

PHILOSOPHY

Patsan V.O.

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE PERSONALITY: THE WAYS OF DEFINING THE SELF-EXPERIENCE

Vasyl O. Patsan (Archbishop Eulogius of Novomoskovsk), PhD in Theology, PhD in the History of Philosophy, Vicar of Dnipropetrovsk Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Associate Professor of Philosophy Department of Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, Ukraine

Abstract

The article reveals the premises of developing the personalistic inspiration of the contemporary thought in the formation of the post-secular space of the personal self-knowledge; combining the methods of historical-theological and historical-philosophical reconstruction, the author analyzes the modes of manifesting the primacy of the person's self-definition reflected in the course of repersonalizing the metaphysical foundations; the study treats the forms of expounding the theistic suggestion of personalism by its most metaphysically oriented version arisen in the late 19th – the early 20th century in the USA.

Keywords: the Personality of God, interpersonal relationship of the created person with Creator, human cognition of God, self-existence, self-reflection, personalist trend of philosophizing.

The Rubicon between the second and the third millennia A. D. is indicated by revealing the need for the self-renewal of the post-traditionalist mind. Detached from the Absolute criterion of “the subject's authenticity” (M. A. Mozsheiko) on the ways of declaring “the agnostic position” [1] of post-metaphysics paved by deconstructivism and communicative philosophy in the course of founding the anti-form of ontological argument for the existence of God, the rationally oriented person's self-reflection of the late twentieth – early twenty-first centuries achieves the threshold of realizing the return to the

unconditionally-personal truth of God's Word ("I am the way and the truth and the life"(John 14:6)) as the only way to overcome the limits of anthropocentrism responsible for the self-destruction of the secularized consciousness. Manifesting itself in the field of philosophizing as the rise of the post-secular philosophical reflection intended to comprehend the theocentricity of the ultimate experience of communication reflected by theology, the initiative of transcending "the immanent frame"of the secular world perception [2] is supported in the ecclesiastical sphere by the call to revise on the basis of theism both the metaphysical devices of depersonalizing the Source of being and the forms of the phenomenological application of these means of metaphysics. Grasping the separation of the human mind from its spiritual origins as the main outcome of secularizing the world view, the theological thought reveals the premises of such dissociation predetermined by the scholastic substantiation of the theory of two truths. Having been comprehended by Orthodox theologians since introducing the theological courses into the curriculum of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (1690), this predetermination is currently realized by Catholic and Protestant theologians. [3; 4; 5]. Therefore consolidating the efforts aimed at reuniting spirituality and rationality in the domain of philosophizing, "the theology wends its way to the philosophy, and the philosophy is directed towards the theology" [6, p. 10].

This two-way movement "testifies to the awareness ... of the inseparability of intellectual source from its spiritual origins, opened by Christianity, but lost in the course of the secularization of knowledge" [7, p. 237]. The designation of such a prospect of the departure from the secularized modes of thinking does not demonstrate the exhaustion of resources of rational cognition: "The voluntary communion of the person with God, the involvement of his mind into the conciliar mind of the Church negates neither human mind nor manifestations of personal life, but on the contrary, it is their triumph. Through the incarnation of Christ, "shined upon the world the light of wisdom" [8, p.8].

Intended to expound the personhood as the ultimate principle of being for the rationally oriented person of after-post-modernity, trying to manifest his/her identity in opposition to the radical pluralism characteristic of "the post-modern condition" [9], the emerging dialogical interaction of philosophical and theological discourses breaks the soil for the post-secular thought realizing the insufficiency of the rationalistic tools of human cognition of God and subjective self-knowledge and striving to acquire the arsenal of defining the self-experience elaborated by theology [10]. Such convergence of both ways of ultimate explanations dissociated by the impersonal forms of thinking presupposes the realization of the meta-ontological character of the problem of the human personality explicated in the midst of the twentieth century by the prominent Orthodox theologian and philosopher-personalist V. N. Lossky. Having compared philosophical and theological approaches to its solution, one

of the greatest apologists of the personhood in the last century came to the conclusion: "And if there is a certain meta-ontology, only God can know it, that God, Whom Genesis show us during the pause in His creativity made to say at the Pre-Eternal Council of Trinity Hypostases: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" [11, p. 411].

