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## The Necessity of Auto-Teleology in Achieving Moral Life according to Karol Wojtyla's Philosophy<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The human person is a being above any other in this world because of his dignity, which springs from the fact that he can choose between good and evil. By choosing good, he experiences his becoming good; by choosing evil, his becoming evil. This truth is rooted in the reality that man is free to choose which actions will he pursue. These prevailing concurrent moral challenges in the present world are the factors contributing to the distortion of the proper use of freedom. The human person today chooses boundless freedom regardless of its moral consequences. As a consequence, living a moral life seems to be impossible since such a life is basically a life of transcendence. Karol Wojtyla's notion of auto-teleology, which emphasizes self-limitation towards transcendence, becomes the necessary response to these moral dilemmas that obstruct living a moral life. To answer "Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life?" I will first show the auto-teleological aspect of Wojtyla's concept of the human person and second, I will demonstrate how is the moral life shaped by human action in the thoughts of Wojtyla, because these two tenets of Wojtyla serve as the foundation of his philosophy. All in all, this thesis aims to prove that Wojtyla's notion of auto-teleology is necessary for achieving a moral life, a life that is transcendental insofar as the human person for Wojtyla is not simply a rational being but a spiritual being too.

**Keywords:** Auto-teleology, ethics, human action, human person, morality, moral life

All persons have a great desire to surpass their limitations, evident in terms of technological advancements and scientific explorations to name a few. These are positive human achievements and contributions in the world brought by their desire to *surpass their limits*. In contrast to this, suppose a diabetic person defies the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of Blaise D. Ringor, "The Necessity of Auto-teleology in Achieving Moral Life According to Karol Wojtyla's Philosophy" (Master's Thesis, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, May 2020).

restrictions of his medical doctor and nutritionist to limit his sugar-rich food intake and ended up being amputated. In this way, the *limit* is given in order to achieve a good end. These two opposing ends meet in one goal: to reach the good. Applying this to freedom, the question may arise: “If I am truly free, why do I need to limit my freedom?” Limitless freedom leads to self-destruction and social chaos. History can tell us that the greatest crimes against humanity originated from those people who forgot to respect the limits of their freedom; leaving a painful mark in this world such as Adolf Hitler’s Concentration Camps, Pol Pot’s Cambodian Genocide, the Chinese Government’s Tiananmen Square Massacre, and Al-Qaeda’s 9/11 Terrorism. Freedom must be subordinated to truth. This reality is rejected whenever a person oversteps the limits set to one’s freedom. From this, one can say that evil arises when a person bypasses the limits of freedom.

If one will revisit the history of philosophy, particularly the ethical aspects that can be learned from it, one can easily observe that the concept of *limit* is nothing new. Socrates in Plato’s *Gorgias* shows that “limitless desire is unsatisfiable desire.”<sup>2</sup> Here, Socrates indirectly tells that someone who cannot be satisfied with what is limited will never be satisfied with anything good at all. Subsequently, Plato’s reference in the tale of Gyges’ ring in *The Republic* proves to us that if one is given unlimited freedom, that is, when one can get away from justice surely, he will prefer injustice over justice.<sup>3</sup> Although this is quite pessimistic, Plato is only trying to tell us the danger of giving absolute freedom to a person who is incapable of handling it correctly. Furthermore, Aristotle’s teleological ethics demonstrated in his *Nicomachean Ethics* teaches man to *aim* for the golden mean, that which is between excess and deficiency, lest man not live a virtuous life, a life of moral excellence.<sup>4</sup> In the middle ages, Thomas Aquinas synthesized various philosophers from the ancient period up to the early medieval period including his contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> The most influential thinker for Thomas is the *Stagirite* who is no other than Aristotle. Thomas also follows Aristotle’s lead in terms of his doctrine of the golden mean. Thus, they share the view that it is important for a person to never go beyond nor beneath one’s capacity. The only difference is that for Thomas, Aristotle’s golden mean is not simply for the achievement of a virtuous life—which is of course a contemplative life—but, above

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<sup>2</sup> Alasdair McIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge Classics, 2002), 30.

<sup>3</sup> See Plato, *The Republic* II.359c. The works written by Plato in the entirety of this research are taken from *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John F. Cooper (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) and McIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* ii.1106a-1107a. The passages and paraphrases coming from Aristotle’s primary works in this whole work are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 and vol. 2 (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Armand Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy: An Introduction* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982), 163-166.

all, it is for the sake of attaining a life of blessedness.<sup>6</sup> Aquinas remarks that the golden mean is not applicable when it comes to theological virtues.<sup>7</sup> Up to this point in the history of philosophy, *limit* is taken positively, and deviating from it means betrayal of freedom.

