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## **SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE. THE ESSENCE OF MAN-PERSON ACCORDING TO KAROL WOJTYŁA**

A good occasion for writing this article is a new bilingual, Polish/English, edition of *Considerations on the Essence of Man. Rozważania o istocie człowieka*<sup>1</sup> by Karol Wojtyła. With this book a young priest, Fr. Karol Wojtyła started his lifelong studies on the essence of man. The book “contains its author’s basic and, at the same time, fundamental thinking with regard to [the essence of] man”<sup>2</sup> and therefore it may greatly enhance the understanding of Wojtyła’s philosophical anthropology presented mainly in his *Person and Act*. After all, *Person and Act* is a refined and detailed analysis of the essence of man-person through his actions,<sup>3</sup> so first it is good to know what is

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<sup>1</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man. Rozważania o istocie człowieka.*, trans. John Grondelski (Lublin-Roma: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Societa Internazionale Tommaso D’Aquino, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B., “From the Publisher,” in Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn [Person and Act]* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1969), 14. Here Karol Wojtyła gives reason why he has chosen the fact “man acts” as the best experiential way to analyze person; he writes: “action is the crucial moment whereby a person is revealed. Action gives us the most adequate insight into the *essence* of [man-]person and allows us to understand it most fully.” (This and all the other quotations from *Osoba i czyn* are translated by Małgorzata Jąlocho-Palicka.)

considered by Wojtyła to be, “basically and fundamentally,” the essence of man.

## **Discovering the Spiritual Substance—The Essence of Man-Person**

### *A Substance-Essence and Its Accidents*

In his research on the essence of man Wojtyła stays on the ground of Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy of being which distinguishes between the two kinds of beings: substances-essences and accidental beings (accidents). “A substance[-essence] is such a being that possesses self-existence (*est per se*),”<sup>4</sup> i.e., it exists with its own separate independent existence. The word “essence” refers to *what* a given substantial being is and what is grasped primarily by concepts in the direct simple experience—we immediately recognize *what* substance-essence we see, e.g., we are instantly aware that we see a cat and not a man, a man and not an animal; then, if we like, we can undertake a deeper study of the nature of a given substance-essence. In contrast to substances-essences, accidental beings do not possess self-existence, but they owe their existence to the substance they belong to. An action (an accident) of a man (a substance-essence), for example, does not exist separately from the man, but it draws its existence from the existence of a concrete being-substance-essence-man: John, Mary, Kate.<sup>5</sup> The consequence of a close existential dependence of accidents on a substance-essence is that the character of all the accidents of a given substance-essence is determined and defined by the character of the substance-essence. We observe, for instance, that someone’s action is human—i.e., it is performed in accordance with what the human being-

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<sup>4</sup> Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 127.

<sup>5</sup> See Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 86: “The existence of action is dependent on the existence of man—it is here that the proper moment of causing and causation resides. The existence of action is preordinated by and subordinated to the existence of man in an accidental manner, as *accidens*.”

substance-essence is—or it is inhuman, which means that it contradicts what/who man is. As Wojtyła notes, the category of a concrete substance-essence and its accidents embraces all beings,<sup>6</sup> so it is the most useful tool for the analysis and explanation of every being-substance-essence and its accidents—also the man and all the accidental beings connected with him.

Wojtyła uses the category “substance-essence and its accidents” not only in his first book *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, but also in his other writings on philosophical anthropology, including the main one—*Person and Act*. The only difference is that, in order to modernize Aquinas’ thought, especially in *Person and Act*, he often replaces an “old-fashioned” philosophical category of “accident” with more modern concepts such as “an aspect,” “a manifestation,” “a property,” “a phenomenon,” etc. However, we must remember that behind those terms there is always a Thomist category of an “accident,” i.e., a being which does not exist separately and independently from a whole concrete self-existing being-substance-essence it belongs to. To draw our attention to this, in *Person and Act*, Wojtyła warns against absolutization and ‘substantialization’ of an aspect (i.e., of an accident). He says that absolutization of an aspect is always an error in describing any composite reality<sup>7</sup> (including the reality which a man-person is). Such absolutization and substantialization of an aspect would exactly consist in endowing an aspect-accident with an independent, quasi-substantial self-existence.

Especially dangerous is the absolutization and “substantialization” of the human consciousness which takes place in the philosophy of consciousness. When the consciousness is absolutized, it becomes an

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<sup>6</sup> See Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 127: “[T]hat differentiation [into substances-essences and accidents] exhausts the entirety of real beings.”

<sup>7</sup> See Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 33: “An aspect may never replace a whole [substantial being] nor can it push the whole [substantial being] out of our sight. If that happened, we would have to do with the absolutization of the aspect, which is always an error in the cognition of any composite reality.”

autonomous, quasi-substantial subject of its acts and we forget that a consciousness is always just an aspect-accident of a concrete human being-substance-essence, it never exists separately and independently from him;<sup>8</sup> man-person himself is a subject of his own existence and acts (he is a substance-essence) and his consciousness is an accidental being subjected in him.<sup>9</sup> The absolutization of consciousness goes together with the absolutization of its contents (ideas, states, moods, constructions) which, being absolutized, are not verified by the contents of real beings. Thus idealistic or agnostic attitudes are developed: either the ideas of a philosopher's consciousness are (mis)taken for being (idealism) or he proclaims that it is only the contents of consciousness that he has access to and not the things-in-themselves (i.e., the real beings-substances-essences), so the latter cannot be cognized (agnosticism).

Karol Wojtyła from the very beginning of his considerations on the essence of man takes a realistic cognitive attitude—he says that the object of our philosophical cognition are real beings which include, first of all, self-existing substantial beings,<sup>10</sup> and then accidental beings sub-

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<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*, 37: “Consciousness does not exist by itself as a ‘substantial’ subject of conscious acts . . .”

<sup>9</sup> Karol Wojtyła's care not to absolutize and substantialize consciousness is also seen in a careful formulation of the title of the chapter on consciousness: “Person and Action in the Aspect of Consciousness” (see *ibid.*, 29). Thus he emphasizes at the very beginning of his analysis of consciousness that consciousness is just an aspect-accident and not a substantial, self-existing being. (By the way, there is some gradation of accidents, e.g., one accident [consciousness] can be an accident of another accident [action], but this is another topic for a separate analysis).

