

# MAN IS HIMSELF THROUGH TRUTH. IN SEARCH OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF KAROL WOJTYŁA'S AND TADEUSZ STYCZEŃ'S PERSONALISM

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**Abstract:** The paper discusses one of the key aspects of Karol Wojtyła's and Tadeusz Styczeń's ethics, namely, the dependence of freedom on truth. By building their ethics within the framework of the classic metaphysics, both the thinkers were convinced a range of the intellectual and moral errors of the present times, which are dangerous to man, spring from the breach of that constitutive bond between these fundamental values. The article is a reconstruction of the understanding of the relationship between freedom and truth as underlying the mutually supplementary personalist ethics of Wojtyła and Styczeń, with the dignity of the human person as its conceptual centre. The same triad of values, dignity – freedom – truth, in particular, the truth about the human person, would, for John Paul II, become the criterion of evaluation of the human culture and actions taken in the social dimension.

**Keywords:** person; dignity; conscience; law

## INTRODUCTION

This text has been inspired by the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, to fall in August 2023.<sup>1</sup> The concept of truth is placed in the very title and at the core of the document, devoted to “the fundamental issues of the Church's moral teaching.” Each encyclical is the head of Church's intervention in response to a malady afflicting man and humankind at any given time. In *Veritatis splendor*, John Paul II points out some trends in contemporary thinking, i.e., subjectivism, utilitarianism, pragmatism, scepticism, and above all, ethical relativism, which threaten to blur the boundary between good and evil. The significance of human freedom is emphasised to such a degree that it becomes absolute and the source of all values. The pope sees the absolutisation of freedom,

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<sup>1</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae encyclicae cunctis catholicae Ecclesiae episcopis de quibusdam quaestionibus fundamentalibus doctrinae moralis Ecclesiae *Veritatis splendor* (06.08.1993), AAS 85 (1993), p. 1133-228 [hereinafter: VS].

combined with the vanishing of the idea of the universal truth about good as being among the most profound sources of the crisis of contemporary culture. Awarding the individual conscience the prerogative of the supreme instance of moral judgment which decides what is good and what is evil in any given situation by itself is a symptom of the crisis (VS 32). Thus, every human has a truth of theirs, different from the truths of others. At its extreme, the individualism leads to a rejection of the idea of the human nature and, paradoxically, doubting or even an outright questioning of the freedom itself (VS 32, 33).

John Paul II did not limit himself to the diagnosis of the contemporary crisis and its sources but went on to identify a way of overcoming it. It was still in his time as cardinal that he wrote: "Man is himself through truth. The attitude to truth constitutes the person's humanity, dignity .... Thinking about truth and life in truth decides this dignity" [Wojtyła 1980, 115]. This quotation expresses the essence of 'the case of man' that emerges from the anthropological discussions of Karol Wojtyła as well as of Tadeusz Styczeń, who expanded on and propagated the ethical personalism of the author of *Person and Act*. Both the thinkers advanced in their philosophical work an interesting theory of mutual relations between truth and freedom in man's anthropological structure. It is of special importance to the contemporary culture in the context of the notion and phenomenon of post-truth that is becoming highly acclaimed, dangerously fashionable, and influential. In the name of the human person's well-being and rights as well as for the sake of a proper shape of social reality and the good of personal interrelations, we need to continue demonstrating the closest possible links between these two basic values. This is the objective of this paper. To be a little more accurate, it is intended to reach the interface between truth and freedom as underpinning K. Wojtyła's and T. Styczeń's personalism. Since this is human dignity which is key to understanding the ethical thinking of both the philosophers, the discussion will begin with this issue.

## 1. REVEAL THE PERSON AND ITS DIGNITY

"Ethics finds itself only after it's become a proclamation for personal dignity. Being in the service of that proclamation is therefore the main, if not the only objective of ethics, its proper role, and public mission" [Styczeń 1993b, 13], T. Styczeń claimed in response to the question, "What do I, as an ethicist, see as my role and mission for my contemporaries?" [ibid.]. The experience of moral obligation, of a categorical nature, is the starting point for the ethical deliberations undertaken by Wojtyła and Styczeń.