An opposing perspective though arises during the modern era. The modern period is the battlefield where Wojtyła developed *via negativa* his notion of auto-teleology understood not simply as an *end* or *aim*, above all, as a *limit*. The traditionalists (Aristotle and Aquinas), in Wojtyła's mind, are the philosophers who founded what modern philosophers (Descartes, Hume, Bentham & Mill, Kant) have destroyed. Wojtyła aims to reconstruct what has been crushed by these modern thinkers. So, what did the moderns do that became the object of Wojtyła's criticism? This began with the dualism expressed by René Descartes' "*Cogito ergo sum*"<sup>8</sup> which caused the foundation of man's freedom, the soul, to be demolished since Descartes "gave the modern concept of man its distinctive dualistic character. It is typical of rationalism to make a radical contrast in man between spirit and body, between body and spirit."<sup>9</sup> This cannot be possible, according to Wojtyła because "man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a spiritualized body, just as man's spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as an embodied spirit."<sup>10</sup> With this, the freedom of the human person, together with the body, has been detached from the soul. The soul is perceived at this point not as "that which stands under" but "that which can stand alone." The moral impact of this is that the body seems appears as if it becomes liberated from the chains of the soul that restricts the human person to do "whatever he wishes to do" regardless of its effects.

This is continued by David Hume with his doctrine of moral sense which shows that moral decisions are anchored in a moral feeling of good and evil.<sup>11</sup> For Hume, whatever I feel as morally good is good and whatever I feel as morally evil is evil. What is pleasing and useful—as far as the moral sense is concerned—are the only

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<sup>6</sup> See Tobias Hoffman "Prudence and practical principles" in *Aquinas and The Nicomachean Ethics Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörin Müller, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 165-184.

<sup>7</sup> S.Th. Ia-IIae, 1.64, a4., resp.1.

<sup>8</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Ian Maclean (New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2006) IV.32

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Families* §18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: A Critical Edition*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J Norton (New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2007) bk. 3, pt. 1, sec. 1-2. Also see David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2008), sec.3 "Of the Association of Ideas," 16-17, and sec.5 "Skeptical Solution of These Doubts, Part I," 30-34.

things that are desirable and must be pursued.<sup>12</sup> This cannot be acceptable, because freedom must never be anchored to mere feelings that are fleeting. It must always be anchored in truth, otherwise, it will become numb to what is morally good and evil. In this case, freedom cannot be limited to mere feelings alone because feelings depend on impulses and emotional responses. This is a dangerous understanding of freedom because aside from it being limitless, it also varies from person to person. Meaning, there can be no universal truth in which the freedom of the person must be subordinated.

Because of Hume's promotion of moral sensibility, the political philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill endorsed utilitarianism that fostered the greatest happiness principle which "...holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure."<sup>13</sup> It is a form of domination and oppression insofar as it teaches to minimize pain and maximize pleasure even at the expense of others. In this case, the use of freedom is *only* for the sake of *maximizing happiness* for the greatest number, even if it is at the expense of others' freedom and dignity. As a consequence, people are now self-centered and self-gratifying in as much as the ultimate goal is to receive a greater benefit. Wojtyla raises a point of concern regarding this. Without a doubt,

at the foundation of ethical utilitarianism there is the continual quest for 'maximum' happiness. But this is a 'utilitarian happiness', seen only as pleasure, as immediate gratification for the exclusive benefit of the individual, apart from or opposed to the objective demands of the true good... The programme of utilitarianism, based on an individualistic understanding of freedom—a freedom without responsibilities—is the opposite of love[.]<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Immanuel Kant's *sapere aude*—have the courage to use your own reason!<sup>15</sup>—may be understood as a tendency to moral anarchy in the sense that it promotes ethical relativism, morally permitting the human person to unleash his freedom without responsibility. However, Wojtyla notes that "freedom cannot be understood as a license to do absolutely anything: it means a gift of self. Even more: it means an interior discipline of the gift. The idea of gift contains not only the free

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<sup>12</sup> Adrian J. Reimers, *The Truth About the Good: Moral Norms in the Thought of John Paul II* (Florida, U.S.A.: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2011), 7.

<sup>13</sup> John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism" in *The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism* ed. Henry R. West. (Malden, U.S.A.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 68.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Families* §14.

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Sources of Western Tradition Vol II*, ed. Marvin Perry et.al. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), 56-57.

initiative of the subject, but also the aspect of duty.”<sup>16</sup> In addition, this kind of understanding definitely leads to individualism or egoism which he rejects. Wojtyla adds,

individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to ‘establish the truth’ of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else ‘wants’ or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to ‘give’ to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a ‘sincere gift’. Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish.<sup>17</sup>

The very first thing that these modern notions do is to create an illusion by making man distrust his capacity to transcend what is sensible. This leads to a radical denial of the significance of metaphysics in a subtle way.<sup>18</sup> Wojtyla illustrates the way the modern era ended “by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth.”<sup>19</sup> This means that *the use of freedom is directly linked to how the human person receives the truth*. Hence, when truth is falsified and confused, it has a drastic effect on *freedom*. Wojtyla condemns the problematic philosophical stances which he believes are the unfolding of the problems given by the moderns in the contemporary period. The ethical and moral problems concerning limitless freedom which the moderns have spearheaded are still suffered today. In fact, Wojtyla stresses that “the human issues most frequently debated and differently resolved in contemporary moral reflection are all closely related, albeit in various ways to a crucial issue: *human freedom*.”<sup>20</sup> At any rate, freedom nowadays is seen as a power instead of a gift. The difference is crucial: in *freedom as absolute power* man perceives his freedom as an instrument of oppression; an apparatus of exploitation and worst, it is seen as a power that is absolute. In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Wojtyla pointed out that these modern ways of thinking “have rejected philosophy’s contemplative end.”<sup>21</sup> These offshoots in philosophy caused the human person to wrongly think that freedom is a license to do whatever he wants to do. As a result, it leads man to the illusion that he is incapable of *auto-teleology* because after all there is no need for that.

