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## The Existential Metaphysics of the Person. Part 2: *Esse Personale* and the Metaphysical Turn

This paper is a continuation of my article entitled “The Existential Metaphysics of the Person. Part 1: The Classical Concept of the Person and the Metaphysical Theory of *Esse*.”<sup>1</sup> Both papers are designed to present a research project aimed at introducing the concept of the existential metaphysics of the person—a contribution to classical anthropology based on so-called existential metaphysics. The first paper discussed the roots of this concept in the light of the classical concept of the person (especially the philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas), and presented the theoretical model of the metaphysics of the person developed in the Lublin Philosophical School in Poland as a contemporized version of Aquinas’s concept. Against the background of the first one, this second paper is an attempt to show the philosophical breakthrough resulting from the adoption of the concept of *esse personale*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Studia Gilsoniana* 10, no. 2 (April–June 2021): 277–292.



## The Metaphysical Significance of *Esse Personale*

In order to sufficiently emphasize the theoretical significance of the concept of *esse personale* (personal existence), one must point to its distinct reliance on the crucial assertions of the general theory of being. Personal existence functions as a foundation for personal action (*operari sequitur esse*), and this allows personal existence, among others things, to more fervently and more radically justify the thesis claiming that the person cannot be encompassed by the natural sciences alone.<sup>2</sup> Such an understanding of the person and their existence essentially belongs to the order of philosophical considerations: the person is discussed here not on the grounds of some prior theories or definitions, but on the grounds of personal experience as the point of departure. For this reason an in-depth reflection concerning so-called anthropological experience seems necessary.<sup>3</sup>

The inquiries conducted by Karol Wojtyła lead to the conclusion that the concept of *esse personale* in itself is open to dialogue with contemporary thought, assuming the priority of experience and a realistic point of departure. The primacy of existence before action (*operari sequitur esse*) became the basis for the affirmation of the act of personal existence (*esse personale*), thus underlying all of the dynamisms of the person. Since the person is a subject (*suppositum*) of existence and action, then its proper existence (*esse*) is personal, not only individual, in the sense of an individualized nature. The fullness of the notion of a person is expressed by uniqueness rather than by concreteness. A per-

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<sup>2</sup> Max Scheler had a similar claim. In the latter part of his intellectual activity he sought for a substantive notion of the human being which could be acquired independently from scientific methods. See *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, trans. Manfred S. Frings (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 6ff.

<sup>3</sup> For more on this topic, see, e.g., Gerd Haeffner, *The Human Situation: A Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. Eric Watkins (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), part A, §1 and §4.

son does not solely mean “‘individualized humanness’; it actually consists rather in the mode of individual being that pertains (from among all the types of existing beings) to mankind alone. This mode of being stems from the fact that the peculiar type of being proper to mankind is personal.”<sup>4</sup>

Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, in his analysis, similarly demonstrates that classical anthropology is prolific, i.e., it can be developed and opens up new research perspectives (assuming the priority of metaphysics and the objective order). Krąpiec’s personalism, based on traditional metaphysics in which a crucial role is played by existence as an act of being, turns out to be a fairly intransigent approach, forcing a radical change in the understanding of the person—just as the metaphysical concept of *esse* requires a radical change of thinking about being. The person is a being in the fundamental sense and this constitutes a model of being’s self-understanding.<sup>5</sup> The person is already given in primordial experience, not only in a theory or a notion, and is given from the side of existence (the metaphysical primacy of existence over essence).

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<sup>4</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), 83. Wojtyła explicitly indicated here Thomas Aquinas’s concept of *esse*, the extension and specific continuation of which is supposed to be the theory of person’s action, thus rooted in personal existence. Wojtyła, whilst agreeing with Aquinas’s concept, points to human nature as the appropriate basis of dynamic unity (cohesion), whereas its deepest foundation is *esse*. Humanness is, therefore, the only nature which really exists individually as a person. Hence every human dynamism has a personal trait. This is the so-called integration of nature and humanity in the person. See *ibid.*, 83–85.

