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## **Analogy or Katalogy? Methodological Requirements for the Knowledge of the Person**

**ABSTRACT.** From the distinction made by Theology between Nature and Person we can understand human realization as starting from a dynamism which goes beyond potency and act. This is about that potentiality to grow into being in virtue of an *energeia* which comes from the divine reality that transforms the person raising up her to an unprecedented state and disproportionate to her nature. The knowledge of this new reality requires methodological criterion that allows the person, through a leap (as Kierkegaard pointed out), be separated from a certain qualitative sphere to enter a new one. This way, which we might call “katalogical”, assumes that the truth of the person is accessible in a movement which goes from top to bottom.

Despite the importance of the katalogical way to recognize the qualitative difference and irreducibility of different ontological orders, the one-sidedness of this approach could prevent recognition of their possible relationships, marginalizing them to the realm of the irrational and nonsense. To the extent that reality is a unit and polar configured, it should be thought in such a way that its various areas be integrated into the unit. Thus emerges as a methodological requirement to apply the katalogical *via* alongside with the analogical way.

**KEY WORDS:** analogy, katalogy, Romano Guardini, philosophical and theological anthropology, Kierkegaard

The origin of Christian theology coincides with the efforts of the first Christians to assimilate and redefine the Greek categorial framework, in order to rationally explicate the novelty of revelation. The Christian *novum* grew from the basis of Jewish revelation, the first Christian theologian appropriated the efforts of some Jewish thinkers, like Philo of Alexandria, who understood the content of their faith through Greek Philosophical elements. In the book of Genesis, God shows himself as a being who is transcendent to the world, and who acts through a freedom which cannot

be explicated from within the created. Man, on his part, is invited to participate in this transcendence when God creates him “in his image and likeness”, that is, capable of a personal and dialogical experience with his Creator. There is something in man which is not explicated through any intramundane principle, but through God himself, through that principle which the Bible calls divine “breath” (*ruah*). Man is not defined through his highest natural virtue, but through a personal calling which proceeds from God. The conceptual revolution effected by Christianity takes place in that fact, scandalous the eyes of a Greek Philosopher, that a God assumes human nature in order to redeem it. In this way, the doctrine of the *imago dei* reaches a new radicality in the fact that Christ, man and God at the time, is the true image of God Father. Through incarnation Christian Theology introduces the decisive distinction between nature and person. The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, decides freely to assume human nature. The anthropological consequences of this fact are radical: every man is a person. In other terms, a person is such not in that it possesses a spiritual nature, psychic or somatic, but in that it is capable of assuming its nature, in order to make it participate from a plenitude revealed in Incarnation.

Speaking about man means, for Christian Theology, speaking of a person as a subject called for a “divinization” in the person of Christ. From this distinction between nature and person, it is possible to understand human realization from a dynamism which goes beyond the couple potency-act. It is that possibility of growing within being, through an *energeia* proceeding from divine reality, which transforms the person, elevating it to an unprecedented condition and one which is disproportional to its nature. If the person can only be understood through the ultimate possibilities of its essence, which are actualized through a supernatural principle, then the method which allowed to speak about the truth of the person, would have to justify a point of departure which would be alien and disproportional to all natural fact. The knowledge of the person, therefore, calls for a methodological criteria which allow through a leap (as Kierkegaard stated), to separate oneself from a given qualitative sphere, in order to insert oneself in a new one. This way, which we may call “katalogical”,

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assumes that the truth of the person is accessible in a movement which goes upwards and downwards. The present paper intends to present this katalogical way as an ideal way for a discourse on the persona, from the works of the Italian-German theologian Romano Guardini.

### **1. Excess and disproportionality**

The person is a mystery which it is not possible to know in a definitive way; there is no concept or definition which comprehends it completely. This is because the person does not possess existence as something which corresponds to it necessarily, and, on the other side, it is not a thing, or something finished or static whose end can be predicted with mechanical exactitude. In personal life an initiative is instantiated, which far from answering to cause-effect logic, refers to a subject's call for acting freely, to someone which is not ordered according to the dynamics of the species, and who constantly experiences the risk and unpredictability of what may happen. If there is any possibility of knowing the person, such a possibility is actualized through a non objectifying-way which takes into account the singularity of this "point of departure". That means appealing to a living subject capable of experiencing the here and now in which the own existence occurs, leaving behind the traditional image of a subject placed in front of or before something else. The decisive fact of the person can only be reached through an internal event which coincides creatively with the emerging of existence. In this last case, Guardini says "I can think my own beginning only when I have begun to be, from being-there. I can do it to the extent in which I realize the beginning" [Guardini, 1976, p. 238]. There arises here a circularity which, discarded in the logical-argumentative sphere, may be accepted in the existential plane, there where the act of thinking coincides in time with the novelty and inductibility of that beginning through which someone begins to exist. It is not, therefore, a circularity in which the person would be melted or integrated into a totality which transcends it, but one which, inaugurating the singular life of the I, fosters the rupture or cleft of the person in regard to the environment, ex-

pressed through questions on the origin, the sense and the end or goal or its existence.

