

Personhood and personalism: Perspectives on the metaphysics of the person for the Digital Age

Constantin C. Lupaşcu*

Abstract: This article examines the ontological and ethical transformations of human subjectivity under the impact of expanding digital technologies. Structurally, it is divided into two thematic parts. The first explores the development of personalist philosophy by establishing its historical foundations through key milestones in Western thought. It traces the genealogy of the person, charting its evolution from the ancient Greek theatrical mask and the Roman institutionalization of identity to the moral philosophy of Marcus Tullius Cicero. Moving onward, it then follows this trajectory through patristic theological redefinitions, Boethius's formulation of the person as a rational substance, Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, which endows it with the highest dignity, and Max Scheler's phenomenological analysis of affectivity, concluding with the post-war decline in the value of human personhood. The second part turns to identity in the virtual space, examining algorithmic determinism and technologies capable of behaviourally simulating specific persons, whether living or deceased. It addresses the dangerous depersonalization of the digital realm and argues that the rise of automated non-human agents could prove the "Dead Internet Theory" a reality by creating an environment devoid of authentic human presence. Ultimately, the study considers the future of personhood in the age of algorithms, arguing that while technology can reproduce personality with ever greater fidelity, it cannot reproduce the person. And it is precisely this distinction that constitutes the final—and most important—refuge of personalism.

Keywords: person, personhood, personalism, depersonalization, digital identity

* Constantin C. Lupaşcu (✉)

Corresponding Member, The British Institute of Persian Studies, London, United Kingdom

e-mail: c.c.lupascu@gmail.com

Person, personhood, personalism: A genealogical excursus

Although this is often the case, the modernity of personalism must not be confused with the antiquity of the problem from which it arose. A philosophy of the human person can be encountered, albeit sporadically and in forms very different from those assumed by its contemporary incarnation, much earlier—in ancient Greek philosophy, in Roman law, and, above all, in Christian theology. It was through these successive transformations, and later through the metaphysical upheavals of German idealism and the social and spiritual crises of modernity, that the question of the person gradually acquired the contours of a philosophical doctrine in its own right. The term, therefore, is modern, but the question is not.

The personalist movement did not emerge from a single philosophical school, nor can its origins be clearly traced to one intellectual tradition or another. Rather, it took shape gradually and most definitively towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as a response to the various forms of depersonalization brought about by accelerated industrialisation and the increasingly impersonal structures of social life that it entailed. The rise of the industrial order, together with the growing authority of positivism, the emergence of collectivist ideologies, and the reduction of human existence to economic and biological categories, compelled philosophy to reconsider a question that modernity had by no means rendered obsolete: What, precisely, is a person?

The Greek word πρόσωπον (*prósōpon*) provides us with one of the earliest points of departure for this genealogy. The etymology of the word is habitually derived from πρὸς (*pros*), meaning “towards” or “before” something, and ὤψ (*ōps*), “eye”, or that which is laid bare before the eyes (Beekes 2010, s.v. “πρόσωπον”). Its semantic field could thus denote a face, someone’s outward appearance or countenance, the façade of a building, as well as a mask worn by an actor or the role they played on the stage (Liddell and Scott 1940, s.v. “πρόσωπον”). Πρόσωπον is therefore, from its origins, already marked by the paradox that would prove divisive for the later philosophy of the person, between that which appears before another and that which stands behind it.

One of its earliest recorded uses can be found in Homer (*Iliad* 7.212; *Odyssey* 8.85). It subsequently entered Greek philosophy from poetry, appearing in the works of Xenophon (*Anabasis* 2.6.11; *Agesilaus* 1.13; *De Re Equestri* 5.4; *Cynegeticus* 4.2), Plato (*Phaedo*

117b; *Politicus* 257d; *Symposium* 211a; *Phaedrus* 253e; *Alcibiades I* 130e, 133a; *Timaeus* 45c), and Aristotle (*Historia Animalium* 1.1; *De Caelo* 3.4.302b). All four employed πρόσωπον in a rather physiognomic sense, associating the attributes of the soul with those of the body, as is evident from the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *Physiognomonica* (1.1–2.1). In Plato, however, the inquiry into one's personality is pursued through other terms used to describe the character and inner constitution of the human being, among them ἦθος (*ēthos*) (*De Republica* 2.375c, 9.577a), εἶδος (*eidos*) (*Rep.* 4.435a–e; *Phdr.* 271a–d), ψυχή (*psychē*) (*Rep.* 1.345b, 1.353d, 4.439d–e, 8.544e; *Phdr.* 246a–e; *Gorgias* 524a–525a), and τρόπος (*tropos*) (*Rep.* 8.544d). Most importantly, however, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle (1449a–b) discusses the concept within theatrical theory, describing the figures on stage and the manner in which their masks determine their character. He also makes another particularly important observation in his *History of Animals* (2.1), whereas his predecessors had not concerned themselves with this distinction, and nor did Aristotle himself always observe it, despite the fact that many of the organs are analogous, only human beings possess πρόσωπον, since one cannot properly speak of a face in the case of animals or inanimate objects (*Hist. An.* 1.8).

From here we arrive at the Romans, where the Latin *persona* would inherit virtually all the functions of the Greek πρόσωπον while adding several new, specifically juridical applications to it. There is, however, a problem with assuming that *persona* developed directly from πρόσωπον. Three hypotheses have been proposed concerning its origins: 1) that it was a borrowing from Greek; 2) that it was a word of Etruscan origin, although the Etruscans in turn may have adopted it from the Greeks as well; and 3) that it was a Latin compound derived from the acoustic root *sonō*, “to make a noise, sound”, and *per*, meaning “through”, hence “to sound through”, as in the voice that is heard (Lewis and Short 1879, s.v. “persona”; Ernout and Meillet 2001, s.v. “persona”). The latter was the explanation given by the Romans themselves (Boethius, *Contra Evtychen et Nestorivm* 3.9–13). The Greek hypothesis, however, has long since been disproved, not least by the fact that *persona*, unlike πρόσωπον, never carried the meaning of the anatomical “face” (Ernout and Meillet 2001, s.v. “persona”). Nevertheless, it was its association with the theatrical mask that exercised the most enduring influence upon the history of the concept.

Despite its disputed etymology, whatever the precise origins of the word may have been, its semantic development gradually led *persona* to denote the self, one's character and social role, and eventually the distinctive individuality and moral standing of a human subject. Its range thus records, in a rather compressed form, a shift from appearance towards identity, from the role assumed before others towards the interiority of the individual who assumes it. It would subsequently become the pre-eminent term through which the philosophy of the person was to be rendered in the Western world.

