The Notion of Person and a Transcendental Anthropology, from Boethius to Polo.
Whether the separated soul is a person, and whether the person is the whole or the *esse* of man

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ABSTRACT: The notion of person, absent from Greek metaphysics, was a philosophical contribution from Christianity. Through the Cappadocians, the term *hipóstasis* was left without its pure value as *hypokeímenon* and substance in order to bring it closer to the meaning Latin authors had given to the term *person* –as different from *things*. Theology applied this notion to God, describing it as a *subsistent relation*. When applied to man, however, Boethius defines it as *individual substance of a rational nature*, thus depriving it of its peculiar features –its subsistence and its relational character– while also losing the analogical framework between the human and the divine. Saint Thomas, following Boethius, initially declares that the separated soul is not a person, as this seems only proper of the human "whole". Still, he would later on reformulate this view, describing it as "spiritual subsistent" (*De potentia* 9, a4, c), and newly grounding it in being. Recently, the fundamental structure of Thomist metaphysics and its difference between *essence* and *esse* was recovered by Leonard Polo, who applied this distinction to Anthropology, opening the way for an understanding of the person as the free act of being of man.

KEYWORDS: person, thing, act of being, esse, soul, substance, subsistence, Boethius, Thomas Aquinas.

The philosophical notion of person is absent from Greek metaphysics. As pointed out by Zubiri, the complete absence of this concept and even the term is one the most fundamental and grave limitations of Hellenistic philosophy. It made necessary "the titanic effort of the Cappadocians to deprive the term *hypostasis* of its pure character of *hypokeímenon*, of its character of *subiectum* and substance, in order to bring it closer to the juridical sense the Romans had given to the term person, as different from the mere *res*, meaning thing."[1]

The term *person* was meant to underscore the radical difference between a human individual and that of any other species, which was generally called a *thing*, or, more technically, a *substance*, or, with greater precision, what medieval authors called a *suppositum*. However, the burden of naturalism, which usually considers a human being as just one more being among others in the universe, has been felt in Western thought. Even today, materialisms of different sorts do not recognize a radical difference between man and the rest of the cosmos, considering the former as just an individual member of a more evolved species.

Medieval authors, on their part, did not hesitate to hold that "the person signifies what is most perfect in the whole of nature,"[2] and the fundamental intuition brought by the notion of person remained in the anthropological themes of modern thinkers. Philosophers like Descartes and especially Kant wished to indicate a difference between the human being and the *res naturalis*. And so, from different perspectives, we hear about the transcendentality of human subjectivity, be it as the infinity of the will in Descartes or as the "transcendental I" in Kant or Fichte. Today we also speak of a transcendental freedom a transcendental intellect and the transcendental character of the person. But what does this transcendentality entail?

[1] Zubiri, X., *El hombre y Dios,* Alianza editorial, Madrid 1984, p. 323.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.,* I, q. 29, a. 3: Persona significat *id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura*.

1. PERSON AND TRANSCENDENTALITY

If we rely on metaphysics, we can say we have recognized the act of being as transcendental, especially after the discovery of the *esse-essentia* distinction, i.e. the key element of Thomas Aquinas' philosophical-theological edifice.[3] The act of being actualizes forms without being a form, it makes the substance and the accidents exist, and since it doesn't belong to any category, it transcends categories themselves, being of a superior, transcendental plane. However, if the act of being is *supposedly* so perfect, how can we speak of a peculiar dignity of the human person? Where does dignity come from: the essential features of man or his act of being? What exactly is the human person? If the act of being is transcendental, do we ascribe the term 'person' to the *whole* human individual, or is it proper only to the act of being of the individual human?

At a first glance, it seems that, since all existents are similar in their being existents, their differences come from their essence (what they are, *id quod sunt*). In other words, the act of being turns beings homogeneous distinguished only by their formal cause, as actualized by the act of being. This is a possibility, and, in this sense, the human individual would be different from the individuals of other species according to the features provided by its essence, specifically, rationality. This sums up Boethius' definition.

On the other hand, Aquinas' discovery of being as an act and his doctrine of transcendental participation provides us with more information.[4] In Saint Thomas' approach, the act of being is received –and limited– according to the nobility of the essence that receives it: the more noble the essence, the more noble the act of being is. This is so in such a way that beings differ not only through their essence but also from the quality of the act of being that actualizes them; thus, they would be different not

[3] Cfr. Gilson É., *Being and Some* Philosophers, Pontificial Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1952[2].

[4] I am referring here to the doctrine of participation without engaging in partisan discussions. There are important studies that have been dedicated to clarifying the different interpretations, e.g. Forment, E., *Ser y persona*, Publicaciones Universidad de Barcelona, 1983[2]; *Persona y modo substancial*, PPU, Barcelona, 1983.

only for *what* they are, but also and fundamentally in the way they *are*. It seems, then, that the act of being admits of degrees or levels. Hence, the act of being would not be the same for all existents. This is the meaning of transcendental participation, and in virtue of it, beings are, from the perspective of their act, also partly the same and partly different according to being.

2. THE ACT OF BEING OF THE UNIVERSE AND THE ACT OF BEING OF MAN

Looking for the first and most important difference between a things' act of being and a person's act of being, Zubiri holds that not only do persons have their own act of being, but they also have it as their possession: "Being a person is effectively being my own: a substantive reality that is the property of oneself. *Being reality in the property of oneself*: this is the first answer to the question of what it means to be a person. The radical difference separating the human reality from any other is precisely the character of being the property [of myself]. (…) *This means property in a constitutive sense*. I am my own reality. (…) The 'mine' in the sense of property, is a 'mine' in the order of reality, not in the moral or juridical order."[5] Later on he will reformulate this according to his own terminology: if real things are real because 'of themselves', the human reality among them, even while being 'of itself' is its 'own' reality. This means man has what he calls 'itself-ity' [*suidad*], which is a peculiar feature of reality that he describes as 'possessing oneself'. In his own words, "taking *possessing of oneself*, as a feature of the first act, is precisely the mode of being itself that constitutes the person."[6]

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[5] Zubiri, X., *Sobre el Hombre*, Alianza, Madrid 1982, p. 111.

[6] Zubiri, X., *Sobre la esencia,* Alianza, Madrid 1985, p. 504. The person, Zubiri goes on to say, "is not only a reality constituted by its own properties (in this it coincides with any other reality), but also for the peculiar character of its reality. Man does not only have reality, but rather is a reality that is formally 'his,' insofar as reality. Its real character is 'itselfity.' This is, in my understanding, what constitutes the formal character of the person" (Zubiri, X., *El hombre y Dios,* pp. 372-373). Zubiri's language may be obscure, for

Therefore, if only the person alone possesses its being as its own property, this means that all other beings in the universe participate from an act of being that, in a way, is not their own but of the universe. In this way Cardona affirms that "as to corruptible creatures, their being is already in the universe (an important metaphysical sense of *materia quantitate signata* as the principle of individuation). (…) The act of being is what makes the individual subsist, even if this act of being is already radically given at the creation of the universe, from the beginning."[7] In other words, the individuals of the cosmos will have their own being in a certain sense on loan; it is the being of their species and, in the end, of the Cosmos.

This line of thinking resurfaces in several authors. Zubiri claims in various passages that the Cosmos constitutes a whole substantivity, while each person is a particular substantivity in itself. He holds that "at the level of simple matter, substantivity does not rigorously belong to any of the so-called material 'things', but to the material world taken as a total whole, for each of those things, properly speaking, is nothing but a fragment of the total substantivity (of the Cosmos)."[8] And in another place: "The truth is that no living being has a plenary (…) substantivity. All living beings, in one way or another, are a fragment of the universe. Their own life is a moment of the entire Universe." [9]

A setup like this has even greater consequences in the more elaborate development of Leonard Polo's anthropology, as he clearly asserts that the Cosmos as a whole has a single act of being, while each person has their own. [10] He asks: "Is the created act of being plural? Are there as many

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he does have as his point of departure the difference between essence and act of being; and yet he does not confuse them even if the first act of the person, possessing itself, is said to be of a formal nature.

[7] Cardona, C., *Metafísica del Bien y del mal*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1987, pp. 62 y 72.

[8] Zubiri, X., *Sobre la esencia*, p. 171.

[9] Zubiri, X., *Estructura dinámica de la realidad*, Alianza, Madrid 1989, p. 201.

