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The Existential Metaphysics of the Person. Part 1: The Classical Concept of the Person and the Metaphysical Theory of *Esse*

The question of the status of the person still turns out to be one of the most important problems of the contemporary world. Both the theoretical question of “what is the human being?,” of key importance to philosophical anthropology, as well as important for humanity of all times, the existential version of that question “who am I?,” have accompanied man or woman since the dawn of their intellectual reflection on the nature of the world and the meaning of their own life. They have always been so, and nowadays they are probably more important to humankind than ever due to the important socio-cultural, ideological, legal, etc., aspects, with their more or less clear consequences in the practical life of individuals and societies.

This paper is a brief presentation of a research project aimed at introducing the idea of the existential metaphysics of the person. Firstly, the roots of this concept will be discussed in the light of the classical concept of the person and, in particular, of the philosophical theories of St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as a contemporary version of the metaphysics of the person devised within the Lublin Philosophical School in Po-

land.¹ Against this background, secondly, an attempt will be made to show the philosophical breakthrough that the concept of personal existence (*esse personale*) can and should bring about, with an indication of the most important theoretical consequences of its adoption.

Classical Concept of the Person

In the culture of ancient Greece, the awareness of the spiritual greatness of the human being came to the forefront for the first time so that it became important and significant for the subsequent course of history. Since then, the sense of human uniqueness, which is crucial in the history of our culture, has manifested itself in all areas of intellectual activity, from art, through science, to religion and the concept of education (here, in particular, the ideal of Greek *paideia*). This pattern has found its significant and creative continuation in various currents which had been developing in European culture since the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance, up until modern times.

Particularly noteworthy are the concepts of several outstanding philosophers, which have become milestones in the development of understanding the uniqueness of the human person. In Plato's thoughts, the awareness of the explicit distinctiveness of the human being was echoed most significantly, which in turn gave rise to the path of idealism that posed the threat of marginalizing the real context of life to a

¹ This article adopts the name "Lublin Philosophical School," although other versions of this name, such as "Lublin School of Philosophy" or "Lublin School of Classical Philosophy," are also encountered in the literature. See Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik and Paweł Gondek, "Preface to the English Edition: Faithful to the Truth – Faithful to Reality," in *The Lublin Philosophical School. History – Conceptions – Disputes*, ed. Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik, Paweł Gondek (Lublin: KUL, 2020), 10–11 [hereafter cited as: *The Lublin Philosophical School*]. The decisive factor in choosing this version was the fact that this is the title of the first monograph on the subject in English: Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *The Lublin Philosophical School*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Lublin: PTTA, 2010).

greater or lesser extent, and of detaching the human subject from reality.

Aristotle, undertaking his considerations essentially in the background of discussions with Plato, sensed a similar distinctiveness of the person—for instance, in the concept of friendship, where a friend was understood as a good in itself.² In the scientific explanation of the human being as an empirically given fact, Aristotle focused on the natural and empirical dimension of the human being, at the same time looking for reasons for its rationality which is the principle of cultural activity and the basis for the pursuit of moral and cognitive perfection.³ A deeper analysis of intellectual cognition revealed the uniqueness of the nature of intellect as the supreme power of the human being, which—in order to make possible the necessary and general cognizance of the particular objects of the material world—must be immaterial.⁴ Taking into account the profoundly realistic stance of the Stagirite thinker, it can be assumed that the lack of a final systemic solution to the problem of the theory of the nature of intellect converging with the human unity thesis resulted from understanding the proposed explanation to be only an in-

² “[T]hose who wish the good of their friends for their friends’ sake who are friends in the fullest sense, since they love each other for themselves and not accidentally.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b, in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 19, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1934).

³ Moreover, it should be remembered that the concept of the human being in the thought of the Stagirite thinker was constructed in opposition not only to Plato’s dualistic explanations, but also to the extremely naturalistic theories of atomists, in the light of which the human being was understood as a purely physical being, completely subject to the principles of the natural world and did not differ significantly from other physical beings.

