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## “Beauty of the Person” According to Karol Wojtyła (Ontology and Experience)

An anonymous Greek sophist of the fourth century B.C. believed that “everything done at the right time is seemly and everything done at the wrong time is disgraceful.”<sup>1</sup> He thought that only the “right time” – understood as the Greek *kairós* – determines whether a given thing is assigned to the collection of beautiful things or not. On the one hand, this leads to the recognition of the total subjectivity of both beauty and ugliness, and on the other hand – which seems significant – to paying attention to the circumstances of the process of cognitive perception of a given thing. For example, walking down a field path among rustling, colourful autumn leaves, we may be delighted with them, but when unexpected heavy rain comes and the leaves become wet and slimy, our delight may change into disappointment, dislike or even disgust. Although they are the same leaves, yet it is not the same time, not the same unique *kairós*, as the ancients would say.

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1 R. Kent Sprague, *Dissoi Logoi or Dialexeis*, II, 20, “Mind” 77 (1968) No. 306, p. 159, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LXXVII.306.155>.

This thought will serve as a prelude to a consideration of the issue of beauty in the studies of Karol Wojtyła.<sup>2</sup> The starting point will be his encounter with the ontology of Kazimierz Wais. Then our attention will be drawn to the presence of the category of beauty in selected works of Wojtyła. The aim will be an attempt, at least in its aspects, to bring closer what the “beauty of the person” meant for Wojtyła as a concept and as its corresponding reality.

## Father Wais’s Ontology

In 1942, as an alumnus of the clandestine spiritual seminary in Krakow, Karol Wojtyła received from Professor Kazimierz Kłósak a textbook *Ontologia, czyli metafizyka ogólna* [Ontology, that is general metaphysics] by Father Kazimierz Wais (1926).<sup>3</sup> It consisted of four main parts addressing the issues of being: as a general, transcendental concept, its categories, causes and perfection. Young Wojtyła was completely absorbed by the textbook and by studying it carefully – in difficult circumstances, in occupied Krakow, in his free time or, as far as possible, while working at the Solvay factory – the priest-to-be was gradually introduced into the scholastic metaphysics. The author of that textbook, Father Wais (1865–1934), a professor at the University of L’viv, who acquired and deepened his philosophical education in the greatest Catholic academic centres of Europe, especially in Innsbruck, Rome, Freiburg, Paris, Leuven and Fulda, represented the neo-Scholastic philosophy of those times in Poland. Concurrently, Wais’s Thomism was not homogeneous, and as Józef Jan Sawicki stressed, it demonstrated on the one hand certain connections with Scottishism, Francisco Suárez’s system and Cartesianism, while on the other hand a closeness to positivism, since it attempted to base the subject of philosophy on detailed

2 Vide also the author’s text: *Piękno jako kategoria antropologiczna w ujęciu Karola Wojtyły* [Beauty as an Anthropological Category in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła], “Ethos” 31 (2018) No. 3 (123), p. 270–281.

3 Vide A. Frossard, “Be Not Afraid!”. *John Paul II speaks out on his Life, his Beliefs, and his Inspiring Vision for Humanity*, transl. J. R. Foster, New York 1984, p. 17; K. Wais, *Ontologia, czyli metafizyka ogólna* [Ontology, that is general metaphysics], Lwów 1926.

sciences according to the Lowan School.<sup>4</sup> In his research and publications, Wais devoted most attention to cosmological and psychological issues, as well as to theodicy and metaphysics. The handbook of the latter, which Wojtyła had received to study, triggered a significant cognitive resonance in him. Years later in a conversation with André Frossard, already as Pope, he affectionately recalled reading this book, which became a particular "Copernican revolution" in his personal and scientific life:

Straightaway I found myself up against an obstacle. My literary training, centred round the humanities, had not prepared me at all for the scholastic theses and formulas with which the manual was filled. I had to cut a path through a thick undergrowth of concepts, analyses and axioms without even being able to identify the ground over which I was moving. After two months of hacking through this vegetation I came to a clearing, to the discovery of the deep reasons for what until then I had only lived and felt. When I passed the examination I told my examiner that in my view the new vision of the world which I had acquired in my struggle which that metaphysics manual was more valuable than the mark which I had obtained. I was not exaggerating. What intuition and sensibility had until then taught me about the world found solid confirmation. [...] / This discovery, which has remained the basis of my intellectual structure.<sup>5</sup>