To comprehend the meta-ontology of the personhood uncovered by the Supernatural Revelation and explained by the patristic theology [12], the post-secular philosophy should incarnate the "theistic suggestion" (B. P. Bowne) of philosophizing which was indicated by the personalist thought in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries [13; 14] and inspired the movement of non-classical and post-non-classical philosophical reflection to the foundations of theism. The starting-point of performing a such initiative is considered to be the definition of the personalistic ways of realizing the self-experience that forms the aim of the investigation in this article presuming the combination of the methods of historical-philosophical and historical-theological reconstruction for its achievement.

The idea of constructing the metaphysics disclosing the personal principle of being was actualized at the end of the nineteenth – the beginning of the twentieth centuries by the founding fathers of the personalist trend of philosophizing in the New World - Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910), George Holmes Howison (1834–1916) and Josiah Royce (1855–1916). Being the basic intention of the personalistic philosophy of the USA it initiated the reception of philosophical tradition directed at restoring its origins associated with the personally oriented modes of thinking [15].

This way of forming American personalism along with its Protestant basis devoid of dogmatic stability [16] predicted the dialogue openness and liberality of this national-historical type of philosophizing and its viability manifesting itself not only through the contribution into forming non-classical paradigm of philosophy, but also through inspiring the self-transformation of post-non-classical philosophical thought. Realized as the inherent form of the self-organization characteristic of "the first complete and comprehensive system of philosophy developed in America" [17], its reinterpretation of philosophical classics has being predetermined the focus of both self-reflection of the personal metaphysics and its historical-philosophical retrospective giving rise to the academic history of the personalistic ideas.

But all the four generations of the adherents of the original version of American personalism involved in reconstructing its genesis, from Albert Cornelius Knudson (1873–1953) to Thomas Oliver Buford (b. in 1932), characterize the process of perceiving the philosophical tradition by the personalist thought awaken on the North American continent as the realization of the sense-forming potential of personalistic thinking accumulated by the philosophy itself [18; 19; 20; 21; 22]. The European Catholic interpreters of the philosophical doctrine of the personality formed in the USA - Czeslaw

Stanislaw Bartnik (b. in 1929) and Bogumil Zygmunt Gacka (b. in 1955) – confirm the self-definition of the personal metaphysics sharing this viewpoint and arguing for it [23; 24]. As a result the theological nature of the withdrawal from the abstractness of ontology performed by American personalism remains unclarified for both historians of philosophy focusing on the formation of this national branch of the personalist reflection and philosophers appealing to the personalistic constructs to provide the self-renewal of rational consciousness by laying the foundations for the post-secular type of philosophizing.

The only exception was made by the Swedish scholar J. O. Bengtsson, known as an authoritative expert in the history of ideas, in the monograph *“The Worldview of Personalism: Origins and Early Development”* (2006, revised in 2011) in which he emphasized Bowne's affirmation of “the validity of personal knowledge” in the course of correlating “personal reason” with “impersonal understanding” [25]. But concentrating on the influence exerted on the originator of the philosophy of the personality in North America by the personalistic tradition of philosophizing formed in the Old World the most eminent contemporary reviser of the philosophical doctrines of the personhood deviated from revealing the explicit relatedness of the concept “self-experience” used by B. P. Bowne as an indicator of “the personal implication” to the Bible topology of the personhood. Thus the question about the way of overcoming “the fallacies of abstractions” [13] paved by the philosophers-personalists of the USA has not been answered yet.

Actualized by the classical versions of personalism as a way of conceptualizing the personal principle of being grasped through the access to God's Word, the idea of “pouring the new wine in the old bellows of philosophy” [26] was embodied more consistently in the American personalistic doctrine than in the French philosophical trend defining the personality as the ontological, epistemological and axiological ultimate “of all reality” [27]. In contradistinction to the radical departure from the ratiocentric mainstream of philosophizing declared in the 1930s in France as an European start of the personalist reaction against impersonalist modes of thought, the apology of the personhood initiated at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the USA was based upon the revision of the philosophical tradition intended to overcome its impersonalistic tendencies.

