

The Reverend Professor Bogumił Gacka, MIC

**The Personalism of Edith Stein**  
and European Personalism

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Towarzystwo im.  
**Edyty Stein**

**Ministerstwo**  
**Kultury**  
i Dziedzictwa  
Narodowego.



centrum  
historii  
zajezdnia

**Wrocław** miasto spotkań

**WROCLAW 2020**

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WROCLAW 2017

ISBN 978-83-941554-7-6

International Conference

Edith Stein - Europe And Its Identity

Wrocław, 13 - 15 October 2016

## Introduction

Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher (1768-1834), German theologian, philosopher and classical philologist used the term *personalism* (*der Personalismus*) for the first time in history in his most famous book *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter Iren Verächtern*, Berlin 1799 (*On religion: speeches to its cultured despisers*, Berlin, New York 2001) in 1799. The book *Über die Religion* was written as his personal creed and includes the following words: „Personalism and the opposite (pantheistic) way of thinking in religion.”<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher was born as a pastor’s son on 21 November 1768 in Breslau (Wrocław) in Silesia region. Therefore from the perspective of personal-ism we can say that Wrocław is a *genius loci*. In the same place Edith Stein – Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross – was born on 12 October 1891. In her autobiography entitled *Life in a Jewish family*, Edith Stein states that when she started dealing with religious issues in Göttingen, she sent a letter to Eduard Metis, President of the Humboldt Academic Association at the Wrocław University asking a question concerning „his idea of God: whether he believed in personal God.”<sup>2</sup> Metis, who was different than his companions in that „he was an orthodox and observant Jew”<sup>3</sup> answered briefly: „God is Spirit; nothing more could be said on the subject. To me, it seemed I had been handed a stone instead of bread”<sup>4</sup> – Stein observes.

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1 Cf. B. Gacka, *Personalizm europejski – European Personalism*, Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenie Ekosystem-Dziedzictwo Natury, Warsaw 2014, p. 127; Cf. F. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York 2001, p. 170.

2 Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Dislaced Carmelite, *Life in a Jewish family. Edith Stein: An Autobiography 1891-1916*, transl.by J. Ko-eppel, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 1986, p. 213.

3Ibidem, p. 212.

4Ibidem, p. 213.

# 1. European Personalism

On 10 September 2014 – for the first time in history – Bronisław Komorowski, the President of the Republic of Poland, delivered a speech in the German Bundestag (*Deutscher Bundestag*) in Berlin. In his historical address, the President said: „It is personalism that constitutes the core of European culture. Personalism is derived from Christianity which created the concept of a human being who understands him/herself as *a person*. It can be likewise derived from the tradition of the Enlightenment when it was accurately described by Immanuel Kant. What unites Europeans is their conviction about the inalienable dignity of every human being. In accord with that conviction, we must construct the whole of education and legislation, shape economic life and institutions. Centered on personalism, we should build today possibly the broadest sort of a global ‘anthropological coalition,’ which recognizes the primacy of the human being. This is the most fundamental message that should be sent from Europe and for Europe. And it is the concept of man as a person: a rational being, free, social and endowed with unlimited dignity that we should defend. We realize, and this is corroborated by history, that whenever human dignity is at risk, compromise ceases to be a value in itself.”<sup>5</sup>

Personalism is a system for discovering and understanding reality from the fact of the person. A person is the key to reality according to Borden Barker Bowne (1847-1910), the father of American Personalism. As a system, personalism means a scientific, philosophical (social-ethical) and theological movement, whose ultimate reality is found absolutely in the Divine Persons, and analogically in the angelic and human persons. Personalism emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability

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<sup>5</sup>B. Komorowski, *The speech of the President of Poland in Bundestag*, Berlin, 10 September 2014, p. 5.

of the person, as well as the communitarian dimension of the person, which is the principle, cause, goal and sense of all reality. For a person (*persona*) means an objective subsistence and a subjective subsistence in relation.

According to Joseph Ratzinger, there is no person in an absolute singular. Since the Absolute is a person, He cannot be a person in an absolute singular. What is not and cannot be in relation cannot be a person. Therefore, exceeding the „singular solitary is necessary in the concept of person.”<sup>6</sup> There is one God but He is not alone (St. Hilary), *the relational dimension* is important then. Relation is a constitutive quality of a person being a subsistence.

According to Albert Cornelius Knudson from the Bostonian School of American Personalism, personalism „represents one of the oldest and broadest currents in the history of human thought; it stands organically and structurally related to the spiritual philosophy of all the ages. It is the ripe fruit of more than two millenniums of intellectual toil, the apex of a pyramid whose base was laid by Plato and Aristotle.”<sup>7</sup>

#### a) *Panoramic view of European personalists*

If European personalism is presented from the point of view of outstanding European *personalists* and their *nations*, we can observe that in England John Henry Newman (1801-1890) used term „a method of personation” already in 1830 and he used this quite original term (*personatio*) to define the process when a person appears in reality, whereas John Grote, Associate Professor, Department of Moral Philosophy of the University of Cambridge, published his book *Exploratio Philosophica* in 1865 where personalism became a foundation of his metaphysics. Other representatives of British personalism are: H. W. Carr (1857-1931), who wrote

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, translated by Z. Włodkowska, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2006, p. 184.