If the Greeks valued the metaphorical, almost kenning-like dimensions of πρόσωπον, the Romans, whom we may regard as jurists par excellence, assumed this legalistic bent in order to afford *persona* a greater clarity. The revolution here consisted in what might be called “the legalization of identity”, the transformation of what had been a vague and often abstract notion into an institution of the state. For them, personhood was not simply a given. According to the *Institutes* (1.8) of the classical Roman jurist Gaius, Roman law distinguished between *personae* (persons), *res* (things), and *actiones* (actions). Being born a human did not automatically entail legal “personhood”. An individual attained personhood when they were awarded a “role”, when they acquired a “voice”, to continue the theatrical allegory, within Roman society, and above all upon the “political stage”, or at least a presence—even a silent one, since in theatre there is also the recognised role of a *persona muta* (silent character). To this public *persona* were subsequently attached the names, rights, and responsibilities of the individual, together with the dignities that accompanied it, first as a ritual rite of passage and later as a juridical formality (Mauss 1985, 14–17). This is a tradition that continues, in various forms, to be recognised in most societies today, where, alongside one's biological identity, one acquires a legal personality immediately upon birth. Although this did not automatically confer the same legal standing, nor ensure equal rights for all, as was the case with slaves, for example.

Under *ius naturale* (natural law), all human beings were recognised as persons, however, under man-made *ius civile* (civil law), a slave was treated as *res* (property) rather than as a legal person. Gaius (*Inst.* 1.9) himself refers to both *liberi* (freemen) and *servi* (slaves) as persons, but continues to regard the serviles as *res* (Ibid, 2.13, 2.14a). This is hardly paradoxical if we consider that modern examples of the same contradiction are not difficult to find, as in the pre-Civil War

United States, where the *Declaration of Independence* of 1776, although not a legally binding document, proclaimed as a self-evident truth “that all men are created equal” and that they possessed unalienable rights, among them liberty—a claim rendered manifestly false by the history of slavery in that country.

Roman law, however, did not operate according to a strict binary of person and non-person, but rather along a spectrum of *caput* (legal capacity). A full person was *sui iuris* (in one’s own right) independent, while all others were in a certain form of dependency, either upon others or upon their masters. And just as one could attain personhood, so too could one lose it, either in part or altogether. Beyond slaves, there existed a veritable bestiary of juridical gradients: those who had lost, or never acquired, the full standing of a person, such as the *peregrini* (foreigners) and *barbari* (outsiders); those under *alieni iuris* (the law of another), such as women and children, who, although free, did not possess an independent legal personality but remained subject to the absolute power of the *pater familias* (male head of the household), whether the father or the husband; and those in a state of “civil death”, such as the *infames* (persons deprived of honour), or persons affected by *capitis deminutio* (diminution of status). The latter was divided into three degrees: *maxima*, *media*, and *minima*. The most severe, *capitis deminutio maxima*, entailed the loss of *libertas* (freedom), *civitas* (citizenship), and *familia* (family), effectively reducing the person to a condition of servility. Yet no other human beings were stripped of their legal personality and reduced to absolute objects in the manner the slaves were, as another famous Roman jurist, Domitius Ulpianus (*Digesta* 50.17.32), established: “Quod attinet ad ius civile, servi pro nullis habentur”—As far as civil law is concerned, slaves are regarded as nothing.

Another important turning point in the development of the concept of the person can be found in the works of Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero. It is he who shapes the transition from the social role of *persona* towards the conscious construction of one’s identity behind it. Although he derives his interpretation of the notion from theatre rather than from jurisprudence, he transforms it into a principle of ethics, thus incorporating it into moral philosophy. In *De Officiis* (1.107, 1.115) he explains that every human being is endowed by nature not with one, but with four *personae*, or “masks”, that one must assume in life in order to act rightly and harmoniously. The first of these masks represents the *universal nature* of the human

being *qua* human being. It is the aspect shared by humanity as a whole and derives from the fact that, by virtue of our very being, we are endowed with reason and are superior to beasts. This mask requires us to conduct ourselves as rational and therefore moral beings, as a matter of duty (Ibid, 1.107). The second mask represents *individual nature*. It is the expression of our particular traits and innate individuality—our temperament, physical abilities, and psychological inclinations (Ibid, 1.107). Even attributes that may appear less commendable or plainly bad at first sight can serve different purposes in different circumstances and for different individuals. Cicero insists that one must never turn against one's own nature, but rather remain true to it, provided that it is not outright vicious (Ibid, 1.110). As far as possible, one should avoid attempting to imitate the qualities of another, even when those qualities are good in themselves, and should not introduce anything foreign into one's actions or into one's life as a whole (Ibid, 1.111). The third mask is that which comes to us through *chance* or which is imposed upon us by *fate*. It is the station determined by the external conditions associated with the nobility or modesty of our birth, our social status, wealth and influence, and the historical circumstances of the age in which we happen to live (Ibid, 1.115). The fourth and final mask is that of our *deliberate choice*. This is the role we assume through our own volition and represents the profession, career, or way of life we elect to pursue (Ibid, 1.115). Cicero maintains that morally appropriate action requires the roles assumed through the third and fourth masks to remain in complete harmony with our inner and outer nature as expressed through the first and second masks. When one assumes a role that does not suit one's interiority, one's actions become inauthentic. In his view, any act that betrays one's own person is fundamentally morally wrong, because one thereby fails to fulfil one's proper nature. We should, therefore, devote ourselves, to the best of our ability, to the role to which we are most naturally adapted (Ibid, 1.114). This, in turn, opens the way toward the debate on the concept of authenticity. In this respect, Cicero can be credited with elaborating one of the earliest theories of personality in the sense understood by modern psychology.

While not a Stoic himself—Cicero was a skeptic, and a particularly uncompromising one at that, highly critical of Stoic epistemology, nevertheless, he explicitly presents his work as a continuation on the thought of the ancient Greek Stoic philosopher Panaetius (Ibid, 1.7). His treatment of individual nature would prove highly influential in the

subsequent development of Stoic philosophy, particularly through its recognition of the moral significance of the particular traits of each individual. What the Stoics would embrace most fully was the principle that to act morally is to live in harmony not only with nature in general, but also with human nature in particular. In this way, individuality acquired moral significance through the person as its self-conscious agent.

It was to be expected then that a term with so long and distinguished tradition in Greek literature would have been adopted by the Christians. The word πρόσωπον enters Christian theology through the *Septuagint*, where it occurs innumerable times: in Genesis 2:6, referring to the face of the earth; in Genesis 2:7, to the face of Adam before he was animated; in Exodus 10:11, to the face of the Pharaoh; in Exodus 34:35, to the face of Moses; and even in reference to the face of God in Exodus 33:20–23. It appears with equal frequency in the *New Testament*, for instance in 2 Corinthians 4:6 and Matthew 17:2, where it refers to the face of Christ.

In the 2nd century, the early Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria uses πρόσωπον in his commentaries on the *Old Testament*, particularly in his *Homilies on the Psalms* (15.1.2). Here, he employed a method of interpretation known as *prosopological exegesis* (Mas 2024, 160f). He explained that, as in theatre, the Holy Spirit assumes the “voice” of a particular character in order to speak through the scriptural text. When reading a psalm, Origen asks from which πρόσωπον the words are spoken.