<sup>5</sup> Under the influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century tendencies in science, an exemplary form of being was assumed to be the simplest, i.e., the least complex material being. In this way, the simplest material instances of being became the model of rationality and self-understanding, as a result of which personal beings turned out to be rationally the most incomprehensible (the Absolute Being was the most incomprehensible being). See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Odzyskać świat realny* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1993), 612. This model set the standards of rationality in the period of Krąpiec’s activities and with regard to that model, based mainly on the postulates of positivism, he formulated his theses. Despite the noticeable changes which took place in recent years in the field of philosophy, the influence of positivism still seems to be quite significant, and the thesis concerning the domination of the level of things in science and culture has not lost its prominence.

The person is also recognized as a paradigm of beingness, as a substance existing within itself (the metaphysical primacy of a person over a thing).<sup>6</sup>

The primacy of existence over essence may be clearly noticed in the direct experience of “I,” which is constantly present in experienced acts. I cognize the existence of “I” differently than in the case of affirming the existence of external beings (where the cognizing subject concentrates on substantive aspects), with the constantly accessible view of the being coming from within, whereby the continuous affirmation of the primacy and transcendence of existence over essence (substance, traits, properties) occurs. The subject feels that its acts do not constitute its “I,” but they emanate from the “I”; they are (causatively) attributed to it.<sup>7</sup> Recognizing existence as the bridge connecting thinking to objective reality thus enables the unity of the human being with the world. The splitting of reality into the realm of being and the realm of consciousness (“I”) therefore may be eliminated on the grounds of philosophy by concepts based on the personal *esse*.

A person, “in the general understanding of man (in both philosophical and theological anthropology) and in explaining the individual fact of being a man, is never an end point, but always a special starting point.”<sup>8</sup> The human being, at the very source of experiencing themselves, discovers themselves to be a person, i.e., an “I,” an independently existing, autonomous subject, identical with themselves, with their own actions emanating from themselves, thus expressing their personal nature. The personal “I,” constituted by *esse* and proportional to the

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<sup>6</sup> I presented Krąpiec’s metaphysical personalism in: Arkadiusz Gudaniec, “The Foundations of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec’s Metaphysical Personalism,” *Forum Philosophicum* 19, no. 1 (2014): 61–96.

<sup>7</sup> See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Metafizyka* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1988), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 638.

individual subject, is something more familiar to us in our personal actions, more primordial than our nature.<sup>9</sup> The existence of the person is therefore a unique type of existence, which in the case of a human being manifests itself in the perpetual organizing of their “own” nature, thus expressing not only the power of ruling over this nature, but also the need of matter without which the human person cannot express themselves in their own personal action.

In this way the application of the metaphysical concept of *esse* in anthropology opens the path of moving *proprium humanum* from the essential level, where the human being is constituted by traits stemming from human nature, to the existential level (*esse personale*)—with this presenting the uniqueness of the person as an completely different type of existence. A person exists by virtue of their own act of existence, which is a primary act and dynamizes the entire being of a person, i.e., all secondary acts.<sup>10</sup> The extension of this revelatory intuition, included in the inquires of Mieczysław A. Krąpiec and Karol Wojtyła, allows us to formulate a thesis in light of which personal existence lays the foundation for a distinctly understood existential metaphysics of the person. This concept leads to the necessity of a clearer posing of the issue of the person on the grounds of classical philosophy, which may be connected with the substantial modifications of some solutions hitherto assumed in classical anthropology, including those concerning the relations between anthropology and metaphysics.<sup>11</sup> Since *esse* is the most perfect element in being, as it is the act of being itself (that which actualizes being), whereas the person is the most perfect being, then *esse*

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<sup>9</sup> See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1991), 142; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Karola Wojtyły ‘Osoba i czyn’,” in *idem*, *Człowiek – kultura – uniwersytet* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1998), 76.