These words prove the importance of Wojtyła's encounter with the contents of Wais's book and with scholastic and Thomistic thought, which he explored not only through reading Wais's textbook, but throughout his seminary formation and during further specialist studies in Rome. In his letter to Mrs Irena Scotch, he wrote tellingly that "[t]here would be much to talk about Thomistic studies [...]. The whole system is something

4 Vide J. J. Sawicki, *Czy i jakim tomistą był ks. Kazimierz Wais* [Whether and What Kind of a Thomist was Fr Kazimierz Wais], "Studia Philosophiae Christianae" 2 (1966) No. 1, p. 296–301.

5 A. Frossard, "Be Not Afraid!", p. 17.

immensely beautiful, delightful, and at the same time appealing in its simplicity.”<sup>6</sup>

## The Experience of Man

Wojtyła, however, would not cease his admiration and exploration of Thomistic metaphysics. From the very beginning, de facto following the great postulate of modern thought, he turned to experiencing the person and its objectivization, whether through the study of religious (mystical) experience in St. John of the Cross or moral experience in Max Scheler’s phenomenology. In *Person and Act*, an introduction to his fundamental philosophical work, he wrote:

man who continues to expect a new and penetrating analysis [...]. As the discoverer of so many secrets of nature, he himself must be constantly discovered anew. While remaining to a degree an “unknown being,” he still demands a new and increasingly mature expression of the being.<sup>7</sup>

Wojtyła’s focus on this very human aspect – ethical, anthropological, and spiritual – was the core and horizon not only of his scientific research, but also of his pastoral practice. In the above-cited conversation with Frossard, he said:

By temperament I prefer thought to erudition. I came to realize this during my short career as a teacher at Cracow and Lublin. My conception of the person, “unique” in his identity, and of man, as such at the centre of the universe, was born much more of experience and of sharing with others than of reading. Books, study, reflection and discussion – which I do not avoid, as you know – help me to formulate what experience teaches me. In these two

6 *Kalendarium życia Karola Wojtyły* [Calendar of Karol Wojtyła’s Life], oprac. A. Boniecki, Kraków 2000, p. 92.

7 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, transl. G. Ignatik, in: K. Wojtyła, “*Person and Act*” and Related Essays, Washington 2021, p. 115.

aspects of my life and activity, the pastoral vocation prevailed over that of teacher and scholar; it gradually turned out to be deeper and stronger; but if the two vocations are a long way from each other, there was never any rupture between them.<sup>8</sup>

The author of *Person and Act* emphasised that the so-called "experience of man" is the fact that "man encounters, that is, establishes cognitive contact with, himself,"<sup>9</sup> and it is the richest and most complex of experiences available to man. It is a special "insight" (German: *Einsicht*) into oneself, in which man is both a knowing subject and a learned object. Through induction in the multiplicity and diversity of facts of experience, the human mind discovers their fundamental meaningful unity, while not losing the richness of the multiplicity of singularities. Further, through reduction, that is, the process of cognitive "exploitation" of experience, it brings out, i.e. explains or interprets the original human view. As Wojtyła stressed "[f] or we are not concerned with the abstract but with a penetration into the actually existing reality,"<sup>10</sup> to discover the subjectivity of the person, who is a particular *suppositum* (subject of existence and action) and simultaneously a real, unique and inimitable self.<sup>11</sup>

However, how does the aforesaid relate to "beauty," if at all?

## Beauty of Nature, Art and the Person

When using the term "beauty", Wojtyła did not give its unambiguous definition. However, he seems to have followed the Thomistic metaphysics in

8 A. Frossard, "Be Not Afraid!", p. 17–18.

9 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 95.

