The Human Subject and Its Interiority. Karol Wojtyła and the Crisis in Philosophical Anthropology

El sujeto humano y su interioridad. Karol Wojtyła y la crisis de la antropología filosófica

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Abstract: This article discusses the concept of the human subject and its interiority as developed in modern and contemporary philosophy, focusing especially on criticisms directed at this. Hence, some far-reaching modifications of the theory of the subject are presented, including the thesis that interiority is constituted by exteriority. Karol Wojtyła's approach to the subject is then set out. The author of the paper tries to establish what the relation is that obtains between these two construals of the subject, and whether Wojtyła's conception can also be subjected to such criticism. Having concluded that two quite different understandings of the human subject are in play, a possible field of dialogue between them is sketched.

Keywords: human subject, interiority, postmodernity, Karol Wojtyła, dialogue.

Resumen: En este artículo se discute el concepto del sujeto humano y su interioridad tal como se desarrolla en la filosofía moderna y contemporánea, poniendo especial atención en las críticas que se le dirigen. En este sentido, se presentan algunas modificaciones importantes de la teoría del sujeto, incluyendo la tesis de que la interioridad está constituida por la exterioridad. A continuación se desarrolla el enfoque de Karol Wojtyła y el autor del trabajo trata de establecer cuál es la relación que existe entre estas dos conceptualizaciones del sujeto, y si la concepción de Wojtyła también puede ser sometida a tales críticas. Tras concluir que se trata de dos interpretaciones muy diferentes del sujeto humano, se esboza un posible terreno de diálogo entre ellas.

Palabras clave: sujeto humano, interioridad, postmodernismo, Karol Wojtyła, diálogo.

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1. Introduction

Karol Wojtyła's thinking about the human person is strictly connected with the concept of the subject. The term "subject" often appears in his works, especially in those in the field of philosophical anthropology. Moreover, the one notion seems so tightly bound to the other that the understanding of persons would be extremely difficult without a proper grasp of the term "subject". Nevertheless, the latter, taken by itself, is far from clear. If we read Wojtyła's works while focusing on the subject and the person, we encounter a problem in determining the source of his thinking and consequently do not know, at least to begin with, how to interpret the subject itself.

The theory of the human subject, in the contemporary understanding of the term, is a fruit of modern philosophy. Pre-modern (medieval) philosophy approached the human being from a different angle. The notion of "subject" is present there, but is basically considered in terms of beings. Wojtyła seems to maintain a middle ground: to some extent at least, he employs the terminology of modern philosophy, and his thinking is partly in tune with it, but at the same time he keeps in mind many elements typical of pre-modern philosophy, and these play an important role in his investigations.

When thinking in terms of the subject was initiated in modern philosophy, one of the main characteristics associated with it was interiority. Ever since then, the philosophy of the subject has presented this as a reality, as its inner existence. It has usually been contrasted with the subject's exteriority and transcendence. The language of interiority also appears in the works of Karol Wojtyła, so he, too, may be said to have a stake in the modern philosophical approach. Nevertheless, in modern philosophy the subject is undergoing vigorous criticism, to the extent that we are even witnessing its radical deconstruction. If Wojtyła had adhered fully to this modern understanding, his insistence on the existence of the subject and its main characteristic, namely interiority, would share such a fate. It would mean that rejecting the subject, as a strong metaphysical structure, leads to the substantial weakening of personhood. This negative scenario seems alien to Wojtyła's philosophizing. Nevertheless, we need to outline and clarify what is distinctive about his own approach. The Polish philosopher's analyses –as we mentioned above– cannot be confined within the boundaries of modern philosophy or its understanding of the subject. He did, it seems, propose his own concept of the sub-

ject[1], and we should investigate how this approach is (or is not) immune to the process of its being deconstructed. In so doing, we will also try to establish Wojtyła's originality in this respect.

In this paper, we are going, first, to sketch an attack on the Cartesian subject, which seems to be a modern paradigm of this category. It is chiefly characterized by its inner, extra-worldly existence, and this is the main subject of criticism. Second, we will try to analyze Wojtyła's works in order to discover his understanding of the subject and its interiority. Third, we will attempt to establish how his approach differs from (but is also similar to) the Cartesian tradition. Finally, we will try to sketch a possible place for dialogue between these two perceptions of the human subject that are at variance with one another.

2. The Cartesian Subject under Siege

Descartes can be credited with having been the pioneer of thinking in terms of a pure subject. His *res cogitans* bears all the marks of such a category. We can characterize it as an entity which thinks, understands, wills, imagines, and feels. In other words, thinking encompasses both mental and psychological acts. Moreover, the subject cannot be identified with the body, or with any other substance (of any other sort) within the body. Neither can it be identified with any other thinking substance, wholly or partially. The subject has an ability to discriminate between itself and the other. In other words, due to its fundamental attribute, namely thinking, the subject knows how to distinguish itself from other thinking and corporeal substances. In this sense, it is a world enclosed in itself, which knows itself (along with other clear ideas, e.g. the idea of God), and as such is able to identify itself as itself with a high level of certitude[2].

