*, Lect. II, qu. I, a 4, ad 6.

experience contains. “Here, understanding,” writes Cardinal Wojtyła, “grows directly from experience without any intermediary stages, without reasoning” (p. 157). This is because “[t]he experience of man not only reveals that reality to us but also generates the need to explain it and at the same time creates the basis for this explanation. The wealth and diversity of experience, so to speak, provoke the mind, so that it tries to grasp the already-understood reality of the person and act in the most comprehensive way and to explain this reality most fully. This, however, can be accomplished only by way of an increasingly deep entry into experience, into its content. Thanks to this, the person and act are in a sense brought out of darkness. Standing before the mind that cognizes them, they appear more and more fully and more and more comprehensively. Interpretation, or reductive understanding, constitutes, *so to speak, and exploration of experience*. The very word ‘reduction’ ought not to be erroneously understood. It does not in the least mean a reduction in the sense of diminishing or limiting the wealth of the experienced object. The aim is to consistently bring out this object. The exploration of the experience of man must be a cognitive process in which the constant and homogeneous development of the original vision of the person in the act and through the act is accomplished. During the entire process, this vision must be consistently deepened and enriched” (pp. 108-109).

We find concrete examples of this position throughout the study *Person and Act*. For example, on the question of the spirituality of the person the author states: “The spirituality of man is manifested in consciousness, thanks to which it forms in lived-experience the experiential inwardness of his existence and action” (p. 147).

The validity of this approach is supported by both substantive and historical reasons in terms of Thomistic tradition.

And so, when it comes to substantive reasons, then 1° – if we do not want to practice pure rationalism in relation to human philosophy, then we must first indicate the reasons explaining his essence in the experience itself; and 2° – we need to know who man is in himself, what his essence is, before we can meaningfully ask whether or what reasons are required in addition to it,<sup>16</sup> and

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<sup>16</sup> According to Husserl, all sciences are based on certain ideas and fundamental concepts which themselves cannot become the subject of research. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what these basic concepts actually mean and from where their meaning initially grows. In Husserl’s language, this can be expressed as follows: the noematic content of basic concepts must be captured both in terms of the essence revealed in them and in terms of their origin. This kind of explanation of the basic noematic content has nothing to do with speculation about the essence that is carried out from the outside. The fundamental explanation can only be achieved in such a way that the basic eidetic content is sought in its original form and is drawn from it in such a way that nothing is added to this original content. We must already know what we mean when we say, for example, nature or history, before we can proceed towards further

how the essential “moments” of human existence can be interpreted within the framework of a general theory of being.<sup>17</sup>

The human person must therefore be given to us visually in experience. This can be called an interpretation, an objectification of human experience. How could we possibly know this? And even if someone from outside could point this out to us (Revelation),<sup>18</sup> what significance would it have for us if it could not be found and verified in our own experience? Would it then constitute a reality “for us” or rather conceptual poetry?

This position is also an extension of the Thomistic tradition. For St. Thomas (following Aristotle), philosophical reflection on beings, in the definition of which “sensory matter” cannot be omitted, does not constitute metaphysics in the *sensu stricto*, but the philosophy of natural beings (*scientia naturalis*).<sup>19</sup> *Scientia naturalis* also treats the soul as a form of the body.<sup>20</sup> Gilson says the same thing, in his own way. “Anthropology cannot be derived from metaphysics. Like other creatures, man is also a being animated by the act of being, but exceptionally his nature cannot be known independently of this act.”<sup>21</sup> Knowledge in this field of being is achieved by pointing out the essential structural moments in what is given to us.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Cardinal Wojtyła, from the entire wealth of human experience, chooses the fact of conscious action in particular, does not mean a fundamental change in the philosophical concept, but rather an enrichment of it with this aspect which, as he himself points out “*was too confined...in the traditional conception*” (p. 593).