10 K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 110 [distinction in accordance with the original].

11 The author analyses the "experience of man" in Karol Wojtyła's perspective in more detail in: *Filozoficzna koncepcja kultury Romana Ingardena i Karola Wojtyły. Studium analityczno-krytyczne* [Philosophical Concept of Culture of Roman Ingarden and Karol Wojtyła. Analytical-critical Study], Kraków 2021, p. 139–150.

that regard, where, as Wais writes, “beauty is the radiance of perfection [of being, of things], whose intuition [that is, contemplation] is a delight.”<sup>12</sup>

The issue of beauty as “the perfection of being” in Wais’s work studied by Wojtyła triggered his attention to relating the concept of beauty both to the nature and to human works (art). Thus two kinds of beauty are specified, the beauty of nature and the beauty of human works (artistic beauty).<sup>13</sup> This division, imposing itself directly in everyday experience, does not seem to need any further justification. However, through his attention to human experience and the specificity of human action (Latin: *operari*), Wojtyła realized that such a division was insufficient. In his ethical study *Love and Responsibility*, he introduced the concepts of “the beauty of the human person” and “the beauty of the person.”<sup>14</sup> And although he clearly stated that he would not analyse that question thoroughly, he indicated a horizon of the research in which beauty was one of the ways leading to the revealing of the “mystery of the person.”

Before diving into the accurate discussion of such a concept of beauty, it is worth recalling what Wojtyła wrote in his essay *Tajemnica i człowiek* [Mystery and Man]. There he pointed out, in very vivid language, referring to the philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann, that “man has something from a stone and from a star, from a plant and from an animal,”<sup>15</sup> however, “all the «animal» forces of his psyche exist in him, live and act, not by their own dynamics, but by the power of yet another element [...]. These forces and laws are intrinsically separate and not reducible to the forces and laws according to which matter exists and lives. The human spirit constitutes the limit of man’s similarity to the material universe – and at the same time this spirit decides about the lack of similarity, about the difference.”<sup>16</sup>

In other words, one could say that “the beauty of the human person” has something of the beauty of nature in it, but at the same time is not

12 K. Wais, *Ontologia, czyli metafizyka ogólna*, p. 308 [transl. D.R.].

13 Vide K. Wais, *Ontologia, czyli metafizyka ogólna*, p. 285.

14 Vide K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, transl. H. T. Willetts, London 1981, p. 80.

15 K. Wojtyła, *Tajemnica i człowiek* [Mystery and Man], in: K. Wojtyła, „*Aby Chrystus się nami posługiwał*”, red. J. Hannelowa, Kraków 1979, p. 29 [transl. D.R.].

16 K. Wojtyła, *Tajemnica i człowiek*, p. 29 [transl. D.R.].

reducible to it. One could, however, identify it exclusively with man-made objects, from the first useful tools to the non-useful works of art. However, further analyses by Wojtyła, in particular the study of human action, lead to the conviction that such an interpretation is insufficient, to say the least. For by producing certain things, whether for practical use or for beauty alone, man shapes his interiority, the beauty of himself as a person. And even though, as already Pope, Wojtyła wrote in his letter to artists: "Not all are called to be artists in the specific sense of the term. Yet, [...], all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece."<sup>17</sup>

Leaving aside detailed analyses of the human act (Latin: *actus humanus*), it should be emphasised, following Wojtyła, that "[i]n acting, not only perform actions, but we also become ourselves through those actions – we fulfil ourselves in them."<sup>18</sup> In acting, which by definition must be a conscious and free one, man reveals himself as a person. In acting, the dynamism proper to man is embodied, which, as St Thomas Aquinas pointed out, is realised in two dimensions: transitive and non-transitive. Human activity (action)

is transitive insofar as it tends *beyond the subject*, seeks an expression and effect in the external world, and is objectified in some product. It is intransitive, on the other hand, insofar as it *remains in the subject*, determines the subject's immanent quality or value, and constitutes the subject's essentially human *fieri*.<sup>19</sup>

17 John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, Vatican City 1999, p. 7.

18 K. Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, in: K. Wojtyła, *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, transl. T. Sandok, New York [etc.] 1993, p. 266.

19 K. Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, p. 266 [distinction in accordance with the original].

The Latin term used by Wojtyła, "fieri" (which is derived from the verb "fio" – "to become") describes "aspect of man's dynamism [...] – an aspect directed to man himself as the subject of this dynamism. Amidst all its dynamizations, this subject does not behave indifferently: it not only takes part in them, as was already shown to a certain degree, but also through each of them is in some way shaped or transformed in itself. [...] For «to become» is the same as «to begin to exist». The first dynamization through existence, by *esse*, is simultaneously the first *fieri* of the human

By acting, man produces various objects, such as building a house, painting a bedroom floor or a portrait of a young aristocrat, writing an article for a magazine, etc., and at the same time “creates himself;” becomes – in a transitive dimension – a good or bad engineer, painter, portraitist or writer, and simultaneously – in a non-transitive dimension – shapes himself as a person. Actions bear witness to those who perform them – in the words of Jesus Christ as conveyed by Saint Matthew – “ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos” (Mt 7:20).