⁴ Among other things, the Stagirite thinker was confronted with the problem of two ways of defining the human being: on the one hand, the human being is defined by the form alone (i.e., the rational soul), and on the other hand, the human being is defined as a whole composed of soul and body. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1037a, in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 17 & 18, trans. H. Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933).

tuitive perception of the correct interpretation path, which needs to be supplemented and continued.⁵

Thus, despite the fact that Aristotle's essentialism and the concept of separating the intellect from the soul prevented the emergence of a concept of the person on the grounds of classical Greek philosophy, in the following centuries, on the basis of his intuition, a classical concept of the person was developed, based on the hylomorphic unity of the human being and the concept of the human soul as a substantial form. In the period of Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, the radical distinctiveness of the person (*persona*, *hypostasis*, *subsistentia*, etc.) was noted in a variety of ways, especially by St. Augustine, Boethius, Richard of St. Victor and St. Thomas Aquinas (as well as other Scholastics). The definition of the person in the basic Boethian wording (*rationalis naturae individua substantia*)⁶ in Richard of St. Victor became: *rationalis naturae incommunicabilis existentia*,⁷ replacing the Aristotelian term *substantia* with *existentia*, indicating on the unique way of the person existence. The version given by St. Thomas Aquinas, *individuum subsistens in rationali natura*,⁸ in turn draws attention to a new, in comparison to the previous descriptions, relationship between

⁵ This subject is addressed in my article: "Ludzka natura podstawą rozumnego działania," in *O metafizyce Arystotelesa*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, Natalia Kunat, Zbigniew Pańpuch (Lublin: PTTA, 2017), 295–315.

⁶ For a commentary on Boethius's definition, see, e.g., Agnieszka Kijewska, *Filozof i jego muzy. Antropologia Boecjusza – jej źródła i recepcja* (Kęty: Marek Derewiecki Publishing, 2011), 100–128.

⁷ Richard de Saint-Victor, *La Trinité*, I, 4 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1959).

⁸ "Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura" (Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 3 [hereafter cited as: *S.Th.*]); "Oportet quod persona divina significet subsistens distinctum in natura divina, sicut persona humana significat subsistens distinctum in natura humana" (id., *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4); "Res autem subsistens in intellectualibus naturis vocatur persona" (id., *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, cap.10, no. 6). The collection of Aquinas's works in the original, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*, is available online—see the section *References* for details.

the individual and nature, which is expressed not by the genitive (*rationalis naturae*), but by the adverbial (*in rationali natura*), which subsequently reduces the dependence of an individual on nature. Moreover, the active form of the verb (*subsistens*) used here points to the subject as an autonomous being, to a greater extent. Aquinas's modification of Boethius's definition, as can be judged on the basis of a cursory grammatical analysis of the term, proceeds more clearly than its previous versions to highlighting the specificity of personal *esse*.⁹

It should be noted that in the contexts outlined above, actually apart from the intuitions expressed in the modifications of the definition of the person performed by Richard of St. Victor and St. Thomas Aquinas, there was a lack of an account of the person which emphasized the specificity of their existence. The proof thereof is the Boethius's definition of the person, adopted almost universally in the theological and philosophical writings of those times, indicating the common holding of human nature as a distinct sort of substance. Upon discovering the uniqueness of the human person in many themes of Greek-Latin-Christian culture, the absence of theoretical justification for this phenomenon nonetheless constituted a serious shortcoming. In this sense, an important role was played by new ideas which emerged in early modern philosophy, placing a strong emphasis on the sphere of subjectiveness. Despite the excessive emphasis and even the absolutization of subjectivity, which occurred within the realm of epistemologically oriented philosophy of the subject, the legacy of the period nonetheless may constitute a

⁹ However, one must consider the theological context of medieval disputes about the person which refer to the term *esse personale* in Aquinas's writings (among others in *Super Sententiarum* III, *Summa Theologiae* III, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV). While discussing the problem of the personal existence of God (Christ), it was pointed out that God assumes the form of a human being, not becoming another act of existence, but thanks to personal existence God may assume a human nature. This context, although focused on considerations concerning the person of Christ, allowed one to emphasize the meaning of *esse personale* also in the case of the human being which the Son of God becomes.