The novelty of such a personalism consists in the fact of the moral obligation being grounded in the truth of personal dignity [Wierzbicki 2021, 249-50].

### 1.1. The person is 'somebody' objectively (K. Wojtyła's approach)

To Wojtyła, the person's special ontic status is the source of and reason for the norm essential to morality. The personalist norm stated in *Love and Responsibility* is the core of his ethics. Modifying the second formula of I. Kant's categorical imperative, Wojtyła wrote: "Whenever the person is the object of action in your conduct, remember you cannot treat it merely as a means to an end, as an instrument, but must take into account it has or at least should have an end of itself" [Wojtyła 2001, 30]. Such a personalist norm has two varieties. As a principle with negative contents, it says "the person is a good that doesn't agree with use, which cannot be treated as an object of use and, as such, as a means to an end. This is paralleled by the positive content of the personalist norm: the person is such a good that love is the proper and fully valuable attitude to it" [ibid., 14]. The personalist norm arises from the discovery of the ontological and axiological status of the person among the remaining beings of the visible world. They do give rise to the moral obligation of affirming the person for its own sake. The very fact of being a person 'calls for' living up to who one is. Understanding what the person is engenders the obligation of respect for both its own and other persons' dignity [Wojtyła 2020, 180]. In this sense, the dignity of man as the person means above all a property or a basic quality – in this meaning, the value of the person as such: the value accruing to a man for the reason of him being a person, which man should care for this very reason [Wojtyła 1991, 50].

Man is ontically a personal being. This means that, in a cognitive confrontation with the world, he always manifests himself as *somebody*, different from the remaining beings of the visible world, always merely *something*, in the fullness of his unique and most perfect being [Wojtyła 2001, 24]. The deepest semantic core of the Polish word 'person' points to this 'intrinsic' dimension of every single man. Thinkers have long pondered man's ontic status. The notion of the person as the peak form of being is the good shared by the responses to that first and foremost question, Who is man?, emerging from a variety of philosophical currents.<sup>2</sup>

Explaining what it means to say the person is objectively *somebody*, Wojtyła said: "The word *person* was forged to emphasise man will not reduce

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<sup>2</sup> *Persona significat id quo est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura* (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 3).

himself without any residue to the contents of *the individual of a species*, but has something more, a particular fullness and perfection of being which must necessarily be highlighted with the word *person*” [Wojtyła 2001, 24]. Man as a person is neither one of the many pieces of the same species nor even an individual. Even less is he a copy of an object. The person stands out from other beings with its existence characterised by individuality and uniqueness. The dimension of inner life is what decides the exceptional relationship of the person to the outside world and is also the reason for the exceptional status of a human subject (dignity). This spiritual dimension of the person is actuated in the acts of reason and will by means of which the person realises its transcendence in relation to the external world and to itself [Wierzbicki 2021, 29]. Referring back to the classic definition of the person by Boethius and to the fundamental categories developed by Thomas Aquinas, Wojtyła stresses this dimension of the human person’s transcendence.

The personalism of Wojtyła the philosopher is rooted in the tradition of Christian thought. The author of *Love and Responsibility* compliments the philosophical understanding of the human person’s dignity with the theological perspective. This approach occupies a central position in John Paul II’s doctrinal teaching. The personalist norm Wojtyła as pope keeps returning to has its theological grounding in the ending words of the 24th number of *Gaudium et spes* Constitution of the 2nd Vatican Council: “If human beings are the only creatures on earth that God has wanted for their own sake, they can fully discover their true selves only in sincere self-giving.”<sup>3</sup> These words imply the statement the fullness of personal being is constituted by mutual self-giving. In this way, the person is constituted in its relation to another.

