

The Person at the Crossroads

A Philosophical Approach

Edited by

James Beauregard

Rivier University

Giusy Gallo

University of Calabria, Italy

Claudia Stancati

University of Calabria, Italy

Series in Philosophy



VERNON PRESS

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www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street,
Suite 1200, Wilmington,
Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Philosophy

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019956379

ISBN: 978-1-62273-888-5

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From the Editors

This book flows from the International Conference on Persons held at the University of Calabria, Italy, in 2017. The ICP itself grew out of conversations between philosophers Thomas O. Buford and Charles Conti as a way to provide a forum for discussion and interaction among scholars interested in the personalist philosophical tradition. The first International Conference on Persons was held at Mansfield College, Oxford, in the summer of 1989. Since then, the conference has met biannually:

- 1989 Mansfield College, Oxford
- 1993 St Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana
- 1995 Oriel College, Oxford
- 1997 Charles University, Prague
- 1999 St John's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- 2001 Gaming, Austria
- 2003 University of Memphis, Tennessee
- 2005 Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw
- 2007 Asheville, North Carolina
- 2009 University of Nottingham
- 2011 Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah
- 2013 Lund University, Sweden
- 2015 Boston University, USA
- 2017 University of Calabria, Italy

The editors would like to extend their heartfelt thanks first to the individual authors who have contributed chapters to this book. We are also grateful to Randall Auxier, who wrote the introduction. Last, but certainly not least, our thanks go to the good people at Vernon Press who have brought this book into the world, Argiris Legatos, Carolina Sanchez and Javier Rodriguez.

James Beauregard
Rivier University, USA

Giusy Gallo
University of Calabria, Italy

Claudia Stancati
University of Calabria, Italy

Author Biographies

R.T. Allen read philosophy at Nottingham University and later earned a Ph.D from King's College, University of London, with a thesis, later published, on Polanyi's philosophy and Christian Theism. He has also published *Beyond Liberalism: The Political Thought of F.A. Hayek and Michael Polanyi*, and many other articles, and has made several contributions to collections on Polanyi. He has also *edited Science, Economics and Philosophy: Selected Articles by Michael Polanyi*, and co-edited *Emotion, Reason and Tradition: Essays on the Social, Political and Economic Thought of Michael Polanyi*. He founded *Appraisal*, now the journal of the British Personalist Forum.

Randall Auxier is Professor of Philosophy and Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Along with many articles and reviews, he is author of *Metaphysical Graffiti* (2017) and *Time, Will, and Purpose* (2013), and co-author of *The Quantum of Explanation* (2017). He was primary editor of eight volumes of the Library of Living Philosophers and numerous other books; he edited the journal *The Personalist Forum* and re-made it into *The Pluralist* (now the official journal of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy); he is deputy chief editor of *Eidos: A Journal of the Philosophy of Culture*. He is co-founder of the American Institute of Philosophical and Cultural Thought (www.americanphilosophy.net) and was the Green Party candidate for US Congress, Illinois District 12 in 2018.

James Beauregard is a Lecturer in the psychology doctoral program at Rivier University, Nashua, New Hampshire, USA, where he teaches Neuropsychology, Biological Bases of Behavior, Psychology Health Care Ethics and Aging. His research interests are in the fields of bioethics, neuroethics, and personalist philosophy, including the intersection of these two areas as they impact our understandings of personhood. He is a member of the Spanish Personalist Association, and is on the board of directors of the International Conference on Persons.

Bianca Bellini obtained her Ph.D in 2018 from Vita-Salute San Raffaele University (Milan), where she graduated with a bachelor's degree focused on the link between phenomenology and self-knowledge and a master's degree focused on the link between phenomenology and literature. During her Ph.D, her interest in literature has led her to approach the topic of imagination, whereas her interest in individuality has led her to approach the topic of self-shaping: these interests flowed together into a project that aimed to argue for the role of imaginative experiences in the process of self-shaping. Specifically, she argued that fantasy is a

fundamental force that nourishes self-shaping and that such a force goes along with two other forces that constitute pivotal keystones of the same process, namely exemplariness and repentance. This research project relied on Scheler's stance on individuality and Husserl's stance on fantasy. Her participation in international conferences has enabled her to develop the main theses underlying this project, and a research period at the Husserl Archives in Leuven (2016) enabled her to improve her knowledge of Husserl's manuscripts. In Leuven, she met the co-tutor of her Ph.D. thesis, Nicolas De Warren, who, along with Roberta De Monticelli, guided her through her doctoral work.

Marc Djaballah is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Université du Québec à Montréal. He is the author of *Kant, Foucault, and Forms of Experience* (2008).