[10] This can be found in many of his writings, as it is one the main tenets of his philosophical approach. Cfr. e.g. Polo; L., *La esencia del hombre,* Eunsa, Pamplona

acts of beings as animals or things? Is there an act of being for the dog and another one for the stone, or is there only one created act of being? Evidently, we cannot admit that there is only one created act of being, because the act of being of a human person is not the act of being of the stone. I am not different from the stone only by virtue of my essence but also by virtue of my act of being. My act of being is personal and that of the stone is not."[11] Thus, it is necessary to "distinguish the act of being of man from another created act of being. And yet the act of being of the created universe is not plural but a single one. Why? Because it corresponds to one essence, for the intra-cosmic, the cow, the horse…: these things are not distinct essences."[12] At any rate, "there are different acts of being. The act of being of man is not the act of being of the universe, because its act of being is personal and the act of being of the universe is not. Furthermore, the essence of man is not the essence of the universe. What is the real distinction between the act of being of the universe and the universe as essence? What is the real distinction between man as a person and man as an essence? These are different questions, because the essences and acts of being are different",[13] and "both the human essence and *esse* are superior to the essence and *esse* of the physical universe."[14]

The first Thomists of the 20th century rediscovered, as we have mentioned, the metaphysical difference between act of being and essence, speaking of an *intensive* dimension of the act of being, which consists in recognizing that being, as an act, depending on the kind of essence it actualizes, is itself different; the act of being is said in part equal and in part different, regarding the act of being of a material reality or that of man.[15]

2011, pp. 90-91.

[11] *Ibídem*, p. 91.

[12] *Ibídem*, p. 91.

[13] *Ibídem*, p. 98.

[14] *Ibídem,* p. 43

[15] Cfr. González, Á. L., *Ser y participación. Estudio sobre la cuarta vía de Tomás de Aquino*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1979, pp. 98ss. Herein we read: "The intensive act of being, universal and ultimate perfection that the intellect apprehends as inhering to the ob-

Still, even if the doctrine of a transcendental participation can acknowledge differences *within* being *qua* being, according to Leonardo Polo the difference is much more radical, as the plain term 'being' is insufficient to speak of man: indeed, man's being is *being-with* (*Mitsein*), in Heidegger's terminology,[16] or co-existence in Polo's. The act of being of human beings is thus different from that of the cosmos, but this is not just a question of intensity: man's being is still being, but at a different level, that of anthropology. This is why its properties or features are also different from the act of being of the material universe, and why it is understandable that in Polo's theory of the transcendentals (the properties of being *qua b*eing)[17], there is a difference between anthropological and cosmic transcendentals.[18] Indeed, the act of being of the universe is different from the act of being of man and the cosmological transcendentals do not apply symmetrically to man: they fall rather short.

The proposal to study the transcendentals of man represents a great step forward: it reflects the need to explain, at the transcendental level, the intensive notion of act of being when applied to man. The anthropological transcendentals, *being-with*, *person*, *freedom*, *intelligence*, *effusion* or *gift*, are different terms to designate the human act of being.[19] As

servable subsistent subjects of the universe, with its wonderful variety of genera, species, sub-species and individuals, belongs to each one of them in what they properly are, that is to say, in the respective way of being given by the essence. Subsistent subjects possess being in different degrees" (p. 106). Cfr. also Fabro, C., *Tomismo e pensiero moderno*, Roma, 1969, pp. 144ss.

[16] Chapter IV of *Being and time* is titled: *Being-in-the-World as being-with and being a Self: the "They"*, and paragraph 26 is "The *Mitda-sein* of the Others and Everyday being-with". Being-with is proper to man, *Dasein*, being-there. Cfr. Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit*, Neomarius Verlag Tübingen, 1949, (1ª ed. 1927), pp. 114-129.

[17] Transcendentals have been considered a conceptual progress in our growing knowledge of being. And since transcendentals are convertible with being, they are not really distinguished from it, so there is no real distinction between being and unity or goodness.

[18] He calls them 'metaphysical', considering metaphysics according to its etymological meaning.

[19] This is what Leonardo Polo calls them. Cfr. Yepes Stork, R., *Leonardo Polo y la historia de la Filosofía*, en «Anuario Filosófico» 25 (1992/1) 101-124.

it can readily be seen, in this proposal the term *person* is considered a human transcendental, that is, one of the names of the human act of being. From the transcendental perspective of the person, we may here glimpse a first approach to the depths of human dignity. According to this view, one person is worth more than the whole universe, because it has its own *esse*, just as the universe as a whole and the personal being is greater than that of the cosmos.

Still, the medieval tradition ascribes the name *person* to the individual of a nobler nature, as a complete being. Therefore, our question here should be about the person: is it the whole of an individual or rather the act of being of a subject? Is the human person a whole or one of its constitutive co-principles, possessing peculiar transcendental qualities?

Let us proceed, firstly, by examining Boethius's definition.

3. THE NOTION OF PERSON AND THE BOETHIAN REDUCTION

The term person was first employed in Latin thought: we can already find in Cicero's writings the classical opposition between *person* and *res*. In this case, it is a juridical opposition, even if within it we find the first outline of a philosophical description of the notion anticipating Boethius' formula.[20]

At a later stage, the notion of person would be redeployed in a theological setting, after a long depurative process that allowed for a clear distinction between nature and person. This was an effort carried out

[20] Cicero gave different meanings to the term person in his writings: a juridical sense (subject of rights and obligations as in *De orat* II, 102), and a social sense that privileges personal dignity against the impersonal collective (De off I, 124). In another passage he highlights the difference between a person's excellence against the thing (De orat III, 53) and explains its philosophical characters: "Intelligendum etiam duabus quasi nos indutos esse a natura personis, quarum una communis est, ex eo quod omnes participes sumus rationis, praestanteque eius qua antecellimus bestias, (...), altera autem quae propria singulis est tribute" (*De Off. I, 107*). Here Cicero comes close, in a poetic fashion, to the doctine of the human nature that Boethius will claim in his definition of person. Cfr. Riva, C., *Origine del concetto di persona*, «Iustitia», jul-sept (1964) 210.

mostly by the 4th century Greek fathers, especially the Cappadocians, after several oscillations among the terms *ousía*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon*. In the end, they came to identify hypostasis and person as distinct from *ousía* and individual substance. We should mention here this passage from St. Basil: "*Ousía* is what is common to individuals of the same species, what they all equally possess, and thus the term by which they are nominated, one that does not convey any of the individual features that determine them (…). If these features are conjoined to an *ousía*, we have a hypostasis. The hypostasis is the terminated individual, an existent by itself, which comprises and possesses the *ousía*, but is opposed to it as what is proper to what is common, as the particular to the general."[21]

We can appreciate in this quotation the notion of *hypostasis* as almost synonymic to individual substance, which is why St. Gregory of Nazianzus will add the notes of totality, independence, intelligence, and freedom.[22] This allows him to delineate the concept further, by distinguishing the individual substance from its subsistence, until, in the end, he clearly separates the person and its nature –no matter how perfect the latter may be–[23] and points out that while the Aristotelian substance is basically a form or an essence, subsistence indications the order of *being*, i.e. with this separation the Cappadocians discovered that a person is in the order of being.

The nature-person distinction proved quite fruitful to scrutinize theological mysteries; how could we otherwise talk about divine unity while also affirming three different Persons within its intimacy? How could we consider the Incarnation without the Hypostatic union,

[21] St. Basil, Letter 38, 1,4, to St. Gregort of Nazianzus.

[22] Cfr. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.*, 21, 16.

[23] For the work of the Cappadocians cfr. Buda, C., *Evolución del concepto de persona*, en «Revista de Filosofía», Madrid, 15 (1956) 243-259; y Gómez Arboleya, E., *Sobre la noción de persona*, en «Rev. de estudios políticos» 47 (1949) 104-116.

which distinguishes one Person having a nature as able to take on another? Nonetheless, the distinction was not applied to anthropology. We should take note of some interesting facts here.

Theology describes divine Persons as Relations, and more specifically as *subsistent relations*: this is the way of Boethius' description in his *De Trinitate*, which led Aquinas to conclude that "the notion of personhood denotes relation."[24] Still, what happened when Boethius applied the concept to man? It is of particular interest to observe that he plainly knew that substance, when applied to a person, is called subsistence. However, hoping to be faithful to Aristotle, he goes back to the original idiom, which he understands to mean the same, and squanders for the first time the deep ontological grounding of the Greek fathers when he reinstates the characters of *subiectum* and *hypokeímenon* to the notion of person. He reports the question as follows: "In a highly expressive fashion the Greeks called an individual substance of rational nature a *hypostasis*. But we, by lack of significant terms, have had to employ a figurative term, and thus what they call hypostasis, we call a person. But the Greek language, being more subtle, employs hypostasis for the individual subsistence." [25]

In the end, however, he considers hypostasis, namely, individual subsistence, to mean the same as individual substance,[26] for, even while recognizing substance and subsistence do not mean exactly the same, he believes the notion of subsistence can only be applied to universal

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[24] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* I, q.29, a.4, sed contra.