For John Paul II, the person of Christ the Saviour, who fully reveals man unto himself, is the foundation and ultimate warranty of the human dignity. It is only in Christ, he claims, that man finds “the proper greatness, dignity, and value of his humanity. Man is reaffirmed, as if uttered once again, in the Mystery of Salvation.”<sup>4</sup> Since Christ saved every single man, everyone regained their Divine filiation, forfeited through sin. Therefore, to fully comprehend himself and his own dignity, man “must become closer to Christ, must somehow enter Him with himself, must acquire, assimilate the entire reality of the Incarnation and Salvation” [ibid].

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<sup>3</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis *Gaudium et spes* (07.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025-115, no. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae encyclicae ad Venerabiles Fratres in Episcopatu, ad Sacerdotes et Religiosas Familias, ad Ecclesiae filios et filias, nec non ad universes bonae voluntatis homines Pontificali eius Ministerio ineunte *Redemptor hominis* (04.03.1979), AAS 71 (1979), p. 257-324, no. 10.

In the theological perspective, the calling of man to participation in God's life is a special confirmation of the human person's dignity. K. Wojtyła stresses the human personality expresses itself in particular ways in its relation to the personal God [Wojtyła 2011, 358]. The participation in the life of the Holy Trinity Persons is the ultimate horizon of both human life and a variety of human activities. The relation to God, who, like man, is a personal being who comes to meet man in Christ, is the core of Wojtyła's theological personalism as well as the foundation on which he builds his philosophy of the person [Scola 2010, 136].

### **1.2. *Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam* (T. Styczeń's approach)**

K. Wojtyła pointed to the personalist norm, which orders the affirmation of each person without exception as the basic standard of morality. T. Styczeń expresses the same conviction, emphasising the moral nature of this obligation. The Lublin-based ethicist was convinced that what is due to the person from another person is given on a simultaneous understanding what good the person is [Wierzbicki 2021, 179]. He placed the person's value at the foundations of the moral obligation. Styczeń makes the moral experience, which consists in a subject directly grasping the absolute obligation of affirming the person and its dignity, the foundation of his personalism. The moral obligation is defined here as a normative interpersonal relation in which "the person-object faces ... the person-subject as someone who, by the very fact of being the person, demands recognition from all persons regardless of any other objectives" [Styczeń 1993c, 34]. It's expressed as the following norm: 'the human person must be affirmed for its own sake' (*Persona est affirmanda propter se ipsam*) [Styczeń 2013a, 252]. The formulation of this overarching ethical norm is also grounded in the recognition of the person's status among what can be experienced cognitively in the visible world. The human I's experience of 'above' and 'differently' is directly connected, the Lublin ethicist used to say, to man's inside, his subjective structure [Styczeń 2013b, 133].

Styczeń's understanding of the moral obligation is aptly explained by Alfred Wierzbicki: "The person's dignity is the rationale for the moral obligation. This is not about a theoretical concept of the person that can only be developed by way of philosophical consideration, but about the specific perception of one person by another in real life. It always manifests itself as somebody, the other, the neighbour, not merely one of the objects I have a cognitive and practical contact with, but a magnitude that demands recognition for itself. The recognition of the person's intrinsic value, its ... *above* and *differently* in relation to beings which aren't persons, is the essence of the moral experience. The experience of the obligation is thus objectively

grounded in the person's being and value" [Wierzbicki 2021, 176]. The moral obligation, the affirmation of the person for the sake of itself, is empirically ascertainable. It is a judgment about the real state of affairs concerning an interpersonal relation arising from the fact of personal dignity [ibid., 182-83].

According to Styczeń, the moment of discovering himself in himself is the turning point in the formation of man's moral attitude [ibid.]. By sufficiently recognising ourselves and our human dignity, we discover our difference – we find out we're unique and incomparable to anything else in this world, that we are somebody separate and thus 'personal' against the background of the whole universe. In the world and in the universe, there's nothing not only more worthy than but even equal to the person. Styczeń claims, therefore, the value of every human community is only perceived when the value of each separate human being is noticed and appreciated, especially those most defenceless, that is, above all, those who are already alive but haven't been born yet. The measure of authentic freedom (and of democracy, which values freedom so highly) for each and everyone is the respect not for a race, collective or a state, but for each individual person, whose affirmation becomes a norm of morality [Styczeń 1993a, 187].

