

Manifesto

Person at the Center - The Association for the Philosophy of the Person (*Associazione per la Filosofia della Persona*) was founded with the main purpose of putting the person at the center as a “perspective of perspectives”, recognizing as a whole her or his spiritual, material, rational, emotional components and in the ability to generate community bonds. It is necessary to reclaim “thinking about the person”, in a historical phase in which there is a strong plurality of interpretations that requires an adequate discernment of the very concept of the person and her or his dignity, so as not to empty the meaning until it is diminished into a reductive naturalism. It is therefore a question of thinking and realizing a renewed humanism in the face of the challenges of the post-human and the trans-human. This involves overcoming all reductionism, be it naturalistic or anthropocentric, opening up to the paradigm of integral ecology and an understanding of the person constituted in the relationship with a transcendence in harmony with the value of finite realities. In this context, differences and gender relations must be valued in the recognition and practice of reciprocity.

In today’s global society, dominated by the maximization of instrumental-strategic action and the self-finalization of systemic media (technology, money, information, consensus, success, power), the scarcest resource has become the *sense of being* in general and the *sense of the personal being* in particular, with the consequent and inevitable reduction of people to functions-tools-objects of apparatuses at the service of potentates of the financial, techno-industrial, media and military realms, etc.

For many years, in Italian, European and world culture, there has been a need to return to reflect on one of the fundamental concepts of Western philosophical and legal culture: that of the human person in its constitutive substantial and relational dimension. As Paul Ricoeur rightly stated, unlike the “philosophies of the neutral” and the impersonal which are widespread today, and the various forms of nihilism, “the person remains, even today, the most appropriate term to boost research for which [...] neither the term conscience, nor subject, nor individual are adequate.

The purpose of the association is to put the person at the center as an idealistic leader and therefore a “concrete utopia” that offers itself as an *interpreter and shaper* of a new historical construction. The association’s *fundamental task is to discuss and formulate ideas and proposals to contribute to the solution of the most pressing historical issues in the global scenario*. The disintegration of ethics, the unlimited power of technology, the primacy of *homo oeconomicus*, the eco-systemic imbalance and the crisis of democracy indeed entail the dissolution of the person in the logic of the impersonal and of functional performance. Our cultural elaboration is also aimed at those who have political, institutional and educational roles and responsibilities, to provide useful elements for the blossoming of the person and of good coexistence. This will be pursued by carrying out the following phases:

- a) **develop**, with a transdisciplinary research method, an *analysis of historical issues* capable of understanding the phenomenology, the problems and the set of contributing causes that have caused them;
- b) **formulate** a *historical judgment*, that is, an evaluation of individual problems and their relationship, in an anticipatory vision of the fulfillment of the human;
- c) **suggest** *ideas and proposals for the solution of the examined problems*, providing planning and operational indications for the subjects called upon to implement them.

Within this general purpose framework, we indicate below some **specific aims and objectives** that the association intends to pursue, promoting and coordinating Italian and international research on the subject of the human person in her or his many dimensions through the organization of meetings and events of a reflective-critical-dialogic nature (transdisciplinary annual conferences open to the public, workshops, thematic seminars, summer schools, residential workshops of philosophical practices, public interviews, presentations of works, etc.). These will be designed for an audience not only of academics and specialists but above all innovative in the **method** of *communication* (open, circular and recursive) and in the search for truth in the multiplicity of approaches and different formulations.

1) *The promotion of studies about the different “philosophies of the person” that have been developed in modern and contemporary Italian culture and the enhancement of all those figures of philosophers, intellectuals, jurists and pedagogists* who in the contemporary world have offered original contributions to a thought centered on the idea of person (for example, in the Italian Christian context Giuseppe Capograssi, Luigi Stefanini, Felice Balbo, Giorgio La Pira, Luigi Pareyson, Armando Rigobello, Virgilio Melchiorre and in the Italian secular context Antonio Banfi, Norberto Bobbio, Uberto Scarpelli, Bruno Trentin, Stefano Rodotà).

The association also intends to establish collaborative relationships with foundations and scientific research centers that demonstrate attention towards and interest in the rich personalist tradition, and to seek the values implicit in the notion of person that are present in other perspectives, even in those which appear further away from it.