These basic tenets of the Cartesian philosophy of the human person have been subjected to strong criticism for a long time. Various objections have been formulated against them. We are not going to examine all of them, but will point to an established model of criticism. This mainly concerns the existence and character of an "inner" subject, the self or "I"[3]. Hence, we are going to present some voices that are critical of

[1] I set forth Wojtyła's understanding of the human being in contrast with René Descartes' position in: G. Holub, *Karol Wojtyła and René Descartes. A comparison of the anthropological positions*, in "Anuario Filosófico" 48/2 (2015), pp. 341-358.

[2] These fundamental theses can be found in the main works by René Descartes, namely *Meditations on First Philosophy,* meditation 2, no. 27-28; meditation 6, no. 78 and *Discourse on the Method,* chapter 4.

[3] In this paper I am only going to sketch a certain pattern of criticism directed at the Cartesian subject, appealing only to a select number of philosophers. The discussion of the

such an understanding of the subject, ones that have arisen in the course of modern, and especially contemporary, philosophy[4].

In post-Cartesian philosophy, the most notable expression of skepticism concerning the existence of the "I" was that offered by David Hume. As an empirical philosopher looking for and paying attention to natural occurrences, he had a problem with something that transgresses the boundaries of the natural (empirical) realm. He registers his own mode of inquiry in this way: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but perception"[5].

If we treat Hume's "myself" as a Cartesian *res cogitans*, it cannot be grasped as such because no empirically available perceptions are associated with it. Within such an epistemological approach, we might easily be led to conclude that it simply is not there at all. In broader terms, we might claim that human interiority –if it exists at all– is basically furnished by sensory experiences and their outcomes (ideas)[6]. But then this interiority is nothing more than the aftermath of exterior activities (sensory experiences)[7].

In contemporary philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein questions the possibility of perceiving his own self and determining its localization. In his *Philosophical Investigations* he grapples with the phenomenon of consciousness, which, for Descartes, was first and foremost a power of *res extensa*. We hear him saying: "But what can it mean to speak of

subject has advanced a long way, so it is not possible to present all possible forms of criticism. I have chosen those voices that make reference to a Cartesian extra-worldly subject, that is, a subject which can be characterized by its inner sphere and sometimes can even be identify with interiority itself.

[4] An interesting overview of this process has been presented by one Polish philosopher K. Gurczyńska-Sady. K. Gurczyńska-sady, *Człowiek jako słowo i ciało. W poszukiwaniu nowej koncepcji podmiotu*, Wydawnictwo Universitas, Kraków 2013). In subsequent parts of this paper, I draw on some remarks and comments presented in her book.

[5] D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* Book I, Part IV, Section vi.

[6] Hume's approach seems to be at least ambivalent. What we can easily notice is that there is an "I" who is performing the inquiry, but at the same time that "I" cannot find itself. As many critical commentators have pointed out, the self that the English philosopher admits to not being able to find is the one he himself finds to be a stumbling block. Cfr. H. Price, *Hume's Theory of the External World*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1940, pp. 5-6; R. Chisholm, *On the Observability of the Self*, in "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research", vol. 30, no. 1 (1969), pp. 7-21.

[7] In this sense, the distinction between "interior" and "exterior" reflect less a particular locational demarcation, and more the possibility or impossibility of being objectified using empirically-oriented methods.

'turning my attention on to my own consciousness'? This is surely the queerest thing there could be! It was a particular act of gazing that I called doing this. I stared fixedly in front of me –but *not* at any particular point or object–. My eyes were wide open, the brows not contracted (…). No such interest preceded this gazing. My glance was vacant; or again like that of someone admiring the illumination of the sky and drinking in the light[8].

The Cambridge thinker, following rules of observation set by empirical philosophy, is unable to say something definitive and positive about the self, the "I" and his own internal sphere, which can easily lead –within this paradigm of philosophy– to the assertion that there is no such thing as human interiority. Things exist, and are perceivable, because of their empirical qualities, e.g. their localization in space. If they cannot be described in this way, they easily slip (with some exceptions) into non-existent realities. Again, as in the case of Hume, it looks as if interiority is being measured against exteriority using cognitive tools typical of the latter rather than the former.

The difficulty with grasping the "I" and its interiority is not limited to empirical philosophy. It also arises in philosophical projects located at the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum. Jean-Paul Sartre, arguing from the stance of existentialism, underlines the undetermined character of the Cartesian subject. He considers this when comparing an object of consciousness with its subject, and gives us the following account of his observation: "But as soon as we wish to grasp this being, it slips between our fingers, and we find ourselves faced with a pattern of duality, with a game of reflection. For consciousness is a reflection, but qua reflection it is exactly the one reflecting, and if we attempt to grasp it as reflecting, it vanishes and we fall back on the reflection"[9].