<sup>10</sup> In Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, followed by Wojtyła, self-existing substantial beings are the proper object of philosophy called also the “first philosophy,” the “philosophy of being,” or “metaphysics.” This is so, because self-existing substances-essences are beings in the proper sense, whereas accidents are beings in analogical sense. In this tradition accidents of a given substance-essence are the objects of philosophy as far as they reveal a self-existing substantial being. Having this in mind, we may call Wojtyła's anthropology the “metaphysics of person,” since he studies the accidents of man-person-substance-essence in order to reveal what/who man-person is. Modern philosophy, having autonomized various philosophies of accidental beings (e.g., the

jected in the investigated substance-essence. The basic intuition of the essences of beings is expressed in their names. Going further and exploring experientially the essence of a studied being we are able to cognize it quite well. The best experiential method that helps us to go deeper into an experienced being is Aquinas' philosophy of being with its main distinction between a substance-essence and its accidents.<sup>11</sup>

Although the qualities of all the accidents of a given substance-essence are determined by the substance-essence, we may distinguish among them, in an act of direct experience, the accidents (properties, aspects) which are more essential to a given being-substance-essence than the other ones. This ability to grasp essential qualities of a substance-essence through immediate experience<sup>12</sup> is very important, since we cannot cognize a substance-essence directly—we get cognitive access to it through analyzing its most essential accidents-aspects. Behind the procedure of accessing the very essence of a being through the essential properties of the being there is a realistic cognitive attitude that the essence of the substantial being manifests itself through its essential accidents-aspects. In other words, the principle of causality is applied: on the basis of experience we treat a being-substance-essence as the cause of its accidents—among them there are the essential ones which manifest themselves in the acts most specific to the examined being. As far as man is concerned, there is a common agreement that the most essential accident-aspect of man is his, broadly understood, consciousness springing from his capability for intellectual cognition, and embracing his conscious, free decisions and actions. So, according to the principle of causality, Wojtyła examines man's cognition and man's

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philosophy of language, the philosophy of cognition, etc.), departed from Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

<sup>11</sup> The latter, to emphasize it again, labeled also by Wojtyła, in a more modern fashion, as “aspects”, “manifestations”, “properties”, “phenomena,” etc.

<sup>12</sup> The observation that we can grasp in the direct experience the essence of some quality (aspect, phenomenon) of the investigated substance-essence is the contribution of phenomenology to Wojtyła's philosophy of man-person.

free rational will in order to cognize the nature of their cause, i.e., the nature of the substance-essence called “man.”

As we know, the principle of causality was rejected by the modern philosophy of consciousness. Consequently the phenomena stopped being considered as the effects-manifestations-accidents of the causes-beings-substances-essences; they became closed in the human consciousness and defined as something that “appears to/in consciousness.” Here lies the crucial difference between phenomenological and Wojtyła’s metaphysical approach to phenomena: Wojtyła does not close the phenomena within the realm of consciousness exclusively (as phenomenology does), he treats them as the manifestations (effects) of their causes, i.e., the manifestations of real beings-substances-essences. Therefore, unlike phenomenologists, he does not stop within the consciousness itself and he does not consider it the essence of man, but the essential quality of man which is the manifestation-effect of a real human being-substance-essence. So he applies the principle of causality in his search for the essence of man and asks about the ultimate reason(s) for consciousness—unlike the philosophers of consciousness, he poses a metaphysical question “why?” (*dia ti*): Why consciousness? Why do we have minds? Or more precisely: Why cognition and free rational will (the components of consciousness)? What is the reason for which man is capable of rational cognition and free conscious decisions?

*A Substantial Spiritual Soul Is  
the Essence of Each Man*

Analyzing the human cognition and quoting extensively from psychologists who examined the functioning of the human senses and brain, Wojtyła observes that this accidental being (the human cognition) cannot be explained on the ground of matter and purely materialistic physiological processes going on in the human organism. There is an abysmal gap between a sensory cognition and a mental cognition. Our senses perceive only particulars present here and now: this particular chair, those particular trees, etc. True, our imagination can recreate

those sensually perceived particulars and build from them images and associations but there is “an unbridgeable chasm between the ability of recreation (reproduction) and association,”<sup>13</sup> and the ability to grasp the essence of beings in concepts<sup>14</sup>—the proper expressions of the human mental cognition. Concepts

are not . . . some clusters of sensory imaginations or “resultants” of [them] . . . but completely distinctive knowledge about the relations of things regarding an object, obtained on the path of mental abstraction and generalizations from the material concrete things.<sup>15</sup>

The formation of judgements and conclusions goes even further than concepts on that path as it is based not only on understanding of the essence of individual beings, but also on the deeper ability to compare those essences and make universally valid statements, such as: “the essence of an accident consists in residing in a substance as the subject of its existence.”<sup>16</sup> Since all the elements of mental cognition (concepts, judgements and conclusions) are abstract and general, they are not quantitatively limited. They embrace all beings—“‘being’ referring to everything which in any way exists or can exist.”<sup>17</sup> So, in a way, reason (the faculty of cognition) can become everything,<sup>18</sup> because everything can be the object of the human cognition. In contrast, every material being is quantitatively limited—it takes some definite amount of space and time and it is just itself—a cell, an atom, a fig tree, etc. All in all, Wojtyła, having examined the essential properties of mental cognition

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<sup>13</sup> Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 83.

<sup>14</sup> Actually, every being—be it substantial or accidental—has the essence grasped in a respective concept (“hand,” “redness,” etc.). Before, in the article, we talked only about substances-essences and the concepts referring to substantial beings so as to clarify the meaning of a “substance-essence”.

<sup>15</sup> Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 85.

<sup>16</sup> This sentence is Wojtyła’s own example. *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, 77: “Reason *natus est quoddammodo fieri omnia*—can become everything, as St. Thomas following Aristotle expresses it.”

and seeing how far they exceed matter, comes to the conclusion that this accidental being (mental cognition) cannot be subjected in the material substance. The cause cannot be of the lower rank than the effect. The immaterial cognition cannot be the effect even of the “highly organized” matter. So man is not a purely material being-substance-essence as the Marxists proclaimed and forced the Polish university students to believe at the time Wojtyła wrote his *Considerations on the Essence of Man*.<sup>19</sup> The human immaterial cognition which is the essential property of man can be adequately explained only by the immaterial cause—that is by a spiritual substantial soul. It is a spiritual substantial soul that is the essence of each man, as Thomas Aquinas and many other philosophers discovered. A spiritual soul substantially (i.e., really) exists “in” each human being. The word “soul” is not a metaphor to label some moods, feelings, “higher states of consciousness” or “higher self.” A soul is a real spiritual being-substance-essence of each human being at each stage of his life.

Another accidental being that testifies to the real existence of the substantial spirituality in each man is the human free will, strictly connected with the human cognition. Purely material beings are not free; they are determined by strictly defined patterns of behavior, natural laws and the two basic instincts: to preserve their life and to prolong their species. In contrast, man does not blindly follow his instincts and feelings. On the basis of the cognized truth about himself and the universe, he chooses his own goals and then decides about the proper means to achieve them. If his goal demands so, he may act against his feelings and instincts. For example, mother does not feel like getting up

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<sup>19</sup> *Considerations on the Essence of Man* were originally spoken lectures delivered in 1949 to university students who gathered at St. Florian Church in Cracow where a young Fr. Karol Wojtyła exercised his ministry. At the request of one of the students, he wrote his lectures down the same year. Strangely enough, only 40 years later were they published for the first time (while every word, spoken or written by Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, was immediately widely quoted and commented): see the first Polish edition of *Considerations: Karol Wojtyła, Rozważania o istocie człowieka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1999).



early but pursuing her goals (raising children, running home etc.), she overcomes her feelings and gets up; or a policeman decides against his self-preservation instinct, because he wants to save a drowning child. The only goal by which the human will is bound is the good and happiness resulting from achieving the good. But again, it is a matter of one's own cognition and choice what he considers to be good for himself. One is made happy by pursuing artistic career, another's happiness is to be a soldier. The ultimate end is the highest good which brings the highest happiness—its choice also depends solely on one's cognition and free will. In the world of purely material nature we do not observe such freedom; matter is ruled by necessity. So Wojtyła sums up his reflections on the substantial spiritual soul as the source of man's free, rational will, quoting the Apostle St. Paul: "where the Spirit is there is freedom," and concludes "that the words of the Apostle . . . also find their complete philosophical support."<sup>20</sup> Contrast observed between strictly determined nature and free rational man testifies to the fact that man is not purely material. Free will as well as cognition (the basis for the will's free decisions) must be rooted in a spiritual substance—the essence of each man.