Avoiding the absolute rejection of the rationalistic scope of the subjective self-definition articulated by the leading French personalists Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950) and Jean Lacroix (1900 – 1986) to eliminate “the dead forms which oppress even eternal values...” [28], the reception of metaphysical and primary (Kantian) phenomenological frames of the subjectivity awakening the personalist trend in America inspired the repersonalization of the fundamental principles of rational consciousness revealing itself in the course of performing the task “to form the right habits of thinking” [13]. Formulated by Borden Parker Bowne, an outstanding

philosopher, Methodist Minister and theologian recognized as the father of American personalism and the originator of its Bostonian hub, this intention was directed not against the subject's cognitive core itself but against the reduction of the cognitivity to the impersonal arch-form.

The initial self-manifestation of the personalistic philosophy of the USA disclosed its presumption of “primordial personalism” [13] and predetermined reinforcing the tools of philosophizing by the arsenal of theology in the course of the explanation of the irreducibility of the personhood resulting in the doctrine of the personality representing the climax of the personalistic movement on the North American continent. Realizing the “shortcomings of impersonal philosophy” destroying the foundations of philosophizing as the results of “the misleading abstractions and aberrations with which the history of thought abounds” [13, p. vi], B. P. Bowne warns: “...when our fundamental philosophic principles are impersonally and abstractly taken, they disappear either in contradiction or in empty verbalism” [13, p.211]. Such perception of the impersonalist forms of thinking implies the idea of the primary personal metaphysics was developed throughout the works of the thinker declaring himself “...a Personalist, the first of the clan in any thoroughgoing sense” [24] and predicted both the subsequent personalized variants of ontology constructed in the philosophical-humanitarian space of the USA and the “inner vision” of the genealogy of American personalism.

It is obvious that Bowne's correlation of the starting point of philosophizing with the comprehension of “personal beginning of all speculation” [13, p.vi] was inspired by his reception of the Scripture topoi of the personhood and the views of his European teacher, German philosopher Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817 — 1881), the apologist of returning the philosophical reflection to the “wholeness of the spirit”. But the explication of the primary insight of the “personal world” given by the metaphysician-personalist in his final work *Personalism* (1908) reveals the impact of the positivist doctrine founded by Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) on the formation of the personalistic philosophy in North America.

In the *Preface* to the treatise generalizing the author's position as “personalism” and attaching this term to the American philosophical discourse B. P. Bowne recognized Comte's rightness in asserting the historical primacy of the causal “explanation in terms of personality” determined by the theological character of “the first stage of human thought” [13, vi - vii]. Moreover the progenitor of the Boston personalist school stated that A. Comte was right regarding the “abstract conceptions of being, substance, cause, and the like” representing the next, “positively” defined as metaphysical, stage of knowledge as “the ghost[s] of earlier personal explanations” [13, vi – vii]. To argue for such understanding of ontological abstractions B. P. Bowne appealed to the generalized and anonymous impersonalistic experience of philosophizing. He underlined: “Later philosophic criticism has shown that the

conceptions of impersonal metaphysics are only the abstract forms of the self-conscious life, and that apart from that life they are empty and illusory” [13, vi].

But simultaneously the philosopher-personalist criticized the founder of positivism for eliminating the causality from the sphere of cognition in his general representation of its stage-wise development. Appealing to the dynamics of the historical-philosophical process B. P. Bowne affirmed: “Causal inquiry, though driven out with a fork, has always come running back, and always will” [13, vii]. Accordingly to Bowne's amplification such cyclic recurrence of thought proves that comprehending the causality is the final goal of the cognitive activity of the human person which can not be excluded from the sphere of his/her self-definition and self-fulfillment. Therefore the author of the most famous manifestation of the personalistic philosophy of the USA emphasized: “It only remains to give the causal doctrine the form which is necessary to free it from the objections of criticism” [13, vii].