It seems that when it is active and reflecting on something, the subject is obvious, but when we try to grasp it as a reality existing-in-itself we fail to do so and are left with its sole activity, that is, reflection itself. The ground of this reflective power slips away, disappears –or maybe does not exist at all–. However, if we want to sustain its existence, the subject with its being and interiority must be identified with the flow of inner activities. Of course, the latter option has its price, associated with the difficulty of establishing viable criteria of personal identity.

[8] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1968, § 412.
[9] J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Methuen & Co LTD, London 1957, pp. 75-76.

Max Scheler also undertook an investigation concerning the human subject. He understood it in two dimensions: namely, internal and external. On the one hand, the person is a spirit inhabiting its various intentional acts and investing them with a kind of unity[10]. On the other, the human being constituted by that spirit is also constituted by the body and the psyche. Despite the fact that these latter retain their own specificity, they still make up parts of that same life process, being aspects of it. Scheler also pointed out the different spheres in which a person exists: namely, the intimate and the social. Within this latter realm we may consider social interactions to be factors constitutive of its very being. He declares that "(…) a man tends, in the first place, to live more in *others* than in himself; more in the community than in his own individual self"[11]. He then acknowledges the presence of "(…) a phenomenon, which is directly based upon the fact that the individual begins by living in the community to a much greater extent than he does in himself"[12]. This priority of the social environment leads him to stress the presence of what is alien in us, and to establish how it conditions our self-perception. His claim goes as follows: "It will also be evident from this how largely the actual direction of self-perception at any time, the selection of what we shall or shall not observe in ourselves, is dependent upon the prevailing fields of attention which the environment imposes upon us"[13].

Scheler is far from claiming that a human person is to be characterized by a substantial self[14]. But the spiritual self he points to, connected with the body-psyche sphere of life, is somehow exposed to social interactions. If we are to recognize ourselves, we must be immersed in a society, with its tools of communication and cooperation. For example, the language of a given society enables a human individual to name its inner experiences, which in turn provide it with a platform for actualizing its person. Without this tool there would only be a stream of undifferentiated experiences, which would not be of any substantial benefit to the individual human life. Despite the existence of a spirit that transcends the body-psyche realm and can rightly be referred to as the interior sphere of

[10] The philosopher does not put it clearly, namely that the person is a spirit, but we find some passages in his main work suggesting such a thesis. See M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value. A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973, pp. 383 and 386.

[11] M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, London 1954, p. 247.

[12] *Ibíd.*, p. 248.

[13] *Ibíd.*, p. 252.

[14] M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value. A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, cit., p. 371.

the subject, exteriority still plays an essential role, with its resources. The actions of persons are vitally dependent on language, which is a product of a given culture.

Sartre, who was mentioned above, also directs our attention to the social sphere and its role in self-constitution. In the absence of any possibility of cognitively grasping my substantial "I", the only field for research is my active consciousness. The French philosopher limits his interest to this sphere, but also shows how it is shaped by encounters with other human beings. Thus he points out that "in the field of my reflection I can never meet with anything but my consciousness which is mine. But the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. (…) Thus the Other has not only revealed to me what I was; he has established me in a new type of being which can support new qualifications. This being was not in me potentially before the appearance of the Other (…)"[15].

As we have already mentioned, this new being should be understood as a new state of consciousness. It can only come into existence in the dialectics of human interactions. But still, there is no such thing as a subject with an interior sphere prior to any encounters with other human beings. Social exteriority comes first, and interiority seems to be a consequence of what goes on in a realm outside of the subject.

Deconstructing the subject and her interiority is also a typical feature of postmodern philosophy. We can point to many examples of this approach, but for the sake of brevity let us concentrate on the ideas of one prominent figure of postmodernity, namely Michel Foucault. His reasoning goes as follows: "I shall abandon any attempt (…) to see discourse as a phenomenon of expression, the verbal translation of a previously established synthesis; instead, I shall look for a field of regularity for various positions of subjectivity. Thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined"[16].

Abandoning the concept of discourse as a manifestation of interiority for the sake of the notion of its dispersion shows that we persons exist in ourselves only at the very beginning. The more we progress in our development, the more the character of our person is modified. Being a person with one's own interiority gradually gives way to being an entity that

[15] J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,* cit., p. 222.

[16] M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London-New York 2002, p. 60.

enters into various interactions and in this way acquires a new "nature". As one of Foucault's commentators claims, "for Foucault subjectivity is not some *thing* we *are*, it is an activity that we *do*. Subjectivity is relational, dynamic, and restless, potentially unruly and unpredictable"[17]. We can thus only really ask what the main activity responsible for constituting a human person is.

Karlis Racevskis gives us an answer, while providing us with an interesting explanation of the formation of subjectivity as a whole. "(…) By acquiring a language, a human being becomes an entity in a familial, social, and cultural context; he acquires a familial, social, and cultural identity. But it must be noted again that a cultural individuality is acquired at the cost of further alienation from oneself, since the language into which we are born, which serves as a vehicle for a mass of social and cultural information, is not ours. In acquiring a language, we become its subjects and further separate ourselves from our essential, intimate, pre-linguistic selves. The socially or culturally determined subject is therefore to be understood not as a plenitude or as a unified consciousness but as a dispersion along the three axes that structure the domain of human perception: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real"[18].