Another way of understanding freedom is as a gift. This way of understanding is taken as a responsibility, an instrument of duty, and the vessel of goodness and truth

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<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Families* §14.

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

<sup>18</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, “From Vatican I to John Paul II” in *Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays in Fides et Ratio*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor: The Splendor of Faith* (August 6, 1993), §4.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, § 31.

<sup>21</sup> David Vincent Meconi, S.J., “*Philosophari in Maria* [original emphasis]” in *Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays on Fides et Ratio*, eds. David Ruel Foster and Joseph W. Koterski (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 83.

not only to oneself but also to others. So, the problem now becomes clear, freedom as absolute power must be corrected for it hinders man to achieve a moral life. Undeniably, this is a very common topic, but what makes this different? This research focuses on Wojtyła's concept of auto-teleology, an aspect of his philosophy that is not studied in detail. One of the reasons that I can see why these scholars have missed this point is that auto-teleology is a concept of Wojtyła that he discussed in an article that serves as a sequel to his book *The Acting Person*. This article is entitled: "The Transcendence of The Person in Action and Man's (Auto) Self-Teleology" published in the *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research Vol. III*. The opening lines confirm this, "While referring to the rich program of the Conference of Arezzo-Siena, devoted to the question of teleology in its multiple aspects and meanings, I wish to present the problem of man's self-teleology...I undertake one more attempt to develop conceptions contained in my study *The Acting Person*."<sup>22</sup> Under those circumstances, I attempt to provide a theoretical solution to the aforementioned problems through a study on how auto-teleology makes man achieve a moral life. The problem that this study wants to answer reads as follows: Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life according to Karol Wojtyła's philosophy?

## WOJTYŁA'S PERSONALISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

There are two ways to understand the human person according to Wojtyła. First is *cosmological* which understands the human person based on external and biological factors like Aristotle's *homo est animal rationale*, Boethius's *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia*, and Aquinas's *perfectissimum ens*.<sup>23</sup> These observations are true, yet these must be complemented by the second way of understanding the person: the *personalistic* which seeks to understand the person inwardly since the human being is "not merely as a being defined according to species, but as a concrete self, a self-experiencing subject."<sup>24</sup> John F. Crosby summarizes this point in a very accurate way saying that

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<sup>22</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "The Transcendence of The Person in Action and Man's Self-Teleology" in *Analecta Husserliana: The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology* ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, (Boston, U.S.A.: D.Reidel Publishing Company, 1976), 203.

<sup>23</sup> See Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, 211 and Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism" in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, 167.

<sup>24</sup> Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, 213. The 'irreducible' here refers to the dignity of the human person and also of his subjectivity in contrast to objectivity, but added to that Wojtyła clarifies that he also refers by the *irreducible* "...everything in the human being that is invisible and wholly internal and whereby each human being, myself included, is an 'eyewitness' of his or her own self—of his or her own humanity and person." Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being" in *Person and Community*, 214.

Wojtyla distinguishes between what he calls a predominantly cosmological understanding of man and a predominantly personalist understanding of him. In the former, man is considered 'from without,' in the latter he is considered 'from within,' that is, as he experiences himself in consciously living his being...in the former, man is experienced objectively, and in the latter, subjectively, or according to his subjectivity.<sup>25</sup>

This leads Wojtyla in saying that one must stop at the *irreducible in man*. At this point, it makes sense to ask what makes man irreducible? Wojtyla answers this in his work *Love and Responsibility*. He first shows that in the world there exist as *objects* which are also being in this world, yet these beings are deprived of reason and life, therefore a thing is an inanimate object in the proper sense of the word. But man is not an inanimate object. He possesses freedom, reason, and dignity. Therefore, he is rightly and justly to be taken as a *subject*. Although man is also an *object*, he is an object inasmuch as he also belongs in the same world as other objects. He is an *objective somebody* never merely an object as *something*. Hence, he can never be treated in the same way as any other objects for the simple reason that he is a person, someone who possesses an interior life.<sup>26</sup> Wojtyla highlights the reason why the human person should be regarded as a *person*:

to stress that man cannot be reduced wholly to what is contained in the concept of a "specimen of the species," [i.e. *homo sapiens, homo est rationalis naturae*] but has in himself something more, some particular fullness and perfection of being. To emphasize this fullness and perfection the word 'person must necessarily be used.<sup>27</sup>

One is led to ask, what makes man unique among any other being in this world? Wojtyla gives us three answers. First, one of the characteristics that make the human person unique is his *interiority*, his interior life.<sup>28</sup> But, because he has a body, he can also reach to his world, to other beings that surround him, in a different way insofar as he is not only composed of a body but he has a soul.<sup>29</sup> This interiority, therefore that

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<sup>25</sup> John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 244.