valuable background for personalistic reflection. However, it is worth noting that reaching for these achievements from the *cogito* perspective introduces the theories of a person into the area of subjectivist-oriented considerations, which are burdened with numerous theoretical difficulties.¹⁰

St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Esse* Theory and the Theory of the Person

According to the so-called existential interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics, a being consists of its existence (*esse*) and conceptually perceivable essence which becomes real thanks to *esse*: existence is an act in relation to essence which functions as an ontic potentiality.¹¹ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec noted that:

According to Aquinas, existence is not an accident of being (as a separate substance); the substantial order does not exist first as some sort of pure content or possibility that would then be realized by “grafting” existence to it, and existence would basically change nothing in the thing. . . . In such a conception of the being, existence was outside of its brackets—it could be or not be, and being would still be intelligible as the result of the apprehension of its necessary connections that are constituted by substantiality and the content of being. . . . The conception of being that Thomas Aquinas formulated is the exact opposite of the conceptions of being that were before him. While Aquinas did accept Aristotle's intuition, he saw that it applied only to the substantial order. The truth is that being “is composed” of act and potency, and that this act in being is its substantial form, which gives un-

¹⁰ See, e.g., Berthold Wald, *Substantialität und Personalität. Philosophie der Person in Antike und Mittelalter* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2005); Vittorio Possenti, *Il nuovo principio persona* (Roma: Armando, 2013), part 1; Grzegorz Hołub, *Problem osoby we współczesnych debatach bioetycznych* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2010), 13–60.

¹¹ This crucial intellectual turn in the understanding of being is called by V. Possenti *the third voyage*, in reference to *the second voyage* of Plato's *Phaedo*. See Vittorio Possenti, *Nihilism and Metaphysics. The Third Voyage*, trans. D. Gallagher (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2014).

derstanding and content-meaning to being, since the content by itself of being is not yet a full being. For a being to be a real being, it must exist. The possession alone of determined content does not distinguish being from so-called nothingness, but the fact of real and concrete existence does.¹²

Applying the concept of *esse ut actus essendi* to the problem of a person as such allows one to raise the subject of the specificity of personal existence in anthropology. One can find harbingers of anthropological personalism in many of Aquinas's works, in which the problem of the person is posed in a universal perspective, i.e., independently from a theological context. Examples include the following texts: "The existence of being belongs to the subsisting person, inasmuch as it has a relation to such a nature;"¹³ "Existence belongs to the very constitution of a person . . . and therefore the unity of a person requires the unity of existence itself, which is complete and personal."¹⁴

The emergence of the metaphysical concept of *esse* ultimately led to a significant modification of the theory of act and potency, and hence also of the theory of the hylomorphic unity of the human being. The absolute novum of Thomas Aquinas's anthropology which still has not been sufficiently examined, is the thesis that assigns the soul its own act of existence, which it provides to the body, while being the substantial form thereof:

The soul communicates that existence in which it subsists to the corporeal matter, out of which and the intellectual soul there re-

¹² Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Istnienie (bytu)," in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, vol. 5, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk (Lublin: PTTA, 2004), 45–46. Translated by Hugh McDonald.

¹³ "Ipsum esse est personae subsistentis, secundum quod habet habitudinem ad talem naturam" (*S.Th.*, III, q. 17, a. 2, ad 4). Own translation. Cf. M. A. Krąpiec's interpretation: "a person is . . . an existence which is appropriate and proportional with regards to a concrete individual nature" (Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek* [Lublin: RW KUL, 1991], 414).