If we put such emphasis on the role of language in the formation of subjectivity, then it makes sense to examine the main conclusions entailed by this. First, the process of development is a gradual departure: from oneself as metaphysically understood, to oneself as socially constructed. Second, over the course of this passage it is language –construed as a social phenomenon– that is the principal factor. The more we master it, the more we become social creatures. A primitive interiority must then give way to a socially constructed one, which generally comes from outside. Third, the identity of the subject is not so much modified as essentially changed: it is no longer organized around the unity of the being, but around its dispersion instead. If we understand identity as an inner connectedness between various aspects of the person, which can be characterized by such attributes as rational complexity, harmony among its many constituents, and so on, then such a passage effecting a dispersion is nothing less than a wholesale deconstruction of identity. At least, we can arrive prima facie at such a conclusion[19].

[17] E. Mcgushin, *Foucault's Theory and Practice of Subjectivity*, in D. Taylor (ed.), *Michel Foucault. Key Concepts*, Aucmen, Durham 2011, pp. 134-135.

[18] K. Racevskis, *The Discourse of Michel Foucault: A Case of an Absent and Forgettable Subject*, in B. Smart (ed.), *Michel Foucault. Critical Assessment*, vol. I, Routledge, London-New York 1994, p. 143.

[19] I would not exclude the possibility of a new integration occurring after such a state

The main objections directed towards the existence of an inner subject come from a part of empirical as well as non-empirical philosophy. In the realm of sensory and emotional experiences, the above-mentioned philosophers are unable to detect anything that precedes live experiences and can provide a foundation for them. The method of investigating sensory and emotional elements is not, then, an effective tool for pointing to the existence of a subject with its own inner, independent interiority, and thus it is that, in the opinions of these philosophers, such a reality does not exist. Moreover, a similar conclusion may be reached by thinkers who rely solely on self-reflection. Apart from active thinking about the self, they are unable to detect any metaphysical ground that could underpin it and make it possible. However, some phenomena of the subject are striking and do call for an explanation; but this can be provided by pointing to the exteriority of the individual, where the social environment, with its culture and inter-human interactions –especially via language– play decisive roles.

If the above characterization of the modern story of the subject is true, we must face the following consequences: there is no interiority possessed by persons; the human being is a social creature and society, together with its cultural forms, defines his nature; the person comes to be by entering into various relations and acquiring a mode of communication, namely language; if we are to advocate the existence of interiority at all in the context of this new paradigm, it will have to be an internalized exteriority. This leads us to a more general conclusion: from a methodological point of view, there is no need to pursue ontology or philosophical anthropology any more. They seem to have been entirely replaced by the sort of analyses that are typical of cultural theory[20].

3. Wojtyła on the Human Subject

Wojtyła himself uses the terms "subject" and "subjectivity" in various contexts. One of these arises when he is contrasting a subject with an object. For instance, the human being is, for herself, a subject and an object at the same time. This mode of expression has a rather epistemological character. However, in the center of our attention is a different approach: we are interested in a metaphysical understanding of the term. Thus we are more concerned with the mode of existence of the subject.

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of dispersion has been arrived at, but I do think that postmodern thinkers must themselves shoulder the burden of demonstrating the viability of this.

[20] K. Gurczyńska-sady, *Człowiek jako słowo i ciało. W poszukiwaniu nowej koncepcji podmiotu,* cit., p. 64.

Wojtyła inherited some ideas and methods from modern philosophy, but at the same time he rejected many others. For instance, he accepted the necessity of turning to consciousness, but rejected the tendency to absolutize it[21]. This means that even if consciousness is important for characterizing the subject as such, it does not mean that the latter is a pure incarnation of the former. Reading him, we hear him declare: "as soon as we begin to accept the notion of 'pure consciousness' or the 'pure subject', we abandon the very basis of the objectivity of the experience that allows us to understand and explain the subjectivity of the human being in a complete way, but then we are no longer interpreting the real subjectivity of the human being"[22].

Consciousness is one way to understand the subject, but not a unique and exclusive one. How, then, does Wojtyła present and unfold the concept of the subject?

In his writings, we find several important clues for clarifying his understanding. First, he points to the so-called metaphysical concept of the subject: namely, as *suppositum*. Second, Wojtyła coins the notion of the personal subject[23]. Third, the thinker considers some essential human dynamisms, which can be perceived as helpful tools in understanding the human subject: namely operativity and subjectivity.

The metaphysical notion of *suppositum* derives its roots from the philosophies of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. It amounts to a metaphysical subject of existence and action. In other words, it constitutes the foundation of any action and any dynamism in the subject. At the level of metaphysical thinking –as Wojtyła argues– the human being, understood as a being, can be identified as a *suppositum*[24]. Of course, we can describe almost any living creature with this term, but in the case of the human being it has its own character. He is aware that a

[21] See G. Holub, *Wojtyła on Persons and Consciousness*, in "Forum Philosophicum", vol. 19, no. 1 (2014), pp. 45-51.