According to Wojtyła, it should be emphasized,

that which is transitive in our [...] activity and is expressed externally as an effect, objectification, product, or work can be said to be a result of the particular intensity of that which is intransitive and remains within our disinterested communion with truth, goodness, and beauty. This communication, its intensity, degree, and depth, is something completely internal; it is an immanent activity of the human soul, and it leaves its mark and brings forth fruit in this same dimension. It is from this communion that we mature and grow inwardly.<sup>20</sup>

And herein lies the reality of the “beauty of the person” expressed above all in his ethical qualification, his moral value.

## Types of Beauty of the Person

In terms of the structure of the concept and reality of human-personal beauty, Wojtyła distinguished two basic areas of consideration: (1) the issue of the difference of human beauty according to gender (“Beauty, feminine and masculine, is [...] a subject, and a large one, in itself”<sup>21</sup>) and (2) the issue of distinguishing between external, visible, sensual human beauty

being, his coming into existence. Any further dynamization through *operari* no longer brings this fundamental coming into existence. Nonetheless, with every such dynamization, something begins to exist in the already existing subject «man»” (K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, p. 199–200).

20 K. Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, p. 271.

21 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 79.



(beauty of the body) and internal, invisible, spiritual beauty, which is strictly "beauty of the person."<sup>22</sup>

The difference in human beauty between the sexes is rooted in nature and stems from the difference between female and male in the way of being human ("Woman is beautiful in a way of her own"<sup>23</sup> and "man is also beautiful in his own particular way"<sup>24</sup>). It is not, however, limited to external physical characteristics alone. Depending on their gender, women and men are beautiful in their own way.

Moreover, special attention should be paid to two so-called "moments" of beauty: external and internal. External beauty is a certain aesthetic value, which manifests itself in women and men in their own way – "fascination," "charm" or "glamour," which one person can perceive in another. This external beauty refers to the "beauty of the body" (for example, facial features, hair or musculature).<sup>25</sup>

However, as Wojtyła frequently stressed, "human being is a person, a being whose nature is determined by his or her «inwardness»."<sup>26</sup> This statement retains its validity also from the perspective of beauty, both external and internal. The latter is "the good that one is" and is therefore more important than external beauty of the body. The inner beauty is in fact "full and deep appreciation of the beauty of the person."<sup>27</sup>

## The Beauty of the Person in the Community Dimension

In his analyses of love between a man and a woman conducted as part of his *Love and Responsibility* study, Wojtyła developed and further elaborated

22 Vide K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 80, 105; K. Wais, *Ontologia, czyli metafizyka ogólna*, p. 312–313.

23 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 79.

24 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 80.

25 External beauty can possibly be extended in meaning beyond its aesthetic values. In a broader sense it can also entail practical skills (e.g. protectiveness), so that beauty will no longer be seen as an aesthetic value, but a practical one.

26 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 80.

27 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 80.

on the idea of the “beauty of the person,” especially analysing love as an affection. As Wojtyła wrote:

A human being is beautiful and may be revealed as beautiful to another human being. Woman is beautiful in a way of her own, and may attract the attention of a man by her beauty. A man is also beautiful in his own particular way, and because of his beauty may attract the attention of woman.<sup>28</sup>

When a woman “attracts” a man and/or vice versa, she appears as a certain value – as a certain good (as the good that she is!), which presents itself simultaneously as beauty. Such an affection is the basis and, in a way, the beginning of love between a man and a woman. In Wojtyła’s drama, *The Jeweler’s Shop*, we find a splendid image thereof in Andrew’s story about his meeting with Teresa. Here is a longer excerpt:

I went quite a long way before reaching Teresa, I did not find her at once. [...] I thought much at the time about the “alter ego.”  
Teresa was a whole world, just as distant  
as any other man, as any other woman  
– and yet there was something that allowed one to think of throwing a bridge.