<sup>7</sup> A. C. Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism*, Abingdon, New York 1927, p. 434.

*The Unique Status of Man* in London in 1928, J.M.E. McTaggart (1866-1925) and John MacMurray (1891-1976), Scottish personalist.

In France, the following are the pioneers of personalism: Descartes (1596-1650) – *Cogito, ergo sum*, M. Biran (1766-1824), F. Ravaisson (1813-1900), G. Marcel, H. L. Bergson (1859-1941), E. Mounier and J. Maritain (1882-1973). In 1903, B. Renouvier (1815-1903) published in Paris the first book entitled *Personal-ism* where he presented metaphysics of personalism, sociology of personalism and eschatology of personalism.

In Germany, F. D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) used the term „personalism” for the first time (*der Personalismus*) in *Über die Re-ligion* in 1799 acting in defense of the mystery of the Personal God against pantheism of Johann Herder. R. H. Lotze (1817-1881) published *Microcosmos* in Leipzig in 1856-1858. In 1906-1923, William Stern (1871-1938), who was a very famous German psy-chologist, published his book *Person and thing* (3 volumes) in Leipzig. The next famous scholar was Max Scheler (1874-1928) who established personalism in ethics.

In Poland, personalism has been developed in philosophy, theology and history. In his book *Person and Act* (Kraków 1969), Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (1920-2005) presented personalism in ethics, while Primate of Poland Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981) focused on personalism in social relations. The Reverend Professor Wincenty Granat (1900-1979), Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin wrote *The Christian Personalism. Theology of the Human Person*, Poznań 1985, the Reverend Professor Czesław Stanisław Bartnik (born in 1929), presented a system of the universalistic personalism in his book *Personalism* published in Lublin in 1995 and in Warsaw 2000.

Russian personalism has been developed by, among others, W. S. Solovyov (1853-1900), M. A. Berdyaev (1874-1948), in particular in his autobiography *Dream and reality*, and M. O. Lossky (1870-1965), who published *History of Russian philosophy*.

Italian personalism is represented by A. Rosmini-Serbati (1797-1855), L. Stefanini (1891-1956), Andrea Milano (1938-) and A. Pavan (1937-). J. Maritain and E. Mounier influenced Italian personalism in a very particular way.

Juan Manuel Burgos (1961-), President of the Association of Spanish and Latin American Personalists is the most famous personalist in Spain.

Pavol Mačala (1958-) of Slovakian origin prepared the original publication *Personalism of Slavs*.

### *b) terminology*

In very general terms, we can assume that *humanism* means that a human being is not an animal because he/she is provided with reason (*animal rationale*, rational being). From this perspective, Voltaire, the French Encyclopaedists and Marxists were humanists. *Anthropology* explains that human being is a *person*, therefore there are two foundations: reason (*nous*, Greek) and faith (*emuna*, Hebrew). The reason created by God is a natural foundation, and faith being a supernatural gift from God is a supernatural foundation – it means that we can rely on the Rock, not on ourselves. Finally, *personalism* is a system which tries to discover and understand reality from the fact of the person and relates to Divine Persons, angelic persons and human persons. Therefore anthropology constitutes only a part of personalism.

I am convinced that it is fully justified to define personalism of Edith Stein because her philosophical and theological contribution is associated with reality of a person and refers to the understanding of Divine Person, angelic person and human person.



## 2. Personalism of Edith Stein

In the opinion of many specialists (K. H. Lembeck, C. M. Wulf, J. H. Nota), the complete philosophical contribution of Edith Stein is associated with reality of a person and there is a main concept passing through all phases of her work and it is a notion of a person or personal «I». The metaphysics of Edith Stein reached its peak in *the philosophy of a person*, and her faith led her to *the theology of a person* that is her major focus. In her letter to Hedwig Conrad-Martius dated 13 November 1932 she wrote: „My concept of metaphysics is different anyway: metaphysics focusing on the whole reality including the revealed truth so that an approach based on philosophy and theology.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Professor Andrzej Póltawski, „disciple of Edmund Husserl, founder of phenomenology, after she accepted Catholic faith she also became an enthusiastic but not unquestioning student of Thomas Aquinas' teaching, aiming at a new synthesis of the modern thought on human being and traditional wisdom, towards philosophy of a person, *Christian personalism*”<sup>9</sup>.

In the introduction to the book written by Fr. Rafał Kazimierz Wilk OSPPE, *Człowiek-istota wezwana*, Professor Andrzej Póltawski calls Edith Stein „an outstanding representative of Christian personalism.”<sup>10</sup> Professor Póltawski admits: „we mentioned the *personalism* of E. Stein. How to understand this term? Philibert Secretan in his introduction to Edith Stein's philosophy writes: «*Personalism* means a meeting of man with his own dignity that very often he does not respect; it also means the insight of a man into his own essence, strong desire to know and un-

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. *Selbstbildnis in Briefen I*, Freiburg 2000, Brief [Letter] 230.

<sup>9</sup>R. K. Wilk, *Człowiek - istota wezwana. Antropologiczno-personalistyczne aspekty filozoficznej twórczości Edyty Stein - Św. Teresy Benedykty od Krzyża*, Paulinianum, Kraków 2003, s. 7.