[22] K. Wojtyła, *The Person: Subject and Community*, en K. Wojtyła, *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, Peter Lang, New York 1993, p. 222.

[23] On the relationship between these two subjects see also: G. Holub, *Karol Wojtyła on the metaphysics of the person*, "Logos i Ethos", vol. 39, no. 2 (2015), pp. 102-108; G. Holub, *Wojtyła on Persons and Consciousness*, cit., pp. 349-352.

[24] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1994, p. 122.The English edition of this book is *The Acting Person*, Reidel, Boston 1979. All quotations are taken from the Polish version and translated by the author of the paper. As far as the English translation of *Osoba i czyn* is concerned, there are some doubts concerning its adequacy (cfr. T. Sandok (translator's remarks), in K. Wojtyła, *Person and Community*, cit., p. 207). For instance, in *The Acting Person* the Latin term *suppositum* – important for our analyses – completely disappears, and is replaced by a variety of supposed equivalents in English. This seems to be a major flaw of that translation.

human *suppositum* will differ substantially from other *supposita*. This otherness, which is usually conveyed by a differentiation between "who" and "what", permeates the whole structure of the human being. When looking for a factor responsible for bringing about this metaphysical distinctiveness of the human *suppositum*, we must point to a specific human existence *(esse)*, also understood as the first dynamism of the being[25]. *Suppositum* is the most general determination of the subject, which is the basis for any other understanding of this category. Moreover, the metaphysical subject is not a kind of mysterious reality hidden and distant from other kinds of subjectivity. Although the concept of *suppositum* is the fruit of theoretical thinking, it stands in a vital relation to another understanding of the subject: namely, the personal subject.

The personal subject stems from the realization that any human being has something unique and specific in itself. The above-mentioned mode of existence, *esse*, not only differentiates the human being from other living creatures, but also introduces a difference among human individuals themselves. In the latter case, the difference does not just consist in being individuated where human nature is concerned: it runs deeper. To establish the unique character of personal subjectivity, consciousness and operativity must be taken into account.

Thus a human *suppositum*, in comparison to other *supossita*, has a special sphere where all kinds of conscious experiences and volitional acts can take place. In other words, the human subject does have its own interiority. The specific character of her actions is established essentially in this sphere. Wojtyła pointed out that what distinguishes the person from other beings is its richness and perfection. For instance, in his *Love and Responsibility*, he advances this thesis in the following way: "the term 'person' has been coined to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within the concept 'individual member of the species', but that there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in the manner of his being, which can only be brought out by the use of the word 'person'"[26].

This special character of the person is something that, in the first instance, concerns the order of being. Due to its rational nature, which encompasses various potentialities and abilities, the human being exists as an extraordinary creature in nature. Nevertheless, conscious-

[25] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn,* cit., p. 123.
[26] K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1981, p. 22.

ness, will and the sphere of the emotions offer privileged spaces in which these can manifest themselves. And we can take these factors as a synonym for interiority. For example, when Wojtyła writes about one function of consciousness, namely reflexive consciousness, he claims that "due to this function of consciousness the human being exists as if 'toward his interior' as well as in the full dimension of his mental (rational!) existence"[27]. Interiority is here understood as a sphere to which all human achievements and experiences are referred. But it also plays the opposite role: namely, that of being the source of the person's various activities. When the person undertakes some free and rational course of action, this represents a highly dense concentration of elements stemming from her interiority. Operativity/efficacy is not, then, a simple instance of blind causation, as with non-human nature, but instead is underpinned by a complex prior interaction of such personal elements as knowledge, self-knowledge, consciousness, deliberation, and the experience of moral values[28].

Of course, we cannot separate these two understandings of subjectivity, because they are both of them essential aspects of the human being. We should rather point out how they relate to each other. Generally speaking, both kinds of subjectivity reveal the person, but at different levels of her existence. Furthermore, they are mutually dependent and reinforcing. The Polish philosopher points out that "the *suppositum humanum* must somehow manifest itself as a human self: metaphysical subjectivity must manifest itself as personal subjectivity"[29]. Although Wojtyła emphasizes just one direction of this dependency, he is certainly aware that a complete picture of the person is only possible in the context of a two-directional approach. In the epistemological order, we first establish personal subjectivity, and only later the metaphysical one. In some cases, to be sure, even though we cannot cognitively establish the former (e.g. in embryos, or in anencephalic newborns), this need not necessarily be thought of as putting the latter in question. Yet from a logical (absolute) point of view, the fact remains that they are inseparable, and so in principle accompany each other –meaning that the human being is always both a metaphysical and personal subject–.

[27] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, cit., p. 95.

[28] On the personal causation see also: G. Holub, *Persons as the Cause of Their Own Actions: Karol Wojtyła on Efficacy*, in "Ethical Perspectives", vol. 23, n. 2 (2016), pp. 259-275; G. Holub, *Karol Wojtyła and René Descartes. A comparison of the anthropological positions*, cit., pp. 352-357.