2) The recent scientific-technical revolution (which focuses on neuroscience), and the scenarios opened by artificial intelligence and the most recent developments of new technologies in all fields of human action (economic, legal, communicative, educational, healthcare, political, administrative, etc.), offer urgent and fundamental questions to the philosophy of personalist inspiration. Often it is the very identity of the human person in her or his irreducible traits of uniqueness, freedom and dignity that is questioned. *Another important aim is to face the new frontiers of the sciences to offer an “integral” understanding of human nature*, with a “hermeneutics of the person” capable of integrating all its indivisible components (conscience, intellect, body, will).

3) The variegated postmodern season and the latest trends in the *post-human* debate have spread a general skeptical attitude of “farewell to the truth” throughout culture and a nihilism that has precise declinations also in the ethical-political, juridical and educational fields. *The association intends to propose a constructive and generative ethics that has no reservations against asserting a truthful vision of the human.* The crisis of values that characterizes so much of contemporary culture can be seriously addressed only by starting from a correct anthropological understanding: constructive responses to the current educational and ethical-political emergency can be sought by indicating a centrally referenced value in the human person.

4) The association, adhering to the ideals of personal freedom and social justice that are found in the Italian Constitution, *intends to qualify itself as an ethical-political and value-based training body, but does not seek to be identified with any political ideology.* Democratic life can consider all values as relative except one: that of *dignitas personae*, that is, respect for the human person in her or his inalienable rights and duties. “The person is the very essence of law, she or he is the subsistent human right.”; this famous statement by Antonio Rosmini is still fundamentally relevant today.

5) Western democracies today show signs of a profound crisis. The obsessive search for an immediate consensus and an end in itself prevents far-reaching intelligent planning, the lack of which is the basis of many of the pathological expressions of the current political situation: the transformation of the dialectic of positions into media spectacles, narcissistic leadership, voter apathy, the imbalance between rights and duties and the nationalistic claims that close down in a negative reaction to the dominant trends of global techno-capitalism. Faced with the disintegration of traditional identities, and in order to construct more advanced models of coexistence, *the association intends to highlight the philosophical and ethical foundations of an authentic democratic practice, and aims to suggest some possible itineraries to radically rethink the reasons for politics its ability to create interpersonal and community relationships.* A redefinition of democracy is therefore necessary, based on a propulsive resumption of the various cultural and spiritual roots that animated it, starting from its origins in Greek classicism and Roman law to the stimuli of the Jewish-Christian matrix and the acquisitions of the Enlightenment, enriched by the successive achievements of greater social equality. This seems to us to be the most comprehensive horizon for re-launching the essential values of the person within the broader worldwide socio-cultural context, in which the intertwining of civilizations becomes fruitful in the mutual acceptance of forms of knowledge and wisdom.

The association *does not want to be the expression of a singular thought, but intends to have a cultural profile that is nourished by the “conviviality of differences”.* The members of the association come from different cultural backgrounds and express a plurality of views on the instance of a “philosophy of the person”. In the belief that “truth is symphonic”, in the promotion and defense of the most fruitful and constitutive values of the interpersonal relationship, the

association intends to make its own the affirmation of Albertus Magnus: *in dulcedine societatis quaerere veritatem*.

Therefore, it is proposed to *simultaneously undertake “a community of research” and “a research of community”*, working on *the three levels of research, encounter and action*:

- a) **theoretical content**: elaboration of visions, ideas and theories that advance a foundational claim or shared validity;
- b) **interpersonal relationship**: conscious management, with unlimited dialogical openness, of cooperative processes and possible conflicts;
- c) **constant reference to historical issues**: attention to the problems of the people most threatened by the culture of marginalization and waste, in order to advance ideas and projects inspired by the values of fraternity, justice and care.

These seem to us to be the guidelines along which the *conditions* of a “happy” life for individuals and communities can be promoted.

The activities promoted by the association are also intended to qualify as valid opportunities for the scientific updating of teachers in universities and secondary schools. The association also seeks to promote specific meetings aimed at students with a focus on reflection, as well as public events capable of creating wide interest and involving broad participation.

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