In his earlier *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2.16.114), however, we see a different attitude, criticizing the Sabellians, followers of the heretical theologian Sabellius, for employing πρόσωπον in its older sense of a “mask”. Sabellianism was a form of Modalistic Monarchianism (Artemi 2019, 102), that is, its adherents maintained that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were merely “modes”, or temporary manifestations of the one God, rather than distinct persons, hence the designation Modalistic. Sabellius held that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were not three distinct personal realities, but three successive modes of manifestation of the one God. Accordingly, πρόσωπα served to designate the three distinct “faces” or roles successively assumed by a single divine substance. This heterodox interpretation arose from the fear that the doctrine of the Trinity, following the model of the triune configurations of the pagan gods of antiquity, would encourage polytheism among Christians. In

order to preserve the unity of God as a single, supreme, and absolute divine entity, the Sabellians effaced any real distinction between the Persons of the Trinity in the strictest monotheistic sense, hence Monarchianism. Origen opposes this by reinforcing the meaning of πρόσωπον with that of ὑπόστασις (*hypóstasis*)—the underlying essence or subsistent reality of a thing (Ibid, 2.10.75). The Son is not just a “mask”, a superficial appearance, or a role assumed by the divine substance, but possesses his own distinct existence.

Latin Christian theology did not merely “borrow” the term *persona*, but fundamentally redefined its conceptual status. Its meaning acquired an entirely new depth in Christian trinitarian theology during the 3rd and 4th centuries, when Christian thinkers such as Tertullian (*Adversus Praxean Liber* 11–15, 27) and Augustine of Hippo (De Trinitate 1.6.12, 1.9.19) turned to the notion of *persona* as the Latin equivalent of the Greek ὑπόστασις, rather than that of πρόσωπον, to describe the structure of the Trinity of God (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 5.8.9–5.9.10; Boethius, *Contra Eutychen et Nestorivm* 3.5–9, 3.23–29). In fact, it was Tertullian (*Adv. Prax.* 3–4, 8) himself who coined the term *trinitas*, thereby furnishing the Latin Church with the precise vocabulary it needed to articulate the nature of its Godhead. Augustine, in *De Trinitate* (5.9.10), however acknowledged that the usage of *persona* was, in a sense, an artifice born of a “great poverty of expression”, employed to convey the relation between οὐσία (*ousía*) and ὑπόστασις (*hypóstasis*) within the persons of the Trinity: μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις (*mía ousía, treîs hupostáseis*)—one substance, three hypostases. The Latin *tres personae, una substantia*—three persons, one substance—thus emerged as a terminological rendering of the Greek formula, seeking to express more precisely the mystery of the Holy Trinity to the Western half of the Roman Empire.

In the 6th century, Roman philosopher, statesman, and Christian theologian Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (*Contra Eutychen et Nestorivm* 3.4–5), regarded as one of the last great thinkers of the ancient world and an intellectual bridge towards the Middle Ages, arrived at a definition of the person that would greatly influence scholastic philosophy and, indirectly, the very fabric of modern thought: a person is “naturae rationabilis indiuidua substantia”—an individual substance of a rational nature. This will become the standard definition of the person in Western philosophy.

Boethius’ definition was later adopted and further refined by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* (1.29.1), who added to it—

long before Kant—what is perhaps the most important addition. Owing to the fact that “*persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura*”—the person signifies that which is most perfect in all of nature (Ibid, 1.29.3), it also enjoys the highest dignity: “*hypostasis proprietate distincta ad dignitatem pertinente*”—a hypostasis distinguished by a property pertaining to dignity (Ibid, 1.29.3).

The history of *πρόσωπον* and *persona* therefore anticipates one of the underlying challenges that personalism would eventually make explicit: whether the human being can be adequately understood through what appears, what is empirically observable, and what can be socially or psychologically probed and explored, or whether there remains within the person an irreducible dimension that exceeds every such determination.

Thus, the question of the person was no longer a matter of abstractions or metaphors, establishing itself definitively as a problem of concrete ontology. Applied once again to the human being, this understanding would confer upon the person a privileged dignity, grounded in the belief that man is created in *imago Dei*—the image and likeness of God, and therefore cannot be reduced to its mere created nature. The person is not simply a creature among other creatures, but a being whose very constitution bears the imprint of the divine and whose individuality acquires a metaphysical significance that transcends the limits of existence. Modern thinkers such as the Frenchmen Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, and Gabriel Marcel, the Italian Cornelio Fabro, and especially the Polish theologian and philosopher Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, would inherit from Aquinas this “metaphysical kernel”, out of which a robust Christian personalism would later develop.

After Boethius, the definition of the person would not undergo any major changes in the following centuries. Some thinkers would occasionally further clarify the particular faculties that belong distinctively to it, without compromising its rational nature. English philosopher John Locke ([1689] 2011, 335, § 9) placed an even greater emphasis on the attribute of self-consciousness and offered a comprehensive definition of the person: “This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to

me essential to it [...]”. The passage is reproduced almost word for word by the German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz ([1704] 1765 / 1926, 247, § 9) in *New Essays on Human Understanding*, his unpublished polemic against Locke. As a deeply religious man, Leibniz emphasized the moral character of the person, elevating it to a soteriological dimension. In his earlier *Discourse on Metaphysics* ([1686] 1846 / 2002, 98, § 34), he specifies that the immortality promised by religion is not merely the mechanical survival of the soul, but the preservation of personality, that is, the memory of who one was.

German philosopher and early psychologist Christian Wolff ([1734] 1740, 660, § 741) also emphasized self-consciousness as well as memory as the defining features of the person, describing it as a being that preserves the memory of itself: “Persona dicitur ens, quod memoriam sui conservat, hoc est, meminit, se esse idem illud ens, quod ante in hoc vel isto fuit statu”—A person is said to be a being that preserves the memory of itself, that is, it remembers that it is the very same being which was previously in this or that state. He calls this conscious being *individuum morale*—a “moral individual”. For a physical individual to become a moral individual, it must first be a person. On the basis of the immortality of the soul, he establishes the permanence of memory as the grounds for psychological identity and, consequently, for the capacity to be held accountable before God and before other human beings (Ibid, [1734] 1740, 661, § 742).

Ultimately, this conceptual evolution finds its culmination in Kantian ethics. German philosopher Immanuel Kant elevates the person into a structural foundation intrinsically bound to practical reason and moral agency. For him, a moral obligation cannot derive from a purely phenomenal being, it requires an ultimate ground for morality, which he establishes through the *categorical imperative*—“an action as objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end” (Kant [1785] 1996, 67).

The moral law is, in other words, for the will of a perfect being a law of holiness. But for the will of every finite rational being, it is a law of duty, of moral necessitation, and of the determination of one’s actions through respect for this law and reverence for one’s duty (Kant [1788] 1996, 206). The premises of this vision were initially formulated in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant ([1785] 1996, 80) introduces the famous formulation of humanity as an end in itself: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own

person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”. The human being, and every rational being in general, exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means to be used. The person therefore possesses an intrinsic dignity that excludes its reduction to a mere instrument of another’s purposes (Kant [1785] 1996, 79).

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant returns to what he calls the “awe-inspiring” idea of personality, which reveals to us the “sublimity” of our nature (Kant [1788] 1996, 210). As a being situated within the sensible world and subject to the physical laws of nature, the person remains subject to instincts, biological desires, and the “mechanism of nature”, that is, physical causality. In this capacity, the human being is merely a phenomenon within space and time. Personality, on the other hand, designates that dimension of the human being belonging to the noumenal, intelligible world—the rational capacity to act from duty, independently of biological drives and egoistic inclinations. Because the human being belongs to both worlds, Kant maintains that one must regard one’s own nature in reference to this second and highest vocation only with reverence, and its laws with the utmost respect (Ibid). His definition of personality synthesizes this duality: “It is nothing other than *personality*, that is, freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws—namely pure practical laws given by his own reason, so that a person as belonging to the sensible world is subject to his own personality insofar as he also belongs to the intelligible world [...]” (Kant [1788] 1996, 210).

