

>Person< vs. >Object< – Not dualism, but polarity

Emending Notice

Since a couple of years I have tried to promote the insight that our everyday conceptual system is built on a dualism of the concepts of >person< and >object<. More recently I started to describe the alleged duality in terms of the rules

>What is something is not someone< vs. >Who is someone is not something<.

Most recently Prof. Ursula Wolf, a disciple of Ernst Tugendhat, in a mail presented me with the following objection: persons are simply material objects with the unique mark of being in command of a propositional language. For they necessarily are animals (living beings) and therefore a class of material objects in space and time.

This is correct. But I am inclined to uphold my intended claim for a welter of reasons presented in my writings on the concept of a person<sup>1</sup> the most important being that the relation of the concepts of person and object I meant to describe is anchored in the referential system of everyday language via the indefinite pronouns >something< and >someone<. The argument for this indicating some kind of duality is the following: Quine taught us that indefinite pronouns are the colloquial predecessors of variables in formal notation like PM ese. And: What we have variables for we certainly presume that there instances exist distinctly. For: >to be is to be the value of a variable.<

So I have to redescribe the wrongly assumed dualism as a polarity giving in these rules:

>What is *merely* something is not someone< vs. >Who is someone is not *merely* something<.

This acknowledges that the concepts of person and object partly overlap while being at the time descriptively correct of our communicative practice.

© E.M. Lange 2023

---

<sup>1</sup> Cp.the respective section on the concepts in >Philosophy<. In German I wrote >Begriff und Ideen der Person< and >Wer wir sind – Philosophie des Personalausweises< - all on [www.emilange.de](http://www.emilange.de).