

Taken from the Italian translation of “Persona e Atto” (Person and Act) from the original Polish by Giuseppe Girgenti and Patrycja Mikulska, contained in the Italian language compendium of all Wojtyła’s philosophical works *Metafisica della Persona*, Giovanni Reale and Tadeusz Styczen, eds. (Bompiani, 2003)

In the second half of the second section of the introduction to Person and Act, Wojtyła considers that the intellectual vision of the person formed in the observation of acts derives not only from the acts themselves, but also from the moral value of those acts. The acts of a person are different than actions in general in that persons are presupposed to be agents. The acts of an agent have an intrinsic moral property which cannot be separated from the act without artificially reducing the full dynamic experience of the act.

For Wojtyła the morality of the person is existential in nature. Not only do we come to understand a person through the experience of moral acts, the person him- or herself becomes good or evil through the moral nature of the acts chosen through one’s agency. Thus the person is found both at the point of departure, i.e. in the experience of a moral act as performed, as well as the end point, i.e. the person that one becomes as a result of a moral act.

Again Wojtyła notes that ethics typically considers moral values per se, in the light of which individual acts are then considered. Neither is it an anthropological approach that sets out to discover, without valuation, the moral values of a person. Wojtyła’s study, in difference with ethics, will reverse this to consider how we come to understand something of the person, either of self or other, through acts and their intrinsic morality. Wojtyła notes that both ethics and anthropology are based on the unity in the experience of human acts and the experience of their morality. By considering the morality of acts we arrive at a much fuller comprehension of the person than through acts alone; in a fully integrated phenomenology of the person morality cannot be set aside.

In concluding the second section of the introduction, to better define the methodology in this study to contrast the relationship between ethics and anthropology, Wojtyła gives the analogy of factoring common terms in a mathematical equation outside of enclosing parentheses. In this study ethical considerations will be “placed outside the parentheses” in order to better highlight the unique qualities of the experiences which remain inside the parentheses, now unentangled from ethical considerations per se. In so doing Wojtyła chooses to set aside essential ethical considerations in favor of essential anthropological considerations, without however altogether ignoring ethical considerations.

Share this page: