

On Personal Aspects

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Abstract

The starting point of this paper is in some insights and difficulties concerning the mind-body problem in von Wright's last writings. My main thought is that the opposition between the inner and the outer (the subjective and the objective) is in the difference between personal and impersonal aspects in the contents of our experience. What is described by focussing on a personal aspect – someone being in pain, one raising one's arm – can be impersonally described in terms of physical processes. However a personal aspect, which is as real as any physical one, only becomes visible if we perform a basic turn from the position of an observer of processes to the position of a participant that is actively engaged with our environment, in ways and forms that we share with others. Therefore it is no mere outcome of a conceptualization of behaviour. On the other hand, the distinction between personal and impersonal aspects has no ontological foundations: no further ingredients have to be injected into impersonal processes to turn them into (intentional) movement or pain. Instead, the transition from personal to impersonal aspects is gradual.