

## **The Human Person: Genealogy and Biography**

Introduction to Convention A.  
“The Human Person: Genealogy and Biography”,  
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In Christianity, personal being is the center of being. Christianity is the interpretation of the entire reality, of the *Gesamtwirklichkeit*, in such a way that personal being is primordial and primary.

I.

There is no religion or philosophy in history and in the present in which personal being plays a role more central. In Christianity, personal being is not only the unlikely consummation of the impersonal. It is not the unlikely but somehow realized highest stage of the evolution or development of the impersonal. Rather, reality has to be understood by starting from the primordial and primary personal being. Impersonal being is the somewhat derivative and incomplete mode of personal being. This is the profound difference between the Christian personalist and the evolutionist impersonalist ontology. In the debate between these two ontologies, it is not the existence of evolutionary processes but the primacy of personal over impersonal being that is at stake. The point of disagreement between evolutionism and personalism is not whether there is and has been some evolution - this can clearly be granted by personalism. It cannot be granted, however, that personal being is only the accidental state of the nonliving and impersonal. For Christianity, personal being is the original and substantive state of being.

The personalism of Christianity does not only consist in the ontology of an eternally personal origin – this personalism of its idea of God it shares

with Judaism and Islam. The personalism of Christianity is founded in the Trinitarian concept of God's personal being, in the idea of a personal creation, and in the idea of an incarnation in full person. The basic idea of Christianity is that being as such is the revelation or the coming forth of personal being, the *Offenbarung* as the Germans say, the becoming revealed and the becoming apparent to be perceived by oneself and by others of the personal God and of the personal human being.

## II.

I shall try to approach the problem of the human personal being from the idea that personality is not, but reveals its being. Personal being is not like other being only being like a stone is. Rather, personal being reveals itself. Jakob Böhme is to be regarded as a founder of the idea that revelation or to reveal one-self is the fundamental category of ontology and not only of theology. He subsumes God's trinitarian self-manifestation, God's becoming apparent in the creation as creator and God's self-revelation in the incarnation in Christ in the one concept of revelation or of becoming apparent. Böhme makes revelation the central concept of the theory of God' internal life, of ontology as well as of the theory of history. He develops the theory of the total reality as the theory of God's self-revelation, *Selbstoffenbarung Gottes*. Reality is the self-revelation of personal being. Schelling and Baader followed Böhme in their "philosophies of revelation". Böhme's philosophical-theological narration of being as the self-revelation of God's personal being spans from God's eternal self-revelation to and in himself in the trinity and from his revelation as creator in the creation to his revelation as savior in the incarnation.

The center of Böhme's thinking is the *Mysterium Magnum*, the revelation of the hidden to the apparent God. This self-revelation of God's personal being is called by Böhme: „the divine revelation or the divine becoming apparent, *die göttliche Offenbarung*<sup>1</sup>: God distinguishes

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<sup>1</sup> The *Mysterium Magnum* is the eternal transition of the hidden to the apparent God in God himself „ or as one would like it: the divine revelation (*Offenbarung*). JAKOB BOEHME: *Von der Gnadenwahl (Of the Choice by Grace)* (1623) 2, 21. Cf. for Böhme, Schelling and Baader also P. KOSLOWSKI: *Philosophien der Offenbarung. Antiker Gnostizismus, Franz von Baader, Schelling (Philosophies of*

himself in himself as father, as son and as spirit. In this trinity of the divine persons, God's being is apparent as eternally accomplished self. Schelling followed Böhme in the centrality of the idea of revelation for a theory of personal being or personality. The principle of Schelling's late philosophy, of his *Philosophy of the Revelation*, are the several meanings of the concept of revelation which we already encountered in Jakob Böhme. Revelation does not only mean that somebody declares something up to now hidden through his or her word and reveals something up to now hidden by teaching. Rather, revelation as personal self-revelation means firstly that a person becomes apparent to him- or herself in self-consciousness and secondly that someone either becomes apparent through acts of self-revelation and/or through the revelation in his or her work. In relation to God, the several meanings of revelation of personal being imply that God does not only reveal something hidden before in the revelation through his word or teaching, but that God becomes apparent in his internal self-manifestation of the trinity, that God manifests himself as the creator in the creation, in his work, and that God becomes apparent in history in the actions of his divine incarnation. The broadened concept of revelation contains three elements: first, personal beings become conscious of themselves in the process of self-consciousness, secondly, they manifest themselves as producers in their work, and thirdly, they reveal their self to others in their free acts.

The late Schelling emphasizes these three meanings of the revelation or becoming apparent of personal being. God manifests himself in himself, reveals himself as creator in the work of nature and history, and he reveals himself in the special revelation of the biblical history and of the incarnation. The biblical history or the revelation of the Old and New Testament is for Schelling a revelation through God's deeds, through their character as historical facts caused by deeds.

### III.

According to Tertullian, we know, that God is begotten by God and the human being begotten by the human, however the human being is not begotten by God or God by the human being. The theory of the equality

of substance, homo-usia, of God and the human being is rejected by Christian theology as pantheism in which a unity of God and humanity is assumed. God's son is homo-usios with God, not the human being. The son is also not created as the creation is made but begotten. God's personal being does not become personal through the process of creation but is eternally personal in the Trinitarian life. There is an analogy of personal being between God and the human being, an *analogia entis*, an *analogia entis personalis*, I might add. There is an analogy and not an identity of being between God and the human. The conclusion from the absolute personal being to the finite personal being is only possible by analogy, *per analogiam*, not as identity of qualities, not *per identitatem*.

#### IV.

The sections of Convention A. "The Human Person: Genealogy and Biography" respond with their wealth of topics and ideas to the richness of the features that accompany the becoming apparent and real of personal being. These sections reflect the "genitus non factus" of personal being in investigating the fact that the human person, the personal being, is generated and born, and not made, in bioethics and the life de-terminations. They study the processes of human self-consciousness and memoria. They discuss the human rights that are derived from being born and being conscious. They debate the relationship between the metaphysics of being and the anthropology of personal being. They investigate into the mystery of God's revelation in the incarnation and its linking of the mystery of God with the mystery of humankind.

Genealogy and biography point to two features of human life, the becoming of the species in phylogenetic and ontogenetic respect, and the becoming of the person in its biographical dimension. Genealogy means the history of humankind, the process of its becoming humankind. Into this process of the species our personal life is intertwined.

Biography points to a distinction which already Aristotle has introduced to philosophy, the distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, life and leading a life. We share with the animal world the features of biological life, metabolism, movement, perception, but we transcend it in that we

not only live our life but lead our life. We consciously try to give our life direction, meaning, and destiny.

It is to be hoped that the anthropological and the theological reflection will stimulate each other in a deeper understanding of the person, of the primordially and primacy of personal over impersonal being.