I let that thought run on, and even develop within me.  
It was not an assent independent of an act of will.  
I simply resisted sensation and the appeal of the senses,  
for I knew that otherwise I would never really leave my “ego”  
and reach the other person – but that meant an effort.  
For my senses fed at every step  
on the charms of the women I met.  
When once or twice I tried following them,  
I met solitary islands.  
This made me think that beauty accessible to the senses  
can be a difficult gift or a dangerous one;

28 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 79–80.

I met people led by it to hurt others  
– and so, gradually, I learned to value beauty  
Accessible to the mind, that is to say, truth.  
I decided then to seek a woman who would be indeed  
my real "alter ego" so that the bridge between us  
would not be a shaky footbridge among water lilies and reeds.<sup>29</sup>

There is a clear distinction here between the two dimensions of beauty – "outer" and "inner" – as already referred to. When we analyse the love of a man and a woman, this distinction plays an important role. A relationship built solely on the former is not a "permanent bridge," but – as the poet says – "a shaky footbridge," for it does not take into account the whole person, but only the aesthetically positive impression. Obviously, this aesthetic value, this human sensual "charm" is important, as it helps people get noticed in a crowd and get to know each other. To stop solely at this sensual impression, however, is tantamount to reducing a person exclusively to their body and sexual attractiveness. This is a fallacy of *pars pro toto* ("a part (taken) for the whole"). By choosing a certain perspective (for example, a person's body or a certain skill), a person is held back by it alone, thinking that it constitutes the whole.

Sensuality – as Wojtyła wrote – always implies experiencing a particular value bound up with this sensory awareness. Specifically we are concerned with a sexual value, connected above all with the body of a person of the other sex [...]. In such cases the ordinary short way of putting it is: "Y affects my senses." This effect upon someone's senses is only incidentally connected with awareness of the beauty of a body, with aesthetic appreciation. Another consideration is of real importance to sensuality. Namely, that when it only stirs sensuality a body is commonly experienced as a "potential object of enjoyment." Sensuality in itself has a "consumer orientation" – it is directed primarily and immediately towards a "body": it touches the person only

29 K. Wojtyła, *The Jeweler's Shop. A Meditation on the Sacrament of Matrimony, Passing on Occasion into a Drama*, transl. B. Taborski, San Francisco 1992, p. 24–25.

indirectly, and tends to avoid direct contact. Even with bodily beauty it has, as we have already said, only an indirect connection.<sup>30</sup>

Wojtyła clearly distinguishes between beauty and sensuality. The former demands admiration (contemplation), while the latter aims at sensual gratification (consumption). Without neglecting the role of the senses, which direct us towards the external beauty of another human being, one cannot – as Wojtyła stresses – limit oneself to them. This is only the first step. Apart from external beauty, one should be able to discover the internal beauty of a person and to please oneself in it, or even primarily to please oneself in it. The beauty of a person is not diminished to aesthetic delight stimulated by the senses, which introduce a consumable reference to the object. “For beauty – as Wojtyła continued his analysis – is essentially an object of contemplative cognition, and to experience aesthetic values is not to exploit: it gives joy, enjoyment as defined by St Augustine in the word *frui*.”<sup>31</sup>

Here Wojtyła referred to Augustine’s distinction between *frui* – “to enjoy, to reap the fruits of” and *uti* – “to use, to enjoy.”<sup>32</sup> In experiencing the value of beauty as *frui*, there is a kind of love turning of the person towards the other person (man towards woman and *vice versa*). Adherence to the other person for his or her own sake, not for the sake of his or her sensuously beautiful eyes or slender figure. Hence, going further in the analysis of love, a clear distinction must be made between sensual impressions and affective emotions. While the former are defined by *uti*, the latter allow for actual *frui*.

Direct contact between man and woman – as Wojtyła emphasised – always entails an impression which may be accompanied by an emotion. When

30 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 105.