<sup>10</sup>Ibidem, p. 10.

derstand himself that is specific for himself as a spiritual being; it means the capacity to absorb scientific and cultural impact that proves his spirituality; it means, in line with his religious destiny, *desire to reach goals beyond himself*».<sup>11</sup>

#### a) *Relationship with personalists*

During the course of her studies, Edith Stein had direct contact with prominent representatives of European personalism (W. Stern, M. Scheler) and at the same time she influenced famous European personalists, in particular Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II.

From 1911 to 1913, Edith Stein studied at the University of Wrocław. During four quarters of studies in Wrocław she mostly focused on psychology. In her opinion, the most interesting were the four-hour lectures of William Stern (1871-1938) of introduction to psychology. Edith remembers that „Stern’s presentation was elementary and easily understood,”<sup>12</sup> she would sit there as if she were chatting with a friend. In 1911, she studied psychology in the class of Professor Stern, and from 1911 to 1912 she attended a seminar in psychology. Moreover, in 1912, she studied forensic psychology in the class of Professor Stern and she attended in exercises in psychology. Edith observes that „Jewish descent” of Stern was an obstacle for his academic career.<sup>13</sup> During the course of her studies in Wrocław, Edith Stein joined a group of youngsters. This „«Pedagogical Group,» as they called themselves, were mostly men and women from Stern’s seminar.”<sup>14</sup> They were the future teaching staff.

In her autobiography *Life in a Jewish Family*, Edith Stein presents a detailed portrait of William Stern: „In general, our relation to our teacher was most independent. Stern represented

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11           Ibidem, p. 8; cf. Philibert Secretan, *Erkenntnis und Aufstieg. Einführung in die Philosophie von Edith Stein*, Innsbruck-Wien-Würzburg 1992, p. 44.

12           E. Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, p. 186.

13           Ibidem.

14           Ibidem, p. 192.

a distinct type of Jewish personality. In his early forties at the time, he was of average height though he seemed shorter because he walked with a slight stoop. His pale features were framed by a brown beard; his eyes were kind and alert; his expression and the tone of his voice were exceedingly mild and friendly.”<sup>15</sup>

According to many specialists (E. S. Brightman, R. T. Flewelling, W. Granat, Cz. S. Bartnik), William Stern is one of the great founders of personalism who combined value theory with the notion of person. He is considered the founder of the *personal-istic psychology*. He first dealt with experimental research in the field of psychophysics and then research on speech and thinking development in children and youth. He is an author of the intelligence quotient (IQ) concept and general intelligence theory as well as initiator of research on psychology of individualistic differences. Nevertheless, William Stern became famous primarily as a founder of *critical personalism* which it was a synthesis of his psychological and philosophical enquiries. Critical personalism has been presented by Stern in his three-volume work *Person und Sache. System des kritischen Personalismus* which was published in 1906-1923. According to William Stern, there are two streams in civilization: *naive personalism* and *impersonalism*, namely non-personalism. In response to these comments, Stern developed a *system of critical personalism*. Edith Stein reports: „Once when he appeared at a masked ball dressed in an oriental costume, he looked like *Nathan the Wise*. He had always assured us that at heart he was a philosopher (for which reason he vehemently opposed the separation of the faculties for philosophy and psychology) and that his big philosophical work «*Person und Sache*» [Person and Thing] meant more to him than any of his other achievements. Despite that, he had gone deeper and deeper into experimental psychology and owed his fame to his psychological writings which were translated into all the languages of the civilized world. His work on «Child Speech» and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem p. 197.

«Psychology of Early Childhood» were based on exact observations he made of his own children and on the careful diaries kept by his intelligent and charming wife [Clara Stern] who was his most faithful collaborator. He was extensively occupied at that time with methods for testing the intelligence; all this was in preparation for his work in occupational aptitude tests for which he later gained acceptance in Hamburg. We had strong misgivings about all these things, as well as about his general principle of «golden mean».”<sup>16</sup>

In the spring of 1913, before she left to Göttingen, Edith Stein went to professor Stern and asked him to assign her a topic of her PhD dissertation in psychology. She chose him because, based on her previous experience, she thought that he would leave her more freedom. However, she was disappointed because Stern gently and without any irritation accepted criticism of his students at all times but he remained so strongly committed to his ideas and concepts that nothing was able to confuse him. He also wanted that works of his students support his own work and it was very clear to Edith during conversation: „He received me cordially as ever and readily acquiesced to my request even though I was still exceptionally young. But what he suggested was inconceivable: to write a sequel to the paper I had presented that winter on the development of the thought process in children. In fact, he wanted it based on just such experimental interrogation as had plagued the unfortunate Mos for years.”<sup>17</sup>

After further discernment, Edith Stein realized that „it had been a mistake from the start even to think of getting a doctorate in psychology.”<sup>18</sup> During the course of her studies she came to realize that „this science was still in its infancy; it still lacked clear basic concepts; furthermore, there was no one who could establish such an essential foundation.”<sup>19</sup> All the phenomenological is-

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16        *Ibidem.*  
17        *Ibidem*, p. 221.  
18        *Ibidem*, p. 222.  
19        *Ibidem.*

sues she learned were so fascinating because „phenomenology, so far, fascinated me tremendously because it consisted precisely of such a labor of clarification and because, here, one forgets one’s own mental tools for the task at hand.”<sup>20</sup>