[25] «Longe vero illi (Graeci) signatius naturae rationalis individuam subsistentiam *hypostáseos* nomine vocaverunt; nos vero, per inopiam significantium vocum, translatitiam retinuimus nuncupationem, eamque quam illi *hypóstasis* dicunt, personam vocantes. Sed peritior Graecia sermonum *hypóstasis* vocat individuam subsistentiam», Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, in J. Migne, *Patrologiae. Cursus completus*, Paris, Vrayet de Surcy, 1847, PL 64, PL, 64, 1344 A.

[26] «Quocirca cum ipsae subsistentiae in universalibus quidem sint, in particularibus vero capiant substantiam, jure subsistentias particulariter substantes *hypostáseis* appelaverunt», *ibidem*, PL, 64, 1344 B.

notions. Hence, individual subsistence is resolved into individual substance. Boethius did not thoroughly comprehend the term subsistence, nor does he seem to acknowledge that the terminological shift[27] –from subsistence to substance– implicitly distinguished the orders of being and essence. That is why he formulated a definition of person, even when the order of being cannot be defined because it is neither formal nor susceptible of expression in terms of genera and differences. The domain of being can only be *described*, as it is outside the genera and species of logic. On the other hand, his copiously used and worn definition "individual substance of rational nature" also lacks relationality. As a result, the two elements that human reason had attained as constitutive of the divine Person, namely, subsistence and relationality, are lost through Boethius, which is why his celebrated definition has little to do with the breakthrough of his predecessors. Moreover, as he was keenly aware,[28] this definition was unfit to be applied to God, thus losing the analogy between the divine and the human persons. This burden–still felt today–represents a huge strain for theological anthropology, noted when we try to move forward in the analysis of the *imago Dei* in the human being.

Still, the formula became very popular and from that time on has been considered valid. The Boethian reduction had important follow-ups that need not be considered here. We should just mention that, after him, the *iter* of the concept of person becomes sinuous, being lost and recovered in different authors, effectively disappearing from the foundations of Western culture that takes its support in nature, but not in personhood.

[27] For a thorough development of these matters cfr. Gracia Guillén, D., *Persona y comunidad. De Boecio a Santo Tomás*, in «Cuadernos salmantinos de filosofía», 11 (1984) pp. 72-73.

[28] Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis….,* PL 64, 1343.

4. THE PERSON ACCORDING TO Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas steadily assumes, as his starting point, the Boethian definition of person. Still, as his philosophy matures, his deep view of the transcendentality of the *esse* turns the Boethian formula in order to remove its definition status and so leave the domain of substantiality. He was undeniably able to see and communicate the radical character of the person in the domain of being better than any of his predecessors.[29] His views have been summarized by Schütz and Sarach: "the Person, for [Aquinas], designates the immediate mode and way in which real being fully possesses its essence and makes free use of it."[30] This is why Aquinas will, once again, stop using the term 'substance' in order to employ 'subsistence,' finally describing the person as "spiritual subsistent."[31]

Without claiming here to carry out an exhaustive study of the texts in which Thomas Aquinas deals with personhood,[32] I will outline the way he expanded the Boethian formula that served as his point of departure.

a) The incommunicability of the person

When the Boethian definition alludes to an 'individual substance,' he aims to indicate what in Aristotelian philosophy corresponds to the first substance[33] as distinct from the second substance i.e. the universal substance (a form within the mind). First subsistence is also called hypostasis

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[29] Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *In Sent.,* I, d.6, q.2, a.1; d.7, q.1, a.1; d. 23, a.2; *S. Th.*, I, q. 29, a.1.

[30] Cfr. Schütz, Ch., Sarach, R., *El hombre como persona*, p. 720, in J. Feiner & M. Löhrer et al., *Mysterium Salutis*, Benziger Verlag, Einsiedeln, 1965.

[31] Cfr Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, 9, a.4, c.

[32] Cfr. Forment, E., *Ser y persona*, 2ª ed., Publicaciones Universidad de Barcelona, 1983, pp. 15-69

[33] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q.29, a.2: «... in definitione personae... 'substantia' accipitur communiter, prout dividitur per primam et secundam: et per hoc quod additur 'individua', trahitur ad standum pro substantia prima». (In the definition of person … 'substance' is taken generally, insofar as it applies to the first and second substance, and by adding 'individual' it contracts in order to mean the first substance.)

or suppositum.[34] Furthermore, person is the special name given to singular beings of rational substances,[35] because they are a special or more perfect kind of substances.[36] Following on the first idea, we can point to several passages in which Aquinas explains what makes a substance individual. In the first place, *individual* means *incommunicable*, and so he enumerates what *cannot* be a person:

1) Accidents, because they communicate to substance.[37]

2) Abstract genera, for they are participated by many individuals[38] (and they are otherwise excluded from the person if the latter has a rational nature).

[34] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodl.* II, q. 2, a. 2: «Suppositum autem est singulare in genere substantiae quod dicitur hyppostasis vel substantia prima». (The suppositum on the other hand is the singular in the genus of substance, which is called hypostasis or first substance.)

[35] Thomas Aquinas, *Ibídem*; see also *S. Th.*, I, q.29, a.1: «in praedicta definitione personae ponitur substantia individua in quantum significat singulare in genere substantiae: additur autem rationalis naturae, inquantum significat singulare in rationalibus substantiis». (In this definition person 'individual substance' is included, insofar as it means the singular in the genus of substance: 'of rational nature' is added insofar as it entails the singular of rational substances.)

[36] *Ibid*, «sed adhuc quodam specialiori et perfectiori modo invenitur particulare et individuum in substantiis rationalibus». (But the particular and individual is in rational substances in a certain, more special and perfect way.)

[37] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestionis Disputatae, De Potencia*, q.9, a.2: «Per hoc ergo quod dicitur substantia excluduntur a ratione personae accidentia quorum nullum potest dici persona» (By the term substance the accidents are excluded from the concept of person, since none of them can be called a person.)

[38] *Ibídem:* «Per hoc vero quod dicitur individua excluduntur genera et species in genere substantiae, quae etiam personae dici non possunt». (The individual excludes genera and the species in the genus of substance, for they cannot be called persons either.)

3) Non-rational individuals[39] (Aquinas also holds that the substance composing the person has to be complete non-rational individuals cannot be a person).

4) The parts of the first substance, even if they are individual (e.g. a hand).

5) An incomplete singular substance, for example the separated soul of man, for it is only part of the substantial essence of man,[40] composed of body and soul.

From all the above we can attest that Boethius' definition indicates a person is an individual substance, complete and distinct or not common –this is what is meant by the terms *individual substantia*–, and rational in nature –what is meant by *rationalis naturae*.[41] In other words, the person can be defined as the 'rational suppositum.'

All these features, however, belong to the predicamental domain. It could be deduced from this that the first substance, hypostasis or suppositum is a genus and the person is just one of its species, having rationality as the specific difference. This is an often repeated claim, according

[39] *Ibídem*: «Per hoc vero quod additur rationalis natura excluduntur inanimata corpora, plantae et bruta que personae non sunt». (By this addition of rational nature we exclude inanimate bodies, plants and animals, since they are not persons.)

[40] Ibídem, *De Potentia*, q. 9. a. 2 ad 14: «Anima separata est pars rationalis naturae, scilicet humanae, et non tota natura rationalis humana, et ideo non est persona». (The separated soul is part of human nature and therefore is not a person.). Cfr. also *Summa Th.* I, q. 29, a. 1, ad 5: «Anima esta pars humanae speciei et ideo: licet sit separata (...) non potest dici substantia individua quae hypostasis vel substantia prima, sicut manus, nec quaecumque alia partium hominis. Et sic non competit et neque definitio personae, neque nomen». (The soul is part of the human essence and thus, even while separated (…) it cannot be called an individual substance, as the hypostasis or first substance, in the same way the hand or any other part of man cannot be called a substance. And thus, neither the definition nor the name person belongs to the soul.)