For T. Styczeń, morality is man's distinctive feature. He names Socrates its discoverer, the first to identify an equality between the sensitivity to the human person's dignity and moral sensitivity. In the opinion of the Lublin thinker, Socrates deserves the name of the father of ethics and a precursor to its personalist model, since he found the meaning of his service in arousing respect for man's dignity among his contemporaries, most of whom regarded their own happiness as the norm of morality and the objective of ethical thinking. The Greek philosopher helped others discover the dignity both in themselves and in others. Socrates compared his role to that of an obstetrician helping others to be born morally, or born to their humanity [Styczeń 1993b, 18]. Thinking along the same lines, Styczeń claimed a proper discovery of the person is beyond one's reach. Faced with the impossibility of capturing the person with thought and fully expressing them in language, only one thing remains – silence. "How revelatory... this calling is, though!" Styczeń wrote. "Attention! Person! No more for words any more" [ibid.]. The silence towards the person is an expression of a certain helplessness in the face of a mystery we face, on the one hand. It also expresses, however, a cognitively inspiring meeting and marvel at the person's uniqueness.

Styczeń, like Wojtyła, compliments his search for a most effective proclamation about the person and its dignity with a theological perspective. He says ethics cannot but refer to the event of God's Son's Incarnation. It can't but address the event and teachings of Jesus Christ, "the ethicist of all

times.” The incarnation is a kind of demonstration of what each man is worth in himself, since he has such a value to God [ibid., 20]. In response to Anselm of Canterbury’s *Cur Deus homo?*, which an ethicist should bother his contemporaries with at all times, Styczeń argues God became man to reveal man unto himself, to fully reveal the person to itself. The deed God dared to undertake in Jesus Christ uncovered the ultimate measure of every single man’s value [ibid.]. Its sensitivity to the person’s dignity is the greatest success of the civilisation erected on Christian foundations. Even if, Styczeń asserts, Christianity is found a sheer myth, it cannot be denied the power of its disturbing man’s dignity [Styczeń 1993b, 17].

Both the authors discussed so far claim an adequate perception of man involves a discovery of the truth of his dignity. Any choices and actions of man should be appropriate to this truth at all times. The affirmation of the person for itself is the sole correct response to the perception of the status of its good.

## 2. THE NORMATIVE POWER OF TRUTH

Both the authors contemplated here believe the person’s exceptional status (dignity) is founded on the dimension of its specific transcendence. Both Wojtyła and Styczeń stress the dimension of human transcendence which is associated with the relationship between the human person’s freedom and truth. The link between these two values in man’s anthropological structure is so close that it often proves to be impossible to pursue one without the other in practice. John Paul II saw the most profound and dangerous source of the contemporary culture’s crisis in a breach of that important bond between freedom and truth. In the pope’s view, therefore, the debate on a proper relation between these two fundamental values is of the essence (VS 84).

“All the human issues, broadly discussed and variously resolved in the contemporary moral thought, can be reduced, though in diverse ways, to the principal question, the question of man’s freedom” [ibid., 31], John Paul II wrote in the encyclical *Veritatis splendor*. That question undoubtedly remains at the centre of moral reflections thirty years on. Wojtyła’s anthropology, outlined as early as *Person and Act*, is above all an attempt at showing the truth of human freedom anew. It’s a response to those varieties of ‘personalism’ that stress man’s freedom and regard it as the key foundation of his personal dignity, trying to free it from the duty of respecting the truth man is capable of knowing and should be guided by in life. Jean-Paul Sartre openly raises the postulate of releasing man from any norms. Immanuel Kant and his successors voice this postulate indirectly, by doubting man’s cognitive capabilities or by stressing there is no clear

truth of a specific content, in particular, a truth about man that would be binding on him as a moral norm [Szostek 2014, 199].