Edith Stein planned to study in Göttingen one semester only and she expected to take a state examination in Wrocław so she had a plan: „Before I did anything else, I would have to put my relationship with Professor Stern in order. He received a report of this semester’s developments: I had done nothing whatsoever on my assignment in psychology but had, on the contrary, immersed myself entirely in phenomenology; now it was my most earnest desire to continue working with Husserl. Stern replied most graciously: if such was my desire, then one could only advise that I get my doctorate under Husserl.”<sup>21</sup> Edith Stein went to Edmund Husserl following William Stern’s advice and she asked Husserl for a topic of her PhD dissertation. The topic was: *Zum Problem der Einfühlung (Empathy problem)*.

Max Scheler (1878-1928) was the second great personalist with whom Edith Stein was in contact and she was his student. In 1899, Max Scheler was baptized Catholic, but he left the faith only to come back to it again in 1914 – after his stay in Beuron. In 1901, Scheler probably met Husserl during a party in Jena where he worked as an associate professor. In 1902, in Halle, Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler met Hans Vaihinger who was familiar with Kant’s works.

Max Scheler became director of the new Sociological Studies Institute and was appointed to hold this position by Konrad Adenauer in 1918. At the same time he was appointed to the position of professor at the faculty of philosophy and sociology of the University of Cologne. Since 1912, Max Scheler was a lecturer in Göttingen while being a member of the Philosophical Society. Edith Stein studied in Göttingen, with most of the lectures held by professor Husserl,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 268.

from 1913 to 1915. Her autobiographical record concerning Max Scheler is as follows: „That summer the Philosophical Society chose the second major work in the current *Yearbook*, as the subject matter for our discussions. It was Max Scheler’s *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values* which has probably affected the entire intellectual world of recent decades even more than Husserl’s *Ideas*. The young phenomenologists were greatly influenced by Scheler; some, like Hildebrand and Clemens, depended more on him than on Husserl. At the time, Scheler’s personal affairs were in a very bad way. His first wife, whom he had divorced, had implicated him in a scandalous suit in Munich. In consequence of incriminating disclosures during the process, the university withdrew his faculty status. So his career as an educator had come to an end; as it had been his only steady source of income, he now depended on his writings for a livelihood. With his second wife (Märit Furtwängler), he was living in a modest furnished room in Berlin; often, he travelled [giving lectures].”<sup>22</sup> Then Edith Stein reminisces on the period of her studies in Göttingen when Scheler was her professor.

„For several weeks of each semester, the Philosophical Society invited him to Göttingen to give lectures. He was not permitted to hold lectures at the university; nor were we permitted to hold lectures at the university; nor were we permitted to announce them on the bulletin board. We could only call attention to them by word of mouth. We had to meet in the social rooms of some hotel or café. At the end of this semester Scheler came once again. At first, the lectures were scheduled for several nights a week; but, as he did not know how to allocate his time properly, there was so much material left to be crammed in that, finally, we had to meet daily. After the formal presentation was over, he would stay on for hours in the café with smaller group. I participated in these follow-up sessions only once or twice. Eager though I was to snatch at as much pertinent stimulation as I possibly could, an element was present here which repelled me:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 258.

the tone used when Husserl was mentioned. Of course, Scheler was also one who keenly opposed reverting to idealism; and his comments were almost condescending; thereupon some of the young men allowed themselves a note of irony which infuriated me since it smacked of disrespect and ingratitude. Relations between Husserl and Scheler were not entirely placid. Scheler availed himself of every opportunity to insist he was not one of Husserl's disciples but that, instead, he had discovered the phenomenological method for himself. Although he had never been in any of Husserl's classes, Husserl was convinced of Scheler's dependency. They had known one another for years. When Husserl was still a privatdozent in Halle, Scheler lived nearby in Jena; they often met for a lively exchange of ideas. Everyone who is acquainted with Scheler, or who has merely given his writings a careful reading, knows how apt he was to pick up suggestions from others. Ideas slipped into his mind and grew there while he himself was totally unaware of his having been influenced. He could say with a good conscience that all was his own property. Added to this competition for priority was Husserl's serious concern regarding his students. He took great pains to educate us to rigorous objectivity and thoroughness, to a «radical intellectual honesty». In contrast, Scheler's practice of scattering about ingenious suggestions without pursuing them systematically had something dazzling and seductive about it. Moreover, he chose topics of vital personal importance to his young listeners, who, consequently, were easily affected by them. Husserl, on the other hand, addressed sober, abstract matters. However, at that time in Göttingen, despite such tensions, their association was still mutually friendly.”<sup>23</sup>

Max Scheler is famous for his personalism of values, therefore personalism of Scheler is often called *ethical personalism*. According to Scheler, *person* is present in every *act*, but person cannot be reduced to any act. Who is a person could be deter-

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23 Ibidem, p. 258-259.

mined only by an insight concerning values, and the biggest value is love, therefore direct and immediate capture of another human being as a person is possible in the act of love and through the act of love. When we love another person, from the ethical point of view we are called to love in a more complete way, more deeply and to the highest degree. The deeper the value is, the more personal the calling. The deeper and the more personal the value is, the stronger the calling to act is.<sup>24</sup>