This type of philosophical anthropology does not exclude a strictly metaphysical interpretation in two respects: 1° — insofar as it leads to the acceptance of the existence of a substantial soul that can exist independently of the body, and 2° — insofar as the structural

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explanation. It is precisely a matter of explaining what was originally conceived from itself or from its original data. See: B. Welt, “Der Gottesbeweis und die Phänomenologie der Religion,” in: *Auf der Spur des Ewigen*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1965, 315-316. In our opinion, the same applies to man as a person. In trying to ultimately understand man as a person, the question must arise whether his relationship to God constitutes the reason that constitutes him in himself, and thus whether God is “inscribed” in the definition of man or whether he threatens it in the sense of alienation. See more on this topic in my article: “Człowiek a Bóg,” in: *Logos i ethos*, Kraków 1971; also: “Teologia a antropologia,” *Analecta Cracoviensia* 3 (1971) 58-59.

<sup>17</sup> See further considerations in this article on the second aspect of metaphysical interpretation.

<sup>18</sup> See: Romano Guardini, *Świat i osoba*, published in a joint volume: *Koniec czasów nowożytnych, Świat i osoba, Wolność – łaska – los*, Kraków 1969, 177.

<sup>19</sup> *In Metaph.*, Lib. VI, Lect. I. nr. 1161.

<sup>20</sup> *In Metaph.*, Lib. VI, Lect. I. nr. 1159.

<sup>21</sup> E. Gilson, *Elementy filozofii chrześcijańskiej* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1965), 189.

<sup>22</sup> See, among others: S. Świeżawski – Ks. M. Jaworski, *Byt*, Lublin 1961, 67-69.

“moments” of human existence are explained within the framework of the general theory of being. Cardinal Wojtyła draws attention to both directions of this interpretation, although he does not explicitly systematize them. As for the metaphysical interpretation in the first aspect, Cardinal Wojtyła, not wishing to confuse the fields of philosophical knowledge or to commit the error of *petitio principii*, essentially limits himself to philosophical anthropology *sensu stricto*, that is, to demonstrating the structural moments of human existence as a person. This alone is a significant methodological advantage. At the same time, he points out that this type of anthropology is resolved in a specific way in substantial metaphysics, the spiritual human soul: “Although the foundations of man’s spirituality, in a sense, its roots [St. Thomas would say here: its end – my comment], reside outside the direct sphere of experience – *we reach them by way of reasoning* [emphasis mine] – spirituality itself has an experiential expression, becoming in a sense a sum of manifestations” (p. 147).

This position again reminds us of the view of St. Thomas, who taught about the object and end of the philosophy of material beings. The philosophy of man leads to the “root of spirituality,” which leads, let us add, to the acceptance of a substantial soul possessing its own act of existence.<sup>23</sup> Considering it as such, which is precisely what philosophical anthropology leads to, constitutes a separate type of philosophical reflection, belonging to metaphysics.<sup>24</sup>

There are many examples of metaphysical interpretation in the second aspect. Right away in the first chapter, we note that “the equivalent of our ‘act’ [*czyn*]... is *actus humanus*” (p. 121). The author notes: “In the philosophical tradition of the West, the phrase *actus humanus* also presupposes a certain interpretation of act, namely, one that was developed on the basis of the philosophy of Aristotle in antiquity and of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. This interpretation is realistic and objectivistic as well as metaphysical. It stems from the entire conception of being, and directly from the conception of *potential-actus*, by means of which the Aristotelians and Thomists explain the changeable and dynamic character of being... A close link with the corresponding *potential*... is always characteristic of expressing *actus* in light of the entire Aristotelian or Thomistic conception of being” (pp. 121-122). In another place: “The two objective structures, namely, ‘man acts’ and ‘something happens in man,’ determine two fundamental directions of the dynamism proper to man... *The activity and passivity* – *agere and pati* – are made

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<sup>23</sup> See: Gilson, *Elementy*, 194-195.

