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Indice

Anthropological Foundations of the Language Resources to Recognize Personhood

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Based on the notion of politeness as revisited by Edda Weigand, this essay studies the demands to which the person's image or *face* must respond in order to make true what is said about the interaction between people. The humanist nature of this revisitation reveals the complexity of such a self-image, thus opening up a rich anthropological horizon. With the intermediation of fundamental rhetoric, we read politeness theory through the lens of the resources of care philosophy: primarily the human meaning of what Brown and Levinson call 'heedfulness', which they place at the center of their study.

Keywords: Anthropology, Personhood, Respect, Dinamicity of the self

The idea is easily and intuitively grasped that, with a collaboration between the theory of politeness and the philosophy of care, one could gain some important new specifics on how we recognize personhood. Regarding the specific issue of such recognition of the other person, the approach I now propose was inspired by Edda Weigand's observations on the essence of Brown and Levinson's politeness. There is certainly no shortage of critical remarks on such theory of politeness[1]; indeed, we talk about second- and third-generation politeness. Weigand's observations, however, follow precisely the same track I have been following for some time, which aims to be a deeper understanding of the notions of linguistics and rhetoric, which is no longer linguistics or rhetoric but anthropology[2].

"Describing politeness in terms of 'face-redress' (Brown – Levinson 1987, 91ff) only accounts for part of the phenomenon and not even the essential part", writes Weigand[3]. This observation means something more than simply adding actions to the face to defend it.

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[1] See D. Kádár – H. Haugh, *Understanding Politeness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 2 and 20.

[2] This paper is part of a more extensive project, the Rhetoric & Anthropology Research Net, whose profile is explained in M. Agnetta – A. Cattani – A. Gil – R. Jiménez Cataño – S. Tapia Velasco, *Rhetorical Anthropology or Anthropological Rhetoric: Foundations of the "Rhetoric & Anthropology" Research Net*, "Studia Anglica Resoviensia", 15, 2018, 1, pp. 5-27. See the website: http://www.rhetoricandanthropology.net/, last accessed June 23, 2022.

[3] E. Weigand, *Dialogue: The Mixed Game*, J. Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2010, p. 94.

> Politeness is not a negative phenomenon to be dealt with primarily in terms of 'avoiding face-threatening acts'. At its core, it represents a positive concept, the concept of the respect to be paid to our fellow beings and expected for ourselves. Respecting the other human being is a dialogic attitude that goes beyond the "highly abstract notion of 'face'". The 'positive' as well as the 'negative face' of Brown and Levinson (p. 13) are both defined monologically, i.e. self-reflexively towards the speaker, as the "desire (in some aspects) to be approved of " and the "desire to be unimpeded in one's actions". What is missing – and that is the crucial point – is the dialogic nature of *paying* respect[4].

Such is indeed the development of the model, despite the description of its core before page 91, where the "intuitive bases and derivative definitions" are set. In a very important paragraph, there is a noteworthy concentration of reciprocity-related terms:

> In general, people cooperate (and assume *each other's* cooperation) in maintaining face *in interaction*, such *cooperation* being based on the *mutual* vulnerability of face. That is, normally *everyone's* face depends on *everyone else's* being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten other's face. It is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain *each other's* face, that is to act in ways that assure the other participants that the agent is heedful of the assumptions concerning face given under (i) above. Just what this heedfulness consists in is the subject of this paper[5].

Heedfulness is the most crucial term here, along with the explicit declaration that it is the subject of the study. This is a question of embodiment[6], and while it is true that developing such a subject will imply excessive focus on its tangible manifestations[7] as a trait of the human condition, on the other hand we also find a formulation that can act as a hinge between the pragmatic and the anthropological – dealing *face threatening acts* as the tool for dealing with an embodied essence[8].

Being heedful means being attentive and respectful. "Politeness, at its core, means 'the wish to respect the other human being'"[9]. This meaning of *polite* as 'being (at least formally) respectful' seems to be the noblest popular sense of the term. What justifies the shift from respecting the person to dealing with their image? This is one of the points where one's conception of the human being becomes extremely relevant. I have dealt with

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[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] P. Brown – S.C. Levinson, *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, p. 61, emphasis added. (i) is the definition of *face*: "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself " (*Ibidem*).

[6] See E. Weigand, *Dialogue*, pp. 3 and 58.

[7] See L. Mortari, *Filosofia della cura*, Raffaello Cortina editore, Milano 2015, pp. 159-168.

[8] See R. Jiménez Cataño, *Wishful Thinking and Argumentation through Metonymy*, in *Reason and Person in Persuasion*, Edusc, Roma 2020, pp. 94-95.

[9] E. Weigand, *Dialogue*, p. 94.

this topic before[10] so I will simply point out that the person and his or her image are not to be considered two different things, just as the person and his or her body are not two different things. In the same sense in which we can say 'I am my body' we can also say 'I am my image'. The bridge between the points above – respecting the person and dealing with their image is precisely the fact that the person is active in a community according to how they appear. This is not a reference to 'pure appearance' because, while fiction is always possible, even in the case of full truthfulness or sincerity the person continues to have an *appearance*. Therefore, when the need exists to choose a name for a discipline – specifically, a part of the pragmatics that deals with the linguistic management of one's own image and those of others – there will never be a term in the thesaurus that already signifies this new subject, and 'politeness' seems to be a good choice. Consequently, Weigand suggests "using the term 'politeness' if the focus is on specific expressions and retaining the term 'respect' for the genuinely positive meaning of respect"[11].

In the search for possible ways to express one's awareness of the personal character of the other, it is natural to think of honorifics, of certain categories of deixis, and of certain metapragmatic resources. However, while this is all true, it should first be noted that the recognition of the dignity, i.e., of the personal nature of the other, is the very object of respect. This implies that personhood (not only starting from Kant, but at least from the beginning of Western thought[12]) means self-mastery, which is not pure autonomy, as it needs to exist in the realm of interdependence, that is, relationality. Self-mastery means self-creation, in the sense of configuration of the self. While this is not the deepest meaning of dignity[13], it is the one among its manifestations that is relevant to what we are dealing with: indeed, even when an individual is unable to exercise or manifest self-mastery, the expression of our respect for them often takes the form of recognition precisely of their self-mastery.