Following Thomas Aquinas and other great thinkers, Wojtyła reminds us that the soul of each man is the source of all his acts, not only the acts of cognition and free will. First of all the spiritual substance (the essence) of each man is the source of the ongoing act of his life and also it is the organizer of his bodily form; it forms and gives life to his body. Matter does not have life in itself and it is incapable of generating any activity by itself, be it a simple spatial movement or other kinds of movement meaning any active change from one state to another. This is proved by a common experience that when a man dies (i.e., when his soul leaves him), he stops moving, his eyes stop seeing, his ears stop hearing, physiological processes in his organism are interrupted, his body stops feeling, it loses its human form and decays. So a

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. (St. Paul's words: 2 Cor. 3: 17.)

concrete human spiritual substantial soul first organizes a concrete human body and, at the same time, gives life to it. In this way, a complete human being-substance is created. The spiritual soul itself was called by Aquinas an “incomplete” substance. Man, having a substantial spiritual essence, is the only spiritual being who is not purely spiritual; a human spiritual soul acts “in” a body and “through” a body. In case of man the material body inherently belongs to the spiritual substance (the essence) of each man. This was always a very important fact for Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II: he kept emphasizing that the human body has a tremendous dignity, because it is the means of expression and development for a real substantial spirituality—the essence of each human being.

*Each Human Being Is a Person  
because He Has a Substantial Spiritual Soul*

According to Wojtyła, it is a concrete substantial spirituality that makes each man a person. Except for the word “spirituality,” the word “substantial” is the key word here. The word “substantial” distinguishes Wojtyła’s personalism from other kinds of contemporary personalism. In manifold currents of personalism it is generally agreed that spirituality, however understood, is a distinctive feature of a person as opposed to things. The specificity of Thomistic personalism, represented by Wojtyła, is indicated by one little word “substantial.” Each man is a person because of his *substantial* spirituality, i.e., because of a real substantial being called “soul” in which his personal qualities—cognition and free will (consciousness)—are subjected. Today—after Kant rejected the philosophy of a real concrete being-substance, pushed substance out of the realm of being into [the categories of] the intellect, and counted a human soul among the postulates of pure reason—we usually have to do with non-substantialist theories of person whose Kant is a precursor. Such non-substantialist conception of person was formed, for example, by Max Scheler.

Scheler identifies spirituality with actual states of psycho-emotive consciousness: for him “a person” is a sum of such states or, more precisely, “a person” is a phenomenon which is consciously experienced as the subject of conscious psycho-emotive experiences; this phenomenon appears every time when some feeling-laden experience is consciously lived and re-lived.<sup>21</sup> When there is no actual state of conscious experience, there is no person, but just a purely physical organism. In opposition to Scheler, Wojtyła makes us aware that each human being is a person whether he is in a state of consciousness or not. The rationale for everyone to be a person is his substantial spirituality.

In Boetius’ definition of person which Wojtyła made the basis of his theory of person in *Person and Act*, it is said that a person is an individual substance of rational nature (*persona est individua substantia rationalis naturae*<sup>22</sup>). First let us have a closer look at the last part of the definition, namely “rational nature.” These words refer precisely to what Wojtyła talks about in his *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, that is, to rational mental cognition and rational free will whose immaterial character is described there as the proof of the existence of a spiritual substance (the essence) of each man that makes him a person. The understanding of person as a spiritual being-substance

was worked out with a particular solicitude by Christian thought in the course of difficult theological investigations on the subject of the Trinity of Divine Persons or also on the subject of the personal unity of the two natures—divine and human—in Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For the explanation of Scheler’s conception of person, see Wojtyła’s second doctoral dissertation: “Ocena możliwości zbudowania etyki chrześcijańskiej przy założeniach systemu Maxa Schelera [An Evaluation of the Possibility of Building a Christian Ethics on the Assumptions of the System of Max Scheler],” in Karol Wojtyła, *Zagadnienie podmiotu moralności [The Question of the Subject of Morality]* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2001), 11–128.

<sup>22</sup> Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 76, 87, 167.

<sup>23</sup> Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 155, 157.

Wojtyła draws on this thought in his conception of the human person as an essentially spiritual being-substance.<sup>24</sup> Of course, a human person is not the same as his substantial spiritual soul; a human person is not a soul, but *has* a spiritual substantial soul. In the case of the human being the term “person” embraces “a complete substance,” i.e., his soul and body in their togetherness and indivisibility. Yet it must be stressed here that a substantial personhood of each man comes from his substantial spirituality completing itself by organizing the body for itself and making itself, in this way, a complete substance-person. The existence of a spiritual being-substance constitutes a concrete individual person and leads us ultimately to The Spiritual (Personal) Absolute. Each human person bears similarity to the Spiritual (Personal) Absolute just because of a person’s real, substantial spirituality of rational nature. This similarity to the Spiritual (Personal) Absolute elevates each human person to the highest place in this world, highly above all other purely material beings-substances.

Now, considering further Boetius’ *individua substantia rationalis naturae*, let us stop at the word “individua.” Here, following Wojtyła, we must look closer both at the similarity and the difference between the way a human person exists and the way a plant or an animal exists. Similarity between people and other living beings-substances consists in the fact that every being-substance exists as “this one” concrete being, whether it is a person or a plant or an animal. So if “individua” means “one” numerically, then it applies both to the human persons and to other living creatures (plants and animals). The category of “an *individual* being-substance” refers to the fact that there is no “general” be-

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<sup>24</sup> Throughout his life Wojtyła/John Paul II did not change his concept of person as a substantial spiritual being, taken from Christian tradition (in case of man, this spiritual substantial being forms a body to complete itself and to act through it). He presents such concept of person at the beginning of his priesthood (*Considerations on the Essence of Man*), and then he reminds it, as an elderly Pope, in one of his last encyclicals, *Fides et Ratio* (Rome 1998), no. 76: “[T]he concept of person as a *spiritual being* is particularly original faith’s contribution . . .”

ing; everything and everyone exists as a concrete, particular, “this one” being. But if we take the second meaning of the Latin concept “individua” referring to the degree of individualization, there is a huge difference between persons and animals (or plants). The latter ones exist only as copies of a given species, multiplied solely by the natural process of birthing, totally closed within the possibilities of matter. As a result, all copies of a given species are almost identical and they follow the same patterns of behavior. The world of persons is entirely different; it is marked by great diversity: each person is unique and unrepeatable, she/he has a specific configuration of personality traits, his/her individual bundle of inner and outer experiences, thoughts, decisions, actions, feelings, even his/her external appearance cannot be found anywhere else. Undoubtedly, the reason for such a high degree of individualization in the case of the human persons is everyone’s substantial spirituality with all its uniqueness and freedom.