The sublime value of the human being therefore does not derive from its biological nature, but from the fact that the human being, as a “person”, must submit to its own moral “personality”. At the deepest level, this is the source of human dignity—the fact that we carry within us a moral law that we give ourselves through reason, thereby making us free beings and ends in themselves. Kant ([1785] 1996, 85) draws the conclusion explicitly: “Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature”. This moral dimension of personality is subsequently translated into the philosophy of rights. Echoing a conceptual legacy already seen in Christian Wolff, Kant ([1797] 1996, 378) definitively establishes in the *Metaphysics of Morals* that a person is a subject whose actions are susceptible to imputation. Consequently, a person is a free subject, capable of bearing

rights and duties precisely because of their inalienable moral autonomy.

Personalism as a philosophical movement in its proper sense emerged only toward the end of the 19th century against the background of a revolt directed at the principal forms of reductionism of the age: Hegelian panlogism, in which the individual risked becoming no more than a link in the mechanism of Absolute History, materialism, and positivism, which tended to reduce the human being to rudimentary biological, physiological, and chemical processes. This response took the form of a philosophical defence of human dignity in the face of the depersonalization associated with modern industrial society. The fundamental concern of personalist thinkers was to recover the person from the forces, be they economic, political, social, or ideological, that threatened to subdue the individual and crush them into the inert “mass-man”—a concept described by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset ([1929/1930] 2022, 41–45) as one who is content with their own condition of mediocrity and refuses to assert in any way their personality.

However, as Maritain ([1947] 1972, 12) would later observe, although personalism arose from a rejection of the errors of both individualism and totalitarianism, it is by no means a homogeneous school of thought. We can therefore speak only of “personalist aspirations”, rather than of a unified doctrine: “There are, at least, a dozen personalist doctrines, which, at times, have nothing more in common than the term «person»” (Ibid, 12f).

Personalist currents began to emerge independently in several intellectual circles across Europe and the United States. The term “personalism” itself—*Personalismus*, made its first appearance in Germany as a lexical coinage by the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher in his 1799 *Über die Religion*. Here, it is used to describe classical theism, which insists upon the personality of God, hence the designation “personalism”, placing it in direct opposition to pantheism. Schleiermacher (1799, 256) argues that both are merely *Vorstellungsart*—modes of representation, borne out of human psychology rather than belonging to the essence of religion itself.

In the English-speaking world, the term was introduced by the American pedagogue and philosopher Amos Bronson Alcott. It was subsequently adopted and popularized by his friend, the poet Walt Whitman. Alcott’s biographer, Odell Shepard (1937, 494), presumed

that he borrowed it from the Saint Louis Philosophical Society, known then as the Saint Louis Hegelians—a circle of American philosophers invested in European continental philosophy, particularly German philosophy and above all Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—which had formed around Heinrich Conrad Brokmeyer, a migrant from Prussia. For Alcott, personalism described a theological and metaphysical doctrine: “the doctrine that the ultimate reality of the world is a Divine Person who sustains the universe by a continuous act of creative will” (Ibid). He also established a strict antinomy between personality and individuality: “The unity is the Personality; the difference is the Individuality” (Ibid), attributing to the latter the various forms of human ignorance and its remedy “integrating” oneself into one’s Person (Ibid, 493f). In his 1868 essay *Personalism*, Whitman turned the concept into a fierce critique of the shallow materialism that was beginning to permeate American society in the aftermath of the Civil War. He conceived of earthly society as requiring two opposing, “centripetal” forces in order to remain in balance. The “first principle” was the average—the ideal of community, equality, and assimilation into the crowd—whereas the “second principle” was individuality, or personalism—the conviction that true human identity requires a fierce and protective sense of selfhood capable of resisting the very pressures of the masses. And only these two together, he maintained, could sustain a healthy democracy (Whitman 1868, 540). Along with the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and the naturalist, poet, and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, Alcott and Whitman were to become central figures in the development of American Transcendentalism.

In France, in 1903, philosopher Charles Bernard Renouvier published *Le Personnalisme*, defending human freedom and morality in a Kantian spirit and in opposition to scientific determinism. In Germany, in 1906, psychologist and philosopher William Stern published *Person und Sache*, contributing to the development of a psychologically oriented and critical form of personalism, which would, in part, inspire Romanian philosopher and psychologist Constantin Rădulescu-Motru’s own definition of *Energetic Personalism*. In the United States, in 1908, Christian philosopher, theologian, and minister Borden Parker Bowne published a highly influential work, *Personalism*, laying the foundations of what came to be known as Boston Personalism, a deeply theistic conception

according to which the ultimate reality of the universe is personal and spiritual, God being the Supreme Person.

In the time of the Great War, German philosopher Max Scheler introduced a final radical turn in the development of personalism. In a break with his colleague Edmund Husserl, he shifted the focus of phenomenological examination from pure reason towards human emotions, values, and the spiritual essence of the individual, laying the foundations for personalistic phenomenology. In 1916, he completed his *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, a work directed explicitly against Kant and his formal, rule-based ethics. One thing that Scheler could not accept was that, despite endowing the person with a series of exceptional qualities, Kant ultimately continued to treat the person as an object, even if as a logical subject (Scheler [1913–1916] 1973, 370f). More precisely, Scheler objected to Kant's reduction of the person to a purely logical concept, a mere binding point for duty, thereby removing the concrete human life from the sphere of moral consideration. There is no place in Kant's moral philosophy for "feeling", "loving", or "hating", except insofar as such experiences constitute "erroneous deviations" from rational ethics (Ibid, 65). Instead of lifting the person to the level of the "dignity" that he claims to bestow upon it, he imposes a condition that undermines this very dignity. Thus, Scheler rejected Kantian apriorism and proposed, in its place, an *emotive apriorism*, claiming that the phenomenology of life can have an existence independent of Kant's rational phenomenology of values (Ibid, 64f). And in place of Kant's ethics of "bronze and steel," he introduces a new ethics of "flesh and blood".

Against the classical definition of the person as a substance, Scheler insists that we must never consider it as nothing more than a "thing" exercising "faculties" and "powers", not even if one of those faculties or powers is reason itself (Ibid, 371). It is not a static entity or a thinking *ego* alone, and must never be treated as such, rather, it is "the immediately coexperienced unity of experiencing" (Ibid). Far from being a theoretical construct hidden behind and outside what is immediately experienced, it manifests as an ongoing unity of intentional, spiritual, and loving acts. Therefore, as "a concrete unity of all possible acts", it exists only in their execution and stands outside the entire sphere of "objects" (Ibid, 29).