1. *Overview*

Based on these premises, an analysis of the human resources to express one's awareness of others' dignity as persons may be developed as follows:

a. how language resources are able to signify more than the meaning we would be able to explain;

b. a deeper anthropological view of heedfulness can be found in the notion of care, which has a longer history than it might seem; as a question of embodiment, we may ask: What do we take care of when we take care of someone?;

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[10] See R. Jiménez Cataño, *Taking Care of Identity through Politeness*, "Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov" Series IV – Philology and Cultural Studies Vol.7, 56, 2014, 2, p. 40; *The Understanding of Human Being and Its Relevance for Persuasion*, "Rhetoric and Communication", 44, 2020, pp. 12-14.

[11] E. Weigand, *Dialogue*, p. 94.

[12] See Jiménez Cataño, *Dialogue in View of Human Caring*, "Studia Anglica Resoviensia", 16, 2019, 1, pp. 50-51.

[13] See A.J. Gómez Montoro, *De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de dignidad*, in *La Constitución de los españoles*, M. Aragón Reyes *et al.* ed., Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, Madrid 2019, pp. 550-552.

c. we will see how the theme of care and its interaction with the notion of politeness are dealt with in the most recent philosophy; the self-knowledge implied in dealing with one's self-image will lead us to take the psychological standpoint into account;

d. at this point it will be possible to consider the language resources we can count on to express our respect and our own dispositions towards the person;

e. we will focus on a few examples, looking first at a case in which a speaker asks to be called in a certain way, and then another in which the speaker gains his interlocutor's trust by stating his awareness of the interlocutor's genuinity.

Obviously, this is not linguistics proper. A pragmatic element exists that relates to the theory of politeness, but the anthropology that relates to the philosophy of care has a dominant role, and the mediation of fundamental rhetoric[14] is also anthropological.

Just as a distinction can be drawn between politeness as the implementation of the strategies in which respect is embodied and politeness as identical to respect, it is appropriate to recognize a distinction between what a noun means and what we are able to see, on one end, and, on the other, what remains beyond our factual or even possible observation, which we know is the named reality. This is the metonymic profile of proper nouns and similar expressions, where metonymy is not only an expressive choice, but also a cognitive process that is sometimes necessary to identify the object[15]. There are cases in which it is difficult to identify the literal term that the metonymic one has replaced. And in these cases the reference always goes beyond our awareness[16].

Having surpassed a purely semantic explanation of proper nouns with the arrival of pragmatics, the resources for a new understanding of proper nouns in their links with the named individuals are mainly politeness and deixis. For a deeper understanding of this link, which considers the specificity of the human condition and of personal identity, the anthropological approach of the recently developed fundamental rhetoric[17] does not only add specific content, but also the methodological way to work with those fields together. Moreover, the philosophy of care offers ethical and anthropological tools for the recognition of the interlocutor as a person. Specifically, the philosophy of care introduces human depth into politeness. This happens when one perceives as care the protection of the face, which is at the centre of politeness strategies.

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[14] See P.L. Oesterreich, *Fundamentalrhetorik: Untersuchungen zu Person und Rede in der Öffentlichkeit*, Meiner, Hamburg 1990.

[15] See G. Radden – Z. Kövecses, *Towards a Theory of Metonymy*, in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, K.-U. Panther – G. Radden ed., J. Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1999, p. 17.

[16] See R. Jiménez Cataño, *Wishful Thinking*, pp. 93-101.

[17] See P.L. Oesterreich, *Philosophen als politische Lehrer*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1994, p. 3; *Das gelehrte Absolute. Metaphysik und Rhetorik bei Kant, Fichte und Schelling*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1997, p. 6.

2. *The Notion of Care before the Philosophy of Care*

The presence of care in philosophy dates back much earlier than the second half of the 20th Century. There are not only 'anticipations' (Heidegger, Foucault), which are actually rather close to the philosophers of care, but also quite ancient references (recalled later by Foucault, for example), such as those found in Plato's dialogues. In the *Apology*, Socrates declares that the central aim of his teaching was to persuade everyone "not to care for your persons (*somáton*) or your property more than for the perfection of your souls"[18].

   Alcibiades I presents the distinction between caring for something and caring for what is related to that something:

> What is 'taking pains over oneself' (*epimeléomai*) – for we may perchance be taking, unawares, no pains over ourselves, though we think we are – and when does a man actually do it? Does he take pains over himself at the same time as over his own things? [...] Well now, when does a man take pains over his feet? Is it when he takes pains over what belongs to his feet?[19]

Since Socrates' speech is intended to highlight that we often believe we are taking care of ourselves when in fact we are not, we can rephrase the question about feet and foot-related things, making it about people and their feet: do we take care of ourselves when we take care of our feet? Plato's negative answer seems obvious, given that his answer on feet and foot-related things was also negative, according to the needs of his anthropology. Yet, a non-dualist anthropology would offer a different answer; Indeed, we do find it in Aristotle, and in very meaningful terms:

> Attention (*epiméleia*) must be paid first to the body, before the soul; and then to desire. But attention paid to desire must be for the sake of intelligence, and that paid to the body must be for the sake of the soul[20].

If the body is first, it is simply because it is what we have at hand. But in the body we find the soul, not exactly 'at hand', but the soul is at hand precisely in the body. We take care of the body for the sake of the soul (or of the soul through the body) to the extent that we can say: 'I am my body'. 'To the extent': there may be misunderstandings in the perception of this unity of body and soul, and therefore a wrong approach to the person in approaching his or her body is possible[21].

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18 30b. – Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, transl. H.N. Fowler, Harvard University/W. Heinemann, Cambridge (MA)/London 1913 (LCL 36).

19 127e-128a. – Plato, *Charmides, Alcibiades I and II, Hipparchus, The Lovers, Theages, Minos, Epinomis*, transl. W.R.M. Lamb, Harvard University/W. Heinemann, Cambridge (MA)/London 1964 (LCL 201).

20 *Politics*, VII, 1334b25. – Aristotle, *Politics*, transl. C.D.C Reeve, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge 1998.