<sup>10</sup> For more on this topic, see, among other works, Wojtyła’s analyses in *The Acting Person*, 71–85.

<sup>11</sup> It will be discussed more in depth later on in this article.

*personale* is the most perfect act of being that justifies not only the essential uniqueness and distinctness of being a person, but also establishes the model for beingness at large.<sup>12</sup>

On the one hand, as the pinnacle moment of metaphysics of the person, personal existence presents the human being as one that exists in the world of real beings. And on the other hand, personal existence fundamentally and completely differentiates the human mode of existence among all other forms of existence. This concept, therefore, makes one aware of the necessity to include the double perspective (subjective–objective) in examinations of the human being. In this case the metaphysical theory of analogy turns out to be indispensable,<sup>13</sup> as it guarantees, i.a., a theoretical safeguard from falling into anthropological dualism. Reaching for the theory of analogy in this case turns out to be very creative because it leads to the disclosure of the ultimate foundation for the analogy of personal existence. The personal “I” is a being to such an extent that it can be analogically understood as existence, and at the same time differs so greatly from non-personal beings (understood as things) that it can be seen only as personal existence, i.e., an existence which is entirely unique and radically different.<sup>14</sup>

Pointing to personal existence explains the uniqueness of the person and simultaneously reveals the mystery of the person. Existence,

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<sup>12</sup> One must also remember that the principles which are universally binding in existential metaphysics apply to the same degree to *esse personale*; especially the principle of juxtaposing existence to essence, in light of which *esse* is a non-conceptualizable element, apprehensible solely via an existential judgment, as well as the metaphysical priority of existence over essence.

<sup>13</sup> On a global scale, a unique description of the theory of analogy as a predominantly metaphysical theory can be found in Krąpiec’s monograph entitled *Teoria analogii bytu* [Theory of the Analogy of Being] (Lublin: RW KUL, 1993). See also Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Analogia,” in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, vol. 1 (Lublin: PTTA, 2000), 210–220.

<sup>14</sup> Existence is most perfect in the person because it is simultaneously experienced internally, as if “from within,” but is also cognized “from outside” by analogy with the existence of all other beings.

however, is not a category of conceptual knowledge. While knowing ourselves from the side of our own existence, which is given to us directly and in an individually unique way, it still remains for us a mystery as to who we are because we do not have a direct insight into our essence. Personal existence, nonetheless, allows us to cognize ourselves as persons and reveals the transcendent dimension, described in short as a reference to the truth. It is impossible to entirely objectivize the experience of being a person because we inevitably encounter an insurmountable barrier: essential aspects of consciousness (especially subjectivity) are also beyond the grasp of the natural sciences. The person is ultimately a mystery which reveals itself only partially and even in the experience of their own “I” largely remains “veiled.” This being “veiled,” in order to “unveil” the absolute dimension of the person, opens the field for perennial questions on the origins and purpose of a person’s life—a realm accessible solely (apart from revealed knowledge) through metaphysically oriented philosophy.

### **The New Metaphysics of the Person**

The basis for existential metaphysics of the person, which is outlined in this article, is the assertion that the distinctive human feature is not human nature as such—though on the grounds of nature specific traits differentiate the human being from other species, similarly as is the case with other *differentiae*—but human existence. The human is constituted by the uniqueness of a completely different mode of existence (*esse personale*), with the simultaneous acceptance of the analogy of existence that guarantees both the realism of persons-subjects and the realness of things. As we have seen, the first attempts of drawing attention to this specificity and uniqueness of the person were initiated by Thomas Aquinas in his reflection on the specificity of the human soul which has its “own” act of existence and “grants it [existence]” to

the body, thus forming a human being.<sup>15</sup> Already in Aquinas's philosophy one could notice the origins of the claim that the basis of human nature is a unique existence, described as personal existence. The same uniqueness was stressed in the many differing theories of the modern age by way of placing subjectivity in the centre of philosophical reflection—however, erroneously by way of reaching a certain extreme within the subjective approach, i.e., immanentism, radical idealism, etc.<sup>16</sup> In the contemporary age, especially in existentialism (mainly in Heidegger and Jaspers), emphasis was put on the uniqueness of human existence and the meaning of the individual's life, thus taking into account the privileged treatment of the context of one's internal life and experiences.