Wojtyła places the experience of self-determination at the centre of his analysis of freedom, viewing it in the context of exploring experience: 'man acts' or 'fulfils an act'. Wishing to identify everything in his analysis of the act that shows the person as the agent, Wojtyła points out to the moment of personal transcendence that takes place in the act, which he regards as an expression of man's capacity for self-determination, or self-control, fulfilled in the transcendence towards the perceived truth about good. The Cracow-based thinker analyses the act with reference to freedom, manifested with full force in man's actions. He underlines that man, acting consciously and freely, is not only the agent in an act and its transitive and non-transitive effects but also determines himself in this action. The person's agency is also its self-determination [Wojtyła 1976, 15]. Therefore, if one desires to understand the way a subject experiences its agency, one must reach the personal structures that condition that self-determination. In Wojtyła's opinion, self-determination presumes a certain complexity in the person – "namely, the person is one who possesses itself and the one possessed exclusively by itself" [Wojtyła 1994, 152]. The self-possession is followed by another relationship in the person's structure – that of self-mastery. The person is one who masters itself and is mastered by itself. In this manner, self-determination is conditioned by the personal structures of self-possession and self-mastery. Both the person's agency and transcendence are manifested there.

Wojtyła expands and supplements the traditional meaning of transcendence. The objectivist-leaning philosophy regards the human transcendence as overcoming a subject's boundary towards an object, which takes place in the so-called intentional acts (horizontal transcendence). Speaking of transcendence, Wojtyła means primarily the transcendence associated with a person's objectivisation in self-determination. This is transcendence by the very fact of freedom. He explains: 'Such a concept of transcendence as a property of the person's dynamism is explicated precisely with a comparison to the dynamics of nature. Self-determination contributes first of all the superiority of an own *I*' [ibid., 165]. This transcendence primarily reveals the relation of a person unto itself – a transcendence by the very fact of being free in action. Wojtyła defines it as vertical transcendence, a person's feature distinguishing it from other living creatures where only the activity in the horizontal dimension can be established, underpinned with the dynamism of nature. Man is free (autonomous) because he's not fully subject to what merely 'happens' in him, i.e., instincts or feelings. He's not merely an intellectually more efficient animal. As a person, he is characterised by both an appropriate degree of willpower and by the acts of cognition,



which enables him to subject his conduct to the test of objective truth [Merecki 2001, 212-13].

To Wojtyła, freedom in its basic meaning is free will. Man is free as he relies solely on himself in the dynamisation of his subject. He's not only the originator of his action, i.e., an act marked with his own personality and ingenuity, but also the creator of himself, since, by virtue of his acts, he creates the work of the unique, exceptional, human 'I' [Szostek 2014, 46-47]. In this way, freedom is the root of man becoming *somebody* and *somehow*, or morally good or evil through his acts. By emphasising the object of human will in its fundamental meaning is the subject of the same will, Wojtyła continues to emphasise the moment constituting the acts of will is their subordination to the truth of good. That dependence on truth, inherent in the human freedom, is manifest in conscience, whose role consists first of all in showing the subject the truth of itself. Respect for this truth is the path to the realisation of human freedom and thus to man's self-fulfilment as a person [Szostek 1990, 276]. Conscience brings to self-determination the normative power of truth, whose comprehension and choice condition the fulfilment of a person in the act. Wojtyła writes: "The person's transcendence in the act is not only the self-dependence on its own *I*. It also consists in a dependence on truth, which ultimately determines freedom, since the latter is not realised by subordinating truth but by a subordination to truth. The dependence on truth perceived in freedom defines the boundaries of autonomy proper to a human person" [Wojtyła 1994, 198].

The normative power of truth manifests itself experientially in conscience. It is there where that peculiar coupling of truth and obligation is achieved [ibid. 204-205], described by the author of *Person and Act*. The conviction man is himself through truth is the core of K. Wojtyła's anthropology [Wojtyła 1980, 115]. To be oneself is to transcend oneself towards truth, to become dependent on truth. The truth discovered in conscience, particularly the truth of oneself, is never neutral but always stands before a person as an obligation to choose it and testify to it. The claim of the normative power of truth would become the supreme category of T. Styczeń's ethics.