<sup>26</sup> See Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Wojtyla asserts that what forms the interior life of man is cognition and desire. He says "Cognition and desire in man take on a spiritual character, and therefore they contribute to the formation of the true interior life, which does not occur in animals. The interior life is the spiritual life. It focuses on truth and the good." Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Wojtyla tells us how does man differ from other beings in this world in terms of reaching to the objective world, he says that "...precisely through interiority and interior life man not only is a

allows man to communicate with his creator—God. This particular distinctiveness makes man the greatest and the most perfect being in the created world.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Wojtyła reminds that “the contact of the person with the objective world, with reality, is not merely ‘biological’ (*przyrodniczy*), physical, as is the case with all other creations of nature (*przyroda*), nor only sensual, as is the case with animals.”<sup>31</sup> Second, man, Wojtyła believes, is capable of self-determination. This reality is another truth that makes man an exceptional being in the world because this self-determination is “based on reflection and manifested in the fact that, while acting, man chooses what he wants to do.”<sup>32</sup> This capacity to choose what he wants to do is rooted in the fact that man possesses free will he is therefore *sui iuris*. The human person is the master of himself, the one who steers his direction through his chosen actions as he can rationally distinguish what is right from wrong. Lastly, man, Wojtyła adds, is *alteri incommunicabilis*—nontransferable, incommunicable. This particular point is linked with the second point for both of them point to the power of the human person’s self-determination, interiority, and free will. Here, it is evident how no one can will or act of the will for another.<sup>33</sup> Richard Spinello perfectly illustrates the expressions *sui iuris* and *alteri incommunicabilis* in the following way:

this self-possession, which becomes evident in the examination of human experience is expressed in two ways. First, the person is aware of himself; only a person can utter the word ‘I’ and know that it refers to him. Thus, a person possesses himself because he is present to himself from within by being conscious of himself and his actions. Second, a person ‘possesses himself and determines himself’ because he has mastery or control over himself.<sup>34</sup>

After showing the fundamental understanding of the human person according to Wojtyła, it now makes sense to show what is the thought of Wojtyła regarding *authentic* human love.

## WOJTYŁA’S PERSONALISTIC NOTION OF HUMAN ACTION

One of the most necessary things to consider is Wojtyła’s distinction between *actus humanus* and *actus hominis*. *Actus humanus* implies deliberation of a specific purpose

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person, but at the same time mostly through them inheres in the objective world, in the ‘external’ world., where he inheres in the manner proper and characteristic to him.” Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Richard Spinello, *Understanding Love and Responsibility* (Boston, U.S.A.: Pauline Books & Media, 2014), 17.



in consenting the will to act in such a manner. At any rate, Wojtyla is not satisfied with this *Aristotelian-Scholastic* definition of *actus humanus* for the sole reason that “less directly, it accounts for his potentiality as the source of acting.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, this definition, though it is acceptable, must be developed in order to create a greater emphasis on the person. Thus, *actus voluntarius* is what Wojtyla prefers to use due to the fact that this definition “points directly to the power that serves as the dynamic basis in conscious acting, the basis of action[.]”<sup>36</sup> This *actus voluntarius* involves the use of the free will leading to the experience of the *moment of efficacy* wherein the human person—because of *reflexive trait* of consciousness—experiences himself as being the actor, the author of the specific action that he committed.<sup>37</sup> This specific *moment of efficacy* is Wojtyla’s point of departure in distinguishing the *actus voluntarius* from *actus hominis* because, in the latter, which he expresses as the *something-happens-in-man*, this moment is absent. This latter is “that form of human dynamism in which man is not aware of his efficacy and does not experience it.”<sup>38</sup> Unlike those freely and consciously chosen actions, man is not responsible for the dynamism that simply *happens* to him inasmuch as it lacks efficacy. To make this easier to understand, it is essential to note the two levels of dynamisms namely, the *somato-vegetative dynamism* and the *psycho-emotive dynamism*. The former refers to the biological processes that *happen* in man, for instance, blinking, feeling sleepy, breathing, and the like, while the latter points to the emotional-affective states of man, for example being attracted to the person of the other sex. Certainly, the human person—thanks to the *reflective* or mirroring function of consciousness—is conscious about these experiences, but he is not responsible for these dynamisms for the sole reason that these only *happens in man*.<sup>39</sup>

### *Self-Determination and Self-Fulfillment*

After clarifying the difference between *actus voluntarius* and *actus hominis*, it is now proper to turn our gaze towards self-determination and self-fulfillment. Self-determination is the specific trait of the acting person that confirms the human as *sui iuris* and *alteri incommunicabilis* because self-determination “presupposes a special