Based on these considerations, both on a systemic and historical levels, we can ascertain that the concept of personal existence has not been clearly formulated and differentiated so far. While remaining in the shadow of classical metaphysics, the concept of *esse personale* as something new and one-of-a-kind has not been sufficiently elaborated upon in a systemic manner, as it was predominantly considered in the context of a general understanding of *esse*. Thus its uniqueness has not been noticed, or indeed has been marginalized. But even if we set out from the concept of personal existence and the metaphysics of the person based on it, treated solely as a continuation or distinct case of general existential metaphysics, we will clearly notice the radicality of personal existence which subsequently gains a voice, comparable to that of the concept of *esse* in metaphysics. *Esse personale*, however, is not on-

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *S.Th.*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5: “[A]nima illud esse in quo ipsa subsistit, communicat materiae corporali, ex qua et anima intellectiva fit unum, ita quod illud esse quod est totius compositi, est etiam ipsius animae. Quod non accidit in aliis formis, quae non sunt subsistentes. Et propter hoc anima humana remanet in suo esse, destructo corpore, non autem aliae formae.”

<sup>16</sup> Wojtyła, drawing abundantly on early modern and contemporary philosophy, treated this extremum as a warning. See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 57–58, 114.



ly a particular type of *esse*, but it constitutes *esse* with a source character: it is in a way an *esse* paradigm. This radically different mode of existence of a person not only goes beyond (transcends) any grades in the hierarchy of being, but more importantly cannot be reduced at all to a categorial difference on account of which the human being is distinguishable on the natural level.

Therefore, the concept of personal existence points to the radical uniqueness of a person in an ontic sense (not only in a phenomenological or axiological one), and is based on strong theoretical foundations thanks to the metaphysical theory of *esse*. The person is a distinctly existing subject who “fulfils” its nature (i.e., humanness), whereas personal existence itself allows one to speak of the human being both as a being (real, existing, given in the context of the world) as well as the self-aware and unique “I,” where theoretical discourse intersects with the intimate aspects of experiencing a person as a concrete individual.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as was demonstrated by the inquiries made at the Lublin Philosophical School, especially by Karol Wojtyła, this approach generates a possibility of harmonizing phenomenological and metaphysical measures. The concept of personal existence is not only a theory of a metaphysical type, but is also a kind of phenomenological description of the original experience of the person.<sup>18</sup>

Such a synthesizing personalistic-metaphysical approach may constitute a foundation for the most comprehensive and fundamental theory of the person and also may point to new ways of resolving numerous theoretical difficulties concerning the essence of the human being. The theory of existence as an act of being connected with the concept of a

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<sup>17</sup> Wojtyła drew attention to this hurdle. By concentrating in his research on subjective aspects, he analyzed the experience of the individual, focusing as such not on its objectivization, but rather on its intersubjectivization. See Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 16–17.

<sup>18</sup> It was discussed in detail in my book *U podstaw jedności bytowej człowieka. Studium z metafizyki osoby* (Lublin: PTTA–KUL, 2016), 323–328, 390–397, 406–411.