<sup>24</sup> *In Metaph.*, Lib. VI, Lect. I, nr. 1159.

manifest in them *as the constitutum of the structures and the objective basis of their diversification*. It is known that both *agere* and *pati* constitute two separate categories. The experience of human action and of what happens in man certainly greatly helped in distinguishing these categories. These two categories – *agere* and *pati* – not only oppose but also condition and explain each other in man just as they do in metaphysics” (pp.163-164). That is all when it comes to quotes in this regard. Let us also note that, according to Cardinal Wojtyła, human experience reveals and verifies both the ontic structure of man as a person proper only to him, and the ontic structure that constitutes his participation in the universal categories of being.<sup>25</sup>

All this entitles us to see a philosophical and fundamental character in the study *Person and Act*. Of course, many issues still require further development and more precise clarification here. However, this was not the purpose of the study *Person and Act*. Building this type of methodology of philosophical anthropology is the task of specialists. Here we only want to present its outline, which is included in the study *Person and Act*. This outline can undoubtedly provide creative inspiration for the development of a more comprehensive methodology of philosophical anthropology, not outside of, but within the framework of Thomistic thought. The attempts made so far have been: 1° — overly “metaphysical” in the sense that they interpreted human existence “from above” within the framework of general systemic assumptions, and did not therefore strive to understand it in its own specific categories. (Is this not why modern philosophies of the subject grew beyond the traditional lines of philosophy?);<sup>26</sup> 2° — human experience as a basis for building a philosophical anthropology was not sufficiently take into account. Cardinal Wojtyła’s study, in our opinion, addresses these shortcomings, and at the same time, by taking a stance on the philosophy of being, remains an extension of Thomas’s philosophical orientation.

This brings us to the answer to the second question, which is related to Cardinal Wojtyła’s attempt to integrate this philosophical orientation with the orientation of the philosophy of consciousness.

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<sup>25</sup> See footnote 14.

<sup>26</sup> Cardinal Wojtyła seems to answer this question at least partially himself when he states that: “Without the full revelation of this subjectivity there is no way of reaching and explicating the full and objective comprehensive content of these facts [human action and its relationship to the person].” And that, “subjectivism can also develop due to a too narrow and unilateral objectivism. What protects us from this is a possibly comprehensive analysis of the objective in all its aspects” (p. 158).

2. The concept of merging two philosophical orientations: the philosophy of being and the philosophy of consciousness.

Cardinal Wojtyła clearly stated how he understood the attempt to merge two philosophical orientations: He is concerned, as we have already quoted, with the enrichment that comes with “a more thorough cognition of man in the context of consciousness” (p. 112). Cardinal Wojtyła does not, therefore, have in mind a philosophy of consciousness that reduces all reality to the subject-consciousness (it is not about, as he himself writes, the absolutization of consciousness, p. 127; 593). Then it would be difficult to talk about the philosophy of being as opposed to the philosophy of consciousness. The point here is to take into account the relevant data of human experience (consciousness of action), but without the kind of interpretations that present subjectivism ultimately leading to idealism, or various varieties of the philosophy of the transcendental subject. “Subjectivism,” as the author states, “in the given case would consist in reducing acts exclusively to lived-experience, and moral values... to the very contents of consciousness. *However, once consciousness ceases to be understood as an aspect,*” which the author tried to show in this chapter, “*it also ceases to explain subjectivity, that is, the subjectivity of man and his acts, and it itself becomes an exclusive subject. Subjectivism understands consciousness as an integral and exclusive subject...* under this assumption, with this mental attitude, both lived-experiences and their objective equivalents, that is, values, cease to be something real. They remain only as contents of consciousness: *esse = percipi*. Finally, consciousness itself ceases to be something real and becomes merely a thought subject of contents. The path to subjectivism ends in idealism” (pp. 158-159; 599).

By opposing the interpretation offered by subjectivism presented above, the author aims to demonstrate that taking into account this type of experiential data as a starting point is not only not intrinsically linked to the immanentist interpretation, but is in fact of great importance for realism. In other words: the method of immanence, reflection on the relevant data of consciousness, can both point to a transcendent reality in relation to it, as well as to a concrete, actually existing subject, and thus to the transcendence of a real subject-person, which is the ontological source of consciousness. We read that: “To ascertain the man-person’s subjectivity has a fundamental significance *for the realism* [emphasis mine] and, indeed, the objectivism of our study. *For in*

*reality man is a subject and experiences himself as a subject.* The dynamic relation – or correlation – between person and act is realized on this basis. Without ascertaining the subjectivity of man, no plane exists on which we could comprehensively grasp this relation” (p. 157). And further justification of this importance of human subjectivity for complete realism (experiencing the act, experiencing the person’s causative relationship to it, experiencing moral value): “*All these are objective facts, which nonetheless possess their objective and realness only and exclusively in the subjectivity of man*” (p. 158).