This becomes ever more compelling when considered through its relation to others. Personality loses its meaning outside of its

connection with the community to which it belongs (Ibid, 519). And herein lies Scheler's innovation in defining the person, that relation becomes more than something that surrounds the person, it becomes constitutive of the person itself. Thus, the person is never merely the isolated individual, nor simply the visible figure through which an individual becomes recognizable to others; rather, it gradually comes to mean a being that possesses a particular identity of their own, and a relation to others that cannot be exhausted by the functions or roles that they may happen to perform.

Although Scheler was not an existentialist, his conception of the person as a concrete, living, acting, and relational reality would prove essential to 20th century existentialism. His influence would extend well beyond philosophy proper. Before his consecration, Pope John Paul II was particularly interested in Scheler's assortment of personalism, which would later become a central pillar of his own philosophical creed.

The most influential form of personalism, however, was to emerge during the 1930s in France, around Emmanuel Mounier and the journal *Esprit*, which he founded in 1932, developing into a militant and ideological current recognized as such. The historical context was one of profound crisis, marked by the rise of communism following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the emergence of fascism in 1919 in Italy, and the mounting failures of Western capitalist liberalism, which culminated in the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression. These circumstances were not altogether different from those confronting the world at the beginning of our own century. It was against this background that Mounier proposed what he regarded as a "third way", rejecting alike capitalist individualism, which isolates the human being and reduces it to a creature governed by egoism and private interests, and totalitarian collectivism, which obliterates the person in the name of the state, class, or race.

At the same time, the concept entered the field of psychology as the idea of "personality". This formal appropriation of the person as a distinct object of psychological investigation took place gradually during the 1920s, and by the late 1930s the study of personality had become an autonomous branch of psychology. The work of the American brothers Floyd Henry and Gordon William Allport played an important role in popularizing the emerging notion, with the latter becoming particularly influential in providing it with a systematic theoretical foundation.

Beginning in 1923, the American Psychological Association likewise organized the first symposia devoted explicitly to “personality”. Until then, character, temperament, intelligence and human traits had largely been studied in a fragmented manner, either through philosophical speculation or as secondary concerns within experimental psychology and psychiatry. By establishing a dedicated thematic forum, the Association provided an institutional platform for bringing together new approaches to the study of the individual.

Jewish-American psychologist Abraham Aaron Roback ([1927] 1931, 1–30, 160), in his 1927 *The Psychology of Character*, argued for the scientific superiority of the term “personality” over that of “character”, which he regarded as obsolete, morally charged, and biased towards philosophy. Subsequently, he published a series of studies in the *Journal of Personality*, then known as *Character and Personality*, including one from 1934 in which he criticized the methods of earlier psychological research and proposed “personalism” as the appropriate designation for the study of the “total picture” of the whole person as a unified entity (Roback 1934, 152), while also introducing systematic empirical and clinical methods for the study of human traits and needs.

Yet among these developments, Gordon Allport’s work was by far the most important in establishing a comprehensive definition of personality. In 1937, he published *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, in which he undertook an extensive linguistic and historical examination of the term, identifying fifty different meanings that had been ascribed to it over time. On this basis, he sought to formulate a definition capable of synthesizing the principal applications of the term already in circulation: “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment” (Allport 1937, 48).

At this point, a fundamental distinction must be drawn between person and personality. Personality denotes the ensemble of forms through which the person actualizes, expresses, and realizes itself in existence. The person, by contrast, refers to the irreducible ontological reality that underlies these manifestations. Psychology may describe personality and, to a certain extent, explain how it comes into being. It cannot, however, by means of its own methods, exhaust the metaphysical question of what the person is, or the more radical issues of how its existence is possible in the first place. Here the limitations

which the post-war generation would seek to overcome begin to emerge. Psychology may describe the mechanisms through which personality is formed, biology may identify its organic foundations, and sociology may trace its collective manifestations. What remains unanswered, however, is the question of the ontological ground of the person. What is the human being beyond what it does? What, if anything, subsists beyond the sum of its empirical determinations?

It is precisely this growing preoccupation with the distinctive status of the person that was to exert a considerable influence on the intellectual climate in which the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* would be elaborated. The Preamble to the Declaration, in its fifth paragraph, affirms “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person”. This emphasis is noteworthy; it is the person, rather than the individual, who occupies the centre of this most distinguished affirmation of human dignity.

The Digital Age, a necrologue

In the latter half of the 20th century, however, the human person has undergone a profound devaluation, as the criteria by which human worth is understood have come to be subordinated to the imperatives of technological efficiency and individual self-interest. The cultivation of human potential has progressively receded behind the pursuit of economic prospects, while the ideal of self-actualization has been displaced by an ever more radical form of self-absorption. What was once conceived as the realization of the person’s higher calling has thus come to be more and more closely identified with the expansion of the self, its desires, its preferences, and its material possibilities. In this transformation, the person risks being reduced from an “end in itself” to an instrument of production, consumption, and self-gratification. Materialism continues to gain ground, even as the ecological consequences of this logic become increasingly difficult to ignore and the prospect of an impending eco-apocalypse casts doubt upon the sustainability of a civilization so deeply committed to the indefinite expansion of material needs (Francis 2015, § 109).

If the first conceptual transition from antiquity to modernity marked a shift from appearance—the mask—to interiority—identity, the digital era propels the person in the exact opposite direction, triggering a re-exteriorization of interiority through digital profiles. With the emergence of this new virtual social dimension, the *virtual persona* is born. What was once an inward reality, manifested through the

individual's immediately perceptible presence in the world, is now projected into an *online avatar*. Borrowed from the Sanskrit *avatāra* (Monier-Williams [1872] 1899, s.v. “ava-tara”), in Hindu metaphysics the term literally signifies a “descent”, the manifestation or incarnation of a timeless, infinite deity within the cyclical, mortal realm. In the cybernetic space, however, this vector is inverted, and the finite human subject projects a selectively idealized, malleable extension of the self into the infinite digital multiverse (Belk 2013).

The moment we access the Internet, we are compelled to create a digital account, which may or may not truthfully reflect our reality, but with which we identify and by which we can subsequently be identified by others. This *virtual persona* operates structurally under the auspices of Scottish philosopher David Hume's *bundle theory of identity*. Deprived of any fixed ontological substance, it becomes a pure construct in which a fluid aggregate of data, metrics, affiliations, and interactions coalesces.

This technological landscape turns the public sphere into what Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han ([2013] 2017, 9) conceptualizes as a “swarm”—an aggregate of isolated individuals without a collective body, spirit, nor soul, trapped within a self-referential chamber that screens out everything unfamiliar. It eliminates the radical alterity of the Other (Han [2016] 2018, 1), replacing genuine confrontation with a comfortable swarm of digital echoes. Thus, the very status of the person becomes precarious. *Homo digitalis* is anything but a person, it is a node in an automated matrix, reacting to the impulses of the crowd (Han [2013] 2017, 11).

Under the digital paradigm, visibility becomes the primary currency of existence itself. The centuries-old Cartesian dictum “Cogito, ergo sum” undergoes a fundamental mutation, supplanted by the technological imperative “Digito, ergo sum”—a kind of “I am connected, therefore I exist”. The colloquial expression “if you do not have social media accounts, you do not exist” is no longer a hyperbole employed by the younger generations, but reflects an undeniable sociological reality. In this “inverted panopticon”, people struggle desperately to remain visible, willingly exposing themselves and turning recognisability into a form of social validation. Invisibility is no longer perceived as freedom or privacy, but becomes tantamount to the ultimate punishment—erasure from the social radar. Slowly but surely, social platforms have ceased to be mere instruments of communication, becoming instead veritable existential infrastructures.