Giusy Gallo is adjunct professor of Philosophy of Language at University of Calabria, Italy. She obtained the National Scientific Qualification to function as associate professor in Philosophy of Language. She has been the managing editor of the journal *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio* since 2009. Her main research interest is the concept of practice between language and science in a semiological dimension, and its development in connection to social networks, creativity, and design.

Grzegorz Holub is an associate professor of philosophy at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland. He is involved in ethics, bioethics and the philosophy of the human person. Among his publications are three books "The Problem of the Person in the Contemporary Bioethics Debates," "The Person in the Labyrinth of Moral Decisions. Bioethics in the Personalistic Perspective," "Human Enhancement. Fiction or Reality? Arguments, Critique, and the Search for the Space of Dialogue."

Yong Lu has been a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology at the Faculty of Christian Philosophy, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw since 2016. He earned his B.Eng. in Engineering Economics, M.Sc. in Engineering Economics and Management, and post-graduate studies in Biblical formation. His research takes an interdisciplinary approach to Christian leadership, decision making, and judgment, dreaming, episodic memory, and especially to an emphasis on psychology and Christian theology.

Carol Moeller has, since 1997, been a professor of philosophy at Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA, specializing in social justice. She is a member of the Future of Minority Studies Project and is a longtime anti-racist, queer, disability, and feminist activist. She received a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh in 1998 (as well as Doctoral certificates in Women's Studies and in Cultural Studies). BA, Oberlin College. She was a Greenwall

Fellow in Bioethics and Health Policy at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Universities (01-03).

Laura J. Mueller is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota, where she has been since 2016. She began her research focusing on the Kantian aesthetic foundations of epistemology, particularly the moral feeling of our human sublimity. In particular, her early research on morality and sublimity led to her current interest in developing what she refers to as “virtue pedagogy,” uniting the theoretical element of moral investigation with practical pedagogical strategies for (and beyond) the classroom in order to cultivate students' moral and philosophical growth, and she draws from both Dewey and Kant to do so. In addition to her background in Kantian aesthetics and ethics, she also researches, teaches, and writes on American Philosophy, Philosophy of Culture, Modern Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, and Early American and European Modern Philosophy. Upcoming research and writing projects include an invited chapter on personality and objects in cultural phenomenology, work on the moral obligations and failures of the university, and research on the moral components of education. Dr. Mueller is also a fellow at the American Institute of Philosophical and Cultural Thought, and is on the editorial staff for the international journal *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture*.

Endre Nagy is Professor emeritus, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary. Main research interest: general history of ideas (e.g. Simone Weil), specifically in Hungary - István Bibó, Karl and Michael Polanyi, et al.; history of sociology; and history of the philosophy of state. Published in English and German with Appraisal, Vernon Press, Ashgate, Black Rose Books, Archive für Rechts-und-Sozialphilosophy, European Journal of Mental Health.

Spartaco Pupo, Associate Professor of History of Political Thought at the University of Calabria (Italy), is an expert in western modern and contemporary political thought. Currently, his research interests are mainly focused on the political thinking of David Hume. He has edited and introduced the first complete edition of the essays, letters, accounts, and dispatches, which were written by Hume as a statesman and diplomat (“A Petty Statesman, Writings on War and International Affairs”, 2019). He is member of the Italian Association of Historians of Political Thought, the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society, the Hume Society, and the Association for Political Theory.

Claudia Stancati is Associate Professor of Philosophy of Language, University of Calabria. Her main research subjects are: Epistemology and History of Language's Sciences, Language and Cognition; Language of Sciences, fields in which she has published books and papers in reviews and proceedings of national and

international congresses. Currently, she is working on relationships between linguistics and sociology and in social ontology.

Peter Reynaert is Professor of philosophy at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). His research concerns the limits of a naturalistic approach of embodiment and consciousness.

Matteo Scozia is a scholar in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy at the University of Calabria, where he is affiliated as a Honorary Fellow with the Department of Humanities.

Carlo Vinti is a member of the faculty of the Dipartimento di Filosofia, Scienze Sociali, Umane e della Formazione, University of Perugia, Italy. His research interests include the work of Polanyi and Bachelard.

Xiaoxi Wu received her MA in philosophy from Ohio State University (USA), and a Ph.D in philosophy from the University of Vienna (Austria). Now assistant professor in the department of philosophy and science at Southeast University, China. Research interests include: subjectivity, ethics, history of moral philosophy, social ontology, political philosophy, aesthetics.