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<sup>35</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Holland: D.Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> The reflexive trait of consciousness “denotes that consciousness, so to speak, turns back naturally upon the subject, if thereby the subjectiveness of the subject is brought into prominence in experience...we mean that it directs everything back upon the subject.” *Ibid.*, 43. See also 66.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>39</sup> This is an aspect of consciousness in its “mirroring function...the penetrative illumination is rather like keeping the objects and their cognitive meanings ‘in the light,’ or ‘in the actual field of consciousness.’” *Ibid.*, 32-33. See also 88-89.

complexity of the person. Only the one who has *possession of himself* and is simultaneously his own sole and exclusive possession can be a person.”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, self-determination is comprised of two structures namely, *self-possession* and *self-governance*. The former refers to the experience of genuine “I will” which is contained within self-determination. “I will,” explains Wojtyla, “is an act of self-determination at a particular moment it presupposes structural self-possession. For only the things that are man’s actual possessions can be determined by him; they can be determined only by the one who actually possesses them.”<sup>41</sup> The latter on the other hand is a result of the former. Without self-possession, there can be no self-governance. At any rate, these two are bound together in self-determination. With this second aspect, Wojtyla emphasizes, “every man actually governs himself; he actually exercises that specific power over himself which nobody else can exercise or execute.”<sup>42</sup> It is through self-determination that every action of man, every “I will” originates from himself. No one can dictate against one’s own will. no other person can alienate him from his freedom. “The person, the acting ego,” Wojtyla adds, “also experiences the awareness that *he is the one who is determined by himself* and that *his decisions make him become somebody*, who may be good or bad.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, through self-determination, the human person experiences himself not simply as the *author of the action*, but also the one who *genuinely wills* the action insofar as he governs and possesses himself. “If I determine myself,” Wojtyla emphasizes, “I must possess myself and govern myself.”<sup>44</sup>

Self-fulfillment is equally important as self-determination. “The performing of an action, through the fulfillment it brings,” Wojtyla notes, “is coordinate with self-determination [...]for being the performer of an action man also fulfills himself in it.”<sup>45</sup> However, there is a specific condition towards fulfillment, that is, the action must be morally good, otherwise it will lead to nonfulfillment. “Man fulfills himself as the person, as ‘somebody,’ and as such he may become either good or bad, which means that he may or may not achieve fulfillment.”<sup>46</sup> If, on one hand, self-determination is conditioned by self-governance and self-possession, on the other hand, self-fulfillment strictly requires morally good actions. Besides, “human actions once performed do not vanish without a trace: they leave their moral value, which constitutes an objective reality intrinsically cohesive with the person, and thus a reality also profoundly

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. Emphasis mine

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Wojtyla, “The Personal Structure of Self-Determination” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, 192.

<sup>45</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 151.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

subjective.”<sup>47</sup> This gives justification for why the performance of *morally evil actions* leads to nonfulfillment since the experience of *I became evil because of that action* will surely leave a mark in man’s consciousness and conscience. Here, the function of conscience can be concisely summarized: it leads to man’s actions to depend on truth and goodness. In short, conscience enhances man’s use of his freedom insofar as “human freedom is not accomplished nor exercised in bypassing the truth but, on the contrary, by the person’s realization and surrender to truth.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it is only through a surrendering of freedom to truth that actions become good. Such a surrendering results in man’s self-fulfillment achieved through choosing to *become good* in his action. Let us not forget that “man is not only the agent of his acting, he is also the creator of it.”<sup>49</sup>

### *Transcendence and Integration*

Having discussed this, it is important to probe further the significance of transcendence. According to Karol Wojtyła, there are two kinds of transcendence. The first is horizontal transcendence and the second is vertical transcendence. Etymologically speaking, *transcendence* “means to go over and beyond a threshold or a boundary (*trans-cendere*). This may refer to subject’s stepping out of his limits toward an object, as is in different ways the case in what is known as intentional acts of external (‘transcendent’) perception.”<sup>50</sup> The subject pursuing an external object is what Wojtyła called as horizontal transcendence in which “experience shows the existence of the objectively existing world outside the subjectivity of consciousness.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, this is not the ultimate concern of Wojtyła because the transcendence which he wants to explain is the vertical transcendence. This second type of transcendence “is the fruit of self-determination; the person transcends his structural boundaries through the capacity to exercise freedom; of being free in the process of *acting*, and not only in the intentional direction of willings toward an external object.”<sup>52</sup> Put it differently, vertical transcendence in this sense refers to *experiencing freedom*. If the direction of horizontal transcendence is *ad extra*, the path of vertical transcendence is *ad intra*—it reveals to the human person his internal structures such as freedom, self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination. These all are contributing factors towards the exercise of freedom that is rooted in

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>50</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 119. Emphasis retained.

<sup>51</sup> Adrian J. Reimers, “Reason and Faith in Wojtyła/John Paul II” in *Karol Wojtyła’s Personalist Philosophy: Understanding Person & Act* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016) 50.