To remain outside social networks is to be amputated from an essential dimension of modern existence (Pohl, Wessel, and vom Brocke 2025).

Consequently, the refusal to participate in social networks is increasingly regarded as an eccentric gesture and may precipitate an acute ontological crisis. Disconnection deprives the individual of access to the continuous flow of information, updates, and social interactions, while contributing to the erosion of interpersonal relations and to an existential sense of irrelevance, condemning them to structural marginalisation and ultimately to a form of “social death”.

Yet the paradox of the digital condition lies precisely in the fact that the relentless accumulation of information does not necessarily produce greater intelligibility. On the contrary, oversaturation generates a form of informational entropy in which the incessant multiplication of data, images, opinions, and stimuli progressively undermines the possibility of distinguishing what is meaningful from what is merely present. The corresponding response is withdrawal. Not necessarily a rejection of connection itself, but an attempt to recover a space in which experience can once again acquire continuity, hierarchy, and meaning. The problem, however, lies not in the apparently limitless capacity to accumulate, but equally in the capacity to dissimulate—to obscure contradictions, suppress unwanted realities, and construct appearances capable of sustaining the illusion of coherence.

If previous centuries struggled either to resist or to embrace a long succession of determinisms—fatalistic, biological, psychophysical—the 21st century appears to be defined by yet another of its own—the algorithmic. Although far less ambitious in scope, since algorithmic determinism neither seeks to decipher the world nor concerns itself with its deeper phenomena, and nor can it exist on its own in the concrete world outside the Internet, it may prove the most destructive in its effects, for its aims are to influence human behaviour—not even for the sake of understanding or mastering it, but simply and subtly to direct it for the profit and economic gain of those who control the algorithms themselves. This transformation ushered in the era of “surveillance capitalism”, a socio-technological paradigm in which human experience is unilaterally claimed as free raw material to be translated into behavioural data, ultimately weaponizing the apparently neutral economic mechanisms of online advertising against the very autonomy of the person (Zuboff 2019, 8).

The problem of the person and its personality acquires an altogether different urgency once the conditions of human existence themselves begin to change. If personality denotes the forms through which the person becomes manifest in existence, then the technological transformation of those forms raises a question that could scarcely have been posed in the same terms by the earlier personalists: What becomes of the distinction between person and personality when personality itself can be predicted, reproduced, recorded, and technologically manipulated?

It is no longer a matter of reducing human personality to a set of entries in a data bank, but of the possibility that the very space in which such data circulate may itself become increasingly less human. With these considerations in mind, what has come to be known as the “Dead Internet Theory”, originally dismissed as a conspiratorial theory of digital culture, acquires an increasingly grave reality when considered not as a literal claim about the disappearance of human users, but as a diagnosis of a virtual environment increasingly populated, shaped, and mediated by non-human agents (Muzumdar et al. 2025). The issue at hand is no longer whether the Internet is literally “dead,” but whether it remains in any meaningful sense still “alive”, thus raising the question of what happens to the ontological status of the digital world when automated and synthetic activity assumes an ever greater share of its traffic and content production. A quantitative inversion of this kind, insofar as it is taking place, entails a qualitative transformation in the very structure of the digital environment.

Thus, from the Foucauldian concept of *biopower*, which denotes power over life, we move towards a context increasingly deprived of life—at times, even in the literal sense of *necropower*—in which the capability of digital platforms to deploy and administer populations of other than biologically alive entities becomes a substantial new basis of power, particularly, though not exclusively, political.

On 11 April 2017, the digital conglomerate Microsoft filed a patent (Abramson and Johnson 2020) for what was benignly described as “a conversational chatbot”. In order to develop such a technology, the patent envisaged the compilation of a “personality index” based on scraping the social data related to a specific person—including images, image data, voice data, social media posts, written letters, user profile information, behavioural data, transactional data, geolocation data, and other forms of data—and the creation of a chatbot capable of mimicking “a past or present entity” and reproducing as faithfully as

possible “the personality of the specific person”. Among other things, the patent explicitly identifies a possible application involving deceased persons. The news immediately provoked an almost universal backlash over the potentially disconcerting effects on the emotional and mental well-being of prospective users. Tim O’Brien, then General Manager of AI Programs at Microsoft, acknowledged that the proposal was indeed “disturbing”, while denying that any plans for its implementation existed at the time (Robitzski 2021; Kay 2021).

On 29 November 2023, Meta, the parent company that owns Facebook, the most popular social media platform of the moment, filed a patent similar to Microsoft’s (Bosworth 2025). This time, a language model would maintain a persistent digital identity by organically uploading content and interacting with other users by liking, commenting on, and distributing their posts. The original project targeted individuals with a strong online presence who require a continuous account activity. Yet once again, we encounter the explicit mentioning of death: “The language model may be used for simulating the user when the user is absent from the social networking system, for example, when the user takes a long break or if the user is deceased”.

We are witnessing the emergence of an increasingly self-referential ecosystem in which content is synthetically generated, optimized through artificial intelligence, and circulated through forms of automated engagement generated by other non-human agents. Within such a loop, the human element ceases to constitute either the teleological end of information or the critical arbiter in its validation. The human being risks being left outside the loop, displaced from the position of a knowing subject to that of a passive spectator—or, more radically, reduced even further, to a residual statistical presence within an informational system whose operations no longer require their conscious participation.

From a Baudrillardian perspective, this development suggests the possibility of the Internet becoming a near-perfect simulacrum: synthetic agents simulate desire, curiosity, attention, and outrage, producing a hyperreality that increasingly mimics social life while becoming progressively detached from any human presence. The autonomy of algorithmic systems thereby gives rise to a new form of cybernetic architecture of isolation, in which machines communicate with machines about data generated by machines, leaving the human as a peripheral anomaly within an indefinitely expanding digital monologue.

If personality is the manner in which the person becomes manifest in existence, then the digital world increasingly acquires the capacity to extract, model, reproduce, and circulate those manifestations independently of the person from whom they originate. The danger is therefore not simply that machines might imitate human personality, but that the traces through which this personality becomes recognizable might begin to populate a world in which the person is no longer required. The digital reproduction of personality could thus precede—and perhaps ultimately render conceivable—the disappearance of the person.

This is where the distinction upon which personalism rests assumes its greatest significance for the contemporary world. An algorithm may reproduce patterns of preference, language, behaviour, affect, and even apparent individuality. It may construct an increasingly persuasive representation of who we are, but representation is not existence, and the reproduction of personality is not the reproduction of the person. If the person is, as the personalist tradition maintains, an ontological reality rather than merely the sum of observable manifestations, then no accumulation of behavioural traces can exhaust what the person is. An inherent paradox of the Digital Age is therefore that the more perfectly personality can be reproduced, the more important becomes the question of what cannot be reproduced at all.