¹⁴ "Esse pertinet ad ipsam constitutionem personae . . . Et ideo unitas personae requirit unitatem ipsius esse completi et personalis" (*S.Th.*, q. 19, a. 1, ad 4). Own translation.

sults unity of existence; so that the existence of the whole composite is also the existence of the soul. This is not the case with other non-subsistent forms. For this reason the human soul retains its own existence after the dissolution of the body; whereas it is not so with other forms.¹⁵

The case of the human being is therefore a distinct case in all of nature and indicates the uniqueness of the human being, the basis of which is the uniqueness of the human soul, uniquely possessing its own existence (*esse*). This soul, while acting with regard to the body as a substantial form, grants the body its existence. Thus the human body and the entire human person exists through the existence of the autonomous soul which is capable of transcending matter and creating its own body. The entirety of the human being, including both human spirituality and corporeality, is therefore permeated by the same personal *esse*, attributed to the autonomous soul. It is worth paying attention to the fact that we are dealing with a certain type of internal participation: the body participates in the existence of the soul, thanks to which it is a human body, i.e., a body constituting an essential element of a person, a body “elevated” from a purely natural level up to the level of personal living.

The soul’s own act of existence presents also a perfectly unitary subject (*esse* is a unitary act), the most identical with itself, existing within itself. A person is a distinct subject described with the term *subsistentia* (subsistent being). A subsistent being means the most perfect substance and exemplary type of existence.¹⁶ In the case of the human

¹⁵ “Anima 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” (*S.Th.*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5).

¹⁶ The interpretive procedure of contrasting the person, as subsistence, with non-personal entities, which are merely substances, is encountered. While appreciating the intentions of such a distinction, it should be emphasized, however, that a human person

being, the substantial subject has its foundation in a distinct sort of existence which not only permits the perfect ontic unity of the corporeal and spiritual spheres, but is also the principle of self-awareness and inner experience, a peculiar kind of person's core. This subject is the autonomous author of their own actions and is focused on fulfilling the goals cognized by themselves. According to Vittorio Possenti:

The *in se* character of personal existence simply means that the person exists as an *autonomous and completely singular being rather than as a mode or a property of some other being*. The foundation of a person's independence, autonomy, and freedom lies in his being a substantial whole, for which reason he has value in himself and not because he exists as some part of an overarching totality. This is precisely why being a person is so paradoxical: on a purely naturalistic level, the person appears as nothing more than a minute particle within a vast cosmos; but if we take a moment to reflect ontologically on the person, he shows himself to constitute an entire universe.¹⁷

is a specific type of entity, and therefore a being-substance. Instead of contrasting "subsistent being" with "substantial being," which can lead to a radicalization of human nature, e.g., by turning toward angelism, it seems that on the ground of St. Thomas's philosophy, the analogical use of the term "substance" is more adequate. Its particular type is a subsistent being which is a personal manner of substantial existence.

¹⁷ Possenti, *Nihilism and Metaphysics*, 286. Moreover the author notices that: "Interiority is a property exclusive to persons as subjects capable of returning to themselves, reaching within themselves, deliberating, and opening themselves to relations with others. Interiority, therefore, is not just a particular psychological aspect having something to do with consciousness and memory; rather, it constitutes a modality of being. It is a 'revelation' of the fact that not everything lies at the superficial level of extension and duration; personal being has a more profound and intimate dimension. It is not by *extensio* that man reaches out toward the temporal and changeable, nor is it through *distensio* that he opens up toward spatial otherness; it is rather through *intentio* that he focuses on the 'inner' and on the 'focal point' that we call interior existence . . . interiority is the universal category through which the person reawakens to himself and to the truth." *Ibid.*, 284.

The Distinct Features of the Philosophical Anthropology of the Lublin Philosophical School

Anthropological inquiries conducted within the Lublin Philosophical School refer both to Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics of the human being and to the accomplishments of the early modern age as well as to contemporary times with regard to describing and comprehending the subjective realm in human experience. Attention was drawn (especially by Karol Wojtyła) to the necessity of deepening the subject-oriented aspect of the understanding of a person, in contrast with the object-oriented understanding which dominated classical philosophy. For this purpose, among others, important attempts to harmonize these aspects were undertaken, perceiving this process not only as a methodological requirement for conducting anthropological inquiries, but as a fundamental element of perceiving the very essence of a person.¹⁸