Max Scheler was a genius according to Edith Stein. „One’s first impression of Scheler was fascination. In no other person have I ever encountered the «phenomenon of genius» so clearly. The light of a more exalted world shone from his large blue eyes. His features were handsome and noble; still, life had left some devastating traces in his face. Betty Heymann said he reminded her of the picture of Dorian Gray: that mysterious portrait on which the dissolute life of the original painted its distorting lines, while the person preserved the handsome features of his youth. Scheler spoke with great insistence, indeed with dramatic liveliness. Words he was particularly fond of (for example «*pure Washeit*» [pure whatness]) were spoken with devotion and tenderness. When expressing disagreement with presumed opponents, he used a contemptuous tone. At that particular time he was treating the questions which were the theme of his recently published book *Phenomenology and Theory of the Feelings of Sympathy*. These had special significance for me as I was just then beginning to occupy myself with the problem of «empathy».

In real life situations – Edith Stein observes – Scheler was as helpless as a child. On one occasion I saw him in the checkroom of a café standing in bewilderment before a row of hats; he did not know which was his.

«At the moment, you’re missing your wife, aren’t you?» I asked with a smile.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. Gacka, *Personalizm europejski – European Personalism*, p. 159.



He nodded in agreement. At such times it was impossible to be angry with him, not even when he did things one would condemn in other persons. Even the victims of his aberrations tended to come to his defense.”<sup>25</sup>

Finally, Edith Stein refers to the fact that Scheler combines *fides et ratio* in a human person. „His influence in those years affected me, as it did many others, far beyond the sphere of philosophy. I do not know in which year Scheler returned to the Catholic Church [1914]. It could not have been long before I met him. In any case, he was quite full of Catholic ideas at the time and employed all the brilliance of his spirit and his eloquence to plead them. This was my first encounter with this hitherto totally unknown world. It did not lead me as yet to the Faith. But it did open for me a region of «phenomena» which I could then no longer bypass blindly. With good reason we were repeatedly enjoined to observe all things without prejudice, to discard all possible «blinders». The barriers of rationalistic prejudices with which I had unwittingly grown up fell, and the world of faith unfolded before me. Persons with whom I associated daily, whom I esteemed and admired, lived in it. At the least, they deserved my giving it some serious reflection. For the time being, I did not embark on a systematic investigation of the questions of faith, I was far too busy with other matters. I was content to accept without resistance the stimuli coming from my surroundings, and so, almost without noticing it, became gradually transformed.”<sup>26</sup>

When describing the topic of her PhD dissertation in Göttingen and her PhD examination in Freiburg from the perspective of phenomenological and relational personalism, Edith Stein wrote: „In his course on nature and spirit, Husserl had said that an objective outer world could only be experienced intersubjectively, i.e., through a plurality of perceiving individuals who relate in a mutual exchange of information. Accordingly, an experience of other individuals is a prerequisite. To the experience, an application

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<sup>25</sup> E. Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family*, p. 259-260.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 260-261.

of the work of Theodor Lipps, Husserl gave the name *Einfühlung* [Empathy]. What it consists of, however, he nowhere detailed.”<sup>27</sup>

In the first part of her PhD dissertation, based on some fragments of Husserl’s lectures, Edith Stein considers the act of „empathy” [*Einfühlung*] as a specific act of perception. Then she writes in the spirit of personalism: „After that, however, I went on to something which was personally close to my heart and which continually occupied me anew in all later works: the constitution of the human person. In connection with my original work, re-search along this line was necessary to show how the compre-hension of mental associations differs from the simple percep-tion of psychic conditions. Max Scheler’s lectures and writings, as well as the works of Wilhelm Dilthey, were of the utmost im-portance to me in connection with these questions. Following up on the voluminous literature on empathy which I had to work through, I added several chapters on empathy in the social, ethi-cal, and aesthetic areas. Later, I decided against having these sec-tions printed along with the dissertation.”<sup>28</sup>

Edith Stein defended her PhD dissertation in Freiburg in 1916. Lectures and papers of Max Scheler, personalist, influenced Edith Stein’s phenomenological personalism in a very significant way.

### *b) notion of person*

Around 1917, Edith Stein wrote a paper concerning the ontic structure of person (*die ontische Struktur der Person*). In her theo-logical anthropology, Edith Stein states that there is a dual mean-ing of the hypostatic union, i.e. a unification of Divine Nature and human nature in the Person of the Word: first of all trying with precision to understand and protect against adulteration the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, „a notion of per-son has been developed therefore it is possible to answer a ques-tion concerning the ontic structure of human being and the pre-

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27            *Ibidem*, p. 269.

28            *Ibidem*, p. 397.

Christian philosophy was unable to answer this question. Then, from the unity of Divinity and humanity in the Person of Christ comes out that humanity obtained Divine Head in Christ and Divine life,"<sup>29</sup> as in sacrificial prayers of the Holy Mass we ask to „be able to obtain participation in Divinity of the One who came down in order to participate in our humanity” (Roman Missal).