The position of subjectivism, as can be concluded from the study *Person and Act*, is based not so much on the accepted starting point as on the insufficient consideration of the direct data of self-knowledge<sup>27</sup> that justify the realistic position. Before we move to that, however, let us note here that this concept of combining two philosophical orientations has particular importance when we consider that modern philosophies of the subject have oscillated precisely in the direction of idealism and subjectivism. Accentuating and further developing the direction of the solution presented in the study *Person and Act* should become the subject of a separate academic dissertation, perhaps even more than one. The path shown by Cardinal Wojtyła is certainly new, and the stakes are very high and therefore it is worth the effort.

3. An attempt to integrate the philosophy of being and the philosophy of consciousness  
in relation to the human person.

Regardless of any future work that will address the program and direction of the solution outlined by Cardinal Wojtyła in his study, let us attempt to show, in a broad outline and by way of example only, how he implements his program of integrating both of the aforementioned philosophical concepts.

Cardinal Wojtyła, starting from the consciousness of the act, reverses, as it were, the order that has been accepted so far in the traditional concept, according to which “man exists and acts ‘consciously,’ yet his existence and action do not have a specific source in consciousness” (p. 127) “... the entire human cognition – the ability and habit of active understanding – closely cooperates with consciousness” (p. 132).

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<sup>27</sup> See below quotes from pp. 594 and 134.

Cardinal Wojtyła distinguishes all forms of knowledge from self-knowledge, the object of which is one's own "I." Thanks to self-knowledge, consciousness reflects actions and their relationship to one's own "I." Taking this fact into account is of paramount importance. It affects the character of the "I" and opposes the idealistic position which does not "adequately consider the way in which everything that inheres in consciousness does so" (p. 594). "Without self-knowledge, consciousness would be deprived of semantic contents concerning... man's own 'I' as an object... The idealists postulate a state like this, for in it consciousness can be considered a subject that produces its contents with no regard for any factor located outside consciousness itself. A valid question in this line of thought arises – namely, whether consciousness itself can be considered a real subject or whether it is only its own product" (p. 134).

Thus, an in-depth analysis of data and the way they are embedded in consciousness as a starting point characteristic of the philosophy of consciousness leads to different conclusions about the nature of the consciousness of the "I" than is the case in idealistic trends.

And further: "...self-knowledge has nothing to do with some kind of philosophy whose subject is the 'I.' Then it would be about an abstracted, generalized 'I'; ... *In self-knowledge, the object is the 'I,' concrete and 'one's own'*" (p. 137).

And that is why, according to Cardinal Wojtyła, "*the boundary of objectivity and realism in the conception of man... is marked by the acknowledgment of self-knowledge*" (p. 159).

Cardinal Wojtyła sees in consciousness a trait that he describes as "reflective." It consists of a mental turn toward the subject as such. Thanks to this "this object, which ontologically is a subject... experience[s] himself as a subject – that is... experience[s] his own 'I'" (p. 596). So we have a subjective experience of the subject *suppositum*, which in ontology has a purely objective character, abstracting from the aspect of experience. "In fact, the word 'I' contains more than *suppositum*, for it contains the subjective lived-experience of subjectivity and implicates the object that is a subject (that is, subjectivity in the objective and ontological sense – precisely that which *suppositum* denotes). However, if we severed the word 'I' from its implication, which is the *suppositum*, then this 'I' would merely denote the consciousness-related aspect or, in other words, the psychological aspect of subjectivity" (p. 596).

The above argument takes us a big step forward in relation to the previous statements, where Cardinal Wojtyła questioned primarily the position of subjectivism or idealism in the area of the subject — consciousness. We have here a connection between the subjective experience of

the subject and the ontological *suppositum*, thanks to the reflexive nature of consciousness. This also indicates how Cardinal Wojtyła understands the ontological implications of experience. We experience of ourselves as beings that are the subject of existence and action (see: pp. 596-597). “Ontologia czy aitiologia,” *Znak* 111, (1963).