31 K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 105.

32 Vide S. Augustinus, *De Trinitate*, X, XI, 17, in: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera omnia*, accurate J.-P. Migne, Paris 1841, col. 982 (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 48): „*frui est autem, uti cum gaudio, non adhuc spei, sed jam rei*”; A. Eckmann, *Radość (“gaudium”) w nauczaniu św. Augustyna* [Joy (“Gaudium”) in the Teaching of St. Augustine], „*Vox Patrum*” 32 (2012) No. 58, p. 310.

this emotion has as its object a sexual value residing in the "body" itself as a "possible object of enjoyment" it is a manifestation of sensuality. However, a sexual value which is the object of emotion is by no means necessarily connected with the "body" itself as a "possible object of enjoyment." It may be connected with the whole "person of the other sex." In that case, the object of emotional experience for a woman will be the value "masculinity," and for a man the value "femininity." The first may be connected with, for instance, an impression of "strength," the second with an impression of "charm," but both are connected with a whole person of the other sex, not only with that person's "body."<sup>33</sup>

And it is affection, sensitivity to the other person, that embraces the whole, unlike the sensual excitability induced by their external beauty. "Affection is not an urge to consume. It is, therefore, compatible with the contemplative moods which go with a sense of beauty and responsiveness to aesthetic values."<sup>34</sup> The desire to exploit is replaced here by admiration in relation to the person: man towards woman and woman towards man, respectively.

Sensuality and emotionality obviously do not exhaust love as such. What has been said, however, is sufficient to characterise the outline of the "beautiful love of persons" presented by Wojtyła.

## The Deformed "Beauty of the Person"

As in an interpersonal relationship, it is reductionism to dwell solely on the external beauty of a person, so in the case of creating beautiful things (as well as useful things), the "temptation of self-abasement" can arise. During a retreat for artists given during Holy Week on 16–18 April 1962 at the Holy Cross Church in Krakow, Wojtyła drew attention to it, quoting a sentence from *The Un-divine Comedy* by Zygmunt Krasiński: "Through thee flows

<sup>33</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 109–110.

<sup>34</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 110.

a stream of beauty but thou art not beauty thyself.”<sup>35</sup> Krasieński coined that phrase in the context of the distinction between true and false poetry and the true and false poet. Wojtyła focused on the person of a particular poet, an artist and on his or her self-knowledge. That “stream of beauty” is a talent, an inspiration that pushes a given person to create works. This inspiration infuses into and overwhelms the artist, who virtually becomes carried away by this creative spark. However, as Wojtyła stresses, this talent is not entirely synonymous with the artist – “talent is some kind of special good, some kind of natural distinction.”<sup>36</sup> The artist is him or herself through the talent s/he possesses, but s/he is not that talent, s/he only shares it – “you yourself are not Beauty.” And herein lies the temptation of the self-empowerment of the artist, who has mastered his/her craft perfectly and whose works inspire admiration because of their perfection in the transitive profile. It is the temptation of egoism, of defining oneself analogically perfect in a non-transitive profile – in the words of Krasieński – “I am Beauty”<sup>37</sup> regardless of the real ethical qualification, i.e. the moral value or counter-value as a person.

The temptation of self-abasement of which Wojtyła spoke seems to be particularly dangerous when man submits himself to the hegemony of multiple utilitarianisms, when – consciously or not – he becomes a slave to action, production, efficiency, when next to *actio* there is no place and time for *contemplatio*.<sup>38</sup> Wojtyła stressed that “[n]o function of man is more important than man. The most important is the value of humanity itself”<sup>39</sup>

35 Z. Krasieński, *The Un-divine Comedy*, transl. H.E. Kennedy, Z. Umińska, London–Warsaw 1924, p. 1; vide Z. Krasieński, *Nie-Boska Komedya* [The Un-divine Comedy], Paryż 1835, p. 2: „Przez ciebie przepływa strumień piękności, ale ty nie jesteś pięknością” [A stream of beauty flows through you, yet you yourself are not beauty]; K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelia a sztuka. Rekolekcje dla artystów* [The Gospel and Art. Retreat for Artists], red. A. Dobrzyński, Kraków–Rzym 2011, p. 34: „Przez ciebie przepływa strumień Piękności, ale ty sam nie jesteś Pięknością” [distinction in accordance with the original].