The ultimate explanation of a tremendous difference between the human persons and animals (not to mention plants), as far as the individualization is concerned, is given by Thomas Aquinas in his theory of creation. Aquinas says that each person’s substantial spiritual soul is created separately by the Spiritual Absolute Himself, only the material, from which the soul organizes the body, comes from a person’s parents; whereas purely material living beings (animals and plants) are not created individually but “collectively” as a given species and that is why every sample of the species is just the product of natural birth and not a separate act of Creation. Wojtyła refers to this Thomistic concept of creating each human substantial spiritual soul by the Spiritual Absolute Himself when he speaks about the personal existence (*esse personale*) of each man<sup>25</sup> and its contrast to the species-existence of animals.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 87, e.g.: “the existence of man as this one is the personal existence [*esse personale*].”

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 87: “A person is not only one more sample of the human being. It is a way of an individual [coming into] existence which (among all the beings of the visible world) is inherent only to man.”

To sum up, the concept “individua,” when applied to a human person, has much deeper meaning than just numerical “oneness.” It directs us to the fact of Creation, to the incomparable difference between the “individual” creation of people and “collective” creation of species in case of other living beings and, consequently, the difference between the unrepeatable, highly individualized personal existence (*esse personale*) of each person and strictly-patterned species-existence of animals and plants. Immediate cause of the personal (highly individualized) existence of each human person is his spiritual substantial soul created “directly” by the Spiritual Absolute Himself in a separate act of Creation.

Thus Wojtyła reaches to the deepest metaphysical fundaments of the tremendous worth and dignity of each person. Those two motifs—a person as an essentially spiritual substantial being and a person as the highest value—are strictly connected and interwoven in Wojtyła’s philosophical anthropology. They meet, so to speak, in the centre and the essence of a person, that is, in his substantial spiritual soul which gives him highly individualized life and makes him similar to the Spiritual (Personal) Absolute Who created it in a special individual act of Creation as unique and unrepeatable and in Whom it finds its ultimate fulfillment.

Another reason for an individual spiritual substantial soul’s preciousness is its immortality. Wojtyła mentions some philosophical experiential proof to the immortality of the soul: death means decomposition of material spatial parts, spiritual soul is not composed of spatial parts, so it cannot die.<sup>27</sup> No wonder that a person’s own spiritual substantial soul matters (and should matter) more than the whole world.

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<sup>27</sup> See Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 135: “In the course of rational conclusion the immortality of the human soul is the precise and immediate consequence of its spirituality. As distinct from material beings, which have a defined extension in space and are composed of spatial integrated parts (*partes integrantes*), spiritual beings in their . . . structure are simple, i.e., they are not composed of extended parts . . . [so] they cannot be disassembled into those parts [= they cannot die].”

“For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?”<sup>28</sup> The idea of caring for one’s own soul more than for the world did not come with Christianity. Four hundred years before Christ, Socrates, the father of philosophical anthropology, chose to physically die, rather than lose his soul by contradicting what his soul told him to preach and to do. The Athenian Sage passionately recommended caring for one’s own soul; he regarded such care as the most important task of each man. Caring for one’s own soul is, in many ways, synonymous to caring for what was later called a “person” or “personhood.” Wojtyła stays very much in the tradition of Socrates whom he regarded as a great example for philosophers.<sup>29</sup> Of course, Wojtyła enriches greatly the philosophy of the soul with Thomistic personalism, revealing the substantial spiritual soul both as the ontic constituent of personhood and as the unequalled value upon which a person’s dignity is safely and inviolably founded.

### **A Spiritual Substance as the Principle of Person’s Transcendence and Integration**

Wojtyła’s emphasis on person’s transcendence cannot be overestimated. At the very beginning of his anthropological *opus magnum* *Person and Act* he puts the motto: “The Church, by reason of her role and competence . . . is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person.”<sup>30</sup> Then the main part of *Person and*

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<sup>28</sup> Matt. 16: 26.

<sup>29</sup> See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 26: “It is not insignificant that the death of Socrates gave philosophy one of its decisive orientations, no less decisive now than it was more than two thousand years ago.” Socratic motifs in Wojtyła’s work would need separate studies.

<sup>30</sup> See Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, motto, 5. The motto comes from: *Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Rome 1965), no. 76. Karol Wojtyła was a member of The Vatican Council II and he was one of the authors of *Gaudium et Spes*. He writes about that in his *Osoba i czyn*, 23–24: “The Author [i.e., Karol Wojtyła] . . . would like to recall this special atmosphere which accompanied the

*Act* is devoted to the transcendence of person in action,<sup>31</sup> as the Author indicates in the title of the part. In the concluding chapter of this part entitled “The Transcendence of Person and Man’s Spirituality,”<sup>32</sup> Wojtyła stresses that “transcendence is the concrete shape of man’s existence: . . . the shape of his life itself. Man as person lives and fulfills himself in this shape.”<sup>33</sup> There Wojtyła also points out that the ultimate reason for a person’s transcendence in action and the real ontic foundation of it is his substantial spirituality. The Cracowian Cardinal writes: “[e]verything of which the transcendence of person in action consists, everything that constitutes it, is *spiritual*.”<sup>34</sup> And next he accentuates the substantiality of the spirituality of man-person in the following words: “The manifestations of the spirituality in man cannot be understood or explained without the permanence and the *substantiality* of the spiritual element in him.”<sup>35</sup> Thus Wojtyła reminds in *Person and Act* that spirituality in man is a real substantial being, called commonly “soul,” about which he wrote extensively in his *Considerations on the Essence of Man*. This substantial spirituality—the principle of a person’s life—is, at the same time, the principle of the shape of this life, i.e., the principle of the person’s transcendence.

In *Person and Act* Wojtyła analyzes systematically what we call below an “active” aspect of transcendence, i.e., the manifestations of it

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thought presented in this study [i.e., in *Osoba i czyn*]. It was the atmosphere of the Second Vatican Council and, particularly, the atmosphere in the team who worked on the constitution on the Church in the modern world. The Author was lucky enough to take part in this work. At some stage his own work on person [i.e., the work on *Osoba i czyn*] and the work on the above-mentioned document of the Council were carried out simultaneously.” Those words (and many others) were omitted in the English translation (*The Acting Person*, 1979) and, also, in the Polish second (1985) and third (KUL, 1994) edition of *Osoba i czyn*. Thus deep connection between philosophy and theology in Wojtyła’s personalism was blurred (if not totally erased in the English translation).

<sup>31</sup> See the title of the second part of *Osoba i czyn*, 107: “Part II: The Transcendence of Person in Action.”

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.



exercised in a person's acting. Much less attention is devoted to the ontic aspects of a person's transcendence.<sup>36</sup> The analysis of the latter would involve a closer consideration of the transcendence of the spiritual substance over its accidents. We will make an attempt of such analysis having in mind some of Wojtyła's scattered hints and remarks. There is an interesting remark in one of Wojtyła's commentary on *Person and Act* where he says that "[for the description of man] either the notion of *homo faber* or even the notion of *homo sapiens* . . . are not enough."<sup>37</sup> Why even the notion of *homo sapiens* does not describe man-person adequately, and how is this connected to a spiritual substance as the principle of person's transcendence?