[41] In order to apply this concept to angels and God, who have intellect but not in the same way as humans, Aquinas interprets rationality in a broad sense; cfr. *S. Th.*, q. 29, a. 3, ad 4.

to Forment,[42] namely, that Aquinas thinks of personhood as something essential that is differentiated at the level of the suppositum by a determination of its essence, specifically through rationality. While this view can be attributed to Boethius, it is not Aquinas', for he actually modifies the former's doctrine, even if not explicitly. This becomes manifest when Aquinas conveys other features of the person through his theology:

6) A person cannot be assumed by another's personhood.[43]

Indeed, when analyzing the mystery of the Incarnation, theology acknowledges that Christ assumes a complete, individual human nature –body and soul–, therefore becoming a true man, and yet Christ's humanity is not a human person: humanity is assumed, rather, by the Person of the Word. A peculiar feature of the person, therefore, is that it cannot be assumed, and it cannot be transferred to another. Personhood, however, in itself not assumable, can assume. Following Boethius' definition to the letter, Christ's human nature should be considered a person.[44] On the other hand, the person is not just the individual as opposed to the universal, but also what is proper as opposed to what is common.[45] Therefore:

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[42] Cfr. Forment, E., *Persona y modo substancial*, ed. PPU, Barcelona 1983 pp. 10-23.

[43] Thomas Aquinas, *In quattuor Sententiarum, III, Sent.*, d.5, q.2, a.1, ad 2: «assumptibilis secundum quod id quod assumitur transit in personalitatem alterius, et non habet personalitatem propiam. Non est autem contra rationem personae communicabilitas et assumentis». (What is assumed moves to the personhood of another one, but does not have its own personhood. The communicability of the one who is assumed is not against the concept of person.)

[44] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, III, q. 16, a. 12, ob. 2: «Praeterea Christus, secundum quod homo, est substantia rationalis naturae, non autem substantia universalis. Ergo substantia individua. Sed nihil aliud est persona quam 'rationalis naturae individua substantia'; ut dicit Boethius. Ergo Christus, secundum quod homo est persona». (Christ, as man, is an individual substance of rational nature, not a universal substance. According to Boethius, however, the person is an individual substance of a rational nature. Therefore, Christ, as man, is a person.)

[45] It is useful to note here that the progressive understanding of the notion of person includes two aspects: the Aristotelian perspective highlights its individuality as opposed to universality; the Platonic approach focuses what is proper against what is common.

7) The singular that is common to many and thus predicable of many is not a person.[46]

This is the conclusion attained by Aquinas after considering the mystery of the Trinity. There are three Persons in God and only one essence or nature. Thus, the essence insofar as it is common is not a person; otherwise there would be four persons in God instead of three.[47] This represents a great mystery, because God's nature is not in the predicamental domain. The divine essence is its esse. There is only one *esse* in God and yet there are three Persons. Manifestly, Boethius' definition is insufficient. The person adds something else to the individual nature, precisely that which is not assumable. In its literal sense, Boethius' definition is at

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Cfr. Álvarez Turrienzo, S., *El Cristianismo y la formación del concepto de persona*, en *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri*, ed. Moneda y crédito, Madrid 1970, t. I, pp. 43-78, esp. p. 65.

[46] Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 9, a.2, ob et ad 12: «...essentia enim divina, secundum quod est essentia, non est persona; alioquin esse in Deo una persona, sicut est una esentia (...) Ad duodecim dicendum, quod individuum in definitione personae sumitur pro quod non praedicatur de pluribus; et secundum hoc essentia divina non est individua substantia secundum praedicationem; cum praedicetur de pluribus personis, licet sit individua secundum rem». (The divine essence, insofar as it is an essence, is not a person; otherwise, God would be a person inasmuch as he is an essence. (…) We must say that individual is included in the definition of a person because it is not predicated of many; according to this, the divine essence is not an individual substance according to the predicamental sense, because it is predicated of various persons, even if it is individual according to reality.)

[47] Cfr. Forment, E., *Ser y persona*, 2ª ed., Publicaciones Universidad de Barcelona, 1983, pp. 21-23: "these pages hold that the person distinguishes not just from the universal that is predicable of many, but also from the singular common to many and thus predicable of many. With this term we mean that the person is not common to many, it cannot be multiplied, and is therefore different from all others. (…) Thus in the Trinity we must hold that there are three persons in God, really different from each other, in one and the same essence or nature. This nature or essence, in itself, according to the definition of Boethius, must be a person, for it is an individual substance of rational (spiritual) nature. According to this, in God (…) there would be a quaternity."

the very least incomplete: the person transcends the categorial or essential plane, for what Christ assumed, from the point of view of the essence,[48] is a perfect nature.

b) The person as 'rational subsistence'

From all the above we can conclude the person is something irreducible, incommunicable, unrepeatable, different from all others, and unique. It contributes what is proper and untransferable, wherefore comes the difficulty of knowing a person and knowing what a person is: the person is undefinable. Each one is unique, and what is singular and proper cannot be defined, only that which belongs to the concrete commonness of singularity.[49] Hence, to discover the root of its unrepeatable character we must transcend the order of the essence, as Aquinas plainly realizes. First substance does not mean substantial essence, but rather a subsisting substantial essence. First substance is what is found in reality,

[48] In spite of this, the Scholastic tradition is full of interpretations that hold that what is specific to the person (what the person adds to nature) lies on the essential level. Among them, within the Thomistic tradition, we find Cajetan (1469-1534), whose view, influenced by the terminology of Suárez's (1548-1617) has come to camouflage as a 'substantial mode.' On the other hand we find the opinion of Scotus (1266-1308), for whom the person is negatively qualified: it is just an essence to which all dependency is denied. Christ's humanity would not be a person because it has been assumed and thus it is dependent. We can find similar essentialist views among many Thomistic thinkers, especially those who follow Cajetan. Cfr. the quoted works of E. Forment.

[49] Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q.29, a.1, ad 1: «Licet hoc singulare vel illud definiri non possit, tamen id quod pertinet communem rationem singularitatis, definiri potest: et sic Philosophus definit substantiam primam. Et hoc modo definit Boethis personam». (Even if this or that singular cannot be defined, still, that which belongs to the common concept of singularity can be defined: this is how Aristotle defines the first substance, and how Boethius defines the person.)

thus it is also called *res naturae*, and that means it subsists.[50] Subsistence is a kind of existence, that which exists by itself and not in another.[51]

In other words: we should not forget that substance is a predicament that belongs to the categorical domain. We know Aristotle did not fully expand on the transcendental character of being as an act.[52] For Aquinas, however, it is evident the suppositum is, above all, a "subsistent individual."[53] It does not include only the essence, but along with its determination at the level of the essence (individual substance), its structure comprises another co-principle that is a way of existing: subsistence.

In order to explain what Aquinas means by subsistence we must refer to his conception of being. Being (*esse*) is a co-principle of existents. Indeed, for Aquinas the term designates "what has being."[54] The existent

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[50] *Ibidem*, *S. Th.* I, q.29, a.2: «Dicitur substantia 'subiectum vel suppositum quod *subsistit* in genere substantiae'... Nominatur etiam tribus nominibus significantibus rem, quae quidem sunt 'res naturae, subsistentia et hipóstasis'». (Substance is said of the subject or suppositum that subsists in the genus of substance. (…) It is also called by three names that signify real things: 'natural reality,' 'subsistence,' and 'hypostasis.)

[51] *Ibidem*: «Secundum enim quod per se existit et non in alio vocatur 'subsistentia', illa enim subsistere dicimus, quae non in alio, sed in se existunt». (According to this, that it exists by itself and not in another, it is called subsistence, for we call subsisting not that which is in another, but that which exists in itself.)

[52] Cfr. Garay, Jesús (de), *Los sentidos de la forma en Aristóteles*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1987, pp. 144-153: Loss of the transcendental sense of act in Aristotle. Logos and act.

[53] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, III, q.2, a.2: «... supposito naturae, quod est individuum subsistens in natura illa... quia natura dicitur secundum quod est essentia quaedam eadem, vero dicetur suppositum secundum quod est subsistens. Et quod est dictum de 'supposito' intelligendum est de persona in creatura rationali vel intellectuali; quia nihil aliud est persona quam 'rationalis naturae individua substantiae' secundum Boethium». (... the suppositum of nature, the subsistent individual in such a nature … for such a nature is said according to its being a certain essence; suppositum is said, on the other hand, of what is subsistent. And what is said of the suppositum must be understood of the person in the rational or intellectual creature, for a person is an 'individual substance of rational nature,' according to Boethius.)

