

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).

Wojtyła opens the fourth section of the introduction with a startling claim: that one person can reproduce, in an “adequate” if not complete manner, the subjectivity of another person. While fully admitting that the incommensurability of the other poses certain difficulties, he nonetheless argues this point on the basis of one’s observation of oneself as an integrated subjective/objective, inner/outer whole. That is, since in observing oneself acting the experience is at once from within and from without, in observing the external act of another it is also possible to adequately recreate the subjectivity of the other. This claim is foundational to the development of his view of person and of act.

This is essentially a restatement of what he has already said in the second section of the introduction. There he notes that we can know nothing of the subjectivity of animals, apart from individual cases in which a dog or a horse recognizes its owner from another. When observing another human that changes. We simultaneously know ourselves from within and without, as subject and as object; this opens the possibility for partially understanding another human because our perceptions by which the other is given to us pass through the categories and distinctions we have through our experience of ourselves as subject and object.

The second point in the fourth section develops this further along the lines of consciousness. Again Wojtyła points out that this is not a study of the person as constituted by the consciousness of the perceiver. Yes, the perception of the other happens through consciousness, but Wojtyła is clear on this point: the reason by which the action of another is a conscious action is not simply because it is constituted as such by the perceiver. Rather, in the perception of another person something adequate of the person as conscious agent is already given in the experience itself, and it is the phenomenological, intellectual engagement of these perceptions that reveals the acting person.

In chapters I and II of the work proper this relationship between consciousness and the person as actor will be explored. In so doing the transcendence of the person will emerge through his or her actions, and chapters III and IV will explore a “possibly accurate” analysis of the person as transcendent agent. Chapters V and VI will examine the complexity of the person not only as revealed as transcendent in the act, but also through its complement of the person as integrated in the act.

The final chapter of the work is entitled simply “Participation”. Wojtyła notes that most of our efforts go into understanding the external world; relatively little goes into understanding ourselves. Yet, this understanding of ourselves is critical to how we act and what we accomplish. Because we are constantly exposed to ourselves as subject/object, we run the great risk of becoming commonplace or accustomed to ourselves. We must constantly be recalled to marvel at ourselves, because in that we can begin a process of discovery of who we are through questions and responses. The importance of this seems to sum up in a single sentence, emphasized in the original: *“humanity cannot lose its proper place in the world that we ourselves*

have configured" (*"l'uomo non puo perdere il posto che gli è proprio in quel mondo che egli stesso ha configurato"*, p. 856). The implication that I draw from this is that unless we understand ourselves and how we act, we stand to lose that place.