21 At this point, reasons of space force us to gloss over centuries of thought and practice of care, especially those marked by Christianity (those related to the birth of hospitals, for example), because those topics would warrant their own essays. See M. López Alonso, *El cuidado: un imperativo para la bioética. Relectura*

It is very clear how much importance is given to care, which sometimes appears as the very heart of some ancient philosophers' teaching. It must be pointed out, however, that there is an essential difference with the approach of the current philosophy of care. In the ancient texts we read about a self-care, which may have social implications, of course, but is still self-care[22]. This does not mean that there is no concern for the other, but that it is entrusted to other dynamics, such as the virtue of diligence in Aristotle[23]. This is very similar to how it would later be theorized by Michel Foucault, one of the recent philosophers whose thought has given most relevance to the notion of care.

Yet we must first focus on the thought of Heidegger, who is repeatedly referred to as a pioneer of the philosophy of care. The notion of *Sorge* is discussed in *Sein und Zeit*, and the author states that it is the being self of the *Dasein*, which is to say, of the human being[24]. Here, care is not put in the first place as the care for oneself, but as the care for the world (for the *Square*[25]) in all its dimensions. In "Bauen Wohnen Denken", Heidegger defines *Sorge* (with the nuance of 'saving', *Schonen*) as maintaining things in their essence: "real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature"[26]. It is important to notice the positive connotation of care, which is not depicted as mere protection from danger. This corresponds to the positive connotation of politeness in Weigand's thought.

In the case of Foucault, as we have mentioned earlier, care is directed at oneself, to the point that his thought is known as 'self-care' and is not only often referred to as *epimeleia heautou*, but sometimes, when offering a translation of the single term *epimeleia*, Foucault himself adds the reflexive, as if it were implicit in the concept (*cura sui*)[27]. This insistence on the reflexivity of care, however, is counterbalanced by the very nature of care itself, which is acted upon by a subject who has a social condition. "The care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others"[28]. Even when in ancient authors *epimeleia* is described explicitly

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filosófico-teológica desde la desde la "epiméleia", Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid 2011, pp. 175-269. See M. Borelli, *Dimensiones ética y estética del cuidado de sí en Petrarca*, in *Conocerse, cuidar de sí, cuidar de otro: reflexiones antiguas y medievales*, S. Magnavacca *et al.* ed., Miño y Dávila, Buenos Aires 2017, pp. 357-377; other essays in the volume are also relevant.

[22] See *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

[23] See *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111. See A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, Duckworth, London 1999, pp. 81-98, 119-128.

[24] See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, V. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1977, pp. 240- 305.

[25] That is, *das Geviert*, which consists of heaven and earth, mortals and divinities.

[26] Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York 1971, p. 149. "Das eigentliche Schonen ist etwas *Positives* und geschieht dann, wenn wir etwas zum voraus in seinem Wesen belassen" (*Bauen Wohnen Denken*, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, V. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 2000, p. 145).

[27] See, for example, the first lesson of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2004, pp. 1-24.

[28] M. Foucault, *The ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of freedom*, in *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*, P. Rabinow ed., transl. R. Hurley *et al.*, The New Press, New York 1994, p. 287.

as self-care, yet, it is also clear that it signifies a humanity lived in fullness, which will have an impact on others.

3. *Care Today, and Politeness*

If there is something new in the philosophy of care, it is the relevance of the centrifugal dimension of care and the extension of its exercise to every human being, as an intrinsic calling of the human condition[29]. In this new form, the philosophy of care was born in the first place as ethics. The ethics of care puts us before a mutual responsibility for common fragility and consequent dependence. All of this, then, necessarily leads to the development of an anthropology: there is not only the fragility that awakens responsibility and configures duties and rights (to which one responds in the sphere of care), but also care itself, which reveals the human condition, that is, the fact that care is relevant to the understanding of the human essence[30].

Care can be conceived as an action that takes place between people[31], and this is undoubtedly the first sense in which it is understood even when the possibility of recipients is broadened. Such is the case of the Heidegger's *Sorge*, which is addressed to the whole world. A definition that follows this position would read as follows:

> On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our body, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web[32].

A central point in the discourse of politeness is the protection of the face from threats. This protection is very clearly an act of care, although the actions of maintaining, continuing, and repairing entail more than just protecting. Tronto writes that it is about our world, and adds: "That world includes our body, our selves, and our environment". She could also add 'our image'. The terms in which Brown and Levinson introduce the notion of politeness are less positive than those by which care is defined. The negative characterization of politeness as protection from threats could be explained through an analogy between it and the naming of scales, a situation in which an atypical choice was made. Scales most frequently get their names from their positive extremes: height (for high...low), age (for old...young). Every social act is open to success and failure, to understanding and misunderstanding, and the images of those who take part in it may benefit from advantages or, conversely, be damaged because of it. One's choice to focus on a threat could be perceived to be as insig-

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[29] See J.C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, Routledge, New York 1993, pp. 25-27; R. Jiménez Cataño, *The Understanding*, p. 18.
[30] See R. Jiménez Cataño, *The Understanding*, p. 14.
[31] See A.M. González – C. Iffland, *The Challenges of Care*, in *Care Professions and Globalization. Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, A.M. González – C. Iffland ed., Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014, p. 4.
[32] B. Fisher – J.C. Tronto, *Toward a Feminist Theory of Care*, in *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, E. Abel – M. Nelson ed., State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 1991, pp. 36-54.

nificant as the 'oldness' we find in the question 'How old are you?', but it has in fact left no small mark on the development of pragmatics – which is all the more reason not to make threat the main focus for those who think that human beings "are not innately aggressive beings who primarily aim at maintaining face by defending it from face-threatening-acts"[33]. A very thought-provoking alternative would be the positivity of the Ubuntu philosophy, which is deeply relational and in which every act of relating between people is seen as an opportunity for personal enhancement[34]. It is no coincidence that some have proposed alternative names for 'FTA' such as 'face enhancing acts'[35] and others.