Definitions explain unification of both natures in one *subsistence* and *person*. „Subsistence” refers to Greek „hypostasis”. Both the Greek and Latin words have a double meaning. Firstly, the meaning is „to stand under” (*subsistere*), and it means to stand and rest in myself, but carry and possess something else – it describes a specific way of being. Moreover, they mean something that is in that way, something „standing under” (*subsistens, suppositum*), something that stands and rests in itself but carries and possesses in itself something else. Thus subsisting belongs to hypostatic being. Characteristic or activity – „afterthought” – they are not included in themselves but in something different (they do not „subsist” but „inher”): their premise is something subsisting. A specific part of the whole that is able to exist only as the whole (like members of a single body), does not subsist either. Anyway, we cannot just put an equal sign between the „substance” and „something subsisting” without any further clarification. If „substance” is something general, e.g. a substance of human being could be understood as nature or essence of human being, everything that defines a human being as human being – the substance does not subsist. The nature of human being does not exist as a single being but it exists in a specific human being. The hypostasis is an individual possessor and carrier of nature.<sup>30</sup>

„Every individual is hypostasis, i.e. autonomous, individual possessor of its nature. Person is another kind of hypostasis: its nature is a spiritual nature, aware and free therefore this kind

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<sup>29</sup> E. Stein, *Czym jest człowiek? Antropologia teologiczna* [Who is human being? Theological anthropology] transl. by G. Sowiński, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, Kraków 2012, p. 169-170.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 170.

of nature is very specific. Person knows about his or her nature and therefore is able to enjoy it because the person's existence is a conscious one; and person is able to use his or her nature because the person is free. This very specific characteristic of spiritual nature transforms a person into *hypostasis cum dignitate*, [i.e. hypostasis that is characterized by dignity]. And because person is aware and free therefore he or she has right to his or her own nature; person cannot be used as a mean to achieve an objective goal – contrary to impersonal beings. Since both awareness and freedom of a person are limited, therefore the perfect person is only a being totally free and aware: God.”<sup>31</sup>

### – *understanding of Divine Person*

According to Edith Stein, „the only distinctions among the Divine Persons concern their relations to one another, relations which are explained by the different manner of their procession. Thus, the Father is called *Father* because everything proceeds from him, while he proceeds from no one and nothing else. The Son is called *Son*, because he proceeds from the Father. And «he is called the *Word of the Father* because he proceeds from the Father as an effect or act of the intellect, as a conception of the spirit, and this latter name is also applied to the word that is in-wardly produced by the intellect in us» (*Catechismus Catholicus*, Rome 1933). The third Person is called the *Holy Spirit* «because this person proceeds from the Father through the Son in a single spiration in the manner or mode of love, and it is this first and highest love which moves and guides hearts to a sanctity which is essentially love for God» (CC).”<sup>32</sup>

Using the Trinitarian theology, E. Stein asks: „Can the persons and their distinct personal being be separated from the divine nature if nature and being are inseparable? As far as I can

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31 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 172.

32E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being. An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, transl. by K. F. Reinhardt, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. 2002, p. 419.

see, the only solution to this problem is to regard the *being in the three persons as essential being.*"<sup>33</sup>

E. Stein explains the multiplicity of Divine Persons by the fact that God is love. Love is a free act when 'I' gives oneself to 'you' in order to be unity in 'we.' God, being a spirit, is transparent for Himself and produces his own „image” that has belonged to His being for centuries and in this „image” He can see Himself in Himself – the Son who is an equal being, called the Wisdom or the Word. God is love therefore the „image” that was born by God is love as well. The reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son is a dedication in love and unity in love. Love is something that is the most free of all beings that exist; offering of oneself as an act of a being in possession of itself, i.e. *person*. In God's case, it is an act of a person who does not exist and love in the same way as we do but He is love and only love and this means that His existence is love. Therefore God's love must be a person: *Person of love*. When Father and Son love each other, their dedication to each other is a free act of a Person of love.

Love is *life* in the highest perfection; it is an existence dedicating itself at all times and it is never reduced, it is perpetually fertile. Therefore the Holy Spirit is a *gift*: not only mutual dedication of Divine Persons but Divinity gives itself „externally”; all God's gifts for creation are included in It.<sup>34</sup> „God's inner life is the perfectly free, immutable and eternal mutual love among the Divine Persons, independent of all created things and beings. And what the Divine Persons give to each other is one, eternal, and infinite nature and being, wholly encompassing each of them separately and all of them together. This nature and being the Father gives from eternity [eternally] to the Son by generating him, and from this gift proceeds [eternally], as the fruit of mutual love, the Holy Spirit. The being of the second and third persons is thus a received being and yet – unlike created

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 111.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. ibidem, p. 419-420.

being – no newly originating being. Rather, it is the *one* divine being, simultaneously given and received, since the giving and receiving pertain to divine being as such.”<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, Edith Stein writes that „the *Eternal Word* (the Logos), as that *unity of meaning* which, as the archetype of all finite units of meaning, encompasses the total plenitude of meaning [*alle Sinnesfülle*]. The church designates in her creed the Holy Spirit as the author of life, as the „vivifier” or „live-giver” (*vivificans*). Ultimately, however, only the one who does not receive life but is «life in person» can vivify or give life. In the *Holy Spirit* we thus see the divine fullness of life.