Even though human nature possesses a series of elements in common with other living beings, that which distinguishes it is that interior principle from which the person may elevate itself from the given and returning above it, appropriating it, in the here and now of its existence. That's the reason why one may say that the person exists two times: the first, as given nature, and the second as reality capable of transcending this nature and to integrate it from the interiority of the person (humanized nature). This second mode of existing, says Guardini "makes that man not only exists, but that it lives spiritually; that he has himself interiorly, among the things that exists separately; he may awake in itself this existence; he may make present in this instant that which is extended temporarily, and in each instant, that temporarily past" [Guardini, 1989, p. 30]. The contemporariness of this two moments constitutes the singular experience of the I which integrates existence, not as a necessity, but as a fact, as a gift which points to an instance which transcends it, and which, as every gift, refers to the realm of freedom. The experience of the world as a gift, as "something in becoming which is originating constantly" [Guardini, 1988, p. 87], questions that modern idea of nature – in its voluntarist or rationalist modes – as a powerful and autonomous totality in which there can be no limit with the transcendent nor the acceptance of a site where the supernatural may enter. For Guardini, nature understood this way is a limited concept, and as such, merely abstract. In effect, if the potency of the world is such as to subjugate the subject; if nature is understood as totality which breaches all limit – think about Romanticism and Nietzsche –, there is no possibility at all of an experience of the world. On the other side, if the world is understood as a reality, which carries an autoexplicative principle which accounts for all the facts through a criterion of necessity, as that reality exposed to the differentiating and calculating activity of reason – think about positivism and naturalism – the world loses its spontaneous and autonomous character, and the experience of that world becomes an experience without a subject.

It is possible, from the person, to redefine nature as a reality which carries an essence, and a significance which go beyond itself. In such a sense, nature is something already formed, is “creation”, it points to a reality configured by a logos or an idea oriented to someone capable of taking it up, understanding it, and orientating it to its plenitude through a transformative action. Human action, therefore, calls for its understanding, for a person which “exists above the own nature” [Guardini, 1976, p. 435], which is independent from the capacities, dispositions, impulses, motivations in the natural plane, and which becomes the ultimate reason of the decision which precedes it. In virtue of this openness, it becomes impossible to find nature in a pure state. Even in its condition of given reality, she shows herself as permeated by the action of past generations, which turn into substrate, sediment, “flesh and blood”, of man’s life. Now, to define the nature of the person is not to define the person as person. The person as such appears precisely in the moment in which its “being oriented towards” (*auf hin*), peculiar to its nature, points not towards something, but towards someone. When the person understands itself as someone who exists in dialogue, in language, when the only and unrepeatable of the person shows itself linked originarily and essentially with a “you”. In this sense, Guardini affirms:

God is the bare You of man. In this consists the created person. Man would cease to be a person, if it could step out of the relationship of a You with God, that is, not only if he were to apostatize from God, but if he were not to be find himself ontologically in the relationship of You with God [...] In creating man, God has constituted himself in his You, and it is so, whether man wants it or not [Guardini, 1988, p. 144].

## 2. Person and divine revelation

In a way similar to Kierkegaard’s Guardini affirms that this relational condition of the person becomes fully clear from the fact of creation. In effect, man lives in the condition of a calling, that which God made for him in the moment he created him. “The person of man is, in its most profound sense, the answer to the calling which God makes to him as a you”

[Guardini, 1976, p. 467]. The created, however, is only to be discovered through the act through which God himself reveals himself as creator. Man discovers the truth of his being through an initiative which is not his own, but from an alterity which transcends the order of the created; a truth which reveals itself in the moment in which that alterity produces a response from the person. It is at this point in which the difference between the Judeo-Christian religion and others shows itself. The Judeo-Christian God does not identify itself with any reality of the natural order, but with an alien reality, other to the mundane order, which decides to come out from its mystery in order to reveal itself to its creation. That God reveals itself means fundamentally that He acts making himself present in the life of man. This action characterizes itself by the fact that God speaks to man in first person and invites him to call him by his name. Guardini says: "For God there is no generic concept [...] god is not a concept but a name." [Guardini, 1994, p. 825]. But it is also nor a name among others, it is the Name above all names. That means that in the context of Revelation, the notion of singularity does not fall into the ambiguity of the mythological divinities. God is only and at the same time one.

But revelation says yet more: God is not the absolute Other, but He in whom the I, the You, the We, subsists. That means, that the more I am in God, the more I can be in myself. To pronounce the divine name implies, therefore, to enter into a relational dynamic, in the vertical (with God) plane, and in the horizontal (man with himself and other men) plane. In the New Testament this factum deepens through the revelation of the trinitary nature of God. Relationality is not a human fact, but a fundamentally divine one. Relationality becomes human through a special participation of man in the divine life which is explicated from God and not from man. She becomes human through a special participation of man into divine life which is explicated from God and not from man. If in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* there is present this "up-and-down" movement, in the Incarnation of Christ, this movement is radicalized because it is the divine Person who assumes human nature, and makes it participate from a condition which human nature could never reach in virtue of itself: divine filiation.