It is precisely against the backdrop of this relational context that we should focus on the already quoted paragraph by Brown and Levinson[36], which dwells on the idea of reciprocity five times in different formulations. The paragraph encapsulates a strong anthropological meaning. There is only one point where the stringent nature of linguistics can be perceived, and thus (for methodological reasons) the authors are forced to limit themselves to a description: when they add that by defending the face the speakers show that they are heedful, and that this heedfulness is the heart of politeness. The question remains: Why in the world should one be heedful? And the answer is very much part of a philosophy of care.

But perhaps it is also part of an anthropological rhetoric. As mentioned above, in the framework of a non-dualistic anthropology it is possible that the very care of the body is the care of the person. This is not automatic, because an unbalanced care of the body is conceivable, but it is still possible to the extent that one can say 'I am my body'. We should be able to say the same about our image. To the extent that one can say 'I am my image', the care of one's image inherently is self-care. This is also not automatic, for the same reason that an unbalanced care of the image is conceivable. The above-quoted text from Aristotle's *Politics* speaks of *attention* to the body, where 'attention' is a translation for 'epimeleia'. This reminds us that the term 'attention' itself implies actions belonging to the semantic domains of both care and politeness. A serious proposal was made by Saeko Fukushima to rethink politeness in the light of attentiveness[37]. This suggestion is reminiscent of the philosophical treatment of the notion of attention found in Simone Weil's papers, which is more consistent with the anthropological perspective of this essay than Fukushima's highly technical-linguistic study. In a letter dated May 12, 1942 she wrote: "I was touched to see that you had truly paid attention to some pages that I showed you. I did not take from that that they deserved attention. I regard that attention as a gift freely and generously given

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[33] E. Weigand, *Language as Dialogue*. J. Benjamins, Amsterdam 2009, p. 252; see Ead., *Dialogue*, p. 94.

[34] "A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole" (D.M. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Rider, London 1999, p. 35).

[35] See C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *A multilevel approach in the study of talk-in-interaction*, "Pragmatics" 7, 1997, p. 14.

[36] See P. Brown – S.C. Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 61.

[37] See S. Fukushima, *In search of another understanding of politeness: From the perspective of attentiveness*, "Journal of Politeness Research", 11, 2015, pp. 261-287.

on your part. Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity"[38]. Cristina Campo also attributes an unexpected depth to attention, along the same lines as Simone Weil and with further specifications of what attention means. This is because taking seriously the awareness on a thing or a person must involve us existentially, and "here attention reaches perhaps its purest form, its most exact name: it is the responsibility, the ability to respond for something or someone, which nourishes poetry in equal measure, the understanding between beings, the opposition to evil. Because truly every human error, poetic, spiritual, is, in essence, nothing but inattention"[39]. These two references seem like an unfolding of the term 'heedfulness' in its most humane sense.

4. *Self-Knowledge and Personal Becoming*

Returning to the text by Brown and Levinson, it is interesting to highlight that the face which has to be maintained is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself"[40]. We all claim images for ourselves and defend them. And if we are polite, we also defend the images that others claim for themselves. This seems very clear, and intuitively there is no doubt that it works. However, it would seem that every image is faithful and that the image we want for ourselves is the right one, which might be not the case. It is fair to wonder: a) How truthful is the image we claim?, are we sure we are not pretending?; and b) How well do we know ourselves?

It is at least odd that this pragmatic question regarding the self-image that everyone wants to claim comes after one of the 'outrages' (*Kränkungen*) pointed out by Freud[41], the one that was revealed by him (after the Copernican revolution and the theory of evolution): knowing that much of what happens to us and inside of us is not immediately accessible to our consciousnesses. We shall try to find a material counterpart to this "highly abstract notion of face", as Brown and Levinson themselves call it and as Weigand points out. But before we do so, it seems only fair to note that this notion, borrowed from Goffman[42], is called 'abstract' by the authors of *Politeness*, who also posit a connection between it and the vivid and very widespread ethno-narratives[43] that are relevant to the notion used in this essay (even though the words 'figure' and 'image' are generally used instead of 'face').

There is a significant difference between the two questions above. The former is whether one wishes to appear in a particular way that does not correspond to who one is. It is a more or less conscious willingness to be fake, testified by the impressive growth

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[38] S. Weil – J. Bousquet, *Correspondance*, Editions l'Age d'Homme, Lausanne 1982, p. 18; translation: K. Fitzpatrick, *La plus rare et la plus pure*, "Micro.blog", June 5, 2018, https://kfitz.info/la-plus-rare-et-la-plus-pure/, last accessed June 23, 2022.

[39] C. Campo, *Gli imperdonabili*, Adelphi, Milano, 1987, p. 179; my translation. All subsequent citations with no English reference were translated by me.

[40] P. Brown – S.C. Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 61.

[41] See S. Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, Image Publishing, London 1946, p. 295.

[42] See E. Goffman, *Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behavior*, Garden City, New York 1967.

[43] See P. Brown – S.C. Levinson, *Politeness*, pp. 13-15, 40, 61-62, 72.

of the new technological resources that shape self-images. But it is also quite possible for anybody to claim an image for themselves that does not correspond to their reality, not on purpose but for lack of self-knowledge. This is the latter question. We must not forget that self-knowledge is difficult. Alcibiades declares it to be "very hard"[44]. It is a life-long task and it has been a philosophical and educational issue since ancient times, with a long journey through the centuries in the Christian[45] and Islamic sphere[46] and in secular thought, as highlighted by Alexander Pope, who concludes his "An Essay on Man" with the statement that: "And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know"[47]. Thomas Merton formulates the thought in terms that we can really appreciate today: "You can never be sure whether you are being true to your true self or only building up a defense for the false personality that is the creature of your own appetite for esteem"[48].

The 'know thyself' task was inscribed in the pronaos of the temple of Apollo in Delphi, but the imperative to become oneself in Pindar's second Pythian is equally famous. It represents the perpetual state of becoming in which humans exist: 'become who you are' is the basic imperative of life. The common phrase 'Be yourself', often repeated in self-help settings, implies the dynamic idea of becoming (due to the imperative form), but there is more. The original oracle contains a cognitive element[49]. Some possible translations are: "Learn and become who you are"[50]; "Be what you have having learned what you are"[51]. If I dwell on this subject, it is because this dynamism of the human person is relevant to the recognition of the other as a person, which is also the recognition of a capacity for self-determination, i.e., the recognition of "a specific 'order of freedom', the one that establishes and underpins the moral order, that is, the structuring of personal life through one's own choices, actions, and aims"[52].