Summing up the revision of Comte's positivist theory, B. P. Bowne motivated the development of the personalistic thinking in the domain of philosophizing established on the North American continent in such a way: “... abstract and impersonal metaphysics is a mirage of formal ideas, and even largely of words, which begin, continue, and end in abstraction and confusion. Causal explanation must always be in terms of personality, or it must vanish altogether. Thus we return to the theological stage, but we do so with a difference. At last we have learned the lesson of law, and we now see that law and will must be united in our thought of the world. Thus man's earliest metaphysics reemerges in his latest; but enlarged, enriched, and purified by the ages of thought and experience” [13, vii].

Bowne's alternative to the progressive trilogy of knowledge formed by A. Comte is based upon comprehending the initial – theological – stage of cognition as the period of forming the primary personal metaphysics. Equalizing religious and philosophical consciousness the initiator of repersonalizing the metaphysical principles accents the relatedness of religion and philosophy in the aspiration for defining the causality but overlooks the actual divergence of the ways of realizing the ultimate cognitive intention opened by these forms of the life of the human spirit. At the background of the confessional belonging of B. P. Bowne to Methodism possessing liberal and changeable multipartite doctrine his initiative of retrospectively reuniting spiritual and rational dimensions of the personhood can not be reduced to the contamination of the different notions; it should be realized as the argument for personalizing the ontology in the perspective of reflecting the inner personal experience taken in its restricted semi-Catholic – semi-Protestant explication as the all-sufficient criterion of cognition.

Connecting the rationality with the Bible testimony of human godlikeness the return of philosophical reflection to the immediate self-

experience initiated by the father of American personalism broke the ground for overcoming “the failure of impersonalism” [13] in the course of comprehending “the image of unconditional being ... really given to the human person by the nature of his personality” [29, p.265-266] and marking the irreducibility of the personhood. But the Methodist horizons of perceiving the Supernatural Revelation remote from patristic Trinitology and Christology predetermined the limitation of Bowne's field of vision of the hypostatic mode of existence. Detached from the resource of trinitarian meta-logic ensuring the comprehension of the personal principle of being through the correlation of the person's self-knowledge with the human cognition of God, the philosopher-apologist of the personality tried to define the epistemological foundations of constructing “the latest metaphysics” in the course of the rethinking of Kant's transcendental idealism aimed at the rational explication of the understanding of the personhood formed on the basis of theism.

Having failed to conceptualize the transcendently experienced communion of the created person with Creator as the priority of the personal self-definition B. P. Bowne connected the ultimate explanation of the phenomenal experience intended to transcend it with “a personal interpretation of experience”, the first step to which “consists in the insight that we are in a personal world from the start, and that the first, last, and only duty of philosophy is to interpret this world of personal life and relations” [13, p.vi]. Thus Bowne's thought prescribes to begin the philosophical reflection directed at affirming “the certainty of self-existence” [13] (obvious for theology) as the metaphysical statement not with appealing to the Absolute Personality of God but with realizing “the primacy of the personal world” where “we and the neighbors” are defined as “facts which cannot be questioned” [13, p. 20]. Indicating the personal-subjective perception of “the other” by using the concept “neighbourhood” included in the topology of the personhood uncovered in God-Breathed Book, such formulation of the primary intention of the “enlarged, enriched, and purified” personal metaphysics implies renewing the rationalistic separation of the human cognition of God and self-cognition from the living experience of communication with Him.

Problematized by this definition of the factual primacy of philosophizing the reunion of theological and metaphysical modes of thinking declared by B. P. Bowne is perceived as hardly achievable in the context of his prioritizing the cognitive role of the self-experience which due to philosopher's amplification goes beyond the sensually experienced data to include “the data of self-consciousness” [13, p.99-102].