It need hardly be emphasized that this statement does not imply a partition or division of the divine essence. The one essence owned in common by all the Divine Persons is life and love, wisdom and power. Aside from the relations of the three Persons to one pertain to all of them. And if, within the invisible unity of God, we distinguish certain *attributes* and ascribe some of them to this person and others to that person, we are thereby merely attempting to make the incomprehensible intelligible. And yet what the creaturely image reveals to us of the divine archetype serves to make us see creaturely being in a new light.”<sup>36</sup>

„God, who molds his life in absolute freedom and who is light through and through (from whom nothing is hidden), must be a person in the most eminent sense. And because personal life is going out of oneself and simultaneously being and abiding within oneself, and because both of these characteristics pertain to the nature of spirit, personal being must always denote spir-itual being,”<sup>37</sup> emphasizes Stein.

Finally Edith Stein says that „Divine being-a-person is the archetype or paragon [*Urbild*] of all finite being-persons. [...]. The

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35            Ibidem, p. 351.

36            Ibidem, p. 418-419.

37            Ibidem, p. 362.

Three Persons have their entire essence or nature in common, so that there remains only the diversity of the Persons as such. There is thus a perfect unity of the we, such as can never be attained by any community of finite persons. And there is yet within that unity a separateness of the I [*Ich*] and Thou [*Du*] without which no we [*Wir*] is ever possible.”<sup>38</sup>

### – *understanding of angelic person*

While contemplating the reflection of the Holy Trinity in creation, Edith Stein presents created pure spirits, angelic persons. „To the pure spirituality of angels – Stein observes – there corresponds a less inhibited freedom and more unlimited being-person [*Personsein*] than are found in human beings. Pure spirits are not absolutely and unconditionally free, since they have received their being and their delimited nature as gifts. And they are unable by their own power to break through the boundaries imposed thereby. But they are masters of their own being in the sense that their being is at their free disposal and that they can completely and unreservedly engage in the kind of life for which they were created. In this realm there are no natural events that follow rigid laws which leave no room for free action, such as are found in the corporeal world. Life in its totality is here equivalent to freedom of action and the responsibility of personal decision. Angels know of only one alternative, for or against God, and there is no room for sliding into estrangement and separation additional light falls on that unique and irrevocable decision of angels which determined their eternal destiny.”<sup>39</sup>

Then she says that *person* is a carrier in the best possible meaning because person not only has its own essence but „possesses” it in a very specific sense, i.e. person is a master of its own self and is free to make any decision regarding its own self. „The being-persons of pure spirits is a purer fulfillment of the idea of

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38 Ibidem, p. 349-350.

39 Ibidem, p. 407-408.

personality because there is nothing in their being that eludes this power of free self-mastery.”<sup>40</sup>

Edith Stein writes that heavenly beings are called angels, i.e.: messengers because they are first enlightened by God and then they transfer revelations we are going to obtain.

### – *understanding of human person*

In her work *Finite and Eternal Being (Endliches und Ewiges Sein)*, Edith Stein presented definition of *human person*: „The human person carries and encloses «its» body and «its» soul, but it is at the same time carried and enclosed by both.”<sup>41</sup>

Only from the perspective of this notion of person can we obtain light that enlightens specific human existence. Words ‘I’ and ‘my’ express specific hypostatic existence of a person. „I have body and soul” – this formula makes it possible to distinguish hy-postasis and nature.

According to Edith Stein, every human being, at every stage of his/her development, is a person. Human soul, constituting human existence, is everywhere where human being is and personal structure – personal ‘I’ – is present everywhere where human soul is therefore every single person is a personal being from the first moment of existence. Edith Stein refers also to the teaching of the Catholic Church that God directly creates every human soul but also it refers to the content of dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary saying that Blessed Virgin Mary at the moment of her conception was already preserved from the stain of original sin. In the light of this truth it is clear that unification of the soul and body happens at the moment of conception. These are Edith Stein’s words: „If it was possible that the Most Blessed Virgin at the moment of her conception was preserved from the stain of original sin, it would seem that the unification

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40            Ibidem, p. 408.

41            Ibidem, p. 364.



of the soul with the body and the beginning of human existence must be relegated to this particular moment.”<sup>42</sup>

Edith Stein understands a *human person* as a conscious and free ‘I.’ „We have defined the *person* as a conscious and free I. This I is *free* because it determines its life out of its own self in the form of *free acts*. Free acts thus constitute the primary sovereign dominion of the person. But because by its actions the person exerts a formative influence on body and soul, the entire realm of «human nature» pertains to the proper dominion of the person. And because by its soul-body [*seelisch-leibliches*] efficacy, the person also exerts its influence on the surrounding world, its dominion also extends to the world, which it may justly claim a «mine».

Whatever the person does freely and consciously is ego-life, but person draws their ego-life out of some greater or lesser depth. The resolve to take a walk, for example, derives from a layer that is much closer to the surface than a decision that concerns the choice of a vocation. This depth is the depth of the soul which comes «alive» and becomes luminous in the ego-life, but before its coming alive it was hidden, and it remains mysterious despite this luminosity. What human beings are «capable of doing» as free persons they learn only by doing it or, perhaps, in anticipation, when they meet with a specific *demand*.”<sup>43</sup>

In Edith Stein’s opinion, person is not able to live as a *pure* ‘I’. She lives in the fullness of the essence that shines when living and not dreaming but it can never be completely exposed or contained. She carries this fullness and at the same time she is carried by it as if it was her dark substrate. „The person cannot live as a *pure ego*. It sustains its life out of that fullness of the essence [*Wesensülle*] which is resplendent in the awareness of life, without ever being fully illumined or fully mastered. The person carries this fullness and is simultaneously carried or sustained by this dark and deep ground.