### 3. Katalogy or analogy?

From the distinction between nature and person it is possible to distinguish with more clarity the dynamism by which the person, from its interiority, is capable not only of transforming nature, but of elevating it to an unprecedented and novel dimension. Such a dimension is derived not only from nature, but also from the excess or disproportionality intrinsic to the person. Here a decisive methodological criterion in the thought of Guardini is established: in order to know a reality configured from a specific ontological quality “it is needed to make a leap” [Guardini, 1998, p. 149], which allows to separate from the present qualitative sphere in order to accede in a reverent way to the other. We could call this way – using an expression from Massimo Serretti – “katalogical way”. The need for the leap, expressed also by Karl Barth in the last century, responds to the idea that the singularity of the person can only be apprehended through a free act capable of situating the subject in the sphere of the You, and not through the means of metaphysic, historical or psychological categories. Man “does not exist like the other living beings, but in another way. A plant, an animal are a closed space; they live imprisoned in the own essence; their existence is not determined by the necessity of an essential form which imposes itself, but is determined by freedom, which can, on the one side, complete him, and on the other, mislay him and ruin him.” [Guardini, 1948, p. 119]. It would be impossible, therefore, to know the person going in a linear and continuous way from the vegetal to the animal, and from the animal to the human. We could say the same concerning the knowledge of God: “Every statement – affirms Guardini – as it is referred to the Absolute, acquires a distinct qualitative character; a same statement about God and the creatures cannot be made univocally with the same significant amplitude” [Guardini, 1998, p. 131]. In this case also, it is about making a leap – proper of faith – which would allow to think a God from God and not from the created order.

In spite of the importance of the “katalogic” way to recognize the qualitative difference and the irreducibility of the distinct ontological orders, the unilaterality of this perspective could impede the recognition of

its possible relationships, relegating them to the sphere of the irrational and meaningless. As reality is a unity, polarly configured, it is precise to conceive of it in such a way that its distinct spheres are integrating into that unity. Then arises as a methodological requirement, to follow the katalogic way along the analogic one. This means, speaking about the unity of the person, that the inferior quality can be categorized from an influence proceeding from the superior quality (“from above”), and that it can be understood from the logic of this new quality. So, for example, the chemical and mechanical elements which form part of the life of an organism, receive a new character which they would not have of themselves: vitality. But this new condition is predicated in a non-univocal way, but analogically in virtue of the affinity and real similarity which now they conserve regarding the living. On the other side, speaking about the relationship of the person to God, it is not necessary to affirm that faith is an irrational act with the purpose of saving the difference and disproportion between both: it is also possible to think that the leap of faith is the trusted and loving *fiat* of the person, towards Someone who loved him first, that created him out of love and considered him so great as to redeem him at the price of His blood; therefore, a meaningful act, or more precisely, an act with an excess of meaning. Even though the divine reality which is revealed is heterogenous, disproportionate, unprecedented, and in some sense, unknown, “the natural which is related, awaits it, remains open to welcome it. *Gratia supponit naturam et perficit*. [This fact] founds the essential ordering of nature regarding supernature; the orientation of the natural created being to grace: the character of homeland (*Heimatcharakter*), which grace has towards nature” [Guardini, 1994b, p. 180]. In this way, speaking about the relationship between the supernatural and the natural does not mean placing both orders in a same level, it means rather recognizing a mutual interaction confirmed, not in the theoretical plane, but in the historic-existential one: the divine revelation gives to the person the virtue which makes possible the receiving of it, it inaugurates a new existential beginning through which the person lives in a relationship of meeting with God, covering it, thanks to that fact, with an unprecedented possibility concerning his strength; it is a relationship of becoming itself by becoming similar to God.



If revelation means the selfopening of a non naturally given reality, this cannot be understood with the means of our purely natural being. Revelation, as an objective opening of God, must be in relationship with the possibility of being born again in the participation in the life of God. In this way, that supernatural reality of God is introduced within the natural, which now participates from it [...] This means “grace”, as a new donated quality from a God who reveals himself [Guardini, 1994b, p. 192]<sup>1</sup>.

The methodological consequences of this perspective are decisive: it is not possible to realize a “natural anthropology” separated from a

“theological anthropology”. To think the person implies from a consideration from a “nature” which is totally inserted “from its essence and in necessary mode, in the project of God in the world, and therefore orientated towards grace [Guardini, 2009, p. 77].

In this sense, a reflection on the human person, which intends to cover the totality of its being, cannot be identified with a phenomenology of human finitude, but must open, from the existential novelty inaugurated by faith, to the total truth of the person: that being created from love and for love, wounded by sin and redeemed in Christ through a new beginning. Nevertheless, the importance of the “katalogical” way to recognize the qualitative difference and irreducibility of the distinct ontological orders, the unilaterality of this perspective, could impede the recognition of its possible relationships, relegating them to the sphere of the irrational and meaninglessness. As reality is a unity polarly configured, it is precise conceiving of it in such a way, as distinct spheres are integrating into a unity. There arises then, as a methodological requirement, to follow the katalogical way, as well as the analogical one.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of Romano Guardini are ours.

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