[54] Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio*, XII Metaph., lect.1, n.2419: «Ens dicitur quasi esse habens». *In Quattuor libros Sententiarum*, III Sent., d.6, q.2,: «Ens enim subsistens est quod habet esse, tamquam esse quod est».

encompasses two elements: that which possesses and that which is possessed (the essence that has being). In the end, subsisting is having a certain kind of existence: to exist by oneself and not in another. This determinate kind of existence is a way of having *esse*.[55]

To underscore this intrinsic composition of any existent between an essence and act of being, Aquinas reads *subsistence* whenever Boethius speaks of *substance*. That is to say, if the essence of a person is the 'rational nature', in order to name the whole personal existent we must add, in some way, its act of being. Subsistence, i.e. existing by itself and not through another, is given by the *esse* and is at the very root of the incommunicability of the person. Aquinas writes that "the *esse* is the complement of all things."[56] It completes the essence, making it a real existent and placing it into reality: "all things exist through their being (…). All things exist because of the being they have."[57]

The esse, therefore, completes the essence without becoming a part of it, in a transcendental way, and this yields several conclusions. Above all, we must hold that as *suppositum*, every person has an *esse* as one of her constitutive elements. "Being belongs to the constitution of the person" (it finishes or completes the person). And as the term person names a subsistent, the person is fundamentally said of the *esse* that completes the

[55] For this reason, Aquinas does not identify esse with existence or the mere presence of an existent in reality, or the fact that the essence exists. Existence is an effect of having esse. This is why some authors claim that by its composition with the essence, the esse accomplishes two functions: 1) on the level of ens: making an essence being an ens, and 2) on the level of existence: making that ens exist, being present in reality.

[56] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, Quod. XII, q.5, a. 5: «Esse est complementum omnium».

[57] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, c.22: «Unum quodque est per suum esse... omnis res est per hoc quod habet esse».

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essence or nature: "the term 'person' is not imposed to signify the individual on the part of nature, but rather to signify something subsistent in such a nature."[58]

The reason why the human nature of Christ, perfect from an essential point of view, cannot be called a 'person' is because it does not exist by itself,[59] or rather, it exists but it does not subsist. It exists in another, not as an accident but assumed by the Person of the divine Word. That is why, for Aquinas, the individual substance is a substantial being or a complete substance, that is to say, something complete that exists by itself, a complete being that possesses its own esse. At a first glance, therefore, the term 'person' can be said to be the 'rational suppositum' or 'rational subsistent', for all supposita have an essence and an act of being.

c) The transcendental character of the person

Still, this is not enough. According to this approach, the difference between a person and other *supposita* would be decided by way of their peculiar essences, i.e. through rationality. Indeed, if the suppositum and the person are to be distinguished, it would have to be through some element that includes the personhood the suppositum lacks. It would seem the *esse* cannot be this element, for it is something the person and the suppositum have in common, being a radical ingredient for both: nature is the only thing on which they seem to differ. This account, however, can be contested.

Aquinas thinks of the *esse* as the act of acts of an existent, the perfection of perfections. "All perfections belong to the perfection of being; according to this, things are as perfect insofar as they have being in a certain

[58] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.* I, q. 30, a. 4: «...hoc autem nomen 'persona' non est impositum ad significandum individuum ex parte naturae, sed ad significandum *rem subsistentem* in tali natura».

[59] Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, III, q. 16, a. 12, ad 2.

way."[60] It is the first act of an existent that does not receive anything but rather is itself received. The *esse* is thus not a part of the essence or a perfection of the essence, but rather is at another level altogether, being precisely the one that actualizes all perfections of the essence: the *esse* makes the essence real.[61]

This is why both the essence and the *esse* are necessary co-principles of the person. The individual essence and its proper *esse* do not behave in the same way: the esse completes the essence but forms no part of it. Rather, it completes it in a transcendental sense.

The transcendentality of the *esse* means that it is "the actuality of any form or nature." Unlike the act of being, forms are like potencies as opposed to acts. [62] The *esse* is not the last added act to the essence in order to make it real, but rather the first actuality, the one that grounds or makes the other acts –formal acts– possible. "Being is what is most intimate to anything and what is deeper than everything."[63] The *esse* is the actuality of all forms, the most radical and profound act of all existents. It is therefore their radical constituent, the deepest of created dualities: the *esse* is, in a word, the perfection of perfections.

No existent, however, *is* being itself, except for the Absolute. All other existents are *given* being. In order to explain the real composition of being and essence, Aquinas claims that created beings receive their being according to their essence. The essence thus confines the perfections that

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[60] *Ibídem, S. Th.*, I, q.4, a.2: «omnium autem perfectiones pertinent ad perfectionem essendi: secundum hoc enim aliqua perfecta sunt, quod aliquo modo *esse* habent».

[61] Being act of the essence, 'actus essentiae', is the proper way Aquinas uses the term *esse,* even if he is echoing the expression of other authors, who make use of it in a different sense: Cfr. *In Quattuor Sententiarum*, I Sent., d.33, q.1, a.1, ad 1.

[62] *Ibídem, S. Th.*, I, q.3, a. 4: «Quia *esse* est *actualitas omnis formae* vel naturae... Oportet igitur quod ipsum esse comparetur ad esentiam quae est aliud ab ipse, sicut actus ad potentiam». (Because being is the actuality of any form or nature … Thus it is necessary that the being itself is compared to the essence, that exists by reason of being, as an act to a potency.)

[63] *Ibídem, S.Th.,* I, q. 8, a. 1: «Esse est illud quod est magis íntimum cuilibet, et quod *profundius omnibus inest*».

can be provided by being. In this sense, he affirms that created beings "are not imperfect due to their esse, for they don't have it as fully possessed, but rather they participate from being in a certain particular, imperfect way."[64] The essence marks the degree of being's limitation, according to their capacity. All perfections belong to the perfection of esse. All perfections come from being and not from the essence, since the essence exists only through being by limiting or contracting it. The real distinction between *esse* and essence, established by Aquinas, is centered around this.[65]

In any suppositum, including the person, the *esse* is the most profound aspect of the duality of each existent's composition. By applying the doctrine of the participation of being, we have to hold that the suppositum and the person are different because they are different participations of being, which is the supreme perfection.

We can glimpse from here that a person's dignity comes fundamentally from its esse. Indeed, persons are a particular kind of supposita, whose essence, in virtue of its greater capacity, restricts the *esse* in a different, fuller way. In this way, any suppositum differs from the person in virtue of *esse*. In the words of Aquinas, "the person signifies what is most perfect in the whole of nature, that is to say a self-subsisting being of a rational nature."[66]

This greatest of perfections is set at the transcendental plane, for the *esse* of the person is of a superior standing than the *esse* of anything what-

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[64] Ibidem, *S.C.G.*, I, c. 28: «...non sunt imperfecta propter imperfectionem ipsius esse absoluti, non enim ipsa habent esse secundum suum totum posse, sed participant esse per quendam particularem modum et imperfectissimum».

[65] Ibidem, *Quaestionis Disputatae. De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, q.1, a.1: «Omne igitur quod est post primum ens, cum non sit suum esse, habet esse in aliquo *receptum*, per quod ipsum esse contrahitur; et sic in quolibet creato *aliud est natura* rei quae participat esse, et aliud *ipsum esse participatum*». (Thus, for all that comes after the first existent, as its nature is not its being, its esse is received by another through which being is contracted; and thus, in any created existent, one thing is the nature that participates from being, and another is the very being that is participated.)

[66] *Ibidem*, I, q. 29, a. 3: «Persona significat *id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura*, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura».

soever. To distinguish these diverse levels of transcendental participations is why we give the rational suppositum the special name of person. The term person thus designates the subsistent rather than the essence: "If the suppositum and the person differ, it is because the proper *esse* of the suppositum is limited to a degree, i.e. it is an *esse* limited at a certain measure, just as the *esse* of the person is limited in a different measure. If the person possesses a greater perfection or dignity than the suppositum it is not because rationality happens upon it, but rather because its *esse* is less limited and it is less imperfect than that of the suppositum, in the case of creatures, and limitless in the case of God, due to God lacking a receptive essence. Hence, even while *esse* is the (radical) constitutive of the person and of the suppositum, as proper or limited to each in a different way, the suppositum and the person also differ."[67]

We can conclude that, according to Aquinas, the suppositum and the person differ fundamentally because their *esse* is different, setting the ontological density of the person at a different plane from the suppositum. They also differ in their essence, but their radical difference corresponds to esse. Their own *esse* makes a person a substantial being (suppositum) and also a person, i.e. a being of a much nobler echelon.

d) Human esse *and person*

Aquinas' doctrine makes way for the profound discovery that suppositum and person are not the same. There is a radical difference between them at the transcendental level: the act of being of a suppositum is not the act of being of a person, and it is precisely this difference in esse, or, in other words, the peculiar *esse of* a person, that distinguishes it from the suppositum. In this sense we may speak of the "transcendental character of the person,"[68] and affirm that the radical constitutive of the person is its esse.