How can we pay respect to someone by recognizing them as persons if they are constantly changing? As already shown, it is difficult even for the person themselves to know who they are. Yet knowledge in terms of univocal logic is not only difficult but actually impossible, and neither is it representative of the value of the person. We can agree with with Pareyson and say that, while a total manifestation of the person is impossible in itself, we are still able to make it the object of our language, which is "capable of possessing an infinity"[53].

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[44] *Alcibiades I*, 129a.

[45] See P. Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même. De Socrate à Saint Bernard*, 3 vol., Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1974-1975.

[46] See Dom S. Houédard, *Notes on the More than Human Saying: 'Unless You Know Yourself You Cannot Know God'*, "Journal of the Muhyiddin ibn ʿArabi Society", 11, 1992, pp. 1-10.

[47] A. Pope, *Essay on Man*, in *Alexander Pope: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, P. Rogers ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York 1993, IV-398, p. 309.

[48] Th. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New Directions Book, New York 1972, p. 100.

[49] "Génoi oios essì mathón" (Pindar, *Pythian 2*, in *Perseus Digital Library*, G.R. Crane ed., Tufts University, 1990. http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0033.tlg002.perseus-eng1:2, last accessed June 23, 2022).

[50] *Ibidem*, transl. D. Arnson Svarlien.

[51] J.F. Oates, *Pindar's Second Pythian Ode*, "The American Journal of Philology", 84, 1963, 4, pp. 377-389

[52] R. Mordacci, *Rispetto*, Raffaello Cortina editore, Torino 2012, pp. 150-151.

[53] L. Pareyson, *Verità e interpretazione*, Mursia, Milano 1982, p. 115.

Rodrigo Guerra lists the following as characteristics of personal identity: inner life, incomparable incommunicability, absoluteness, dignity, and continuity of life[54]. The recognition of the other's dignity and the expression of respect are thus closely linked. Does pragmatics respond to this reality? Does the manifestation of respect in politeness make one feel that a person is simply in a *state* of regard, or does it somehow reflect the *dynamism* of the person who *is making* himself or herself?

First of all, it is necessary to outline the possible positions on the constitution of the person:, to what extent a person is what it is since birth, and to what extent it is the result of a process of becoming. Perhaps there is no position that absolutely excludes becoming. If anything, we find it applied to specific aspects of human life: whether one is born an artist or becomes one. In an absolute sense it is also found in the literary field, just as a denial of humanity, in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt,* trolls do not have 'become yourself', as a vital maxim like humans do, but instead 'it is enough for you to be who you are'[55]. On the contrary, the idea that human beings are only what they become has been supported by prominent thinkers and it enjoys large-scale acceptance. Sartre is closely associated with this position. "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself", he wrote in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*[56], and he described this thesis as a direct result of atheism. In another work, Sartre offered a less radically nihilistic formulation that, while compatible with the extreme position, allows a reading that responds to a universal existential experience. He writes: "What is important is not what people make of us but what we ourselves make of what they have made of us"[57].

It is also possible to assert the relevance, indeed the necessity, of becoming, without denying that there is a starting point with an initial configuration, where one can distinguish a radical beginning (ontological, biological...) and a configuration in the first section of life when the subject has not developed awareness yet. Sartre is referring to this stage when he speaks of 'what people make of us'. In our lives, when we develop awareness, others have already made decisions that are part of our identity: our name, language, culinary taste, possibly our religion and residence, and many other traits, which add to circumstances that could hardly be chosen by anyone, such as race, sex, historical era, etc. That becomes the starting point for what we will do with ourselves. An autistic lecturer who was conversing in Sri-Lanka with a Buddhist monk about the purpose of his life received this response:

> What we teach in Buddhism is that the person who can set a purpose in your life is
> you. You are the only person who can set the purpose in your life. You are born in the
> United States, or you are born as a male, but it's beyond your control and you don't

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[54] See R. Guerra, *Identidad personal*, "Open Insight", 1, 2010, 1, pp. 132-135.

[55] Act II, scene 6: "Mand, vær dig selv!" – "Trold, vær dig selv-nok!" (H. Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, in *Project Runeberg*, Linköping 1997, http://runeberg.org/peergynt/2f.html, last accessed June 23, 2022).

[56] Nagel, Paris 1952, pp. 21-22.

[57] Id., *Saint Genet. Comédien et martyr*, Gallimard, Paris 1952, p. 55.

think about that. You just accept the fact and after you accept the fact you search for
the meaning or purpose of your life[58].

Many statements about realities or qualities to the effect that 'you are not born but you
become' are correct in emphasizing the process but neglect the starting point. For practical
purposes, those formulations can be as valid as Sartre's (the second one of those mentioned
above), but as soon as one tries to elaborate on that thought, the ontological position that
was set aside makes its presence felt. John Paul II clearly laid claim to both extremes of the
being-becoming spectrum when he said that the saint is the one who "has lived to the very
end his call to be fully himself, according to the wonderful originality that the Creator had
placed in him"[59]. This speaks of an original originality, which is the criterion for discerning
who 'oneself' is; yet, there is a strong emphasis on the process, a 'fully being'.

    As a non-philosophical, and also non-western, confirmation, a text from pre-Columbi-
an Mexico comes to mind. It is a characterization of the wise man, who has an educational
role towards the others, an action that is described as humanizing: "it belongs to the wise
man to make the will of people human"[60], he "makes others take a *face*, makes them develop
it, puts a mirror in front of others, makes a *face* appear in them"[61]. He makes a human, but
not out of nothing: a face appears after the person has seen something in the mirror.

    This process by which persons become themselves – in actual progress or as possibil-
ity of the subject[62] – is linked with their dignity, that is, with what makes them worthy of
respect. As we have stated, we want to see if this development is recognizable in the expres-
sions of respect proper to politeness. Yet, before we delve into the language, let us make
another stop in the realm of psychology.