Elisabeth M. Yang is currently a Ph.D Candidate in the Department of Childhood Studies at Rutgers University. Her current research concerns the moral agency and personhood of infants in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American and British medical and pedagogical discourse. Areas of expertise and research concern the history and philosophy of developmental psychology, history of child medicine, history of childhood, moral development, social epistemology, personhood, agency, and the works of Michael Polanyi and Karol Wojtyła.

Introduction

Randall Auxier

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

We might as easily have given the subtitle “philosophical approaches,” since the contributors are so diverse, in national and intellectual origins, in disciplines, and in methodology. But the unifying threads are strong in this volume. I class them under three headings: (1) a common intellectual inheritance; (2) common intellectual concerns; and (3) a shared vision. Let us think about these in turn.

As the editors have pointed out, this research was originally presented at the 14th International Conference on Persons, although it has been refined and improved since that meeting. To understand the common inheritance requires grasping what this meeting is, why it exists, who comes to present research, and why such a meeting thrives and grows. As I write this we have completed a successful meeting in Israel, from which a volume may grow when there has been time to reflect and the ideas to mature and benefit from the exchange – just as the essays before you have now ripened. I have been involved in organizing this meeting since 1999 and I know what efforts have gone into promoting and publicizing the event. In the grand scale of things, it isn't all that much effort, because the topic carries itself. We who organize (a loosely structured group of about 20-25 people in a half dozen countries) keep e-mail lists, we network with each other, speak to our colleagues, post our CFP's and do the ordinary things associated with ten-thousand other academic gatherings. These activities would not account for the growth of the meeting and its associated network, and would not even begin to explain why it grows in importance as well as reach and size.

I am convinced that the growing success of our intellectual movement, to this point, comes from the fact that the problem of “person,” its nature, meaning, and prospects, is among the most pressing problems we face today, both intellectually and morally, and for many also spiritually. It is so because the problem became pointed as modernity set in, some four hundred years hence, issues that the empiricists raised with personal identity and the rationalists raised with the self. These together created a “perfect storm” in the intellectual world that reflected developments in the larger world. The aggressive colonial expansion of European nations and the endless bloody conflicts this bred, added to industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of modern economies undermined the stability of the

idea of “person.” Descartes and Locke and Rousseau and Hume and Kant hardly raised this issue in a vacuum. Rather, they understood that persons were being made and unmade by forces that had not been comprehended while these forces were being created and unleashed on the world. The new economic, political, technological, transportation and communication systems would lay siege to an unsuspecting humanity and its associated ecosystems, an archaic humanity for which “person” had always been the primary, embedded, implicit principle of their world-understanding. The West had created a problem, and then made it the world’s problem.

Thus, the common inheritance that joins our efforts in this volume is that a deep and nagging problem was raised that has not met with a clear answer. It is a political, moral, religious, practical, and philosophical problem, and arguably it is at the base of every other problem (at least the Modern ones). That is the common conviction of these authors –not necessarily that the problem of “person” is the grandest and most over-arching problem, but only that it is a problem that we must address because it reaches into every other problem in some way or another.

We might be so bold as to state it thus: without an adequate account of person --our dignity, our meaning, our prospects-- no other problem finds full or adequate resolution. Whatever we do in this world (including what we *think*), we do it to and for *us*—that is, ostensibly, to and for persons. There is no person-free context in which to act, and thus, each action affects and concerns persons. In no way does this thesis imply that only persons (and many of our authors will include non-human entities in the category of persons) are affected by our actions. Rather, at least persons and perhaps more than persons are the patients in our great agency, collective and individual. It is this inheritance, this problem and its prospects for solution, that brings researchers and scholars to our meetings. Each has, in some way, formed a conviction about the importance of the question I have briefly set out, but clearly the essays in the first division of the book bring the matter of our inheritance of a problem and of a common perspective on the core of that problem to the reader’s attention. A grasp of the past, of this inheritance, is, as Jaspers argued, the only way to gain a decisive consciousness of the present.

If I have said something adequate, or at least provocative, about the *nature* of the core problem addressed by our meetings, then I must add that these chapters are also unified by their shared concerns over the *meaning* of the idea of “person.” Not all of our participants and not all of these contributors would consent to being called “personalists,” but most would. It raises the question as to why anyone would choose this designation, or would resist it. First, it must be said clearly that many researchers, philosophers, thinkers, from every methodology—analytical, phenomenological, existential, pragmatic, neuro-philosophical,

etc.—will accept the designation “personalist.” It crosses every methodological boundary and is shared in the sociology of knowledge by every discipline, humanities, social sciences, applied and natural sciences, along with law, medicine, and theology. This label, this “ism” is not the possession of one methodology or one discipline. The idea of “person” itself resists such reduction, and that is part of the importance and also the mystery of the idea. There is a good reason it has never received and intellectually conclusive “account.” The idea goes beyond our depths and our methods and our ways of dividing the world.