person, allows one to transcend essentialist limitations of philosophy to a significant degree: it makes for a solution, for example, to contemporary debates on the classical problem of the incognizability of the soul-body relation.<sup>19</sup> Existence is not conceptualizable—as a personal existence, it can be directly accessed through subjective (intuitive) experience and then expressed by the so-called existential judgments. The personal existence transcends the fundamental contradiction between the subjective and objective perspectives, and reveals itself as a “place” in which these perspectives converge. The objective perspective reaches existence via a direct act of existential judgment that is a natural and spontaneous type of cognition. This act liberates the philosophy of the human being from the constraints of pure essentialism. The subjective perspective, on the other hand, purged of all *a priori* concepts of consciousness, reveals a necessary dependence of the subject on the ontic order, and demonstrates that personal existence is experienced by concrete persons as their irreducibility to things, unrepeatability, uniqueness, etc. These perspectives converge in *esse personale*, which means that the subjective experience of a person is based on the metaphysical *esse* and at the same time the metaphysical *esse* of a person is encompassed in the basic subjective act, i.e., the existential judgment concerning one’s own existence. Consequently, the concept of *esse personale*, like no other, is able not only to protect the human experience from idealism and immanentism, but also to retain realism within the subjective experience of the person.

Personal existence is the most profound ontic principle which provides a common perspective for unilateral (objective or subjective)

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<sup>19</sup> This is one of the problems which is particularly familiar to classical anthropology and which is also analyzed by contemporary philosophy of mind (where the soul was replaced by the mind). The problem of the incognizability of the mind-body relation was posed, i.a., by C. McGinn (e.g., “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?,” *Mind* 98 [1989]: 349–366). According to him, our natural cognitive limitations are the reason why we will never be able to resolve the mind-body problem.

approaches in philosophy. Thus, it also shows the fundamental, perhaps insufficiently noticed so far, level of human unity, at which the perspectives of being and consciousness are united as the objective and subjective dimensions of the person. The so-called concomitant reflection is a unifying point on the side of human consciousness. The subjectiveness of the concomitant reflection cannot be reduced to its immanence, because a person must relate to their own thoughts and judgments in order to ascertain the veracity or falsity of these acts. In this way, what emerges in the subjective dimension of the person is an objective element, which is the condition for the functioning of the person as a person.<sup>20</sup> The concept of personal existence allows one to grasp the objective and subjective side of human essence as one thing—in other words, it allows one to understand human subjectivity in a way that at the same time reveals its rootedness in objective reality.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Metaphysical Turn**

While attempting to renew philosophical anthropology, as based on the concept of personal existence, one must be aware of several basic issues.

First, without metaphysical tools it is impossible to cognize the ontic status of a person, i.e., ultimately understand what and whom a human person is. Therefore, the necessity to return to metaphysical reflection on the grounds of philosophical anthropology seems to be the initial and fundamental research postulate which one should clearly make, especially in view of various anti-personalistic threats that are

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<sup>20</sup> See Wojciech Chudy, *Rozwój filozofowania a "pułapka refleksji."* *Filozofia refleksji i próby jej przewyciężenia* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1995), 89–92.

<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the concept of personal existence, assuming its continued development and systemic clarification, is also capable of regaining theoretical coherence of knowledge about the human being and therefore plays an important role in contemporary anthropological debates.

present in contemporary culture. Consequently, one should defend the assertion that classical metaphysics, rooted in Aristotle's thoughts, is a distinct and theoretically legitimate type of cognition and mode of explanation, and in its existential version (the concept of *esse*) radically deepens the rational insight into reality, thus leading to a particular sort of intellectual contemplation (the so-called "third voyage"<sup>22</sup>). This distinct type of cognition also assumes and requires creative continuation, development, supplementation, acknowledging of new research contexts, etc.

Second, the relation between anthropology (including its original point of departure in the form of the experience of "I") and metaphysics, which postulates the ultimate explanation of the person on the ontic level, needs to be thought through more thoroughly. This relation may be described by pointing to the mutual dependence of its members. Anthropology needs metaphysics because through metaphysical existential judgments a person has access to the world and in a way this binds the person and his (or her) internal experience with genuine reality. Metaphysics, in turn, needs anthropology because, through the anthropological experience of "I," a person reaches directly his (or her) being "from within," where it manifests itself in the most perfect manner. Perhaps it is thanks to its reference to the personal "experience of being" that traditional metaphysics can regain its prominent position in the domain of cognition and conduct dialogue on this ground with other personalist currents.