And hence the conclusion: “Consciousness is linked with a being, that is, with a concrete man ‘who is myself,’ who objectively is some ‘I.’ Consciousness neither obscures this being nor absorbs it into itself, as would follow from the basic premise of idealistic thinking, according to which *esse* is *percipi* (‘to be’ is the same as ‘to be the content of consciousness,’ while no being outside consciousness is accepted). Quite the contrary; consciousness *inwardly, as it were, reveals* this being, the human being – the person... Lived-experience is not a reflex that appears on the surface of man’s being and acting. Quite the contrary – it is *the mode of the actualization of being and acting that man owes to consciousness*. It is, in a sense, a final and definitive mode in which *the real* [emphasis mine] and objective energies contained in man as *a being* [emphasis mine] are actualized not only objectively but also in the profile of his subjectivity, *finding their subjective completion in lived-experience*” (p. 597).

Analyzing agency against the background of human dynamism, Cardinal Wojtyła comes to the following statements that confirm and complement his previous statements about the nature of human existence: “*In no way can we question his* [the person’s] *unity and identity at the foundations of efficacy and subjectivity*, structurally contained in action and in what happens in man” (p. 174). “The subjectivity of man that is common to both structures – to action and happening – found its expression in the concept of *suppositum* in the philosophy practiced according to the principles of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas... *Suppositum indicates* either the very being of the subject or *the subject as being*. This subject as a being inheres at the basis of every dynamic structure, of every action and happening, of every efficacy and subjectivity. This *being is real*, the being – ‘man’ really existing, and consequently *really acting* (pp. 174-175, emphasis mine). “The man-person ought to be identified as a *suppositum* at the first and fundamental view. The person is a concrete man – the *individua substantia*, as Boethius declares in the first part of his classical definition” (pp. 175-176).

To sum up the considerations made from points one to three, let us emphasize the main points: 1° — Cardinal Wojtyła, thanks to the relevant data of human experience, the experience of subjectivity, illustrates certain claims of classical ontology visible in the plane of human existence,

and thereby provides their verification; 2° — Questions the subjectivist and idealist interpretation of human consciousness.

As can be seen, we wanted to show (not entirely, however) Cardinal Wojtyła's approach in the study *Person and Act* (formal aspect) and the realistic solution that he arrives at in the man-person section. However, in accordance with the task we set ourselves in this article, we cannot comment on the substantive correctness of individual decisions in terms of their merits. It seems to us, however, that the method of proceeding and visualizing used by Cardinal Wojtyła brings with it the type of obviousness about which he writes that "it seems to indicate the essential property of revelation or manifestation of the object, the cognitive feature characteristic of it. At the same time, however, evidentness means that the understanding of the fact 'man acts' as the act of the person... finds complete confirmation in the content of experience, that is, in the content of the fact 'man acts,' with its enormous frequency" (pp. 102-103).

Let us also note – and this is not without significance – that the same direction of the solution (a concrete, real subject) can be found in Roman Ingarden's treatise "Responsibility. Its Ontic Foundations," published in *The Little Book of Man* (published after his death in Krakow in 1972). Ingarden, asking about the ontic foundations of responsibility, had to question solutions that reduced a person to a stream of consciousness or to a pure "I" and opt for a realistic solution. "All theories," he states, "which reduce the person to a multitude of pure experiences are insufficient to explain the ontic foundations of responsibility. Only if one regards man, and in particular his soul and his person, as a real object existing in time, which has a special, characteristic form, is it possible to fulfill the demands of responsibility" (p. 132).

### III. A REALISTIC CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE

We will now proceed to read the study *Person and Act* in the light of the second assumption we made at the beginning, namely the issue of experience as a source of philosophical knowledge. The realistic conception of man – person that Cardinal Wojtyła presents to us is not only possible but also justified, thanks to the outline of a more adequate, realistic theory of experience that he presented in the introduction to his work.

Cardinal Wojtyła understands his study as an objectivization “of the great cognitive process that may be defined as the experience of man” (p. 95). For the basis of knowledge about man is always experience (p. 97-98). The author starts from the fact that “man acts” (p. 101).