*Spiritual Substance Is the Principle of  
Person's Transcendence over His Internal Accidents*

As Thomas Aquinas' philosophy of being reveals, a substance-essence can exist without its accidents but the accidents cannot exist without the substance.<sup>38</sup> This is the crucial observation that enables to understand spiritual substance (i.e., soul) as the principle of a person's transcendence over all the accidents subjected in him. In this part of the article we will deal with the transcendence of person over his most essential "internal" accidents, namely his cognition and free rational will which, though externalized in culture, originally take place in the interiority of man and make him *homo sapiens*. Referring to the above-mentioned Thomistic observation about the independent existence of a

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<sup>36</sup> In *Osoba i czyn*, Wojtyła assumes that a reader will know Thomas Aquinas' philosophy of being, generally, and the philosophy of personal being, particularly. Perhaps he also assumes that his *Considerations on the Essence of Man* are well-known. This is why he does not write much about the ontic transcendence of the human person (see *Osoba i czyn*, 190–191: "This way [i.e., the way of the philosophy of being] is well-known from elsewhere, so in the present work we are not going to repeat it.").

<sup>37</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "Człowiek jest osobą [Man Is Person]," in his *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1994), 419.

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Chapter XXIII: "A substance does not depend on its accidents, but the accidents depend on the substance. And what does not depend on anything else may sometimes exist without that" (trans. M.J.-P.).

substance as compared to the existence of its accidents totally dependent on it, we notice that a man-person constituted by a spiritual substance can live and lives, at some stages of his life, without his most essential accidents, i.e., cognition and free rational will (i.e., without his *sapientia*) but not vice versa: his essential accidents cannot exist and never exist without him. In other words, man-person is transcendent over his cognition and self-governance; he is a person and should be treated like a person even if he does not show any visible signs of cognition and free will. Because what makes him a person as the highest being and the peerless value in this world are not even his essentially personal qualities such as cognition and free will (at least, any visible expressions of those) but the invisible substantial spiritual soul within him—the principle of his life and the shape of this life, i.e., transcendence. That is why it is not enough to define man as *homo sapiens*.

Hopefully it has become clear by now that only the substantialist concept of person can show the worth of a person's life and how his life exceeds (transcends) the value of all that the person does (even if these are essentially personal acts of cognition and free will), because, only in the substantialist concept of person, personhood is constituted by the very principle of life, i.e., by a spiritual substantial soul. And this spiritual substantial soul can exist and exists without its accidents while the accidents cannot exist without the spiritual substantial soul. It is as if Wojtyła, through the formulation of the substantialist theory of the human person, had prepared the philosophical ground for his indefatigable papal pro-life preaching, since only such substantialist theory gives rational arguments for defending each human life at its every stage—from the prenatal to the old age.

Non-substantialist conceptions of person, formulated by the philosophers of consciousness (e.g., Scheler) give no rational basis for defending the life of those who do not actually perform conscious cognitive or volitional acts, since, according to those philosophers, human beings without an actual states of consciousness are not persons, but

just mindless physical organisms. One may even go further and dare to claim that the philosophy of consciousness is meant to justify so called “abortion,” “euthanasia,” and all the other forms of elimination and discrimination of those who are thought to have lower or no consciousness by those who pride themselves on having “high consciousness.”

Also, the distinction between “a person” and “a thing,” which lies at the root of personalism, loses its ground if we remove from the conception of the human person a *really existing substantial spiritual* soul as the principle and the source of a person’s inner and outer life, distinguishing him from “things” and transcending by far the pure physicality of “things.” Without substantial life-giving spirituality, man’s life becomes a “thing” and so does man himself. Then, as John Paul II writes in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*:

Man is no longer able to see himself as “mysteriously different” from other earthly creatures; he regards himself merely as one more living being, as an organism which, at most, has reached a very high stage of perfection. Enclosed in the narrow horizon of his physical nature, he is somehow reduced to being “a thing,” and no longer grasps the “transcendent” character of his “existence as man.” He no longer considers life as a splendid gift of God, something “sacred” entrusted to his responsibility and thus also to his loving care and “veneration.” Life itself becomes a mere “thing,” which man claims as his exclusive property, completely subject to his control and manipulation. Thus, in relation to life at birth or at death, man is no longer capable of posing the question of the truest meaning of his own existence, nor can he assimilate with genuine freedom these crucial moments of his own history. He is concerned only with “doing,” and, using all kinds of technology, he busies himself with programming, controlling and dominating birth and death. Birth and death, instead of being primary experiences demanding to be “lived,” become things to be merely “possessed” or “rejected.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (Rome 1995), no. 22.

Let these words of a spiritual giant, John Paul II, suffice as the conclusion of this part of our humble analysis.

*Spiritual Substance Is the Principle of  
Person's Transcendence over His External Accidents*

As Wojtyła points out, a man-person should not be reduced to *homo faber*, that is, to the products and creations of his reason and free will, however great those products and creations are. Wojtyła/John Paul II often expressed his worry over a contemporary man who has lost his proper position in the world, because he thinks too much of his products and creations—i.e., the accidental beings such as culture, technology, science—and he places them too high, regarding them as his greatest achievement and the ultimate purpose of his life. Thus, instead of treating himself and other persons as the ends in themselves, he treats himself and others as the means for the endless production and creation. Obviously, such utilitarian mentality discriminates, one way or another, the unproductive: the weak, the old, the unborn, the untalented. *Homo faber* fails to notice that no matter how excellent his products and creations are, each man-person, himself included, is greater than them and transcends by far all of them. The attitude of *homo faber* leads to the “culture of success” which equals the “culture of death,” since, in such culture, a man who is unproductive, weak, handicapped or ill—and who, with his very presence, disturbs the process of production, profit and the well-being of the successful—“tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated. In this way a kind of *conspiracy against life* is unleashed.”<sup>40</sup>

Other external accidental beings, over which man-person is transcendent, are all relational beings, such as society, corporations, all kinds of associations, etc. Marxist conception of man as the sum of social relations is called by John Paul II an “anthropological error.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 12.

<sup>41</sup> See John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (Rome 1991), no. 13: “[T]he fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. . . . Man is . . . reduced to a series of social

Coming back to our metaphysical *adagio* that a substance can exist without its accidents, but not vice versa, we must remember that a person-substance can exist without relations, but no relationship can exist without substantial people, at least two of them; relational accidental beings do not have any autonomous existence—they exist only with the existences of substantial people who freely decide to enter them. Only an individual substantial person (an *individua substantia*) is an autonomous subject of his own existence and his own action. There is no collective subject<sup>42</sup> which can replace cognition and free decisions of an individual substantial person. Decisions are exclusively up to an individual person and the person is fully responsible for them, especially for their moral quality. It is not society but an individual person that decides what action to take and whether the action is morally good or morally bad. And we are not determined by the web of socio-economic relations, but we determine them as free, transcendent substantial subjects.

Transcendence is another name for freedom. The awareness of person's transcendence over society was very important at the times of totalitarian communism in the homeland of Karol Wojtyła. And it is very important now, in the present world which tries to convince us that we are not free, autonomous, transcendent subjects but just the puppets in the hands of global socio-economic (and cosmic) processes. The core of a person's awareness of his own transcendence over society is the awareness that he carries within himself his own substantial spiritual

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relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order.”