<sup>52</sup> Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 119. Emphasis retained.

conscience. Without a doubt, in the experience of vertical transcendence, “man manifests himself as a person.”<sup>53</sup> More important than that is the fact that through vertical transcendence man realizes his spirituality.<sup>54</sup>

Vertical transcendence will never be possible if the person is *disintegrated* and suspended in a certain void<sup>55</sup> Here, the manifestation of self-governance and self-possession becomes vivid:

He who *governs himself* is at the same time subjected and subordinate to himself. He who *possesses himself*, is simultaneously *in* the possession of himself; to be in the possession and to be subordinate are elements of the same structure, of the same dynamic reality that is determined by the person and the action.<sup>56</sup>

Integration presupposes the fact that the human person is *self-governed* and *self-possessed*. Thus, if to be integrated means being self-governed and self-possessed, the opposite is true to disintegration: a disintegrated person is someone who has “a total absence of self-governance and self-possession...to the extent that this inability *prevents him* from subordinating himself and thus remaining in possession of himself...the defects and defaults of integration become, however, the *defects and defaults of [vertical] transcendence*.”<sup>57</sup> Definitely, integration conditions the vertical transcendence of a person in action.

### *Auto-Teleology*

With the foregoing discussion, a question therefore arises: how is it possible for a human person to subordinate himself and remain in possession of himself, a characteristic of someone who is integrated insofar as he is self-governed and self-possessed? Wojtyła’s answer, as I mentioned earlier, cannot be found in *The Acting Person* but instead in his article “The Transcendence of the Person in Action and Man’s Self-Teleology.” Wojtyła discussed the importance of *auto-teleology* in the vertical

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 181. It is important to note here what does Wojtyła mean by spiritual: “By ‘spiritual’ we mean indeed an immaterial factor which is inherently irreducible to matter....In point of fact, we may easily observe that everything of which the person’s transcendence in the action consists, and which constitutes this transcendence, is in this sense spiritual. Since this, as we saw, is *within the reach of phenomenological insight*, the acceptance of the *spiritual nature of man* in its authentic manifestation is not a result of some abstraction but, if one may say so, has its intuitional shape; *spirituality is open to intuition as well as to an unfolding analysis*.” *Ibid.*, 181. Emphasis mine.

<sup>55</sup> See *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 190. Emphasis mine except “*in*”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194. Emphasis mine.

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transcendence of person in act. According to him, there are three ways to understand *telos* in this sense: (1) *end*, (2) *aim*, and above all (3) *limit*.

In the first sense, Wojtyła explains self-teleology as an *end* in light of self-determination. As already discussed, self-determination is the experience of genuine willing expressed through the statement “I will.” This indicates that “only the personal subject, or the personal ‘I’ is determining and (acting), and also, that this personal ‘I’ is determining about himself as a subject.”<sup>58</sup> This results in Wojtyła’s realization that self-determination illuminates the way for the human person to experience himself as an *end in himself*. However, this cannot be a *solipsistic* idea, by contrast, “the self-teleology of man indicates only that this contact and this life-giving exchange are accomplished on the level and by the standards of the personal ‘I’; in him, it finds its starting point and its goal; to a certain extent it begins with him and is ultimately founded in him; it is from him that it takes its shape, and also shapes him.”<sup>59</sup> What Wojtyła is trying to say here is that self-teleology, as seen from the aspect of self-determination, enriches man’s self-governance and self-possession because it is through self-teleology that man sees himself as the one responsible for his actions.

In the second sense, Wojtyła proves his point that the human person is also an aim for himself. “[H]e acts, and the willing, choices, and decisions, contained in them find their limit in this man himself. This limit is found on the basis of the transcendence reference to truth[.]”<sup>60</sup> Man is an *aim* for himself because he must limit his actions according to what is due to him as a person. It is always expected from him that he uses his freedom according to truth and goodness rooted in his conscience with an *aim* to fulfill himself in it for “the personalistic structure of that fulfillment corresponds in the field of experience to the self-teleology of man.”<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the third sense is *limit*. This points to the fact that actions must be limited on the personal level. Actions must always reveal the person and must affirm the worth and dignity of the human person for this will lead towards transcendence insofar as it allows man to give himself to others. “If a man spontaneously ‘transcends’ himself toward another, toward others, toward the community (and this ‘transcending occurs the ‘outgrowing of one’s self’), that is the proof that self-fulfillment, or in other words, *self-teleology* brings with itself an *opening of the subject*.”<sup>62</sup> This is proof that the more that the human person limits himself—his freedom within the truth and the good—the more he becomes capable of giving himself which results in his fulfillment as a person. “Man fulfills himself ‘through others’ and realizes his

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<sup>58</sup> Wojtyła, “The Transcendence of The Person in Action and Man’s Self-Teleology” in *Analecta Husserliana: The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology*, 206.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Wojtyła, “The Transcendence of The Person in Action and Man’s Self-Teleology” in *Analecta Husserliana: The Teleologies in Husserlian Phenomenology*, 210. Emphasis mine.

own self by living 'for others.' This emphasizes not only the transcending one's self toward others, but most of all the outgrowing of one's self."<sup>63</sup> A limitation is never to be understood as a restriction, but a unique capacity of the human person. This makes us more human inasmuch as it leads us towards realizing our spirituality by vertical transcendence. As Wojtyla highlights