5. *A Psychological Approach*

Viktor Frankl sees responsibleness as an essential trait of the human condition[63]. After pre-
senting human dignity based on its autonomy, and then examining concretely the capacity
of human persons to make themselves, we can now point to responsibleness (in which

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[58] T. Thresher, *Finding my voice through typing*, in *Communication Alternatives in Autism: Perspectives on Typing and Spelling Approaches for the Nonspeaking*, E. Vallejo Peña ed., McFarland, Jefferson (NC) 2019, p. 38.
[59] John Paul II, *Discourse*, November 1, 1986, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19861101.html, last accessed June 23, 2022. This idea is typical of Wojtylian per-sonalism, and is therefore found in his philosophical works, but this clear and synthetic formulation is unique. See *El hombre en su perspectiva: desarrollo integral y escatología*, in *El hombre y su destino*, J. Pérez-Soba ed., Palabra, Madrid 1988, pp. 205-218, especially p. 211. Original release: *Perspektywy człowieka. Integralny rozwój a eschatologia*, "Colloquium Salutis", 7, 1975, pp. 133-145.
[60] B. de Sahagún, *Códice Florentino*, facsimile edition, Giunti Barbera/Archivo General de la Nación, Floren-cia/México 1979, fol. 20v, quoted by M. León-Portilla, *Filosofía náhuatl*, UNAM/Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, México 1974, p. 65.
[61] *Ibid*., fol. 19r.
[62] See R. Guerra, *Identidad*, p. 136.
[63] See V.E. Frankl, *Philosophie und Psychotherapie. Zur Grundlegung einer Existenzanalyse*, in *Dem Leben Antwort geben. Autobiografie*, Beltz, Weinheim 2017, p. 199.

freedom is implicit) as the foundation of dignity. Responsibleness is "the very essence of human existence"[64], and it allows us to see another characteristic of human becoming: the relationship to meaning.

> Even in a deeper sense the hiatus between being (*Sein*) and should (*Sollen*), between being and meaning (*Sinn*), is essential for all being-human (*Mensch-sein*). Neither between existence and essence there is coincidence and congruence; on the contrary, meaning must always be ahead of being – only then can the *meaning* of being be what its own meaning is: to be *guide of being (Schrittmacher des Seins)*![65]

The introduction of meaning gives the human being an ontological depth that is often neglected in discussions about self-actualization. Frankl also uses the term self-actualization (*Selbsterfüllung*), which, thanks to responsibleness and the reference to a meaning (*Sinnerfüllung*), is removed from an ego-centered logic. Paradoxically, self-actualization requires an effort of self-forgetting (*Selbstverleugnung*)[66]. On this point, a Frankl scholar reports that:

> Frankl thus unmasks the latent error hidden behind the prevailing interpretation of the ancient Pindaric axiom, perhaps the most invoked – and misunderstood – by the psychologists of self-actualization. Pindar argued that man must become what he is. This imperative, however, is deprived of its imperative character and transformed into a simple indicative statement, as if to mean: what man must become, he has always been[67].

Now we can turn our attention to the presence of others in our process of self-knowledge. Our self-image (and therefore our self-esteem) depends greatly on the image of us we receive from others. "Man receives this image of the value of his self, above all, from the judgment of his fellows"[68]. There is a 'mirroring' at the basis of our self-knowledge; a 'living mirroring', in fact, because it takes place in a community, in the context of living relationships with others. It is a major responsibility of each one of us to render others their images. An illustration of this phenomenon can be found in the relevance and depth assumed by the gaze in the work of Dostoyevsky, who shows that "the identification of shame, its acceptance, and consequent control is possible only because the gazes are known to us or we

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[64] Id., *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, transl. I. Lasch, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1992, p. 111.

[65] Id., *Ärztliche Seelsorge: Grundlagen der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse*, A. Batthyany – K. Biller – E. Fizzotti ed., Böhlau, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2011, pp. 393-394.

[66] See D. Bruzzone, *Autotrascendenza e formazione: esperienza esistenziale, prospettive pedagogiche e sollecitazioni educative nel pensiero di Viktor E. Frankl*, Vita e pensiero, Milano 2001, p. 261.

[67] *Ibidem.*

[68] Ph. Lersch, *Aufbau der Person*, Johann Ambrosius Barth, München 1954, p. 131.

let ourselves be gazed from another gaze of appreciation that makes us capable of obtaining another type of awareness and, therefore, another type of reaction and choice"[69].

The way we address others is relevant for their self-knowledge, and this brings us to the part of our discussion that deals with language.

6. *Consciousness of Becoming in the Discourse*

The notions discussed thus far (dignity, responsibleness, dependence, self-actualization, and the relevance of the gaze of others) are needed to provide the concept of *heedfulness* with a content that justifies its position at the core of politeness. We can consider a person to have achieved a given state, but the reality is always that the person is in a perpetual becoming. If our heedfulness leads us to always seek to address others according to what they are and what they represent to us, this becoming should be part of our strategy of politeness, so that we can accurately calibrate the expression of the quality of the interlocutors and the relationships that we, as speakers, have with them. This is much more than 'forms of address' (titles, honorifics), even if that is the most obvious and common case of social deixis. A description of deixis by Lakoff introduces time and space in a way that may be understood in a less physical sense:

> It is assumed as a background that some entity exists and is present at some location in the speaker's visual field, that the speaker is directing his attention to it, and that the hearer is interested in its whereabouts but does not have his attention focused on it... The speaker then directs the hearer's attention to the location of the entity (perhaps accompanied by a pointing gesture) and brings it to the hearer's attention that this entity is at the specified location. Additionally... if the entity is moving, the motion may be indicated. And the speaker may choose to describe the entity or its location[70].

One could say "... if the entity is *existentially* moving..." And this would be the awareness of the becoming. If we have to identify a profile of deixis that is not entirely physical, it is certainly social deixis. But by what means? Possible discourse markers are affectivity, badinage, expressivity, and resources of address: vocatives, pejorative endings, solidarity-oriented endings, terms of endearment and nicknames (hypocoristic names). Besides social deixis (absolute and relative), empathetic deixis is relevant here ("encoding emotional distance between the speaker and aspects of the speech event"[71]).