### 3. TOWARDS FREEDOM IN TRUTH: THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIENCE

T. Styczeń points out the path to the understanding of the connection between faithfulness to a known truth and to oneself, through which the human person's unity is expressed and its dignity protected, leads via the experience of one's own conscience. The Lublin ethicist is aware the dispute about conscience – what it is and what role it plays in man's moral life – concerns the human person itself and its identity. For him, the experience

of conscience as a witness to truth is elementary. As the guard of human dignity, it lets its presence be felt especially when man moves away from what he is and should be by his very essence, i.e., a rationally free being capable of self-determination. In an act of defection from truth, it's not freedom which is enslaved but man who, by an act of free decision, becomes a slave to something in himself or something external to himself [Szostek 1991, 29]. Conscience is an act specific to man only as the sole rational and free being who seeks truth and has the freedom of its choice. Conscience, Styczeń says, is 'an act of a subject's self-dependence on itself in the act of becoming self-dependent on truth' [Styczeń 2013c, 194-95]. The act of becoming self-dependent on truth as an expression of obedience to truth guarantees the subject's personal identity and realises its transcendence, a distancing from a variety of forces pressing on the human will, both those inherent in man's biological nature and exercised by social factors [Wierzbicki 2021, 213].

In his search for connections between freedom and truth, T. Styczeń is once again helped by Socrates and his decision. "Why did Socrates decide to stay in prison just when, thanks to the measures taken by his influential disciples, the gate to freedom opened for him? Why didn't he choose the freedom outside prison? ... Why did he prefer death to the freedom offered him?", the ethicist of Lublin asks [Styczeń1993d, 85]. A paradox is inherent in Socrates' decision, which reveals a key piece of information about man: he didn't choose the freedom offered to him because he chose ... freedom – the freedom in truth [ibid., 86]. The position of an anonymous Polish John Smith in the 1980s is similar. Styczeń analyses it and regards it as experientially affirming the normative power of truth. One of the many Poles in the time of the Solidarity movement, imprisoned for his 'anti-state' activities during the martial law, he faces the proposition: 'Sign, and you'll be free'. Challenged with one of whose extreme situations, Smith experiences a personal awakening. He discovers himself, breaking the atom of his own I [ibid., 87]. For Smith, like for Socrates before, the threshold of the prison cell became morally impassable, the place of discovery of freedom in truth, and thus of his own subjectivity. Here comes an interesting passage, worth quoting in full: "Smith sees, in a dazzling epitome, the truth, once known and accepted as truth, cannot be ignored without ignoring, even more, without nullifying himself. To save oneself is to save a freedom incomparably deeper and more important than the one the prison supervisors offer to Smith in return for his signature, an act of deserting truth. To save one's freedom, loyalty to the perceived truth, and to save oneself is one and the same thing!" [ibid., 87].

A conscious defection on a known truth is tantamount to self-betrayal, self-denial – a moral suicide. A truth betrayed will remain itself anyway

but its traitor will be marked as a deserter from himself. Striking at truth with an act of treason, the subject deals a fatal blow to his humanity [ibid., 83-96]. Describing Smith's drama, Styczeń demonstrates the very essence and rank of conscience. It is where the subject comes to know the truth he bonds with, with which he becomes as if 'besotted' and which helps him get to know himself as a person. The experience of conscience as a witness to the truth of its subject is as elementary and primal as the experience of freedom [Szostek 1991, 28]. For Styczeń, Smith is a symbolic figure. There are multiple instances of 'the prisoners of conscience' subject to a similar moral test. One need but mention St. Thomas More, Mahatma Gandhi or Stefan Wyszyński. They all held the stand of moral objectivism. Based on the obvious experience, they understood truth is the rationale for the moral obligation that, once known, the subject will accept as truth – and therefore cannot deny at the price of moral desertion. Denying a known truth creates an ontic dissonance in man and his rational nature. By rejecting what I've established with my own act as a subject of cognition, I 'shape' myself as an ataxic man. In this sense, truth is to man a fundamental value. This self-formation has a direction of its own. By his choices and acts, man is to become what he should become as a person. The truth of man is always the decisive criterion of evaluation of the acts building our personality [Lekka-Kowalik 2017, 79-80].