Speaking about human experience, Cardinal Wojtyła explains how he understands “experience” in general. First, from the negative side, he opposes the phenomenalist position, that is, the reduction of the sphere of experience to the function and content of the senses themselves (p. 101-102). Positively, Cardinal Wojtyła, 1° — connects experience with specific fields of facts; 2° — experience, according to him, indicates the directness of cognition itself, the direct cognitive contact with the object. This directness is not limited to sensory acts: “We must state that a mental act at least participates in this directness of grasping the object... It seems... that the mind is engaged already in experience itself, thanks to which it establishes contact with the object, a contact that is equally, though in a different way, direct. For this reason, *every human experience is at the same time some understanding of what I experience*” (p. 102). The author adds: “It seems that this position opposes phenomenism and is proper to phenomenology, which emphasizes above all the unity of the act of human cognition” (p. 102). Therefore, the Author takes the position “that *the act is a particular moment of the vision* – that is, the experience – *of the person*... It is the intellectual vision given on the basis of the fact ‘man acts’” (p. 102).

And so, the person is given to us here in the fact that “man acts.” This alone indicates that this way of experiencing, through facts, excludes the conception of direct data as pure content of our consciousness. Experience is a means of direct cognitive contact with the reality of a fact that is independent of our consciousness. Here it is a way of cognitive contact with the reality of the person given through the act (the act reveals the person). And hence, for example, such statements by Cardinal Wojtyła: “... this study... aims *in the broadest sense to explicate the reality that the person is*” (p. 106). “The present study comes into being precisely as an expression of the need to explain or interpret *the rich reality of the person* [emphasis mine] given to us together with acts – and through acts – in the experience of man... *However, there exists the need for a more comprehensive explanation of the reality of the person and act*, a need based on some fundamental understanding of the person and act. The experience of man not only reveals that *reality* [emphasis mine] to us but also generates the need to explain it and at the same time creates the basis for this explanation. The wealth and diversity of experience constitute, so to speak, provoke the mind, so that it tries to grasp the already – understood *reality* [emphasis mine] of the person and act in

the most comprehensive way and to explain this reality most fully. This, however, can be accomplished only by way of an increasingly deep entry into experience, into its content” (pp. 108-109).

On this basis, we can speak of a further “healing” of the experience<sup>28</sup> by Cardinal Wojtyła. Phenomenology has undoubtedly made a great step in this respect, overcoming, for example, all kinds of psychologisms. However, a legitimate question arises whether the so-called *epoché* itself does not in certain cases constitute an obstacle to a precise and complete observation of the phenomenon and does not thereby falsify the data.<sup>29</sup> A thorough analysis of the direct data of consciousness and the way in which they are contained in it, however, indicates, as Cardinal Wojtyła tried to show, that one cannot ignore the reality of a specific subject if one does not want to falsify these data. This is also why we are talking here about further healing of experience.

The full explication of what is given in human experience confirms in its own way, that Cardinal Wojtyła’s general understanding of experience is correct, and its application to man is not arbitrary.

Thus, we come to the final conclusion. Getting rid of all prejudices should be based primarily on experience. Experience must be freed from all deforming subjectivist or idealistic theories. When we consider the data of human experience without prejudice, we find that not only is psychologism overcome, but also Husserl’s later position of transcendental idealism. Clarification of the data of human experience leads to realism. It reveals the moment of reality of a concrete subject contained within it. If, as R. Ingarden writes, “the data of experience not only enable us to learn about objects, but also have a justifying power, motivating our beliefs on the one hand, and verifying the concepts and judgments we have acquired about given objects on the other,”<sup>30</sup> then the study by Cardinal Wojtyła is of decisive importance for the realistic position regarding the man – person. This is also where its particular importance lies, regardless of its substantive achievements. As such, it also shows the direction for the development of a contemporary realistic philosophy of the subject – man, and further outlines the way to a more complete justification of the realistic position in general.

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<sup>28</sup> We borrow this term from J.E. Smith in his book *Experience and God*; see footnote 8.

<sup>29</sup> See: M. Dupuy, op. cit. 249.

<sup>30</sup> R. Ingarden, *Z badań*, 290.