The thinker starts clarifying his position with revealing “the first experiential fact” indicated by him as “the validity of our personal knowledge” including “our mutual understanding of one another” [13, p.80]. To define the otherness as the indicator of the personal-subjective truth the philosopher-personalist analyzes the rational aspect of interpersonal relations in the course

of revising Kantian system of phenomenal knowledge. B. P. Bowne underlines: "If we make the world of things subjective presentations because the knowledge of them arises through our mental construction, we must do the same thing with the world of persons, for the knowledge of them has an equally subjective character. Kant passes from the "me" to "us" without telling us how he makes the transition. He really begins with "us" – not merely with the individual self, but with the whole collection of individual human beings – and gets an experience valid for us all in exceedingly obscure ways" [13, p. 84]. According to Bowne's thought, not "to end in solipsism" the reflection of this problematic trajectory should recognize: "The basal certainties in knowledge are ... the coexistence of persons, the community of intelligence and the system of common experience. And these are not given as speculative deductions, but as unshakable practical certainties" [13, p. 127 - 128]. Directed against Kantian reduction of the plurality of personal minds defined as phenomenal selves to the unity of the transcendental subject, such assertion of the factuality of cognition results in the negation of the phenomenological character of the empirical self. B. P. Bowne affirms that the experienced "living, conscious, active" self is not a phenomenon, but the most concrete reality. On the contrary, the transcendental ego, understood as separate from this self, is a mere "fiction" [13, p. 86, 88]. Stating that the "self-existence is the surest item of knowledge we possess" [13, p. 86-88], the progenitor of the personal metaphysics of the modern era reveals the fundamental evidence of this personal-subjective reality in the certainty of the self "as the subject of the mental life and knowing and experiencing itself as living, and as one and the same throughout its changing experiences" [13, p. 86 -88].

Bowne's statement of the cognitive priority of "the inner experience of the conscious self" [13, p. 99-102] develops into the attempt of bridging the gap between the *ratio* and the world taking roots in the fallen human nature and widened in the noumenal/phenomenal distinction introduced by I. Kant to explain the mind's activity in abstraction from the self-experience. Taking into consideration Kant's scheme of constructing the intelligible objects, B. P. Bowne asserts that the categories considered to be the preconditions of experience become the categories of reality deriving their true meaning from "living self-experience" [13, p.99-102] which is immediate in contradistinction to outer perception. On the base of such transformation of the fundamental presumption of classical phenomenologism the leader of American personalists focuses on revealing the correlation of the basic philosophical concepts with the inner personal experience and uncovers the metaphysical implications of personalism in the course of reinterpreting the categorial semantics of *identity*, *unity*, *causality* and *plurality*.

Regarding the category of identity, B. P. Bowne concludes, that it "is given as the self-equality of intelligence throughout experience" and that "any other conception destroys itself" [13, p.99-102].

Providing the analysis of the category of unity, the philosopher emphasizes that it “may be purely formal, as when we call a thing one; but when we come to real unity only experience can tell us whether it be possible and what form it must take on” [13, p.103]. The metaphysician-personalist denies the relatedness of this category to the spatiotemporal phenomena attributing its true meaning to the self-identical personality: “There can be no real unity in anything existing in space and time, for in that case everything would be dispersed in infinite divisibility. We find the problem solved only in the unity of a conscious self, which is the only concrete unity that escapes the infinite dispersion of space and time” [13, p.103]. Moreover, due to Bowne's amplification, the unity of the self is inseparable from the plurality in the concrete, conscious experience. Detached from “an abstract unity without distinction or difference”, the plurality forms an aspect of “a living, conscious unity, which is one in its manifoldness and manifold in its oneness” [13, p.261-262]. The thinker underlines that such connection of unity and plurality is contradictory only for the formal, discursive thought, “taken concretely it is the fact of consciousness” [13, p.261-262].

