

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 third section of the introduction, Wojtyła discusses two stages in the comprehension of the person, intuition and reduction.

In observing a person acting, at the phenomenal level we gather an innumerable set of facts regarding specific acts by a person. These facts source both externally from the actions of others and internally from our own acts. This set of facts is processed by the intellect in a sort of pre-theoretic stage in which a quantitative multiplicity of facts about a particular human are distilled into a qualitative identity of a single person as the source of the actions; this process is an intuitive induction in the Aristotelian sense (see for example <http://www.friesian.com/arch.htm>). It is not necessary to first prove that a human is a person and then that what that human does is an act; in each experience the person and the act are both given in some manner.

Wojtyła specifically rejects the later, more analytic, sense of a form of argumentation or reasoning as the generalization of a set of specific cases to other yet unobserved cases (“all the ravens I have ever observed are black, therefore it must be the case that all ravens are black”).

Following the pre-theoretic intuitive induction of a person as the source of a set of (f)acts, we then want to explore that process, examining and explaining more deeply; this move to a theoretical understanding of the person is reduction. This process is the intellectual analysis of how myriad facts and experiences are reduced to the identity of a single acting person; through deepening this understanding process the person emerges in more clear relief against the background of the variety of observed acts.

Again Wojtyła rejects the understanding that reduction is somehow limiting or diminishing the person as an entity, as can sometimes occur in analytic philosophy. Rather than reductively diminishing the person through (for example) behaviorist or dispositional tendencies as observed in acts, Wojtyła argues for just the opposite; the acting person emerges even more clearly as a result of these analyses.

Wojtyła notes several things that follow from this approach. One is that the proposed study of the person by means of acts is grounded in praxis; that is, it is not a study in how to act consciously, rather a study of conscious action itself and how it reveals the person. Nor is it a study grounded so much in the person as an object as known intersubjectively, partly through our own knowledge of ourselves intrasubjectively. Further, it is not the derivation of the person by abstracting from observed (f)acts; it is rather a penetration into and beyond the acts to the reality of the person behind them.

The object of the study then is to move from the initial inductive intuition of the person to a full explanation of the same such that the experienced reality corresponds to the theory. The task is challenged by the incommensurability of the experienced person-act. We proceed from the basis of our own interior knowledge of ourselves, but the experience of ourselves and of others is beyond complete comprehension. Wojtyła sees as one of the principals tasks of his study the

attempt to come to a correct integration of theory and experience.

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