Perspective vision has been described as proper of the human being in several ways[72]. It would be the difference, in Kantian terms, between the *ektypus* intellect (the human one)

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[69] F. Bergamino, *The Gaze of the Other: Emotion and Relation in* The Brothers Karamazov, "Church, Communication and Culture", 2, 2017, 3, p. 244.

[70] G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London 1987, p. 490.

[71] S. Marmaridou, *Pragmatic Meaning and Cognition*, J. Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2000, pp. 69 and 90.

[72] See E. Weigand, *Dialogue*, p. 56.

and the *archetypus* intellect (the divine one)[73]. A non-perspective subject is actually just a hypothesis for us, and it would have 'divine' characteristics: not seeing things from a point of view, but in themselves, or 'from within'. A perspective subject instead sees (knows, perceives, desires...) from a point in space and time. Place and time deixis express this perspective linguistically, but one's very position in the world is more significantly determined by relationships with people. These relationships show differences in quality and distance, differences 'of position'. These are real positions, to which we can take a purely descriptive approach. They can be intimately related to personal identities, and, of course, they can also be evaluated: they may be right or wrong, they may or may not encourage sharing; the deixis may be more or less true, that is, they may reflect more or less faithfully the reality of the relationships, in the same way that the face that manages politeness can respond with more or less fidelity to the person's reality.

What has been said above about respect invites us to seek resources of politeness in the deictic that highlights the ability of subjects to build their own lives. There are two aspects to this: the ability to act on one's own initiative, and the becoming itself.

The hearer's power to make dispositions is at the origin of many denominations of the speaker that belong to the semantic field of servitude or slavery, even though this meaning is no longer valid today, and also ignored by most speakers. This is the case of the Austrian German 'Servus' and that of the Italian 'ciao' (from *schiavo*, 'slave'), which do not even have the normal grammatical function of nouns. Examples of nouns in the realm of courtesy formulas include the Italian 'servitore', the Spanish 'servidor', and other expressions like the Mexican Spanish 'mande' (imperative of the verb *mandar* 'command'; 'mande' is also used to ask for clarifications, more or less like 'pardon?').

While these are lexical resources, there are also structural ones, such as the reverential verbal mode of Nahuatl, which is formed with the reflexive mode plus the causative mode[74]. An expression like 'You go down the stairs' becomes in reverential form: 'You let yourself go down the stairs', whereby a particular mastery of the interlocutor's over his or her own actions is perceived. In reality, even the actions of the speaker are put in reverential mode in this situation ('I make myself wish you a happy new year'), but in this case they take on a sense of deference towards the interlocutor: he deserves a particular self-awareness on the part of the speaker.

Deferent forms are very expressive and can have great persuasive force, but this has a delicate social framing that requires a cultural modulation without which a risk exists of some confusing, if not ridiculous, extremes. Brown and Levinson point to this phenomenon in the forms it takes in India:

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[73] "Ektypus. Der menschliche Verstand ist intellectus ectypus im Gegensatz zu dem göttlichen intellectus archetypus" (R. Eisler, *Kant-Lexikon: Nachschlagewerk zu Kants sämtlichen Schriften, Briefen und handschriftlichem Nachlass*, Georg Olms, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 1930, p. 115).

[74] See M. Launey, *Introducción a la lengua y a la literatura náhuatl*, trad. C. Kraft, UNAM, México 1992, p. 195. With different terminology, see A.M. Garibay, *La llave del náhuatl*, Porrúa, México 1999[7], pp. 48-49.

> That deference has this double-sided nature (either the raising of the other or the lowering of oneself) is clearly shown by the honorific systems of many languages which have both 'deferential' and 'humiliative' forms. To illustrate the more alien humiliative mode, in the Urdu of Delhi Muslims the respectful way of inviting someone to your house is to say something that glosses as "Please bring your ennobling presence to the hut of this dustlike person sometime"; while forms glossing as 'slave' and 'government' do duty as first- and second-person pronouns respectively[75].

The terms 'slave' and 'government' sound very crude to most contemporary western readers. Basically, they are expressions of the will, used in two situations: when someone has full control over their own will, and when someone declares that they will match their will to that of their interlocutor. As one can see, this is not far from the notion of respect mentioned above: the recognition of someone's mastery over his or her own life.

7. *Going Up and Down through Names – Claiming a Name for Oneself*

Let us now look at the paradigmatic case of some Slavic and Baltic languages with a particular plasticity in their proper nouns, from which a very dynamic politeness derives. I would like to mention a short conversation, reported in a study on family discourse, that took place around the family dinner table in Lithuania, between parents and young children (Kristina, five years and six months old; Paulius, three years and four months old). In the conversation, Paulius goes from being called Paulius to being called Pauliukas, and then again Pauliūkštis or maybe back to Paulius[76]. The pragmatic (empathically deictic) meaning of Paulius is neutral, while that of Pauliukas is affective and that of Pauliūkštis can be affective or pejorative[77]. This means that the consideration of Paulius goes up and down during dinner, and this fact finds a way to express itself. Sometimes the ascents and descents simply happen, but there is also the possibility that someone does not recognize himself in a denomination and claims a new one. So it happens in the following dialogue, where Paulius seems convinced that he deserves a different name from the one his mother used:

6.   Father: I and all the fishes will go for a walk on the carpet then won't they
            when you scuffle
7.   Kristina: no (.) we'll do this this way (.) one day me and another day such a
            (.) me one day Paulius another day me one day Paulius another day
            me [one day Paulius
8.   Father: [Paulius] do you agree?
9.   Paulius: ((starts crying)) I'm not Paulius I'm Pauliukas
10.   Kristina: Pauliukas

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11.   Paulius: Mu:m (.) will you give soon?
12.   Mother: already already already soon one minute
13.   Paulius: Paulius Paulius Paulius [Paulius
14.   Kristina: [everything] is being filmed (.)[78]

8. *Recognizing the Consciousness*

A very particular case of the recognition of this mastery over one's own life appears in the film *The Lives of Others* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006), although it should be noted that there are some aspects of the scene we will discuss that are not fully applicable to what we are looking at in this essay. In short, the scene displays a case of persuasion in which the speaker is not at liberty to talk about the issue of which he is trying to persuade an interlocutor, and this implies a significant amount of conditionings that keep the case away from various situations of ordinary life. However, it is precisely the speaker's need to convey a warning without being able to make it explicit that makes him focus all of his attention on obtaining the credibility and esteem of his interlocutor. He does so by using language that he thinks his interlocutor will recognize and by emphasizing the correspondence between the interlocutor and her self-image.