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[67] Forment, *E., Ser y persona*, o.c., pp. 61-62

[68] The person's perfection as transcendental, as has been shown in E. Forment, *Ser y persona*, o.c., pp. 61-69. By contrasting the Capreolus and Cajetan's interpretations of

Now, it is possible that Aquinas' himself fails to extract all the corollaries to the peculiar metaphysical composition he discovered. In truth, he accommodated notions found in other authors to his greater vision of reality, just as he did with Boethius' definition of person. The concept the latter had of person does not allude to its most peculiar feature: the perfection of its *esse*. However, from this perspective we may overcome some difficulties that were unsurmountable to the Boethian approach.

Following Aquinas literally, it has been repeatedly said that, "the human soul is not the person."[69] This is a reasonable claim insofar as we understand soul as the substantial form of the human essence: the soul is not fully incommunicable, for it is the form of the body. On the other hand, if the soul abides at the essential level and the person at the transcendental level, it seems clear that "man is not a person for having a soul, even if a spiritual one."[70] The human body, in turn, cannot be conceived without its substantial form, the soul. Thus, the human soul –expression of nature– is not the direct reason of human dignity; human dignity comes about from man being a person, and this is by virtue of its esse, because he is someone subsisting in such a nature. From a theoretical perspective, we may say that "being a man or possessing a human nature is not the same as being a person."[71]

Another feature of the person, at least the human person, is that in addition to "essential determinations, it has accidental features."[72] This

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Aquinas, he shows the radical constitutive of the person is the participation of the esse. In dialogue with these authors, and employing their terminology, as they speak of a formal constitutive of existents, he holds that, in the case of the person, this is the esse. This comes about by comparing the relation esse-essentia to the relation form-matter. Keeping in mind that according to Aquinas the created esse has no essential content, it is more precise to speak of a radical or real constitutive.

[69] Forment, E., *La mujer y su dignidad* en 'Verbo' (Madrid), 287-288 (1990), p. 1015.

[70] *Ibídem*, p. 1015

[71] *Ibídem*, p. 1012

[72] *Ibídem*, p. 1015

comes from the same doctrine of esse: the act of being actualizes the substance and the accidents. The latter inhere in the only *esse* that makes each existent a subsistent. Following this lead, we can affirm 'person' designates the complete whole in at least two senses: a) from the point of view of the essence, that must be complete, and b) from an entitative point of view, for in addition to the essence it must possess a corresponding act that makes it subsistent.[73] The *esse* actualizes an existent, becoming one of its intrinsic constitutive components; it actualizes the substantial essence, body and soul, and the accidents. It is not given separated from them, and yet it is distinguished from them. The *esse* belongs to the soul, the body and the accidents, and it is only one, for it is the ultimate root of the existent's unity. But even if it is inseparably conjoined to all the other constituents of an existent, the *esse* is distinguished from the essence and the accidents. The soul is not the person; the accidents are not the person. It is understandable to say the person is the whole: the whole can be called a person because it is wholly actualized by the esse. But we also have to affirm that, properly speaking, 'person' is said of the esse, which is the personifying element.[74]

e) The person and the soul

This approach may clarify the problem mentioned earlier regarding the separated soul. If we strictly affirm the person of the whole existent, what can we say about separated souls? If we hold a literal reading of Aquinas, we should claim –as he explicitly does– that separated souls are not persons. But if we consider the spirit of his metaphysical views of the person, we might be able to overcome the difficulties of this statement. By making all virtual inferences in Aquinas' doctrine explicit, *we may disagree with him while following his own principles*. When he claims the separated soul is not a person he is taking refuge in the notion that

[73] Cfr. Forment, E., *Ser y persona*, o.c., p. 48

[74] If we apply this to Christology, we may say the union of natures happens at the plane of the Person. The mystery of hypostatic union is that the human nature of Christ does not have its own esse, but rather is assumed by the Person of the Word, without admixing natures. The divine Person, therefore, is also not the whole.

substance must be complete at an essential level. He even argues repeatedly that it is not sufficient for something to be individual in order for it to become a suppositum or a person. He uses the example of a hand or an arm: even if it is an individual, it is not a person, because it is only part of a substance and does not subsist separately from the other parts of the body.[75] He concludes that an incomplete substance, like the separate soul, is not a person.[76]

We should not exaggerate the need for the completeness of the individual essential substance, otherwise one might claim a mutilated person is not a complete substance; this would be even more grave in the case of an old person or a disabled child: it could be argued that they are not 'complete substances.' Still, following the principles of Thomistic metaphysics, we are bound to hold that the human soul's existence begins by informing a concrete body. At the moment of death, the soul separates from the body but goes on living. The explanation for this must be found on the transcendental domain: if the separated soul goes on to exist it must be due to its having esse, which makes it subsistent, keeps its individuality and separates it from all others. The separated human soul subsists in itself and not in another; it is different from all others and is not assumed to exist in another.

If, as we have said, being a person comes about fundamentally from having an esse, the separated human soul must, in consequence, still be a person. If the features of the person at a first glance are incommunicabil-

[75] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, III, q. 16, a. 12, ad 2: «Substantia individua quae ponitur in definitione personae, importat substantiam completam, per se subsistentem separatim ab aliis. Alioquin manus hominis potest dici persona cum sit substantia quaedam individua: quia tamen est substantia individua sicut in alio existens, non potest dici persona». (The 'individual substance' put in the definition of the person, refers to the complete substance, subsistent by itself, separate from other. If this were not the case, a man's hand could be called a person, for it is an individual substance; however, it cannot be called a person because it is an individual substance that exists in another.)

[76] Ibídem, *S. Th.* I, q. 75, a. 4, ad 2, among other places.

ity, unrepeatability, being one and unique, these are features that separated souls keep, while on the other hand they maintain a special relation to the body for whom they were made.

According to Aquinas' doctrine, the *esse* is the element of personhood, the decisive constitutive element of the person and the root of its dignity. Hence, if we admit the separated soul has the constitutive of personhood, we would be very hard pressed to say that it is not a person. If the element of personhood is the esse, we can still hold, following the principles set forth by Aquinas, that the separated soul, possessing an esse, is still a person.[77] A solid argument for human immortality could actually be deployed considering the personal esse, rather than the soul and its operations. Nature, both as the body and the mind, is transmitted by one's progenitors, but the personal *esse* is created by God for each one and cannot disappear unless annihilated. Some contemporary Thomists have actually followed this line of thought, e.g. Carlos Cardona, who writes: "even if the complete human nature includes the body, the soul is directly created by God as a subsistent in itself, and participates its own act of being to the body. We know it subsists in itself because it has operations (understanding and loving) that are not corporeal (…); and operating follows being: a spiritual –immaterial– operation presupposes a spiritual substance. The body is an initial condition but not the origin or cause of individuality of the soul (cf. SCG II, 81). Thus, and keeping the contemporary connotations of the term person in mind (conscience and freedom), there is no difficulty in stating that after the death of man, the separated soul continues to be a person, even if (until the resurrection) it does not participate its act of being to the body anymore, and lacks something to be a man in the proper sense, and yet is still an individual, singular subject of its being and operations."

When we spoke of the transcendentality of the person we said the human individual is called a person because of the perfection of the *esse* that constitutes it. "Being belongs to the constitution of the person itself."[78] If

[77] Cardona, C., *Metafísica del Bien y del mal*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1987, p. 75.

[78] Thomas Aquinas, S. Th. III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 4

the person has a different name from the *suppositum*, it is due to the dignity and greater ontological density of the human esse. The person is a person due to its esse. Consequently, following the fact that the radical constitutive of the person is the esse, and even allowing that the term person can designate the whole –because the whole of a concrete man is actualized by its esse–, we can still call the peculiar *esse* of an individual human being –an *esse* that, in the words of Zubiri, it has as its property– a 'person'.