Thus, completing the circle, we return to the original definition of *πρόσωπον*, only now as a concrete reality that presents itself before us. In this sense, a phenomenology of direct experience as advanced by existentialist philosophers, acquires a renewed relevance in the face of algorithmic determinism. If automated predictive systems can use our past behaviour to dictate in advance what we will purchase, anticipate the political choices we will make, or even tell us who we are, then the very act of living beyond the reach of the algorithm, outside the increasingly lifeless world of mechanical calculation, may become a genuine principle of resistance against the death of the Digital Age.

The challenges of personalism for a human tomorrow

Contemporary personalism no longer confronts, as we have seen, the collectivism and scientism of the previous century, against which arguments had already been formulated. It now encounters technological, social, and conceptual realities of an altogether different order. A personalist philosophy grounded in the absolute value of the

human person, in dignity, freedom, and direct relation must respond to questions that previous generations could scarcely have anticipated.

The first of these concerns the crisis of digital identity and the process of the datafication of the self. The identity of contemporary human beings is fragmented and translated into algorithms, metadata, and network profiles. If personalism regards the person as an indivisible, unique, and profoundly interior unity, how can this uniqueness be defended when human behaviour can be anticipated and transformed into a digital construct, algorithmically administered so as ultimately to be monetized in one form or another?

The second problem is posed by the ascent of so-called artificial intelligence and transhumanism. Transhumanism seeks to overcome the biological limitations of the human being through biotechnology, neural implants, the artificial prolongation of life, and other forms of technological augmentation, while generative artificial intelligence has become capable of increasingly convincing simulations of forms of consciousness and creativity. The philosophical danger lies in the emergence of a confusion between the functions of intelligence—that is, what a machine or an augmented brain is capable of doing—and the ontology of the person, that is, what the human being is at its essence. Personalism is therefore challenged to determine what, in the face of the machine, remains irreducibly human.

The third problem concerns hyperconnected solitude and the dissolution of community. Although technology connects us more extensively than ever before, contemporary society is marked by profound atomization and a veritable epidemic of loneliness. Authentic relations, expressed in what the Austrian-Israeli philosopher Martin Buber ([1923] 2022, 9f) designated as the *I–Thou* relation, risk being displaced by utilitarian and transactional interactions into relations of the *I–It* kind. Yet for personalism, the person does not exist in isolation but finds fulfilment through communion. In this respect, the idea of human fellowship and spiritual community may acquire an unexpected contemporary relevance. The task of contemporary personalism becomes, at the same time, one of restoring the social fabric in a world profoundly estranged from itself.

A fourth problem concerns the relation between personalism and anthropocentrism. Classical personalism has often been criticized on the grounds that, by placing the human being at the centre of the universe, it could indirectly legitimate the exploitation of nature. In an age of climate change, this criticism can no longer be disregarded. A

concern addressed in both theological and existential terms by the late Pope Francis (2015, §§ 109, 115–117), who systematically challenged the dominant technocratic paradigm by anchoring ecological stewardship, understood in its biblical sense as humanity’s responsible care for creation, directly in the irreducible dignity of the human person. If the person is indeed the culmination of all cosmic strivings, then it cannot stand in opposition to nature. Any contemporary philosophy of the person must therefore be capable of integrating an ecological dimension—a possible “eco-personalism”—and of explaining how the responsibility of the person may extend to the whole of creation and to the non-human world without dissolving human distinctiveness into a radical movement that would, in turn, place nature above the human being.

A fifth problem concerns hedonistic individualism and irresponsible freedom. Contemporary culture often confuses the person with the consuming individual and freedom with the absence of all constraint and the immediate satisfaction of desire, thereby emptying freedom of moral responsibility and communal obligation. This distinction was already present among the Interwar thinkers. The individual, understood in purely biological and egoistic terms, must be distinguished from the person, who is capable of responsibility, vocation, and orientation towards higher values. Personalism is therefore called upon to formulate a culture of responsibility in an age in which the assertion of rights risks becoming detached from the assumption of corresponding obligations.

Finally, radical relativism and the culture of “post-truth” raise the question of the metaphysical foundation of human dignity. If truth is regarded as a purely subjective construction or as an expression of relations of power, metaphysical points of reference dissolve. Yet personalism, particularly in the tradition represented by religious personalists, presupposes the existence of an objective metaphysical order and the possibility of an authentic encounter with truth. The question therefore becomes how human dignity can still be grounded as an absolute value within a culture that contests the very existence of the absolute.

What remains to be determined, then, is whether personalism has become an obsolete school of thought, destined to remain on the antiquarian’s shelf as a curious relic of a bygone intellectual age, or whether, on the contrary, the very technological transformations of the present are once again bringing its fundamental problem to life. The

answer can only be negative. Personalism has not exhausted its relevance, because the problem of the person endures beyond the passing of the historical circumstances in which the doctrine emerged. On the contrary, it reasserts itself in a new form precisely when technology acquires the capacity to reproduce what had until recently appeared inseparable from the concrete individual. Thus, we must ask not whether personalism still has any relevance for the future, but whether the future itself has any relevance without personalism.

References:

- Abramson, Dustin Isaac, and Joseph Edwin Johnson, Jr. 2020. *Creating a conversational chat bot of a specific person*. United States Patent US10853717B2. Filed 11 April 2017. Issued 1 December 2020.
- Allport, Gordon William. 1937. *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
- Aquinas, Thomas. [c. 1269-1272] 1965 / 2006. *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 6: The Trinity (1a. 27–32). Latin Text, English translation, Introduction, Notes, Appendices and Glossary by Ceslaus Velecky. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aristotle. [c. 343-322] 1831 / 1837. Τῶν περὶ τὰ ζῷα ἱστοριῶν. In *Aristotelis Opera*, Tomus IV (*Historia Animalium*). Edited by Immanuel Bekker. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (Pseudo-)Aristotle. [1831] 1837. Φυσιογνωμονικά. In *Aristotelis Opera*, Tomus VI (*Physiognomonica*). Edited by Immanuel Bekker. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aristotle. [c. 350 BC] 1936 / 1961. Περὶ οὐρανοῦ. In Donald James Allan (Ed.), *Aristotelis De Caelo Libri Quattuor*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Aristotle. [c. 335-330] 1965. Περὶ ποιητικῆς. In Rudolf Kassel (Ed.), *Aristotelis De Arte Poetica Liber*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Artemi, Eirini Avraam. 2019. The 'Logos' in the teaching of Marcellus of Ancyra and Sabellius. *Volynskyi Blahovisnyk / Volynskyi Blahovisnyk Scientific Journal*, No. 7: 99–121.
- Augustinus, Aurelius. [399-419] 1968. *De Trinitate*, Libri XV (Libri I–XII). Edited by William John Mountain with the assistance of François Glorie. Turnhout: Brepols Pontifical Publishers.
- Beekes, Robert. 2010. *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Vol. II. With the assistance of Lucien van Beek. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Belk, Russell William. 2013. Extended Self in a Digital World. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 40, Issue 3: 477–500.
- Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus. [c. 512] 1918 / 1936. *Contra Evtychen et Nestorivm*. In *The Theological Tractates*. With an English translation by Hugh Fraser Stewart and Edward Kennard Rand. London/Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann Ltd/Harvard University Press.