36 K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelia a sztuka*, p. 36 [transl. D.R.].

37 Vide K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelia a sztuka*, p. 34, 36.

38 Vide K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelia a sztuka*, p. 16–17.

39 K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelia a sztuka*, p. 40 [transl. D.R.].

and "the greatest work of culture is man himself – not any of his works or creations, but he himself."<sup>40</sup>

For beauty, as Wojtyła quoted Cyprian Kamil Norwid, testifies to immortality and resurrection, to the possibility of human fulfilment as a person! "For beauty exists that we might be enticed to work, / And work, that we might be resurrected."<sup>41</sup>

As it has already been mentioned, human works can be of two kinds: either (1) useful works (*utile*), which are doomed to die with wear and tear, or (2) works that cannot be used up, which are born out of man's selfless (*unutile*) contact with beauty, goodness and truth. As Wojtyła wrote,

In them [i.e. in the intransitive works] not only do their creators live on, whose names are remembered for generations on end, but also, and more importantly, men and women of different generations continually rediscover the intransitive within themselves: "intransitive" means, in a sense, "immortal."<sup>42</sup>

Man dies, but by perpetuating the transcendental dimension of truth, goodness and beauty in his works during his lifetime, he "remains." In view of the above, it seems easier to understand Fyodor Dostoyevsky's words that "beauty would save the world."<sup>43</sup> The fact that something is beautiful is not a matter of whim. "Real beauty," inspiring and mobilising the creation of works that cannot be used up, seems to establish itself as some kind of bridge towards "immortality," a possible path to "salvation."

40 K. Wojtyła, *Chrześcijanin a kultura* [Christian and Culture], "Znak" 16 (1964) nr 10 (124), p. 1154 [transl. D.R.].

41 C.K. Norwid, *Promethidion. Rzecz w dwóch dialogach z epilogiem* [Promethedion. A Work in Two Dialogues with an Epilogue], Paryż 1851, p. 18: "Bo piękno na to jest by zachwycalo / Do pracy – praca, by się zmartwychwstało"; K. Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, p. 269.

42 K. Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis*, p. 272.

43 F. Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, III, 5, transl. E. Martin, The Floating Press [s.l.] 2009, p. 756.

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## Abstract

*"Beauty of the Person" According to Karol Wojtyła (Ontology and Experience)*

This paper outlines the essential core of Karol Wojtyła's thought on beauty. By introducing the central category of "beauty of the person", Wojtyła essentially integrated and ordered therewith all the other meanings of the term. Whatever is beautiful in an adequate sense is also morally good. As far as human beauty is concerned, Wojtyła pointed out that it is differentiated by gender, i.e. female beauty and male beauty, and by "layers," i.e. external beauty (aesthetic, sensual and bodily beauty) and, more importantly, internal beauty, which constitutes the beauty of a person as a person. Outer beauty allows a person to be noticed, to be discovered, but in love one cannot stop at outer beauty (the temptation to treat the body as a possible object of use). For love is love of the whole person, not only of his or her beautiful body and sexual attractiveness. A specific issue is the analysis of the creation of beautiful things, which at the same time are imprinted in the interior of man and – as long as man does not give in to the egoistic "temptation of self-emptying" – bear witness to his "immortality."

**Keywords:** Wojtyła, beauty, experience of man, person

## Abstrakt

*„Piękno osoby” według Karola Wojtyły (ontologia i doświadczenie)*

Niniejszy artykuł kreśli zasadniczy zrąb myśli Karola Wojtyły na temat piękna. Wprowadzając centralną kategorię „piękna osoby”, Wojtyła zasadniczo zintegrował i uporządkował wszystkie inne znaczenia tego terminu. To, co jest piękne w adekwatnym ujęciu, jest i dobre moralnie. Odnośnie do piękna człowieka Wojtyła zwracał uwagę, że różnicuje się ono poprzez płęć – piękność kobieca i piękność męska, a także według „warstw” – piękno zewnętrzne (piękno estetyczne, zmysłowe, ciała) oraz ważniejsze od niego – piękno wewnętrzne, które stanowi o pięknie człowieka jako osoby. Piękno zewnętrzne pozwala osobom się zauważyć, poznać, w miłości jednak nie można poprzestać na pięknie zewnętrznym (pokusa potraktowania ciała jako możliwego przedmiotu użycia). Miłość to bowiem miłość całej osoby, nie zaś wyłącznie jej pięknego ciała i seksualnej atrakcyjności. Szczegółowym zagadnieniem jest analiza tworzenia pięknych rzeczy, które zarazem odciskają się we wnętrzu człowieka i – o ile człowiek nie podda się egoistycznej „pokusie samoubóstwienia” – dają świadectwo o jego „nieśmiertelności”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Wojtyła, piękno, doświadczenie człowieka, osoba