To sum up, this long *excursus* has made manifest that not even Aquinas peacefully accepted the Boethian loss of the analogy between the divine and the human person in his mature thought. Indeed, one of his *Quaestiones disputatae* expresses that the person is a "spiritual subsistent,"[79] a formula that can be applied to God as much as angels and man. By turning substance to substantiality, Aquinas resettles the question of the person in the transcendental domain, that of the esse, and thus brings considerable support to the development of a doctrine of transcendentality in anthropology.[80]

It is clear, however, that this way of overcoming Boethius has not been sufficiently recognized, for the readers of Aquinas have not acknowledged it. On the other hand, it only recovers one of the previously lost elements, for relationality, constitutive to the notion of person in God, is excluded by Aquinas when he refers to human or angelic persons, which he justifies by claiming analogy is not univocity. If we add this to the fact that the key element of his philosophy was not transferred to his successors, we may claim that posterior philosophy not only ignores being, but even that which is most important to human beings: the person.

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[79] Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia.*, 9, a.4, c: «A person is a distinct substistent of spiritual nature».

[80] Cfr. Lombo, J. A., *Lo transcendental antropológico en Tomás de Aquino. Las raíces clásicas de la propuesta de Leonardo Polo,* en «Studia Poliana» 6 (2003) 181-208.

5. THE RADICAL CHARACTER OF THE PERSON IN POLO

The long *lapsus* from the 13th century until the Polian proposal can be surmised from the works of Xavier Zubiri, who in 1959 was asked to give a set of lectures on the person, which he afterwards wrote down. The result was the article *El hombre, realidad personal* (*Man, a Personal Reality*), published in 1963.[81] A substantial portion of the unpublished part of these lectures was then released as two chapters of his book *Sobre el hombre* (*About Man*).[82] The issues he dealt with brought so many questions with them that he ultimately embarked on a deep investigation about "that great reality"[83] (the way he usually refers to the person), starting with an historical study.[84] The importance this had on his overall thought eventually led him to write one of his greatest works, *Sobre la esencia* (*On Essence*), which grew from a footnote to a complete anthropological treatise.[85]

Zubiri analyzes the concepts forged in medieval philosophy and concludes that "the ultimate metaphysical structure of personal being lies in the articulation of *intimacy*, *origination* and *communication*".[86] He acknowledges that the question of the transcendentality of the person, rediscovered by Boethius, was lost again, for "this question, even if transcendental, was considered a byzantinism."[87] Later on, "philosophy, from

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[81] Zubiri, X., *El hombre, realidad personal*, in «Revista de Occidente», 2º época, n. 1, (1963) pp. 5-29.

[82] Zubiri, X., *Sobre el hombre,* Alianza editorial, Madrid 1986, ch. IV: *La persona como forma de realidad: personeidad*, and the first part of ch. V: *La personalidad humana y su constitución*, pp. 103-152.

[83] Cfr. Zubiri, X., *Respectividad de lo real*, in «Realitas» III-IV (1979) 14-43.

[84] See the first ch. of my book Castilla de Cortázar, Bl., *Noción de Persona en Xavier Zubiri*, Rialp, Madrid 1996.

[85] Cfr. The Introduction to *Sobre el hombre* by Ignacio Ellacuría, p. xx.

[86] Zubiri, X., *El ser sobrenatural: Dios y la deificación en la teología paulina*, en *Naturaleza, historia y Dios*, p. 475.

[87] Zubiri, X., *En torno al problema de Dios*, en *Naturaleza, historia y Dios*, p. 425. Just before the quoted passage he writes: "Scholastic theologians said 'nature' and 'person' are not the same, even understanding by nature a singular nature. Boethius defined

Descartes to Kant, remade its way, albeit painstakingly and erroneously. Man appears in Descartes as a substance, a *res* (…); in the *Critique of Pure Reason* this *res* is distinguished, as a subject, from the pure *ego*, the I; in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the person is discovered *beyond* the I; Kant substituted the Cartesian division of thinking and extended things with a distinction between persons and things. The history of modern philosophy thus rehashed, successively, three stadiums: subject, I, person.[88] What a person is, however, is something Kant left quite obscure. It is of course not just about identity, as held by Locke: it is something more. To begin with, it means being *sui iuris*, which is, for Kant, a categorical imperative."[89] In his view, however, modernity "didn't reach here the radical question about the person", so that "we have to go back, again, to the strictly ontological dimension that was last stirred by Scholasticism, in virtue of the fruitful theological necessities, which sadly became sterile polemics."[90]

In the 20th century, witness to so many affronts against human dignity, and the horrors of two world wars, there arose a distinguished group of authors engaged in the rediscovery of the deep meaning of what it is to be a person: a distinguished group that set up a sort of collective conscience regarding the inviolability and universality of the dignity of man. These authors are the personalists[91] and others like Zubiri and Polo who, even while disclaiming the name, move within a realist anthropology that pivots around the person.

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the suppositum as *naturae completae individua substantia*; the person would be the *rational suppositum*. The Scholastics added that both moments have among themselves a relation between 'that by which it is' (*natura ut quod*) and 'that which it is' (*suppossitum ut quod*) (...). Personhood is the very being of man: *actiones sunt suppositorum*, since it is the suppositum the one that 'is' in a proper sense».

[88] Here Zubiri makes it clear that "we haven't actually gone any farther than distinguishing these three terms as if they were human strata; we should think about the problem of their radical unity."

[89] *Ibidem,* pp. 425-426.

[90] *Ibidem,* p. 426.

[91] Burgos, J. M., *Introducción al Personalismo*, ed. Palabra, Madrid 2012.

I will point out their surpassing Boethius when distinguishing things from persons, precisely in their transcendental dimension, in their *esse*. In the words of Karol Wojtyla: "The concept of the 'person' is broader and more comprehensive than the concept of the 'individual,' just as the person is more than individualized nature. The person would be an individual whose nature is rational –according to Boethius' full definition *persona est rationalis naturae individual substantia*. Nevertheless, in our perspective it seems clear that neither the concept of the 'rational nature' nor that of its individualization seems to express fully the specific completeness expressed by the concept of the person. The completeness we are speaking of here seems to be something that is unique in a very special sense rather than concrete. In everyday use we may substitute for a person the straightforward 'somebody.' It serves as a perfect semantic epitome because of the immediate connotations it brings to mind –and with them the juxtaposition and contrast to 'something.' If the person were identified with its basic ontological structure, then it would at once become necessary to take account of the difference that distinguishes 'somebody' and something.' (…) The person is identifiable with an ontological basic structure in which a provision is to be made: the ontological structure of 'somebody' manifests not only its similiarities but also its differences and detachment from the ontological structure of 'something.'"[92]

In the case of Leonardo Polo, the point of departure of his anthropology is simple and enlightening. After acknowledging the rediscovery of the real distinction between *esse* and essentia, Polo deploys it in his anthropology, noting that it is a difference similar to that of the Cappadocian fathers between nature and person, thus allowing for a parallel reading. In virtue of this real distinction, the human being is, properly speaking, a person through her esse. Thus, the person is the esse, the human

[92] Wojtyla, K., *Persona e atto*, Librería Editrice Vaticana, 1982. *The Acting Person*, Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, 1979, pp. 73-74.

act of being, as distinct from its essence or nature. This is Polo's proposal when referring to the radical character of the person.[93]

In the Polian view, the specificity of the human *esse* can noticeably be seen because it is separated from creation, which explains the difference in *esse* according to its actualized intensity. Polo also considers creation in a radical way. He writes: "The act of being of the creature is not distinguished from the act of being of God because it is really distinct from its essence, but rather because it is created."[94] According to the doctrine of participation, the human person is not a being, but rather has being. Polo confirms it in this way: yes, it has a proportionate esse, but when considering this proportionate *esse* we can claim a person *is* actually its esse. Thus, even while the human person is not being, it is its own being. From here we can derive a peculiar sense of being, proper to the spiritual existent, that is to say, not merely a constitutive of an existent, but a certain way of being. Polo describes this sense of being as openness "towards the inside" or "intimacy," which allows for an inchoative and transcendental regard for the created person.

It is easier to acknowledge, from this perspective, that the whole of human essence, body and soul, is personal, as it is actualized by the personal esse. Still, in virtue of the esse-essentia distinction, strictly speaking the person is the esse, and all other parts can be called personal because the latter communicates its perfection to the former.