Thus, the meaning of the person is a shared problem, and a powerful one. Our essays here must be seen as “essays” in the original sense of the word, as “attempts,” as “tries” in service of an elusive ideal. That there is “person” we do not doubt, and cannot, but what it means for us, practically, morally, spiritually, philosophically, we can articulate only in part. Thus, our common intellectual concerns join our essays. Built from the basis of our inheritance, these concerns point us beyond the siloes we created for ourselves in schools and movements, disciplines, faculties, and colleges. Included as deeply relevant and wholly indispensable to these concerns is the work of critique. We not only recognize that we have inherited a problem that we never made, we must also place the past and the present order of thinking and acting against the most merciless criticism we can manage. No laziness of mind or institutional inertia can protect what we have done and are doing from the due critique that is embodied in several of these essays.

The decisive consciousness we gain in exchanging our inheritance for criticism finds its purpose in the effort to envision a future in which our alienation from ourselves as person, common and individual, is ameliorated. There is a therapy in this volume for those who would be persons in a fuller sense. Almost every essay comes to the place of stating the prescription for addressing some part of the problem of person. It is too much to say that these authors share a common purpose, that our intellectual movement has attained the cohesiveness that would permit us to moralize or prophesy deliverance, as Cornel West presses. And yet there is more to what we are doing than remembering, interpreting, and criticizing.

The term “vision” is over-used and has become hackneyed in contemporary corporatized speech. Every office and organization must have a “vision,” and place it on websites and literature. As an ocular metaphor, its ocularity has disappeared in its repetition. Like Vico before them, Lakoff and Johnson famously speak of how metaphors come, through use and time, to be flattened into literal functioning. We forget that they are metaphors at all. The coupling of vision with mission in our daily parlance has mixed the metaphors beyond reclaiming, perhaps, but is there not something in the religious sense of vision? Consider: “be *thou* my vision.” The hymn (which is so old that no one is certain

where it came from) we know in English renders from the Scottish Gaelic "Bí Thusa 'mo Shúile." That is, literally, imperative and intimate, *be my eyes*. It is direct address.

When I think about seeking a common vision for person and for persons, I think about sharing eyes; you see (or I should say "thou seest," because this is intimate among our fellow person) what I do not and cannot. It is not that I see nothing, but the very meaning of what I fail to see is what you see *for me*—and you, and you, and you. But we must ask. This vision does not happen unbidden or unassisted. William Ernest Hocking set about to reclaim the meaning of prayer and worship, and of elevated experience in his classic personalist masterpiece *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (1912). It was not to find the supernatural but to describe how our responses to one another are part and parcel of what is sought in those experiences we hold in common. It is more than "looking out for each other," it is more like being each other's eyes.

One thing that is tragically lost in contemporary academic philosophy is the intimacy that is clear in "be my eyes," as I offer my arm. Our isolation, reinforced by our individualism and built from our Cartesian egos, is not who or what we are. If anything is outside of nature, it is the predicament of the modern subject. Yet, somehow, the person, the *sensus communus* we share, hovers around that lost subject, encouraging it to see, being its eyes. But unbidden it remains mute. Called forth and called out, it sees *for* us and *as* us. No, it doesn't rise to prophecy, but it rises far above a corporate vision statement—the real corporation is our shared energies, ecological and biological, and that energy is not blinded or even really blindable. None among us is without the kind of eyes we can use for the vision of others. There does not need to be a God for me to say to you "be thou mine eyes." It is not a question. It is an imperative, and not categorical. It is a description of what you already are. What a shame that English has lost its intimate form. So I encourage the reader to wait for and wait upon the moment when each of the essays says, in effect, we must see, yes, and *see for one another*. Approaches.

Part 1
**The Personal Dimension:
The Thread of History**

Augustine of Hippo on the Concept of Person: A Philosophical Analysis

Matteo Scozia

University of Calabria, Italy

1. Introduction

Despite an adverse Romantic tradition, a series of recent studies has shown the essential contribution offered by Patristic authors to the history of ideas. Focusing on the Patristic era, it is possible to find those elements that connect the classical philosophical heritage with new Christian topics. The result is the production of a rational background that will influence every philosophical debate from the Scholastic to the Modern era. Between the 4th and 5th centuries, St. Augustine writes the treatise *De Trinitate (On the Holy Trinity)* for contrasting Monarchianism (one of the early heretical movements). By a series of sophisticated philosophical arguments, Monarchians were opposing the Christian dogma of the Trinity. In *De Trinitate* St. Augustine offers a doctrinal and philosophical defence (rather than a confessional one) of the aforementioned dogma.