"self-teleology of the limit" is first of all existentially proper to the man who exists and acts in the worlds. It is the limit which is the truth of human acts. Conscience is the fundamental condition of the fulfillment of self. "The world" signifies for every man the necessity of a judgment, which arises from the very depth of his personal being.<sup>64</sup>

## THE NECESSITY OF AUTO-TELEOLOGY IN THE MORAL LIFE

Before going any further, it is important to recall the role which self-determination plays in the internal structure of the human person. Wojtyla tells us that self-determination allows man to experience authentic freedom which is expressed with "I can, but I need not." The human person, whenever presented with an option to do moral evil, is free enough to reject doing it. Such is an expression of his authentic "I will." The human person is the efficacious cause of his actions, that he is *inalienable* and *intransferrable*. As a result, even if he is coerced, he can still reject doing evil even at the expense of his own life. We can see examples of this by looking at the martyrs of the Catholic Church. Thus, Wojtyla is correct when he claims that we can discover auto(self)-teleology in self-determination. We can observe that auto(self)-teleology unfolds in self-determination insofar as "self(auto)-teleology presupposes teleology."<sup>65</sup> Auto-teleology literally means directing the self (*auto*) towards an end (*telos*). However, using Wojtyla's own terms auto-teleology must be interpreted in threefold ways: (1) directing of the self towards an *end*, (2) directing of the self towards an *aim*, and (3) directing of the self towards the *limit*.

If auto-teleology presupposes teleology, one can rightly ask: what is the *telos* or *end* in this case? It is the human person himself: "the auto(self)-teleology of man is outlined as a closed cycle, constantly closing within the bounds of man as subject, who in the action becomes for himself not only an object, but also a limit and an end."<sup>66</sup> However, by saying this, it seems that the person is enclosed only to himself and experiences this only through himself. It seems like a solipsistic image in the field of morality.<sup>67</sup> Yet, this cannot be the case since Wojtyla clarifies that

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> See *Ibid.*

man's auto(self)-teleology does not signify in the first place a closing up within himself, but a living contact with the whole reality and a dynamic exchange, characteristic of the structure of self-determination, with the world of values, hierarchized and differentiated within itself.<sup>68</sup>

So what is the proper way of looking at this concept of auto-teleology as an end? Humanity's auto-teleology "indicates only that this contact and this life-giving exchange are accomplished on the level and by the standards of the personal 'I'; in him it finds its starting point and its *goal*; to a certain extent it begins with him and is ultimately founded in him; it is from him that it takes its shape, and also shapes him."<sup>69</sup> In other words, auto(self)-teleology as end shows to man that he is an end in himself.

Wojtyla starts with the claim that "man is such a manner an aim for himself"<sup>70</sup> because one can observe that man's action and everything that proceeds within him before doing that action, find its limit within the person himself. "This limit," Wojtyla explains, "is found in the basis of the transcendent reference to truth (and with it also to good...)"<sup>71</sup> This auto-teleology of aim means that humanity's action *aims* to fulfill his *personhood*. The human person *aims* to fulfill himself and *can* fulfill himself only by doing morally good actions that are fitting to him as a person. Although this is true, one must not forget the fact that auto-teleology as *limit* is the crown itself, because it conditions all auto-teleology of aim proper to man.<sup>72</sup>

Lastly, auto-teleology of limit for Wojtyla is the crowning glory of his personalistic anthropology and ethics because the transcendence of person in act is made possible through this. The meeting point between these two is found in the conscience of man which refers him to truth that will lead him towards what is good. While *auto-teleology as limit* allows man to experience his conscience, one's conscience will enable man to transcend his actions, to subordinate his freedom to the truth and the good. Thus, generally speaking, by virtue of *auto-teleology as limit*, the human person is able to aim for the fulfillment of his being. As such, Wojtyla emphasizes that this type of teleology "is first of all existentially proper to the man who exists and acts in the world"<sup>73</sup> because only the human person possesses a conscience and the capacity to know the truth, giving him the capability to do the good. He is guided by his reason and not only by his instinct given by nature. It is therefore proper to say that it is only the human person himself who is given the power to know and set the limits of his freedom and his actions. By doing so, man, who is the subject of his own self-

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-207. Emphasis mine.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> See *Ibid.*, 209 and 211.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

fulfillment, “keeps the full consciousness of his own non absoluteness or in other words, of the contingency, of the limitations, of the relativity of his being.”<sup>74</sup> Here, we can therefore ask: if self-fulfillment is conditioned by limitation, is it not self-contradictory in the sense that self-fulfillment must liberate man? The answer is no, it is not self-contradictory. It is appropriate for self-fulfillment to be conditioned by limitation because Wojtyla understands auto-teleology of *limit* as limiting freedom only to the true and the good. In Wojtyla’s mind, this is the only real path toward authentic liberty. Thus, if the human person chooses morally evil acts, despite knowing the truth, he does not liberate himself. On the contrary, he chains himself by allowing his personhood and freedom to be enslaved by what is morally evil. Despite being free to reject morally evil acts, he opted to do it, defying *limits for the good*, resulting in non-fulfillment. Therefore, it follows that the kind of liberation of freedom that *auto-teleology of limit* offers is liberation from morally evil acts. Man can experience himself being free to say “I can, but I need not,” amid the inclination to do evil acts. Certainly, each can only outgrow himself and be totally free when he limits himself to what is true and good. Without a doubt, Wojtyla’s teaching on auto-teleology of *limit* proves to us that “man is constantly an assignment to himself; he is imposed upon himself as *a task*, and each time, in every action, willing, choice, and decision are imposed upon himself anew.”<sup>75</sup>