6. PROPERTIES OF THE PERSONAL *ESSE*

As we have said, there were many reasons why late Scholasticism lost the notion of person;[95] also lost was the real distinction between essence

[93] Cfr. Polo L., *La radicalidad de la persona*, in «Themata» 12 (1994) 209-224; and also Polo, L., *La persona humana y su crecimiento,* Eunsa, Pamplona 1996, pp. 141-159.

[94] Polo L., *La libertad*, cit., p. 30

[95] The insufficient distinction of Aquinas from his predecessors had terrible consequences for his philosophy. I refer specifically to the posterior readings of his doctrines, wherein the commentators were unable to acknowledge the originality of his positions.

and *esse*, the intimate structure of beings that have received their existence. Perhaps the most important reason for this loss was highlighted by Leonardo Polo when he claimed that the distinction Aquinas discovered is not simply analytical.[96] Hence, "man is a unity that cannot be reconstituted starting from an analysis. The differences of man are internal. (…) A dot does not and cannot have intimacy; man is intimacy before composition."[97] The essentia-*esse* distinction, when applied to anthropology, reaches its full congruence, for it arrives at the genuine moment of its consideration. But this development remained undone due to the limitation of the analogical knowledge of being and the subsequent weakness in the understanding of creation as participation.[98] In truth, analogy, especially when considered as proportionality, does not sufficiently allow for a calibrated notion of the differences of intensity within being.

To continue with a deep study of personal being, following this approach, we should first say with Polo that created being is divided into 'principial' being (at other times called fundament, referring to the *esse*

Those who realized this were left with the necessary task of giving different definitions of the person from the Boethian perspective, according to which esse, outside the essence, was said to be extrinsic to the person, and the entitative conception, so to speak, in which *esse* became an intrinsic part of the person. Capreolus named these two ways of describing the person 'denominative' and 'formaliter.' But the doctrine of the act of being became diluted through many Scholastic disputes. Many efforts have been necessary nowadays to clarify these misunderstandings. The works from Forment we have referred to in these pages are very worthy in this sense.

[96] Cfr. Polo, L., *El acceso al Ser*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1964, p. 256: «Para admitir el valor real de la distinción entre esencia y existencia (esse) es menester advertir que tal distinción no es analítica, por cuanto no divide una noción de ente ya anteriormente poseída con plenitud... Lejos de ser un obstáculo a la trascendentalidad del ente, la duplicidad aludida no constituye otra cosa que el momento de profundidad en su consideración... Distinción real significa... que la esencia depende de la existencia (esse)».

[97] Polo L., La libertad, an unpbublished set of lectures from 1991, quoted in Yepes R., *Leonardo Polo y la historia de la filosofía*, en «Anuario Filosófico» 25 (1992/1) 48.

[98] Cfr. Polo L., *El Ser I*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1964, p. 126. As Ricardo Yepes points out, «Aquinas' interpretation of creation as an accidental relation became the most difficult point for Polo to interpret »: Yepes R., *Leonardo Polo y la historia de la filosofía*, a.c., p. 114, n. 40.

of the Cosmos) and personal being, also called "second creature."[99] In other words, Polo distinguishes metaphysics from anthropology, for "the latter studies a reality that is nobler than the one thematised in metaphysics."[100] This suggests, against traditional philosophy, "that Anthropology is not a second philosophy, because the person is the highest reality, and Metaphysics is incapable of addressing it."[101] Modern philosophy, for its part, even while trying to tackle the question of subjectivity (something rarely discussed in Greek philosophy, and a little bit more in medieval authors even if still insufficiently), focuses on the human *subject* with concepts borrowed from classical metaphysics; and since metaphysics cannot reach the human person, its endeavor was unsuccessful. Hence Polo's proposal consists of "accessing the human person through a new method that allows us to find new notions that are not metaphysical."[102] Polian anthropology is grounded on the existence of freedom, which allows the development of an anthropology that is compatible with, but different from, metaphysics, as "the person, the great theme of anthropology, is superior to all metaphysical topics and therefore metaphysics degrades its interpretation."[103]

Being different in the transcendental domain, metaphysics and anthropology possess non-equivalent transcendental features. Indeed, "the discovery of the real distinction is splendid, but it cannot become a consecration of metaphysics as the only transcendental approach, rather the other way around: if there are different acts of being, essences are therefore also distinguished and the distinction between acts of being and their essences must also differ. The act of being of man is distinct from the

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[99] Cfr. Polo, L., *La coexistencia del hombre*, in *Actas de las XXV Jornadas Filosóficas de la Facltad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Navarra*, Pamplona, 1991, p. 36.

[100] L Polo et al., *Entrevista con Leonardo Polo. La distinción entre la antropología y la metafísica*, in *Studia Poliana* 13 (2011), 106.

[101] *Ibidem.*

[102] *Ibidem,* p. 107.

[103] L Polo et al., *Entrevista con Leonardo Polo. La distinción entre la antropología y la metafísica, en «Studia Poliana» 13 (2011) 106.*

essence of man, distinct from its essence, and distinct also from the act of a being having the character of fundament and its essence."[104] In Polo's opinion, the duality expressed by the essentia-*esse* distinction "reaches a greater clarity in man than in any other creature; (…) and so both the human essence and *esse* are superior to the essence and the *esse* of the physical universe",[105] because its essence is capable of habits and its *esse* is free.

Regarding the difference between the essence of the Cosmos and that of the human being, he writes: "We reach a proper consideration of the (human) essence when habits are added to its nature, as they are its highest perfection. The essence of man is, therefore, the consideration of his nature regarding his proper natural perfection, that is, the habit. Of course, as physical natures are incapable of habits, they cannot be an essence in the same way as the human essence. The peculiar perfection of physical natures is predicamental and it is called final cause. This succinct observation suffices to exclude a symmetry in all that belongs to the essence."[106] Regarding the human *esse*, one of its radical differences from the being of the Cosmos is freedom, something Polo studies in several of his works.[107]

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

After studying the notion of person in Thomas Aquinas we concluded that it is reasonable to assert that the person is the whole of the human being for two reasons. Firstly, because neither the essence nor the *esse* of beings exist separately, and with the notion of person, as in the case of created persons, we designate a composite being. Secondly, because the *esse* actualizes all the features of every being, and since the human personal *esse* is personal, it can be said that its body and soul are personal.

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[104] Polo, L., *La libertad*, a.c., p. 119

[105] Polo L., *La coexistencia del hombre*, in *Actas de las XXV Reuniones Filosóficas* de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 1991 pp. 33-48.

[106] *Ibidem,* p. 44.

[107] Cfr. Polo, L., *Persona y libertad*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2007.

However, if we take this literally, we could conclude that the separated soul is not a person, which not only contradicts reality but even the internal logic of Aquinas' philosophy. Indeed, he discovered, as the key of his metaphysical synthesis, that *esse* and essence are joined in every being as two different co-principles that relate to each other as act and potency. This distinction allows for the discernment of a transcendental and a predicamental plane. The essence belongs to the categories and yet the *esse* is transcendental, an act of acts that actualizes predicamental forms both substantial and accidental. Therefore, even if the term person can designate the whole human individual, in virtue of the real distinction between essence and esse, the human individual is in a proper sense a person through its esse. That is also why we can call the *esse* a person, insofar as it is different from the essence. In the same vein, affirming that the separated soul is not a person would be equivalent to denying its existence.

To deepen the knowledge of what a person is required us to disentangle the consequences of personhood being rooted in the esse. In this sense, the Polian approach notes that it is necessary to develop the transcendentality in the human being as different from that of the cosmic being. Transcendental anthropology, as formulated by Polo, is a "theory of the personal being," namely, the human *esse* with its own features that Polo calls anthropological transcendentals.[108] These transcendentals of the personal co-being –co-existence– are for him freedom, intellect and donated love, which, in line with the transcendental character of the human being, Polo has developed and explained in several works, culminating in his *Transcendental Anthropology, vol. I: The Human Person*.[109] Regarding the second constitutive element of personal being, relationality, the very term co-existence highlights the fact that Polo places openness at the same level as personal esse. The person, ontologically considered, is co-existent *a radice*. However, how and to what degree Polo develops this relational dimension exceeds the aim of this paper.

[108] Cfr. Yepes R., *Leonardo Polo y la historia de la filosofía*, a.c., pp. 120-121

[109] Polo, L., *Antropología transcendental I: La persona humana*, Eunsa 1999.