<sup>42</sup> See Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 303. However important were for Wojtyła the human relationships and acting “together with others,” nevertheless he emphasizes in the chapter on participation that “*It is always man-person* who is the proper (substantial) subject of existence and action, also at the time when these are realized together with others.” (The part of the sentence is written in italics, as indicated, and the rest of the sentence is originally written in spaced-out print. Just to make sure—the word “substantial” in round brackets is Wojtyła's, not mine.)

soul—the principle of his own transcendence, which cannot be killed<sup>43</sup> or taken<sup>44</sup> from him by anyone in the world.

*Spiritual Substance Is the Principle of  
Person's Transcendence through the Truth*

In the previous part of the article we discussed the ontic transcendence of person rooted in the very nature of his being in which a spiritual substance is transcendent over the accidents subjected in the substance. Now we would like to focus on what we could call an “active” transcendence of a person, referring rather to person’s acting than to his being (though, of course, the “active” aspect of person’s transcendence is strictly connected to the ontic one, since the former could not exist without the latter).

Wojtyła emphasizes that a person is an active subject of his own transcendence through the truth, and not through the consciousness alone.<sup>45</sup> Becoming conscious of something, bringing something into the area of conscious experience and analysis, is not yet an act of transcendence over that “something,” as consciousness fans would like to believe. According to Wojtyła, a person is capable of an active tran-

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<sup>43</sup> See Matt. 10: 28: “And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.”

<sup>44</sup> Burkhardt Gorrissen, the author of the book *Ich war Freimaurer [I Was a Freemason]*, when asked if he had not been afraid to publish his book, said: “I have never been afraid. They can take from me only what I possess and perhaps my [terrestrial] life. But *no one can take my soul from me.*” See the interview with B. Gorrissen: Stefan Meetschen, “Byłem masonem—wywiad [I Was a Free-Mason—An Interview],” [www.fronda.pl/a/bylem-masonem-wywiad,77544.html](http://www.fronda.pl/a/bylem-masonem-wywiad,77544.html), accessed on Jan 27, 2017 (trans. M.J.-P.). Gorrissen’s words (which can be associated with John Paul’s famous words “Do not be afraid” from his homily for inauguration of pontificate) confirm that a person’s own transcendent spiritual substantial soul is what is irreducible and inaccessible in man (cannot be accessed by anyone except for himself and God). Irreducibility and inaccessibility of a person’s own spiritual substantial soul is the essential component of the person’s transcendence over society and other relational beings.

<sup>45</sup> See the subheading in *Osoba i czyn*, 165: “The Truth vs. Consciousness.” In other editions of *Osoba i czyn* (also in the English edition *The Acting Person*) many subheadings were added or modified, so person’s transcendence through the truth is not as conspicuously presented as in the first edition, quoted in this article.

scendence, because he is able to cognize the truth in his own soul and through his soul's cognitive faculty called "reason." Thanks to the cognition of the truth, a person becomes an active subject of his own transcendence over creations of culture and products of civilization, over countless situations in his life and over his actions. If a person likes, he may reject what he cognizes to be untrue, whether it be a religion or a philosophy or a scientific hypothesis. He may also disallow into his life what he sees to be the untrue good—such false good might be, for example, moments of pleasure which, in the long run, would ruin his health, or a financial profit which is obtained dishonestly. If, on the contrary, a person sees that something is true, he may decide to accept it. A special place in a person's life there takes the truth about what is good and what is evil for him. Here mental acceptance is not enough; a person tries to put into practice the recognized truth about the good; he tries to avoid bad actions and perform good actions. Thus he exercises his transcendence over his actions through the truth about the good.

The truth is available to everybody, because it can be read, first of all, not from books, but from real beings. If a person wants to know the truth about beings outside himself (in the external world), he must study those beings, like physicists, biologists and other scientists do. But if a person wants to know the truth about himself, he must study his own soul—a real spiritual being within himself—and, also, the souls of other people revealed by their actions and mutual communication in person or through the works of culture and religion.

Reading the truth in one's own soul and in other beings through one's soul's cognitive faculty called "reason" is the basis of person's transcendence reaching out as highly as the Absolute Truth. A very important truth inscribed in our soul is the truth about the good for the human person, confirmed outside by ten commandments. The highest good for a person and, at the same time, the highest manifestation of the

human spiritual soul, is love based on those commandments.<sup>46</sup> We may say that love is the essence of the essence of man (i.e., the essential act of his spiritual substantial soul).<sup>47</sup> To love, i.e., to obey the highest truths about the good and to act in accordance with them, one must constantly transcend oneself, fighting lower impulses and inherent weaknesses in one's own soul's faculties. There are truths about love that involve special effort in self-transcendence, such as the truth about treating oneself and other persons always as the end in itself and never as a means, the truth about giving out all your possessions to the poor, the truth about loving your enemy, the truth about forgiving those who did harm to you, the truth about losing your life for others in order to gain it, etc. If one wants to achieve a spiritual perfection and follow these truths, one must work on oneself patiently and humbly<sup>48</sup> so that one could transcend oneself and put those truths into internal and external action. The ultimate cause of a person's ontic and active transcendence is the Spiritual (Personal) Absolute—The Absolute Truth, the Highest Good, the Unfathomable Love, the Creator and the ultimate Possessor of each person's substantial spiritual soul, the ultimate Purpose of all his strivings towards the truth and the true good.

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<sup>46</sup> See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Rome 1993), where he argues that there is no true love without obeying ten commandments, i.e., the truth (*veritas*) of the goodness of person and the good for person.

<sup>47</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993). In *Osoba i czyn*, which analyzes the essence of person through his action, Wojtyła points out that *Osoba i czyn* “refers, in a way, to the book *Love and Responsibility*, published seven years earlier” (Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, 25).

<sup>48</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *Elementarz etyczny [Ethical Primer]* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1983), 81: “A humble man . . . is able . . . to accept the fact that . . . [some evangelical truths about love] exceed him. . . . He is even grateful to them for that, because that keeps him alert, that makes him constantly pursue them . . . and persevere in growing up to them. . . . This is why so much is said about humbleness in the Gospels . . .” (trans. M.J.-P.).



*Transcendent Spiritual Substance Is  
the Principle of Person's Integration*

Person's integration is complementary to his vertical<sup>49</sup> transcendence. Without the transcendence of person his integration would not be possible. There must be the transcendent centre which, from above, integrates ontically and actively a whole personal being, as the king integrates the state ruled by him. In a person the transcendent spiritual substance is the king who integrates the whole person. Basic ontic integration of a person into this one being is strictly connected with his substantial spiritual soul as his body maker and organizer. The transcendent spiritual substance rules both itself and the person's body thanks to its inherent capability of self-reference.<sup>50</sup> This capability takes the form of such ontic structures as self-cognition, self-owning and self-ruling which enable self-determination and self-governance. A person, or more precisely his spiritual substance, is someone who owns himself and his body, someone who rules himself and his body and, finally, someone who, due to those ontic structures of his soul, can govern himself and his body. Those structures come down to the transcendent ability to objectivize oneself—a person is both the transcendent subject and the integrated object of his owning and ruling. Integration complements transcendence and the principle of the both is the substantial spiritual soul of a given person. Ontic integration of the person is revealed in his every action in which all the soul's faculties take part: his reason, his free will and his psychosomatics (emotions and body).