[29] K. Wojtyła, *The Person: Subject and Community,* cit., p. 225.

In the thought of Karol Wojtyła, there is one more category, which sheds some light on the human subject. It appears when the philosopher considers operativity. The latter is contrasted with subjectivity. We already know that the former is a dynamic typical for the person and that it reveals the person in her fullness through her personal acts. What, then, is subjectivity? If it is to be contrasted with operativity, then it, too, must be a kind of human dynamism. Nevertheless, this dynamism has a different character: i.e. it exists and is activated outside of the strictly personal sphere. Wojtyła describes it as when "something happens in man", or points out that "subjectivity is shown forth as structurally associated with happening"[30]. Thus it is a part of all bodily and subconscious mechanisms over which the human individual has very limited control. It seems that this mechanism is brought about by something utterly non-personal, though present in the structure of every human being. Later, of course, after such happenings have been activated and have come to light, they are made into subjects of consciousness, and in this sense the person has a kind of control over them (i.e. a mental control allowing them, for instance, to think about them).

Despite these two different dynamisms pertaining to the person, she still remains an integrated and unified being. Her set of personal characteristics is not substantially detached from her subjectivity, and this is only possible because Wojtyła has embraced the concept of the metaphysical subject: namely, *suppositum*. As he says: "on the ground of *suppositum* difference and opposition between acting and happening, between operativity proper to acting and subjectivity proper to happening, taking place in the human being, yield before an obvious unity and identity of this human being. (…) When something happens in him, he –this personal "someone"– does not act, but nevertheless a whole dynamic of happenings is equally his property as the dynamism of acts. He –this personal "someone"– is there at the beginning of these happenings as well as at the beginning of these acts, which he carries out as their doer"[31].

Thus, the personal subject encompasses various dynamics, which belong to her and help her express herself. Wojtyła is convinced that the structural differences between these dynamics do not cancel out the dynamic unity of the subject, but rather serve to show its complex nature[32]. Personal interiority, though primarily connected with personal characteristics, is by no means alien to the sphere of subjectivity as a whole.

[30] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn,* cit., p. 121.
[31] *Ibíd.*, p. 128.
[32] *Ibíd.*, pp. 138-139.

4. Subject and Interiority: Comparing the two Approaches

The concept of the subject present in Karol Wojtyła's work is basically different from the understanding stemming from the Cartesian anthropological tradition. Of course, there are certain similarities, and it is worth underlining these before proceeding any further here. First, both approaches point to thinking as a vital activity of the subject. Hence, the investigation of mental processes can be very instructive as regards discovering the fullness and perfection of the person. Second, the human subject is supposed to be characterized with reference to its interiority, in which the uniqueness of the person unfolds.

Nevertheless, Wojtyła's comprehension of the subject differs substantially from that of both Descartes and his critics. The subject is not an extra-worldly reality, to be reached through special procedures and exertions. Hence, complaints to the effect that it cannot be straightforwardly localized are misplaced. Wojtyła perceives the subject as a reality that possesses its own interiority as well as its own exteriority. Within the project of *suppositum*, the latter is vitally connected with the former. Despite differences between these concerning the kinds of dynamism they possess, the subject cannot be reduced to just one or the other, and one facet cannot be treated solely as a vehicle for the other. Thus, in Wojtyła's project, there is no place for the concept of a pure subject operating as a ghost in the machine.

Wojtyła's approach to the subject is governed by the thesis that there is, indeed, a primitive positive reality in human beings that is not a derivative of anything else. Thus, we cannot claim that special interventions coming from human interactions or culture or language are factors that constitute the subject and its interiority in the first place. The subject indeed interacts with them, and they provide it with the possibility of expressing itself, so these elements can be helpful as far as the unfolding of the activity of the subject is concerned. There is no doubt that all these factors play their role at the "awakening" stage of the subject, and later on, in the context of the carrying out of its various expressions. However, in the metaphysical order, when we take into account the subject's coming to be, all the external factors are secondary.

Wojtyła's subject cannot be identified with a bundle of mental activity or other processes. The subject is not a sequence or stream of psycho-physical events taking place in the human individual. Rather, it must be characterized by a metaphysical structure, which precedes all acts and happenings. This structure, which is the basic framework for the entirety of human existence, plays a quite essential role. If there is a unity of

the many facets making up the subject –as Wojtyła himself directly maintains– the subject must itself ultimately be the cause of it[33]. Of course, this structure cannot be detected by concentrating on a particular thought or sensory experience. Only by taking into account many further thoughts and experiences can we arrive at the claim that there is, indeed, some ground common to both of them. And Wojtyła is far from understanding this ground as a passive substratum. He is convinced, rather, that the metaphysical subject *(suppositum)* not only guarantees and sustains various phenomena, but is also present in them, and thus is itself participating in their dynamics, all the time, hence Wojtyła's above-mentioned thesis to the effect that the metaphysical subject must manifest itself as personal subjectivity.