- Bosworth, Andrew Garrod. 2025. *Simulation of a user of a social networking system using a language model*. United States Patent US12513102B2. Filed 29 November 2023. Issued 30 December 2025.
- Buber, Martin. [1923] 2022. *Ich und Du*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. [44 BC] 1913 / 1928. *De Officiis*. With an English translation by Walter Miller. London/New York, NY: William Heinemann Ltd/George Palmer Putnam's Sons.
- Ernout, Alfred, and Antoine Meillet. [1932] 2001. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine: Histoire des mots*. Reprint of the 4th edition, augmented with additions and corrections by Jacques André. Paris: Éditions Klincksieck.
- Francis, the Holy Father. 2015. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' / On Care for Our Common Home*. Vatican City: Vatican Press.
- Gaius. [c. 161] 1946 / 1958. *Institutes*. In *The Institutes of Gaius*, Part I. Text with Critical Notes and Translation by Francis de Zulueta. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Han, Byung-Chul. [2013] 2017. *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*. Translated by Erik Butler. Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Han, Byung-Chul. [2016] 2018. *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Homer. [8th – 7th century BC]. 1902 / 1920. Ἰλιάς. In *Homeri Opera*, Tomus I: *Iliadis Libros I–XII*. Edited by David Binning Monro and Thomas William Allen. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Homer. [8th – 7th century BC] 1919 / 1995. Ὀδύσσεια. *The Odyssey*, Vol. I: Books I–XII. With an English Translation by Augustus Taber Murray. Revised by George Edward Dimock. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. [1785/1788/1797] 1996. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten / Kritik der praktischen Vernunft / Die Metaphysik der Sitten*. In *Practical Philosophy (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, The Critique of Practical Reason, The Metaphysics of Morals)*. Translated and edited by Mary Jeanne Gregor, with a General Introduction by Allen William Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kay, Grace. 2021. Microsoft has patented a chatbot that could imitate a deceased loved one, celebrity, or fictional character. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/microsoft-patents-a-chatbot-to-imitate-real-people-2021-1>.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. [1704] 1765 / 1926. *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain / Neue Abhandlungen über den menschlichen Verstand*. New Translation with an Introduction and Notes by Ernst Cassirer. Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. [1686] 1846 / 2002. *Discours de métaphysique*. In *Monadologie und andere metaphysische Schriften*. Edited, translated with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes by Ulrich Johannes Schneider. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Lewis, Charlton Thomas, and Charles Short. 1879. *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. [1843] 1940. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Personhood and personalism: Perspectives on the metaphysics of the person for the Digital Age

- Locke, John. [1689] 2011. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited with a Foreword by Peter Harold Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Maritain, Jacques. [1947] 1972. *The Person and the Common Good*. Translated by John James Fitzgerald. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Mas, Silvia. 2024. “The Prosopological Reading of the Term πρόσωπον – persona in the Works of Origen and Tertullian”. In Christophe Rico and Joaquín Paniello (Eds.), *From Logos to Person: History, Traditions, and Perspectives*, pp. 159-172. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Mauss, Marcel. [1938] 1985. “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self”. Translated by Wilfred Douglas Halls. In Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Eds.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, pp. 1-25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Monier-Williams, Monier. [1872] 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*. New edition, greatly enlarged and improved with the collaboration of Ernst Leumann, Carl Cappeller, and other scholars. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Muzumdar, Prathamesh, Sumanth Cheemalapati, Srikanth Reddy RamiReddy, Kuldeep Singh, George Kurian, and Aoorva Muley. 2025. The Dead Internet Theory: A Survey on Artificial Interactions and the Future of Social Media. *Asian Journal of Research in Computer Science*, Vol. 18, Issue 1: 67–73.
- Origenes, Adamantius. [c. 215-249] 1903. Εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον ἐξηγητικά. In *Origenes Werke*. Vierter Band: *Der Johanneskommentar*. Edited by Erwin Preuschen. Leipzig: Johann Conrad Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
- Origenes, Adamantius. [c. 239-244] 2020. *Homilies on the Psalms: Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*. Translated by Joseph Wilson Trigg. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. [1929/1930] 2022. *La rebelión de las masas / The Revolt of the Masses*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Plato. [c. 360 BC] 1900 / 1992. Φαῖδων. Πολιτικός. In *Platonis Opera*, Tomus I: Tetralogia I (*Phaedo*), Tetralogia II (*Politicus*). Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plato. [c. 385-370; 370; c. 390] 1901 / 1967. Συμπόσιον. Φαῖδρος. Ἀλκιβιάδης α. In *Platonis Opera*, Tomus II: Tetralogia III (*Symposium. Phaedrus*), Tetralogia IV (*Alcibiades I*). Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plato. [c. 380 BC] 1903 / 1957. Γοργίας. In *Platonis Opera*, Tomus III: Tetralogia VI (*Gorgias*). Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plato. [c. 380-370; c. 360 BC]. 1905 / 1978. Πολιτεία. Τίμαιος. In *Platonis Opera*, Tomus IV: Tetralogia VIII (*De Republica. Timaeus*). Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pohl, Merle, Lauri Wessel, and Jan vom Brocke. 2025. Disconnecting in a Digital World: A Practice-based Approach. *Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society*, Vol. 5, Issue 3.
- Roback, Abraham Aaron. [1927] 1931. *The Psychology of Character: With a Survey of Temperament*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Roback, Abraham Aaron. 1934. Personalism: A Study in Method. *Character and Personality*, Vol. 3, Issue 2: 144–156.

- Robitzski, Dan. 2021. Microsoft Patented AI to Imitate Your Dead Family. *Futurism*. <https://futurism.com/the-byte/microsoft-patent-ai-dead-family>.
- Scheler, Max. [1913–1916] 1973. *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik / Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*. English translation by Manfred Servatius Frings and Roger Lee Funk. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst. 1799. *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*. Berlin: Published by Johann Friedrich Unger.
- Shepard, Odell. 1937. *Pedlar's Progress: The Life of Bronson Alcott*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.
- Tertullianus, Quintus Septimius Florens. [c. 210] 1948. *Adversus Praxean Liber*. Edited with an Introduction, translation, and commentary by Ernest Evans. London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Ulpianus, Domitius. [211–222] 1872 / 1889. “Libro quadragensimo quinto ad Sabinum”. In *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Vol. I (Digesta). Edited by Theodor Mommsen. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- Whitman, Walt. 1868. Personalism. *Galaxy: An Illustrated Magazine of Entertaining Reading*, Vol. V: 540–547.
- Wolff, Christian von. [1734] 1740. *Psychologia Rationalis*. New edition, amended from the previous. Frankfurt and Leipzig: Officina Libraria Rengeriana.
- Xenophon. [370 BC] 1904 / 1961. Ἀνάβασις. In *Xenophontis Opera Omnia*, Tomus III: Expeditio Cyri (*Anabasis*). Edited by Edgar Cardew Marchant. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Xenophon. [c.360–359; c. 393; c. 360] 1920 / 1969. Ἀγησίλαος. Περὶ ἵππικῆς. Κυνηγετικῆς. In *Xenophontis Opera Omnia*, Tomus V: Opuscula (*Agesilaus. De Re Equestri. Cynegeticus*). Edited by Edgar Cardew Marchant. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.