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<sup>49</sup> As follows from the previous analysis, person's transcendence has a *vertical* character. This distinguishes man-person from purely material living beings which are only capable of horizontal transcendence, i.e., reaching out horizontally for purely terrestrial objects that enable them to survive (food, material for building nests, etc.) and to prolong their species (sexual objects).

<sup>50</sup> Only spiritual intellectual substances have the capability of self-reference, i.e., they are able to objectivize themselves—to be both the subjects and the objects of their (self-) cognition, (self-) governance, etc. Material substances are not able to objectivize themselves in the acts of (cognitive or volitional) self-reference—in this sense, they are only subjects totally identified with themselves.

Wojtyła prefers to talk about the integration of the human person rather than his unity. In this way he points out to the difference between the transcendent spiritual soul and the transcended material body, on the one hand, and to the ontic connection between them, on the other hand. Besides, “integration” seems to be a better concept to embrace not only the ontic aspect of the soul-body junction but also the active conscious aspect of this, involving the effort of cognition and careful decision. Because the integration of a person is not only ontically given; it is also a moral task. This task consists in making ontic structures of self-owning and self-ruling into the moral virtues and submitting the body, with its emotions and drives, to the truth of the good read in and through the spiritual substantial soul.

Another advantage of using the concept of “integration” is that it is easily associated with its opposite—namely disintegration—and the need to cure the latter. Wojtyła/John Paul II was very upset by the disintegration of the modern man. The roots of this disintegration—he claimed—must be sought in the dualistic Cartesian anthropology which affected so much the modern vision of man. Cartesius divided man into two separate substances: soul (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*). Thus he pushed the human body out of the spiritual soul’s realm of the moral law; the human body started to be regarded as purely material thing, as a machine and the subject to purely mechanical physical laws and processes; it stopped being the object of the spiritual moral concern, and became exclusively the object of medical and physical care, the tool to avoid pain and obtain as much pleasure as possible. This has led to disintegration and chaos within the contemporary man, pulled here and there by changing emotions and bodily drives in frantic search for pleasure and power, fitness and everlastingly youthful physical appearance. The human body, expelled from the world of the substantial spirituality and its moral law, got downgraded and depersonalized.

According to Wojtyła, the only way out of this disintegration and degradation is to submit the body to the substantial spiritual soul and

the truth of the good inscribed in it; this needs much work on perfecting the structures of the soul such as self-cognition, self-owning and self-ruling, or to put it in more traditional terms, one has to perfect the two main soul's faculties: reason and will. In the process of man's disintegration, reason was corrupted, and it became an "instrumental reason . . . directed—actually and potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment and power."<sup>51</sup> To cure his reason and make it right (*recta ratio*), man-person should follow the example of great thinkers (like Socrates, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas)—he should get his reason to cognize and contemplate the essential and the ultimate truths which reveal what the ultimate good and the purpose of his life is, what can bring him the true happiness and fulfillment. And he should perfect his will so that it would be strong enough to submit itself and his psychosomatics to the true good, found by his right reason, primarily, in his own soul. Only then will he not be a slave to his raw emotions and bodily drives but he will be capable of ruling himself and his body gently and patiently, elevating his emotiveness and somatics to the truly personal level of love and virtue. Only then can his inner chaos and disintegration be healed and he will be able to enjoy the inner peace and serenity—the fruit of transcendence and integration.

Finally, we would like to note that the integration of the human person does not consist in summing up his personhood qualities. Such thinking is a consequence of rejecting a real concrete being-substance-essence as the basis for integration, and mistaking the substance-essence for the essential qualities of a given being. This goes together with applying the Cartesian mechanistic method of dividing a thing into parts in order to investigate it as well as the assumption that adding up all the analyzed parts would (allegedly) result in an adequate description of the analyzed thing; underneath there is an implication that the thing is a sum of its parts, and not a substantial, self-existing being.

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<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 47.

An example of such procedure is a Kantian philosopher, Hannah Arendt, who analyzes, in her anthropology, the essential faculties of person (thinking, cognition, willing and judging<sup>52</sup>) without person as a real substantial being. Consequently there is no autonomous person in her analysis, no free rational subject owning and ruling himself; there is just something like a “sack” for unconnected, independent parts. Each part (i.e., each faculty) is ruled by its own inherent law, each of them applies its own criterion to (constructing) reality: the criterion of thinking is meaning, the criterion of the intellect is truth, the criterion of willing is novelty, etc. In the end, it is not a substantial person who thinks and freely chooses and thus owns and rules himself but rather these unconnected parts (thinking, cognition, willing and judging) rule a person through their mechanistic laws and their inherent criteria.

Wojtyła includes in his analysis of the human person, more or less, the same faculties of man as Arendt (cognition and will) but while reading his analysis, one never loses out of sight a whole person, that is, an autonomous transcendent subject integrating himself and his body in his human action (*actus humanus*). This is due to the fact that for Wojtyła a person is not the sum of personal faculties but a real substantial being who owes his personhood to his spiritual substance-essence. And also Wojtyła keeps one aware that even if a person does not do anything, does not think or cognize or perform any external action, he is an integral whole, because he exists as this one real (substantial) being—as an *individua substantia*—from the very beginning of his existence in his mother’s womb until the end of his earthly life. The principle of his ontic integrity and substantiality is his spiritual substantial soul.

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<sup>52</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: HBJ Book, 1971).

## Conclusion

Unfortunately, much has been done to remove the human substantial spiritual soul from Karol Wojtyła's philosophical anthropology and to reduce person's spirituality to some vague phenomenon. Wojtyła's anthropological *opus magnum* was grossly mistranslated into English.<sup>53</sup> I wrote about some of the mistranslations in my article "Thomas Aquinas' Philosophy of Being as the Basis for Wojtyła's Concept and Cognition of Human Person."<sup>54</sup> There are also some other mistranslations concerning directly the topic of the present article. For instance, in the concluding chapter on the transcendence of person some "little" words are missing, namely the words "substance," "substantial," or "substantiality."<sup>55</sup> The consequence of those and many other "editorial" interferences into *Person and Act* is creating the impression that it is consciousness or self-governance that is the essence of man-person, which is not true, as we tried to show.

The essence of man-person is a really existing substantial spiritual soul; the essence of the essence of man-person is morality and love based on morality. The essential dimension of man-person and the "shape of his [inner and outer] life" is vertical transcendence arising from his *substantial spiritual* soul which distinguishes him from all purely material substances. The essential sub-dimension of person's

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<sup>53</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979). As far as I know, the English translation (*The Acting Person*) was the basis for translating *Osoba i czyn* into other languages (Spanish, Italian, French), so the mistranslation of Wojtyła's main anthropological work is very wide in scope.

<sup>54</sup> See *Studia Gilsoniana* 3 (2014): 127–153.

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., *The Acting Person*, 182. There is a complicated sentence: "Without assuming this permanence of the spiritual element in man, it would be entirely impossible to understand and explain the discreet and yet consistently interrelated manifestations of his spiritual nature." There should be a simple sentence: "The manifestations of the spirituality in man cannot be understood or explained without the permanence and the *substantiality* of the spiritual element in him." (See the footnote 35.) Omitting the notion of "substantiality," while talking about man's spirituality, brings into mind a wise Kierkegaard's observation: "The most dangerous is the lie which is closest to the truth." To deny the *substantiality* of the human spiritual soul is to deny its real existence.

transcendence is integration which is not only ontically given by the spiritual soul forming the human body, but also involves “soul’s spiritual moral work” on oneself and one’s psychosomatics.