Comparing these two approaches to the human subject makes us realize that what we are in fact dealing with here is an encounter between two philosophical traditions. On the one hand, there is the modern understanding of the subject and its interiority and, consequently, its systematic critique and even deconstruction. On the other, we have a project that draws on some modern and contemporary philosophical inspirations and methods, but remains at heart a pre-modern conception of the subject. In this sense, we must agree with Juan Burgos, who characterizes Wojtyła's general approach to philosophy in the following terms: "what Wojtyła is searching for is a re-elaboration of Thomistic gnoseology that considers the advances of Modernity and mostly the possibility offered by the phenomenology of directly accessing the subjectivity of the person"[34].

5. Looking for a Common Platform

The modern approach to the subject, especially in its later developments, stands at odds with Wojtyła's position. Thus, one possible conclusion would be that any discussion occurring between these two understandings will hardly be promising. However, while such an impression may be justified prima facie, it is rather superficial and shortsighted. On

[33] See G. Holub, *Persons as the Cause of Their Own Actions: Karol Wojtyła on Efficacy*, cit. This unifying function of the subject is often underlined. For instance, Richard Sorabji voices this thesis while speaking about self-awareness. He points out that "if there is unity in one's self-awareness, the unity is supplied by the single owner of that awareness, not by the owner's using a single faculty" (R. Sorabji, *Self. Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death,* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2006, p. 260). Wojtyła's thesis about the *suppositum* provides us with a strong argument for why the owner should herself be considered a real and fundamental reality.

[34] J. M. Burgos, *The Method of Karol Wojtyła: A Way Between Phenomenology, Personalism and Metaphysics*, in "Analecta Husserliana", vol. 104 (2009), p. 110.

the one hand, modern and contemporary insights can indeed become a partner to the discussion, and bring with them some valuable suggestions for Wojtylian thinking. On the other, Wojtyła, and the philosophical traditions from which he draws, do have some explanatory potential and can suggest some solutions to dilemmas entertained by modern deconstructionists of the subject. Even if we disagree with the progressive dissolution of the subject, and with attempts to explain its interiority by recourse to external factors, we can still remain in a dialogue with such adversaries. At the same time, there are some sticking points between these two stances – ones that can serve as a starting point for further investigations–.

On the one hand, if we embrace a much weaker interpretation of the modern and contemporary approach to the subject –namely, that the latter does exist, but is not an isolated and extra-worldly reality– then we are establishing common ground with Wojtyła's philosophy. With such an approach, though, we must point to a multifaceted dependence of the subject on various external elements: we might, for instance, feel obliged to take into account two kinds of element of this sort –linguistic ones and social ones–. The subject, then, is in some sense dependent on, and to some extent formed by, language, culture, and social interactions. On the other hand, we can find in the writings of Wojtyła some other premises that tend to go in the above-mentioned direction. When considering self-knowledge, which is an active power of the subject, he offers his own short description. According to him, "self-knowledge centered on one's own "I" as its proper object goes with it into all of the domains which this same "I" itself permeates"[35]. From this perspective, it is obvious that the "I" enters into a vital encounter with various external environments, be they human or non-human. In other words, the subject, with its interiority and proper powers, enters into contact with what is outside of itself[36]. This leads to two general consequences. First, as we mentioned above, these external elements can act as "activators" of the subject, who then discovers itself as a separate and independent entity. Second, these external factors leave their mark on the subject and its interiority. This means that although the coming-to-be of the subject is independent of what is outside of it, its inner "shape" and quality is influenced by this outer environment.

[35] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn,* cit., p. 88.

[36] See also: G. Holub, *The Relation between Consciousness and Emotions in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła*, in "The Persons and the Challenges" vol. 5, n. 2 (2015), pp. 157-158.

Applying Wojtyła's phenomenological approach further, we should point to the subject (and its interiority) that constitutes a subject-in-context. In other words, going beyond the concept of the pure subject, we should embark on an understanding of the subject in vital contact with the outside world via language and via its involvement in society. Thus, both language and participation in society reveal this subject and, at the same time, influence its maturing.

In many places Karol Wojtyła expresses his interest in the relation between the human being and society. For example, this becomes obvious when he takes up the topic of participation in his main work, *The Acting Person*. Here he considers an activity of the human being carried out with others. His approach has a personalistic character. Thus participation is not any type of collaboration whatever with other human subjects, but keeps its own character. Wojtyła ascribes to it two important characteristics: transcendence and integration. The human being acting together with others carries out an act which –from an objective point of view– benefits other human beings and society as a whole (in causing an effect without), and which at the same time fulfills the human being herself (via integration of the subject within)[37]. In other words, her act has both transitive and intransitive effects.

This interaction within society is then understood as an undertaking proper to persons. In his later philosophical work, Wojtyła tries to shed some more light on the phenomenon of persons in relations. He uses the language of "I-thou", which is typical for dialogue-oriented philosophers (e.g. Martin Buber). Referring to the "I" entering into relation with the "thou", he claims that "the 'thou' assists me in more fully discovering and even confirming my own 'I': the 'thou' contributes to my self-affirmation. In its basic form, the 'I-thou' relationship, far from leading me away from my subjectivity, in some sense more firmly grounds me in it"[38].