Truth and freedom are the most basic values of the human existence and action. They add meaning to anything man does. In the personalist spectrum, truth comes before freedom, however, providing a kind of beacon for man to exercise freedom properly [Chudy 2007, 65]. John Paul II stressed "in a world without truth, freedom loses its content and man falls prey to open or latent passions and conditions,"<sup>5</sup> therefore, freedom is bolstered fully by accepting truth [ibid.]. Although the vision of freedom free from truth seems attractive, its nature is ruinous. It causes man to surrender to forces, including those present within himself, which he should control as a reasonable being. Both Wojtyła and Styczeń warn that, like the supporters of individualism strive to 'free' freedom from truth, turning to conscience the autonomous lawmaker as far as the truth of norms is concerned, the adherents to totalitarianism reduce the obligation to a mere pressure of external factors [Wojtyła 1994, 209]. Both the personalists argue the truth discovered in freedom is what releases the genuine freedom, whereas any means of compulsion or pressure only mask the transcendence proper to the human person [ibid.]. The abandonment of the concept of objective truth always

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<sup>5</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Littera encyclicae Venerabilibus in episcopate Fratribus Clericis que et Religiosis Familiis, Ecclesiae Catholicae Fidelibus universis nec non bonae voluntatis hominibus saeculo ipso Encyclicis ab editis litteris «Rerum novarum» transact Centesimus annus* (01.05.1991), AAS 83 (1991), p. 793-867, no. 46 [hereinafter: CA].

leads to a denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person and its capacity for self-determination and thus to a whole variety of totalitarianisms. If a transcendent truth by obeying which man attains his complete identity is absent, there is no principle capable of warranting just relationships among people (CA 44). In effect, it's not the force of law but the law of force that prevails (following the principle *plus vis quam ratio*). In the circumstances, everyone strives to take advantage of the available means to gain solely his own benefits at any price. It's no exaggeration to say that the experiences that ultimately led to two world wars and the emergence of the 20th century totalitarianisms, their dramatic terrors and genocide on a historically unprecedented scale, were born out of a neglect for the force of the mutual connection between truth and freedom.

### CONCLUSION

According to K. Wojtyła and T. Styczeń, the crises of both the contemporary man and his culture are of a metaphysical nature. They arise from a departure from the classic conception of truth, initiated in the modern era, followed by man's free choice that denies the truth of his dignity. In practice, each separation of freedom from truth leads to individualism and subjectivism, and finally self-enslavement that deprive man of the transcendent dimension proper to him. Without truth, freedom is 'suspended in a void,' becomes blind, and produces not only a disintegration of individual life but also violence and other degenerations known from history.

Both the philosophers cited in this paper agreed in claiming truth is a fundamental value for personalist axiology. It determines both man's personal and social lives in their varied dimensions. It warrants the moral order man does not create but reads out of the objective reality with his reason. A defection on a known truth is always a treason to oneself and one's rational nature. The dependence on truth inherent in man's freedom manifests itself in conscience. The belief in the dependence of freedom on truth is of particular importance today in discussions with the representatives of individualist and liberal thought, who treat individual freedom as an absolute and make the applicability of moral laws and social principles dependent on that freedom. Both Wojtyła and Styczeń were anxious to explicate it's only in the splendour of truth that all other values adding meaning to human life, above all, the greatness of humanity itself, become evident. Therefore, man can regain and reaffirm his personal freedom and dignity only by returning to the obedience to truth. The grave cultural crises of recent decades demonstrate it's not a purely academic postulate.

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