The “editorial” interferences into *Person and Act* seem to be a sign of a broader phenomenon, namely the removal of spiritual substantial soul from the modern philosophical anthropology. The notion of *substantial* (i.e., really existing) spirituality of (in) man-person disappeared from philosophy together with the rejection of metaphysics and its main category of “substance-essence” and “accidents” as describing the real beings (and not the content of consciousness). Consequently, the contemporary man is deprived of the interior source of the objective truth for his inner life (remember that the source of the truth are really and objectively existing substantial beings, e.g., the source of the truth about John is a really existing substantial John). Inner life, once associated with the highest objective truths about man and God, has become the domain of “my” own subjective “truths.” Instead of revolving around the transcendent objective truths (especially the truth about the good and God) read from and through the interior spiritual substance, inner life goes around subjective sensual phenomena: feelings, images, experiences strictly linked to the particular situations in a person’s life and totally conditioned by their particularity. In fact, inner life is now the synonym of subjectivity and subjectivism. Limiting inner life to phenomena, subjective and sensual by their nature, gives ground to pseudo-mysticism (often induced with drugs) in which emphasis is put on sensual visions, and not faith and reason, as the means of the unification with God.

Karol Wojtyła wrote his first doctoral dissertation about a true mystic, St. John of the Cross,<sup>56</sup> who opposed the heresies which at-

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<sup>56</sup> See Karol Wojtyła, *Świętego Jana od Krzyża nauka o wierze* [*St. John’s of the Cross Teaching about Faith*], trans. from Latin by Krystyna Stawecka (Lublin: TN KUL, 2010). John Paul II said that the origins of his philosophical thinking about the human person lie in the thought of St. John of the Cross who, by the way, sticks to Thomas

tached too much importance to visions and disregarded faith and reason as the proper means of the unification of the soul with God. Certainly, it is St. John of the Cross, and not Scheler (as it is suggested by some authors), who was Wojtyła's master of inner life revolving around the invisible spiritual substantial being called "soul" and the objective truths discovered in it through its superior faculty called "reason."

The removal of the human substantial spiritual soul from philosophical anthropology is also accompanied, supported or, perhaps, even generated by some other strong tendencies in the modern and postmodern culture. Generally, the modern and the postmodern man has great difficulty with spiritual beings.

Part of the problem is natural—it stems from the fact that the self-existing, substantial spiritual beings cannot be sensually perceived because they are invisible, they have no spatial dimensions; and man's cognition is rooted in senses, especially in the sense of sight. But there also seem to be other, less natural, reasons for the rejection of spiritual substantial beings in the modern and postmodern world. One of them is the prevailing theoretical and practical materialism. The contemporary man is concerned with the material goods and sensual pleasures. Even if he is religious, his religiosity is directed towards the divine "energies" whose nature, however subtle, is, in the last analysis, purely physical (as in different forms of Buddhism and New Age pantheistic or panentheistic beliefs).

Another factor that contributes to rejecting substantial spiritual beings (together with the Spiritual Personal Absolute) is the modern ideal of clear and distinct cognition, introduced by Cartesius. Since only sensual cognition—exercised in science and technology which, by their nature, deal only with the material objects—is clear and distinct; the religious and metaphysical cognition of spiritual substantial beings

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Aquinas' philosophy and theology, unlike iluministic heretics fought against by him—see *ibid.*, 9, 15, etc.

(the human soul, angels, God) is neither clear nor distinct—it is a “dark cognition,” as St. John of the Cross called it.

Karol Wojtyła, the author of the above-mentioned doctoral thesis about the Spanish mystic, knew very well about the “dark cognition” concerning the spiritual human soul,<sup>57</sup> Angels and the Spiritual Absolute. Some kind of the “dark cognition” seems to be a metaphysical “analogical cognition” which, with regard to non-spatial and invisible spiritual beings, means that we can cognize them only indirectly through analogies to visible physical beings and express the knowledge about them in an analogical imperfect language. Yet, however imperfect and analogical is the metaphysical “dark cognition” concerning spiritual beings (e.g., the cognition of the human substantial spirituality), it is much more valuable than clear and distinct cognition of any material thing. It is much better to have “dark knowledge” of one’s own spiritual substantial soul and God than clear and distinct knowledge about the anatomy of the spider. The value and the nobility of knowledge comes, first of all, from the value and the nobility of its object; clearness and distinctness are not its primary features. This was obvious in Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition<sup>58</sup> followed by Karol

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<sup>57</sup> As Wojtyła writes in his work about St. John of the Cross, faith is like the direct unification of the soul and reason with God without the mediation of sensual faculties. This is why it is the “dark” cognition. See also Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 123: “The human mind . . . will always be disturbed . . . by the circumstance that spiritual reality, which our rational knowledge explains, cannot be checked out . . . by our senses. Our knowledge, especially in the last few centuries, clings to such sensory verification. And this is a basic problem, which lies in that [i.e., metaphysical] approach. But it is the essence of man which demands to be, as it were, extracted from an analysis of the content of human experiences. In that way what is uncovered before us is the truth about the *spiritual* separateness of the human soul as a rational conclusion and philosophical thesis, not just a truth of religious faith. In its own way, it is also a truth of faith, but the circumstance that is particularly important for us is that that truth lies as if in the border zone, in the area where human thought and Divine Revelation meet.”

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Aristotle, *On the soul*, 2: “[K]nowledge is a thing to be honored and prized . . . [also] by reason . . . of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness of its objects . . .



Wojtyła in his studies on spiritual substance—the essence of man and the principle of his life, action, personhood, transcendence and integration.

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**SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE. THE ESSENCE OF MAN-PERSON  
ACCORDING TO KAROL WOJTYŁA**

SUMMARY

The article points out that, according to Karol Wojtyła, a substantial spiritual soul is the essence of each man. It is the principle of his life and all of his acts. A substantial spiritual soul makes each man a person. The spiritual substance is the source of the immaterial, essentially personal, accidental beings such as cognition and free will. The substantial spirituality of the human soul is the guarantee of the essentially personal dimension of man-person, namely his vertical transcendence. Vertical transcendence, in turn, enables person's ontic and moral integration. The authoress also mentions several dire consequences of removing a really existing substantial spiritual soul from the modern philosophical anthropology. Here are some of those consequences: the culture of death, discrimination of those who do not show any visible signs of consciousness or self-governance, losing freedom and being a slave to relational accidental beings such as society and socio-economic processes, removal of the objective truth from the realm of inner life, degradation of the human body treated as a purely material organism, clinging to the senses and the visible, even in religious experiences. etc.

KEYWORDS

substantial and accidental beings, substance-essence, accidents, spiritual substance, substantial spiritual soul, substantial spirituality, man-person, the Spiritual Personal Absolute, person's transcendence, internal accidents, external accidents, the truth, the truth of the good, love, person's integration, "dark" cognition, Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II.

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On [that] account . . . we should . . . place in the front rank the study of the soul" (trans. J. A. Smith, [www.Abika.com](http://www.Abika.com), accessed on Jan 28, 2017).

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