Third, explanation of the person cannot be encompassed within the limits of some general theory of reality or some general theory of self. In light of the concept of *esse personale*, the understanding of the person as a being turns out to be insufficient, because it is not enough to

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<sup>22</sup> This term was promoted and effectively defended by Vittorio Possenti. See his *Nihilism and Metaphysics. The Third Voyage*, trans. Daniel B. Gallagher (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014).

treat *esse personale* as a regular type of *esse*.<sup>23</sup> On account of this, it seems that one should consider anew the relation between metaphysics and anthropology in order to find out whether the function of anthropology as a particular metaphysics has been entirely thought through. Anthropology cannot encompass the human being solely within objective analysis, and metaphysical methods alone are not enough to fully understand the specificity of the person. It turns out that what is also necessary are both appropriate methods of describing experience (namely phenomenological methods) and methods that could harmonize descriptive approach with metaphysical explanation.<sup>24</sup> One may consistently claim that the concept of personal existence, as discerned and formulated within the field of metaphysics, manifests the pinnacle of metaphysical cognition, as it is cognition which concerns the most perfect type of existence. This fact should be perceived as a need for a special treatment of personal existence on the grounds of metaphysics.

Metaphysical discourse about the person in light of the concept of *esse personale* is conducted differently from the way it is usually the case in traditional anthropology. Such a discourse does not have an objective character because personal existence is given primordially in the experience of one's self. Since, in turn, the inner experience of the person reveals most fully what constitutes being, the anthropological experience of the person's self should have priority over metaphysical theories—indeed, a priority understood as something more than simply permitting data from experience to be the point of departure of the theory of the human being.

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<sup>23</sup> It seems that the concept of personal existence, metaphysically understood as *esse personale ut actus essendi personae*, is something more than just a simple application of the general metaphysical theory of *esse ut actus essendi* to the particular case of the person.

<sup>24</sup> Attempts at such a harmonization were undertaken by both Karol Wojtyła and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec.

This research postulate also points to the necessity for the reinterpretation of some approaches within classical anthropology, such as, e.g., the theory of the human soul. Since the soul gives the body its existence, one should more clearly articulate the meaning of this assertion and draw from it all of its most important consequences. The thesis concerning the specificity of the human soul leads to the assertion that personal existence permeates the entirety of human nature, which means that the human body (an organism, i.e., that which in empirical research has a purely naturalistic character) “becomes” a person and exists in a new manner: not like an organized cluster of organic cells, but through attribution to a substantially superior mode of existence that reveals existence as being subjective, self-aware, free, etc. Similarly, taking into account a certain radicalism of the concept of *esse personale*, one must look through the lens of it at such metaphysical theories as the theory of act and potency, the theory of substance, and the theory of life, in a new way.

The postulated metaphysics of the person must also confront theoretical problems concerning the foundations of anthropology: its point of departure and mode of justifying hypotheses. In this case, the foremost role is played by the question regarding the appropriate measure of the subjective factor and its relation to the metaphysical foundations of the person: the subjective factor is that which can expose the objectivity of the person to serious difficulties and even dangers. Influential concepts of modern and contemporary philosophy entangled the theory of the person into subjectivism, and thus attempted to understand the person within the domain of consciousness. It seems that an effective solution to this issue was presented by Karol Wojtyła who managed to successfully distance himself from subjectivist reductions and absolutizations. He left, however, his successors with an uneasy task of improving upon his path of reflection or even discovering similar paths of their own. When considering the rules which were to regulate these issues, a

key role should be played by *esse personale*: since the problems with the subjectivization of the theory of the person fundamentally concern essential aspects, only an adequately understood existence is able to defend personalistic thought against the absolutization of the subjective side. In order, however, to succeed in realizing this postulate, a solid metaphysical foundation is indispensably required.