In a nutshell, the playwright Georg Dreyman is under surveillance in 1984 East Germany. The Stasi officer Gerd Wiesler, who personally conducts the spying operation, begins to realize the evil he is collaborating with. The writer's companion, a successful theatre actress, received offers of work and accommodation for the writer and for herself from the Minister of Culture in exchange for sexual favors. When she is about to meet the minister, Wiesler goes to a bar where he knows she will stop, and he tries to dissuade her from going to the appointment. The strategy he uses is to make her see that she has always been as she is, but that at that very moment, when she lies and says she is going to meet an old classmate, she is no longer herself. To make himself credible, Wiesler presents himself as 'her audience' and shows how well he knows her (very well indeed, since he is a spy; moreover, he has just heard the conversation she had with her partner and repeats some of the expressions she used in that context):

> Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler: Madam?
> Christa-Maria Sieland: Go away. I want to be alone.
> GW: Madam Sieland?
> Ch-MS: Do we know each other?
> GW: You don't know me, but I know you. Many people love you for who you are.
>   (*Viele Menschen lieben Sie... weil Sie sind wie Sie sind*)
> Ch-MS: Actors are never 'who they are'. (*Ein Schauspieler ist nie wie er ist*)

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[78] Abraskeviciute, *Ugniukas*, p. 26. "Everything goes smoothly when the boy is called by a diminutive. However, he does not bother himself arguing with the sister who refers to him as Paulius. But when his father turns to him using an unembellished vocative and not a diminutive form the child gets offended (Turn 9). Moreover, Turn 13 shows that he takes the offense quite seriously: he repeats his name in the form of a vocative several times to show his discontent" (*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32).

GW: You are. I've seen you on stage. You were more who you are than you are now.

Ch-MS: So you know what I'm like. (*Sie wissen, wie ich bin?*)

GW: I'm your audience.

Ch-MS: I have to go.

GW: Where to?

Ch-MS: I'm meeting an old classmate. I...

GW: You see? Just now, you weren't being yourself. (*Sehen Sie? Dabei waren Sie gerade gar nicht Sich selbst*)

Ch-MS: No?

GW: No.

Ch-MS: So you know her well, this Christa-Maria Sieland. What do you think – would she hurt someone who loves her above all else? Would she sell herself for art?

GW: For art? You already have art. That'd be a bad deal. (*Das wäre ein schlechtes Geschäft*) You are a great artist. Don't you know that?

Ch-MS: And you are a good man.[79]

Then Christa-Maria no longer goes to the minister and returns home instead, in search of intimacy. In the persuasive strategy, the role of a language familiar to her is clear (and more than familiar: the one she had heard a few minutes before from her beloved man), and in a decisive way so is the mention of her habitual personal fullness ('Sie sind wie Sie sind') which was fractured at the moment of the wrong choice.

In this case, the power of the interlocutor over his own life takes the form of a correspondence between what she is and what she appears to be. The approach may seem a little diachronic, but the process is implicit: it is clear that the correspondence between what she is and what is manifested is dynamic and requires continuous adjustments.

9. *Concluding Remarks*

Aside from the strategies to manage the image of the person, politeness deals with "the respect to be paid to our fellow beings"[80], whom we grasp in their images. Such handling has the anthropological dimension of care: real care of the person through the care of his or her image. This phenomenon fits within the perspective and methodology of fundamental rhetoric, "which is based on the assumption that metaphysics and rhetoric are reconcilable. It considers what is rhetorical not only to be an accidental means of the external self-manifestation of metaphysics, but an element of its own being which has so far been disregarded"[81].

The attention paid to the person through his or her image does not have a single associated language resource; on the contrary, it is expressed in many dimensions of the human communicative capacity. There is no part of grammar, or logic, or pragmatics that contains

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[79] For the screenplay, see F. Henckel von Donnersmarck, Quotes.net, STANDS4 LLC. *Das Leben der Anderen Quotes,* 2020, https://www.quotes.net/mquote/991327, last accessed June 23, 2022.

[80] E. Weigand, *Dialogue*, p. 94.

[81] P.L. Oesterreich, *Das gelehrte Absolute*, p. 6.

all these resources; they occupy different places in different cultures, and they can occupy more than one area of language resources within the same culture.

The person's dignity is perceived in their self-mastery, that is, their power of configuring their own life. The metaphysical basis is deeper, and therefore dignity is also to be recognized in individuals who are not capable of leading their own lives autonomously, either because they have become temporarily or permanently disabled, or because they are in a very early stage of life. However, it is in self-determination in relation to others[82], and hence in responsibility[83], that we perceive this supreme value of the person, and this recognition configures the most characteristic expressions of respect. Respect has to be embodied in gestures and words[84], and also in thought[85], which will then feed gestures and words.

A particular challenge for politeness is represented by the notion of a 'public self-image that everyone claims for himself'[86]. In the light of the history of anthropology and spirituality, this notion becomes very problematic because of the objective difficulty of self-knowledge and the always-real possibility that someone claims an image that does not correspond with truth. Besides the continuous becoming of the person, this is part of the mystery of the person, which is always beyond any specific description. As a whole, it is the object of the respect which is possible to pay because our cognitive and language resources are "capable of possessing an infinite"[87].

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[82] See Ph. Lersch, *Aufbau*, p. 131.

[83] See V.E. Frankl, *Man's Search*, p. 111; Campo, *Gli imperdonabili*, p. 179; Jiménez Cataño, *The Understanding*, p. 14.

[84] See L. Mortari, *Filosofia*, pp. 159-162.

[85] See *Ibid.*, pp. 162-168.

[86] See P. Brown – S.C. Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 61.

[87] L. Pareyson, *Verità*, p. 115.