Karol Wojtyła drew upon the achievements of the philosophy of the subject and the phenomenological method when describing human internal experience. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, in turn, largely modernized classical metaphysics, moving the emphasis from the concept of the soul to the personal "I" given in experience. These approaches turn out to be complementary in demonstrating the essence of the human being—for instance, in revealing the person in the act, i.e., in what the person expresses themselves most fully as a person (as described by Karol Wojtyła) thus leading to the revealing of personal existence, which converges on the grounds of metaphysics (elaborated upon by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec) with the existence of the immaterial soul, as fulfilled

¹⁸ On the Lublin Philosophical School, see: Krąpiec & Maryniarczyk, *The Lublin Philosophical School*.

through spiritual acts for which it requires the participation of the body.¹⁹

Despite philosophical anthropology being parallelly practiced in two different ways—as the metaphysics of the human being (Mieczysław A. Krąpiec) and as the phenomenology of the moral subject (Karol Wojtyła)—the inquiries conducted in the Lublin Philosophical School converged in performing a common research task, the result of which was an original philosophical concept of the person.²⁰ Different ways of carrying out this task should be considered as its essential and significant element—also expressing the openness of this sort of personalism to modification and additions. Common features that distinguished the metaphysics of the person devised in the Lublin Philosophical School include: realism, the concept of experience, the pursuit of ultimate (metaphysical) reasons, the utility of metaphysics in the theory of the person, and the ontic status of the person as revealed through internal experience (“I”). The most important properties of these features are as follows:

1. *Realism.* The human being from the start is analyzed as a real being, cognized in the context of other beings which surround them, and also in the context of the specifically human experience of themselves. Realism assumes an objective order of reality which is the point of reference for the philosophical explanation of any fact or phenomenon. Personalism in the Lublin Philosophical School is a realistic concept, hence the person is understood as a real being, cognized in a commonsense manner and at the same time is accessible via distinct internal experience.

¹⁹ More on this topic can be found in my book: *U podstaw bytowej jedności człowieka* (Lublin: PTTA-KUL, 2016), 263f.

²⁰ More on this topic can be found in my article: “Metaphysics of the Person: The Specificity of Personalism in the Lublin Philosophical School,” in *The Lublin Philosophical School*, 121–141.

2. *The concept of experience.* The realistic approach requires one to take into account all discernible aspects of cognition. Within the Lublin Philosophical School it was acknowledged that the primal experience of the human being must be comprehensively understood; it cannot be reduced either to phenomenism or rationalism. The concept of experience assumed in classical philosophy is based on pre-scientific cognition, which guarantees cognitive autonomy and the independence of philosophy from the sciences and the assumptions thereof.²¹ The human being is given in the entirety of experience: the cognition of the external world actually occurs within the human being, the subject in turn recognizes itself as someone that exists in the world, as one of the beings of the world.

3. *The pursuit of ultimate reasons.* The pursuit of the ultimate reasons of investigated facts comes from the common heritage of classical philosophy. The path from experience to understanding, i.e., to a theory of the person, must lead through metaphysical analysis. The objective of philosophical reflection should be to accurately expose and adequately explain what is directly given in order to thus show the personal nature of the human being.²² On account of this, the purpose of anthropology is to ultimately explain the human being as a real fact, i.e., as a being and subject given in the primordial experience of oneself

²¹ Krąpiec criticized the assertion, proposed already in his time, that the basic fact of philosophical anthropology is an image of the human being derived from the particular sciences. However, this image is only apparently homogenous. Moreover, out of necessity it contains numerous cognitive implications in the form of assumptions referring to a particular philosophy or theory of science. See Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek*, 57.

²² Cf. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 638–639. The human being, while experiencing directly their own existence, still does not know whom they are. This means they do not know their essence. The analysis of the acts recognized as "mine" in the dynamics of this particular direct experience is aimed at comprehensively cognizing that whom someone is, that is cognizing the essence of the experienced "I," and thus this "I's" nature, understood as the source of determined action.

("I"). The essence of personalism in the Lublin Philosophical School is thus the pursuit of the human (personal) essence in a metaphysical sense.

4. *The utility of metaphysics in the theory of the person.* The metaphysics of the person, created within the Lublin Philosophical School, is founded on a synthesis of the distinct personal experience described at the point of departure and a metaphysical explanation achieved on the path of justification. The pursuit of the ultimate justification of the person is a pursuit of the ontic grounding of personalism, thanks to which personal experience becomes to a certain degree correlated with metaphysical theories. This sort of justification is the essence of adequately understood metaphysics of the person.