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42 Ibidem, p. 516.

43 Ibidem, p. 376.

This latter consideration reveals to us the peculiar nature of the human person. We recognize now what it has in common with the being a person of God and pure spirits and wherein it differs. The human person resembles pure spirits in its free and conscious mode of life, a life which encompasses and carries its own fullness, but it lags behind them because it arises from and is carried by a dark ground and is incapable of personally forming, illumining, and sovereignly governing the totality of its «self». The human person possesses, on the other hand, a certain ontological prerogative (in comparison with created pure spirits) by virtue of its own «depth». And this means that its God-likeness differs from that of pure spirits.”<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

If we compare the Personalism of Edith Stein to the European Personalism in order to summarize we can say that:

1) firstly – it is *Phenomenological Personalism* which was exactly pointed out by Professor Andrzej Póltawski on April 18, 1994 in Edith Stein Society in Wrocław (compare A. Póltawski, *Personalizm fenomenologiczny: Edith Stein i Karol Wojtyła*, „Kwartalnik Filozoficzny”, vol. XXIII 1 (1995), p. 33-44);

2) secondly – it is *Relational Personalism* which can be seen clearly in philosophical and theological anthropology of Edith Stein, in particular in her work *Finite and Eternal Being*, translated by Kurt F. Reinhardt, Washington D.C.: ICS Publications Institute of Carmelite Studies 2002. According to Edith Stein’s method, it is not possible to derive a human person either from a being only or from perception but mostly from a *reference*, relationship (Saint Thomas, Saint Augustine and E. Husserl).

3) thirdly – it is a *Judeo-Christian Personalism* which is proven by Edith Stein’s relationship with Jewish persona-

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 377.

list (W. Stern) and with other Jewish scholars who were baptized and became Christians (E. Husserl, M. Scheler) and R. Ingarden, Catholic phenomenologist.

Moreover, Edith Stein familiarized herself with works of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), an English personalist who was referred to by John Paul II, the Pope who used to encourage to take advantage of Newman genius (Stein's translation of Newman's book *The Idea of a University* as well as translation from the English language and publication of his letters and diaries). Finally in her work *Finite and Eternal Being*, Edith Stein presents Christian philosophy following Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), an outstanding French personalist, also referring to Gabriel Marcel.

According to Fr. Jan Krokos, Edith Stein's philosophy is totally personalistic in its basic source, namely philosophical entity having nature of wisdom. It means that in Edith Stein's opinion, philosophy and theology have not reached the Absolute status but there was servant relationship, first towards her person and then towards other persons (compare J. Krokos, *Edyta Stein – od fenomenologii do Tomasza*, in: J. Piecuch, *Edyta Stein – filozof i świadek epoki*, Opole 1997, p. 47, 31-50).

According to John Paul II, the fruitful relationship between philosophy and the Word of God has been proven by courageous explorations undertaken by original thinkers and among those we need to list the following: John Henry Newman, Antonio Rosmini, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Edith Stein in the Western world and Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel A. Florensky, Petr J. Chaadaev, Vladimir N. Lossky in the Eastern world. „We should wish ourselves that now and in the future there are followers and researchers of this enormous philosophic-theological tradition for the benefit of the Church and mankind” (*Fides et ratio*, 74).

In his book *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, John Paul II writes that in Cracow he was particularly interested in Edith Stein, an extraordinary person because of her life story as well as her philosophy:

„Born into a Jewish family in Wroclaw, she discovered Christ, was baptized and entered the Carmelite convent, spent some time in the Netherlands, but was deported from there to Auschwitz by the Nazis. She died in a gas chamber and her mortal remains were burned in a crematorium. She had studied with Husserl and had been a col-league of the Polish philosopher Ingarden. I had the joy of beatifying her in Cologne and then canonizing her in Rome. I also proclaimed Edith Stein, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, as co-patron of Europe, together with Saint Bridget of Sweden and Saint Catherine of Siena: three women alongside the three male patrons: Cyril, Methodius, and Benedict.

I was interested in her philosophy. I read her writings, especially *Endliches und Ewiges Sein (Finite and Eternal Being)*, but what fascinated me most was her extraordinary life and her tragic destiny, intertwined with that of millions of other defenseless victims of our era. A disciple of Edmund Husserl, an impassioned seeker after truth, an enclosed nun, a victim of Hitler's regime: hers is a truly unique human story" (compare John Paul II, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, transl. by Walter Zięmba, New York, N.Y.: Warner Books 2004, p. 90-91).

According to John Paul II, Edith Stein – *saint martyr* who followed the Lamb (compare to *The Book of Revelation* 14, 4), is the *foundation of a new world, a new Europe and a new civilization* (compare John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, edited by Vittorio Messori, transl. by Alfred A. Knopf, London: Jonathan Cape 1994, p. 177).