Here two words are important: namely, "discovering" and "confirming". With the former the philosopher points to the revealing of the subject, whereas with the latter he underlines the process of strengthening its structure.

Elsewhere, Wojtyła writes about the possibility of experiencing oneself in a new way as a result of an "I-thou" relationship[39]. We can interpret this in the following way: subjectivity as a potential state, getting

[37] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn,* cit., pp. 308ss.
[38] K. Wojtyła, *The Person: Subject and Community,* cit., p. 243.
[39] *Ibíd.*, p. 244.

into a personal encounter with the other, is activated and leads on to a new perception (discovery) of myself. Because I get into many personal encounters with various individuals who differ among themselves, it provides me with the possibility of experiencing myself anew many times over. Every meeting can awaken something new in me and confirm my own "I" in a new manner. It seems that this is the pattern of how a personal identity is forged and built up (at least from the personalistic perspective)[40].

What role here is played by language? If we assume that the person is a multidimensional entity, then so must be its relationships with others, too. And one of these relationships will be its cognitive relationship to them. Of course, in Wojtyła's understanding there is no "pure" cognitive activity embracing a sphere consisting solely of facts. The latter, as he claims, are always connected with values, "for we must take into account the fact that the different objects which we encounter in our immediate sensory experience impinge on our attention not only as having content but as having value"[41]. Language is a vital instrument of cognition and, as such, can be considered a tool for communicating facts and values[42]. Having this in mind, let us concentrate on a single aspect of fact-communication. What can this activity tell us about the subject?

Wojtyła did not pay too much attention to language philosophy. He rather operated within the phenomenological and Aristotelian traditions. Nevertheless, phenomenology must not be divorced from language analyses, and the various roles of language should be appreciated in this philosophical tradition. A good example of this attitude is presented by Robert Sokolowski. As a philosopher involved in the Aristotelian and the phenomenological traditions, he shows how analyses of the functions of language can help us better understand the human person. He assumes that the human being is an "agent of truth"[43] and –following David Braine– adds that when that being thinks, she does so in the medium of words ("thinking in the medium of words")[44]. Thus, tending to the truth and using language are inextricably connected. The phenomenologist de-

[40] Wojtyła's analyses on the dialogue between persons can contribute something important to the philosophy of dialogue. See G. Holub, *The person in dialogue, the person through dialogue*, "Filosofija. Sociologija" vol. 27, n. 1, pp. 3-13.

[41] K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility,* cit., p. 103.

[42] G. Holub, *The Relation between Consciousness and Emotions in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła*, cit., p. 163.

[43] R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person,* Cambridge University Press, New York 2008, p. 31.

[44] D. Braine, *The Human Person: Animal and Spirit,* Notre Dame University Press, Notre Dame 1992.

clares that "the human person acts as such, as a rational animal and as an agent of truth, especially in his use of language, when he thinks in the medium of words"[45] (Sokolowski 2008: 31).

If such presuppositions are correct, then we can point to some important consequences. The human subject is someone endowed with a rational nature, and this expresses itself primarily in the tendency to attain truth. This tendency can be realized only when adequate tools are acquired, e.g. language. Thus, through language the subject manifests its specificity and, more fundamentally, its existence as a specific entity. Nevertheless, language is not entirely a private enterprise. Its syntax and semantics are fruits of a given culture and community. Hence, tending to the truth through words and thinking (which depends heavily on words), the subject must be mentally "incorporated" in a language system, and this means that as an agent of truth it can only realize its nature through society. The latter provides it with a set of tools that will make possible its self-manifestation and fulfillment. Viewed from the other side, however, we may note that society can itself to some extent influence the structure of the subject through language. Tending thus towards manifestation and self-realization, the subject makes itself open to what is external.

6. Conclusions

Karol Wojtyła has an "unclear" philosophical background. His writings cannot be unequivocally classified as pre-modern or modern (let alone postmodern) ways of philosophizing. He is someone trying to draw on the strong points of both philosophical traditions[46]. At the same time, he highlights differences (and sometimes oppositions) with respect to them. These similarities and differences constitute a good starting point for an interesting discursive exchange of ideas. Although his concept of the human person is far from complete[47], it is the fruit of such an exchange and discussion, and this brings to philosophical anthropology a certain "freshness".

To sum up, let us point to two final conclusions concerning the subject and its interiority. We should not accept the radical thesis that the external constitutes the internal. It will suffice, instead, to say that there is a kind of interdependence: the one cannot be properly grasped without the

[45] R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person,* cit., p. 31.

[46] G. Holub, *Karol Wojtyła and René Descartes. A comparison of the anthropological positions*, cit., pp. 357ss.

[47] J. Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty. The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyła/ John Paul II.* The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D. C. 2000, p. 80.

other. If that is the case, then two solutions to the problem of the subject certainly seem false: on the one hand, a subjectivism resulting in a kind of solipsism, and on the other, a pure objectivity that would annihilate all traces of the subject as a sui generis reality.