## CONCLUSION

For this study, I have posed the question: Why is auto-teleology necessary in achieving moral life according to Karol Wojtyla’s Philosophy? After showing the fundamental concepts of Wojtyla’s philosophy, I have provided why and how auto-teleology is necessary for achieving moral life because *auto-teleology* for Wojtyla is the *catalyst*, so to speak, of transcendence which is the crucial factor for the human person to live a moral life. It might initially seem contradicting to see auto-teleology fused together with transcendence since transcendence implies going over the boundaries while auto-teleology is stressed as a limit. Yet, for Wojtyla, this is not a contradiction since the proper way to understand this is through succession. Auto-teleology conditions transcendence while transcendence conditions the moral life of the person insofar as the person is by nature is not merely rational but above all, transcendental.

Auto-teleology for Karol Wojtyla is necessary for a moral life since the person is not simply an objective being but a subjective being who possesses a soul. The considerations of Aristotle, Boethius, Aquinas, or even Scheler had rather reductive views of the human person, falling short to present the human being fully. Wojtyla stresses that the human person is not simply part of this world but also has a world

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*



of his own, a world where he finds his interiority, his soul. This truth about the human person proves that *auto-teleology* is a requirement for him to transcend his being because without it, he remains to be an animal endowed with rationality that cannot tame his own sensibilities. This obviously happens when each allows himself to be enslaved by his passions alone. Without auto-teleology, man's whole being and freedom are doomed.

My claim regarding auto-teleology can be solidified by finding how it is applicable to Wojtyla's notion of love, which is also one of the bases of his notion of moral life. If authentic human love is seen in the light of spousal love, which emphasizes self-donation, it, therefore, follows that auto-teleology is necessary for three reasons. First, auto-teleology as *end* emphasizes self-determination which highlights self-governance and self-possession leading to the experience of the person as *I am an end in itself*. I must treat other human beings as *an end in themselves* and never as a means. With this, the utilitarian attitude is removed. Indeed, it is through auto-teleology as an *end* that reciprocal self-giving of individual I's is possible because it allows each to love another on a personalistic level. Such a take affirms the dignity and worth of the beloved, preventing them to treat each other as a mere object and resulting in a sincere and radical gift of the self. Second, auto-teleology as an *aim* focuses on the self-fulfillment of the person, leading him to use his freedom in subordination to truth and good insofar as man *aims* to fulfill himself in every action. Finally, auto-teleology as *limit* stresses the value of vertical transcendence of the person in act. As a result, it leads the person back to his interiority where his conscience can be found and his spiritual nature can be experienced, so to speak. Through auto-teleology as *limit*, man becomes capable to rise above the lure of appearances, for it prevents him to transcend his actions on the horizontal aspect alone, hence leading him towards vertical transcendence, which is proper to man. Moreover, auto-teleology as *limit* allows man to act according to the personalistic norm, for it makes him rise beyond his own ego. As a consequence, it prevents him to be an individualistic person, making him capable of authentically loving another person through self-donation—sincere gift of the self—which is absolutely free of any utilitarian attitude. For how can one so selfish *totally give himself* to others. Undeniably, auto-teleology as *end, aim, and limit* serves as the bridge in allowing actions that express love to transcend from merely physical love to spiritual love that leads man to look at love “from ‘phenomenon’ to ‘foundation’”<sup>76</sup>

The depth of Wojtyla's notion of *auto-teleology* makes one think that it is purely ideological—suspended in the abstract. However, this cannot be true, because it is existentially factual that man as being transcendental by nature is at the same time limited by his nature as human being. For instance, a person must not excessively

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<sup>76</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason* (September 14, 1998) §83.

work physically, otherwise it can be the cause his death.<sup>77</sup> Translating this into moral terms, a best example can be seen with medical front-liners during this COVID-19 pandemic who are doing their jobs to the best of their ability, not because of any high pay awaiting them but simply because of their charity and duty to a sworn profession despite the virus' threat. They still opted to limit their self-care to transcend it into selfless duty to others. Indeed, *auto-teleology* leads the person towards outgrowing his self which makes one become a better person and finally live a moral life—a life of transcendence. Without a doubt, “rational reflection and daily experience demonstrate the weakness which marks man’s freedom. That freedom is real but limited: its absolute and unconditional origin is not in itself, but in the life within which it is situated and which represents for it, at one and the same time, both a limitation and a possibility.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Katsuo Nishiyama and Jeffrey V. Johnson, “*Karoshi*—Death from Overwork: Occupational Health Consequences of Japanese Production Management” *International Journal of Health Services* 24.4 (1997): 625-641.

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