The concept of personal existence continuously remains a productive area of philosophical investigation. Moreover, it is capable of facing the great anthropological challenges of our time in a new fashion. As was mentioned before, the specificity of personal existence carries with itself a crucial openness. Metaphysics of the person based on *esse personale* opens up a broad field for anthropological discussion and for dialogue with contemporary schools of personalism. It can also be creative and revelatory in a dialogue with other philosophical concepts or solutions resulting from the intersection of empirical sciences and humanities. The important point is to highlight theories which stress the unique character of the person (regardless of critical remarks referring to other elements of these theories). The theory of the existential metaphysics of the person can shed new light on the pursuit of a common ground for philosophical personalism and empirical sciences. It would be acceptable or even desirable for various methods of examining the human being from the perspective of human nature to emerge—provided that they accept the fact of personal existence and the philosophical methods of examining it (as personal existence is accessible only at the philosophical level).

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this paper was to draw attention to the groundbreaking concept of *esse personale* whose theoretical consequence consists in a radically different treatment of the person on the grounds of exis-

tential metaphysics. The theses that were presented, despite the occasionally provocative form in which they were expressed, take form of questions rather than answers and are supposed to encourage further reflection in this field. All the remarks that were made lead to a conclusion that not all (ultimate) inferences have yet been drawn from the concept of *esse personale*. Following further this line of thought, one may rightly ask whether so far we have managed to explore the entire depth of the metaphysics of existence. Perhaps a new philosophical turn—made in the face of contemporary anthropological debates—should reveal anew the metaphysical concept of *esse* as such and demonstrate how creative the enrichment of philosophical cognition through the theoretically deepened concept of *esse personale* can be. For only *esse personale* allows one to know being through its supreme form: the person.

Although until now all the attempts to understand being from the perspective of a knowing subject have turned out to be inaccurate (e.g., the Heideggerian *Dasein*), the intuitions which lie at their basis can be considered accurate to a certain degree. If these intuitions do not concern “forms” of being and the realness of the world as such, but rather existence that is given in the experience of “I,” we can ascertain that it is a person that is this type of existence and, what is more, has a direct insight into their own existence. It means that such a manner of revealing existence (in the experience of “I”) should be considered to a certain degree superior—provided, however, that it should always remain in the shadow of the existence of reality, primordially given and “awakening” the experience of “I.” Surely it is necessary to investigate these philosophical themes deeper by making use of the methods of classical and contemporized metaphysics and by adding new methods of insight which, as one can easily infer from existing attempts, are mostly phenomenological ones. One must hope that such inquiries shall be undertaken, and that the significance of personal existence shall be noticed



and adequately theoretically systematized. It would surely enable us to gain a better understanding of who we are.



**The Existential Metaphysics of the Person.**  
**Part 2: *Esse Personale* and the Metaphysical Turn**

SUMMARY

Against the background of the model of the metaphysics of the person (presented in the article “The Existential Metaphysics of the Person. Part 1: The Classical Concept of the Person and the Metaphysical Theory of *Esse*,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 10, no. 2) which was initiated by Thomas Aquinas and developed in the Lublin Philosophical School, this paper focuses on the attempt to show the philosophical breakthrough that the concept of personal existence can bring, and points out the most important theoretical consequences of adopting this theory in metaphysics. It outlines the elements of a new metaphysics of the person, based on the concept of personal existence, and hypothesizes about the metaphysical turn this concept could make. The investigations undertaken in the paper lead to the conclusion that not all inferences have yet been drawn from the concept of *esse personale*, and that the entire depth of the metaphysics of existence has not yet been explored.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Aquinas, Lublin Philosophical School, Karol Wojtyła, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, man, human being, person, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of man, metaphysics of the person, metaphysical personalism, existence, personal existence, *esse personale*, *esse*, *esse ut actus essendi*, realistic metaphysics, existential metaphysics.

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