

Summary

This dissertation attempts to uncover an ‘original philosophy of the theatre’ in the writings of Karol Wojtyła (his theatrical, philosophical and theological works) to enrich the current canon on theatrical thought and to provide a firm foundation to aid in the expression of his dramatic works for the stage. This thesis therefore has a broader aim of serving as a precursor to an acting methodology that encompasses the philosophy of the *Theatre of the ‘Gift’*. It must also be noted that this paper has also sought to try to rectify the division of *theatre theory* and the *philosophy of the theatre* which has brought about the removal of the object of *normative issues* from the field of philosophy. This division, I believe, has arisen due to the loss of a framework provided by realistic metaphysics (the philosophy of being) which once provided the basis on which to build a philosophical anthropology (the philosophy of man) and ethics (the philosophy of morality).

While Wojtyła never wrote a philosophy of the theatre per se, or at least not independently from his close collaborator Mieczysław Kotlarczyk (whom he co-founded *The Rhapsodic Theatre* with); Bolesław Taborski was in fact sceptical of the fact that Wojtyła’s plays were merely an output of Kotlarczyk’s ideas of theatre, “neither then nor later were Wojtyła’s plays simply ‘dramatized illustrations’ of the Rhapsodic theatre’s theories.” (Taborski 1987, pg. 16) Additionally, in a retreat given to artists in Kraków in 1962, Wojtyła seemingly expresses a very different understanding of the role of the actor compared to that found in the Rhapsodic’s theory of theatre. He does not see the actor as merely a guide but an embodiment of the character, an embodiment that includes his understanding of the person in *Person and Act* and seems to draw inspiration from another Polish pedagogue Juliusz Osterwa. We after all cannot forget the influence of an entire lineage of Polish dramatists that preceded John Paul II and the milieu he would have been formed in,

One pays so much for talent! For vocal talent, for physical talent. How many attempts are needed to draw out a different theatrical character from one’s own concrete, unequivocal character, to create—from the person that I am—another person. What a huge transfer of my individuality, personality; what a huge plasticity of all of the dispositions of my person is required so that in its place, a different “I” arises—authentic and original. (Wojtyła 2021, Lesson II section, para.6)

This work is ‘interdisciplinary’ in nature; that is, in order to try to piece together an original philosophy of the theatre (while the primary emphasis will be on Wojtyła’s philosophy of man)

I drew from Wojtyła's/Pope John Paul II's dramatic, philosophical and theological works. I used this 'interdisciplinary' approach due to the fact that (as the Italian philosopher Giovanni Reale observed and as Professor Wierzbicki explains) Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II (1920-2005) was a "pilgrim of the Absolute" i.e. Wojtyła himself strove to reach the ultimate source of being i.e. the Truth itself in a threefold way of poetry, philosophy and theology. (Wierzbicki 2015, pg. 292) While John Paul II's literature was separate from his philosophical writings one cannot deny the fact that his philosophy heavily influenced his dramatic works...this influence need not remain on the level of content however. In this thesis therefore, I have attempted to extend his *philosophy of man* to the theatrical domain and have actually tried to use it to determine what the essence of the theatre would look like for Wojtyła - what would he see as its foundation and end. I have also used his *philosophy of man* to determine how theatre can submit itself to this foundation and end.

Philosophy and the theatre have a long-standing historical link i.e the very emergence of the term *person*, which comes to represent the object of philosophical anthropology, is adopted from the Greek theatrical tradition and later on becomes further deepened and enriched by the writings of Christian theologians on the Trinity. This thesis therefore 'goes back to the beginning' as it were and tries to ascertain the link between philosophical anthropology and the theatre. It explores the intersection of the term *microcosm* as it pertains to man (in the Aristotelian-Thomistic realistic metaphysical tradition) and as it has been used to describe the relationship between the theatre and the world i.e. the *theatrum mundi* (a term which is rooted in ancient Greece but seems to reach its height in the time of Shakespeare). I have then worked to establish what Plato and Aristotle meant by *mimesis* and have then moved on to try to grasp Aristotle's understanding of *tragedy* and therefore *action* and *catharsis* - terms he uses to describe the distinguishing features of the theatrical act in the *Poetics*. I have used Aristotle as a base not only because he is one of the fathers of Western philosophical thought and Wojtyła is a product of this tradition (further reinforced by his acceptance of metaphysical realism) but because in his writings on *The Rhapsodic Theatre* we see how Wojtyła and Kotlarczyk partially work off and try to develop what Aristotle defines theatre/tragedy as.

An in depth analysis of Wojtyła's philosophical opus *Person and Act* in chapter three has provided the opportunity to understand Wojtyła's philosophical basis for seeing man as 'gift' i.e. how he understands being able to honour man's personhood - his self-determination, self-possession, self-governance, self-transcendence - in light of his relational aspect (participation). I have looked at his study of the *Person and Act*, precisely because (as explained in the previous

chapter) theatre is based on these two very things i.e. man and his action. In order to ascertain what a philosophy of the theatre is according to Wojtyła, we therefore needed to grasp what he understands by these two terms. Not only did we have to look at man in his individual capacity but his relational capacity as well, as not only does this for Wojtyła, fully express man as a person but because theatre is based on this very capacity as well (as we have explored in the final chapter).

This thesis also sought to explore Wojtyła's theatrical roots with a historical account of the idea of the "sacred" in the Polish theatre by turning to its founding fathers: Adam Mickiewicz and Stanisław Wyspiański and it additionally uncovered the foundational ideas of Wojtyła's main theatrical influences i.e Juliusz Osterwa and Mieczysław Kotlarczyk. By turning directly to Wojtyła's writings on *The Rhapsodic Theatre* as well as his letters of correspondence to Kotlarczyk we were then able to perform an analysis of *The Radiation of Fatherhood* using primary sources of the *Person and Act*, *Love and Responsibility* and *The Theology of the Body*. This was to further introduce us to Wojtyła's proper understanding of man as 'gift' and the action which helps him truly fulfill all of his potentialities i.e. the 'act of love'. While this application helps to understand Wojtyła's dramatic work the primary purpose of this analysis, as I have said, was to arrive at a philosophy of the theatre that would best realise this play (and its philosophical content) for the stage. I then concluded by applying what we have discovered to the essential structures of theatre in the chapter *Towards a Theatre of the 'Gift'*, and have additionally attempted an exploration to determine the types of 'participation' that are apparent in the theatre as well. When analyzing the experience of the theatrical act even further, one unveils not just the 'connection', 'exchange', 'communion', 'participation' taking place between actors and the audience but multiple 'connections'/'exchanges' in fact: actor-character, actor-actor, director-actor, director/actor-script-audience.

What was discovered in this thesis therefore was that a theatre that holds the truth of what makes a person truly a person i.e "man acts" and especially an "act of love" as its primary focus not only in content but in the actual practice of the theatrical craft, is not only that which would best portray Wojtyła's works but is in keeping with what seems to be natural to theatre itself. At the start of this thesis we formulated a working definition for the 'philosophy of the theatre' in light of Wojtyła. That it is a form of philosophical inquiry which has theatre as its object and tries, by going back to classical philosophers and through the application of philosophical reasoning (which includes a dialogue with modern philosophy and theatre theorists by an in-depth reading of theatrical experience and reduction) to ascertain its most essential aspects i.e.

its foundational causes and ends. From all we have gathered, I believe that we can logically conclude that, for Wojtyła, personhood is both the foundation and end of theatre. Therefore, in addition to the imitation of a truly human act which reveals this personhood in its fullness, participation is the means by which theatre is submitted to personhood.