Since the late-ancient period, Aristotle was considered a philosophical authority. His works represented the most important production of the classical period. Moreover, his rational system was the touchstone for discerning a good argument from a bad one. Therefore, in order to offer rational arguments against Monarchianism, St. Augustine assumes an Aristotelian background.

By focusing on the Aristotelian metaphysical identity between substance and essence, it does not seem possible to propose a different approach to the study of Being. Aristotle clearly refused those ontological arguments proposed by Plato in the *Parmenides*. Therefore, during the Patristic period, every ontological and metaphysical debate had to respect a series of Aristotelian standards. In reading *De Trinitate* it is possible to see how the concept of Person represents a completely new ontotheological element with respect to the Aristotelian substance or essence. This *prima facie* technical approach will have several practical implications. Reconsidering the human substance as a

Person (i.e. as a different substance with respect to the others) will change the moral and ethical constitution of the human subject.

In this paper, I will attempt to present the philosophical evidence of the Augustinian discussion on the Person, the relevance of the new topic and the difference with respect to the Aristotelian proposal. In particular, it will be important to understand the ontological innovation of the concept of Person, which is a completely different and new one with respect to the classical background. Moreover, once I have established the innovation of this concept, I will attempt to explain its constitutional structure, i.e. I will analyze the fundamental elements that allow one to distinguish personal substances from those ones that are not persons.

2. Differences Among Cultural Contexts: Classicism and Christianity

In 1929 Alfred Whitehead coined the famous quote about Plato's enduring influence: "*the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.*"¹ By assuming the scholarship of Anthony Kenny, it is possible to consider western philosophy as a series of footnotes to Plato and Aristotle.² Since the late-ancient period, every philosophical debate can be divided between two opposite approaches: Platonic realism and Aristotelian nominalism.

For our purposes, it can be useful to consider the classical dispute on the metaphysical constitution of Being.³ This topic represents the theoretical basis for the development of the Augustinian theory of Person. According to Plato (*Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Parmenides*) reality can be divided in two ontological parts: the empirical world and the transcendental world. Ideas (i.e. Essences or Concepts) live in the second part and they are connected with the empirical world by a sort of participation. Every substance that exists in the empirical world receives its form from a particular Idea. Therefore, there is a sharp distinction between Essences (which are transcendental, eternal and immutable) and empirical substances, that receive their forms by a

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 39.

² Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy. Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

³ *Ibid.*, 205-28.

participation with the aforementioned Essences. According to Plato, Essences can exist without empirical substances, but the contrary is not possible.

Contrary to this approach, Aristotle⁴ believes that Platonic Ideas can be considered as general scientific concepts, that come from a specific intellectual deductive process; therefore, there is no reason to postulate the real existence of the Ideas (i.e. to consider Ideas as real empirical substances). According to Aristotle, it is possible to infer a general concept by observing a series of similar empirical substances. However, that general concept exists just as a theory, i.e. as an intellectual deduction. In this way, by following the Platonic philosophical terminology, Aristotle says there is not a real distinction between essence and substance, but every substance contains the corresponding Idea (Concept) of its own form. In other words, Forms are not separate from the substance: any form is the form of some actual substance. In this way, there is no reason to keep the distinction between substance (referred to the empirical object) and essence; a linguistic identity is useful to refer to the (empirical) substance, which is immediately related to its own Essence. Therefore, it is just for a scientific convention that Aristotle distinguishes between primary and secondary substances,⁵ i.e. between the empirical substance and the relative general concept. Moreover, the logical and ontological order is completely different with respect to the Platonic one. According to Aristotle, Essence coincides with the substance and it cannot exist without the empirical substance.

With the advent of Christianity, a series of new problems arose in the cultural debate and required an adequate rational presentation. This is because Christianity does not pretend to be just a religious movement, but a doctrine that explains everything: empirical and transcendental things. Assuming the Christian God as a deontic rational object (confessional, philosophical and juridical) implies the necessity of developing a new rational system. In this regard, in 1277, Stephen Tempier (bishop of Paris) promulgated an official document in which he forbade the use of Aristotle's philosophy for explaining Christian doctrine. The final aim was evident: promoting the development of a new and peculiar rational system for Christian discussion.⁶ Christians cannot

⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics Z, Categories II-V*.

⁵ Substances (hereafter S1 and S2).

⁶ Cf.: 1) Edward Grant, "The Effect of Condemnation of 1277", in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 537-39; 2) Roland Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 thèses condamnées à Paris le 7 mars 1277* (Louvain: Louvain Publications Universitaires, 1977); 3) Arthur Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

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