5. *The ontic status of the person.* The person is a subject in a metaphysical sense, i.e., a substance, and at the same time is a self-aware subject, i.e., a unique and unrepeatable "I." Personalism within the Lublin Philosophical School is a realistic conception, hence a person is understood as a real being, cognized in a commonsense manner and at the same time is accessible by distinct internal experience. Realistic metaphysics of the person is a strictly rational and philosophical conception, often going against contemporary approaches focused on explaining the human being only in an eclectic or methodologically inconsistent manner. This personalism guides the way for an ultimate explanation of the person and leads to revealing the person's deepest dimension which can be reduced neither to a purely empirical level nor to a purely immanent one.

The personalism of the Lublin Philosophical School undoubtedly was influenced by the times in which it was formed. It provided crucial theoretical support in the struggle against communist ideology and was a serious voice in the philosophical dispute with Marxism, materialism and utilitarianism. Nonetheless, the role of the concepts it developed is not reducible solely to historical-cultural or social-ideological issues. As was the case with other accomplishments of the Lublin Philosophi-

cal School, the historical and social context became a crucial impulse to meticulously elaborate universally significant concepts. As a result of anthropological inquiries, an original and unique model of metaphysics of the person was formed, which constituted a firm foundation for subsequent investigations and confrontations. The need for the continuation and theoretical verification of the acquired results is to a large extent a result of the spirit of classical philosophy itself, which is open to all sorts of additions and modifications, even corrections; as a form of cognition it continuously improves upon itself and is verified in its deciphering of objective states of affairs.

Conclusion

A theoretical model of metaphysics of the person should therefore be perceived as a distinct research project, which on the one hand has precisely determined foundations, and on the other hand—is open to modifications and requires continuation. This particularly refers to the effort made in developing basic argumentation, discovering new research paths and aspects, and strengthening the rational grounding of the system of hypotheses as well as empirically visualizing them. The foundation for such a continuation includes an assumption that this model has not become outdated, but rather turns out to be remarkably useful and creative, especially in times of a genuine crisis of rational thinking about the human being and culture. However, in order to demonstrate its potential, one should most of all confront the model with other currently debated propositions and expose it to contemporary theoretical challenges.

The uniqueness of the metaphysics of the person, presented in this paper as the existential metaphysics of the person, consists in the particular role played within it by the category of personal existence. The concept of *esse personale* in its rudimentary and non-systematic

form emerged, in a variety of ways, in the anthropological inquiries conducted by Karol Wojtyła and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec. Their attempts to a large extent refer to those undertaken by Thomas Aquinas to combine existential metaphysics of being (*esse ut actus essendi*) with the theory of the person as the most perfect type of existence. The concept of *esse personale* should be considered as a particularly profound and prospective element of the metaphysics of the person: based on Aquinas's ideas and focused on developing and modifying them. This is precisely what the concept of *esse personale* is: the theoretical core of the metaphysics of the person. It is also the foundation for further work on a more complete and adequate understanding of the person. An outline of the project—some essential elements of the existential metaphysics of the person—will be presented in the second part of the paper.



The Existential Metaphysics of the Person.

Part 1: The Classical Concept of the Person and the Metaphysical Theory of *Esse*

SUMMARY

The article is the first part of a brief presentation of 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. Firstly, it discusses the roots of this concept in the light of the classical concept of person and of the philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. In particular, it discusses Aquinas's significant achievement in combining the philosophical-theological concept of the person with the metaphysical theory of existence as an act of being (*esse ut actus essendi*). Secondly, it presents the theoretical model of the metaphysics of the person, developed in the Lublin Philosophical School in Poland, as a modernized version of Aquinas's concept. The particular core of this theory is the concept of personal existence (*esse personale*), opening the way for new ground-breaking interpretations.

KEYWORDS

Lublin Philosophical School, Thomas Aquinas, 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, definition of the person.

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