The inner vision of the personhood formed in this field of personalizing the metaphysical categories predicts transcending the limits of personal identity and unity marked by the interiorization of the experience of “the other”. Thus B. P. Bowne should recognize: “If personality is to maintain its integrity, it must be kept “a handbreadth off”, both from the Absolute and from things” [13, p.113-144, 166]. According to his personalist position the philosopher affirms that the category of causality cannot be thought “abstractly and impersonally”. But Bowne's detachment from patristic theology determined by his devotion to Methodism deprived him of the trinitological arsenal of expounding the meta-ontological dimension of the personhood disclosed by the Supernatural Revelation as the communion of the human person with Absolutely Personal God. Therefore the thinker restricted by the rationalistic tools of the personal self-reflection connects performing the ultimate cognitive intention with realizing the true meaning of causality in “the self-conscious causality of free intelligence” [13, p.103-104]. B. P. Bowne asserts that the experienced phenomenal order mediates a real content knowable by “our categories”, because it is preconditioned by “a Supreme Intelligence which manifests his thought through it and thus finds that objective unity of the system of experience which is presupposed in all our knowing” [13, p.78, 89]. In this way the philosopher's argumentation for the immediacy of the self-experience transforms into affirming the mediation of the inner appeal of the created person to Creator by the outer interpersonal experience of rational cognition. Restricting the sphere of the personal self-definition, such regression of the personalist thought to the rationalized perception of living God problematizes the prospect of personalizing the

ontology opened by declaring the authenticity of the inner self-conscious experience the main landmark for philosophical reflection.

But in spite of the revealed sources of the self-problematization, Bowne's personal metaphysics founded the Boston tradition of the personalistic philosophy developed by his disciples Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1884–1953), Francis John McConnell (1871–1953), George Albert Coe (1861–1951) and Ralph Tyler Flewelling (1871–1960) known as the founder of the second important North American center of personalism in the University of Southern California. Having adopted their teacher's experience of philosophizing “in terms of personality”, these thinkers expanded the horizons of revising the philosophical classics established on the starting of the personalistic movement in the USA by correlating Platonic and Kantian traditions.

Moreover the idea of the personal interpretation of experience generated in the Bostonian cradle of American personalism supported Howison's and Royce's initiatives of rethinking the principles of classical philosophy. The doctrine of the personal idealism elaborated by G. H. Howison predetermined the basis of the personalist school formed at the University of California, Berkeley, while the reinterpretation of Hegelian concept *Absolute* made by J. Royce inspired the development of the personalistic tendencies at Harvard University. Joining the revision of depersonalized definitions of the subject, Harvardian scholars William Ernest Hocking (1873–1966) and Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000) manifested themselves as personalists.

Forming the dialogic space of American personalism its reception of the philosophical tradition exposed the contradictory character of the attempts of reuniting rationality and spirituality initiated by B. P. Bowne and based upon his reducing the spiritual core of the personhood to the personalized *ratio*.

On the one hand, Bowne's adherents focusing on researching for proper philosophical origins of the personalist thought affirm that the comprehension of the personality as an ultimate reality has become the main result of the previous historical-philosophical process. Conceptualizing such vision of the genesis of personalism, A. C. Knudson asserts that 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.” [22, p. 34]. Developing Knudson's teleological conception of rising the personalist philosophy R. T. Flewelling connects the starting point of “primordial personalism” with the early history of ideas: “It is, in basic principle, as surely expressed in the affirmation of Heraclitus (536 - 470 B.C.) that the fundamental reality is mind because it alone, of all creation, has the power to differentiate itself from the objective world and even from its own experiences, asserting that this Logos is the permanent principle in a world of change. Anaxagoras (500 - 430 B.C.) showed the same personalistic trend in affirming mind to be the foundation of existence, the force that arranges and guides. Protagoras (480 - 410 B.C.) named this differentiating capacity of the person as the basis of all knowledge

and science, expressing it in the famous phrase: “Man is the measure of all things, of things that are, that they are; of things that are not, that they are not” [21, p.21].

On the other hand, the further conceptualization of self-experience performed in the discursive field generated by the “personal world” of B. P. Bowne affirms his suggestion of “an unformulated activity of the mind which is the real gist of the reasoning” [13, p.36, 259-262]. Analyzing the resource of philosophical reflection intended to explicate “the ethical demand for an ethical Creator” [14, p.259-262], associated in Bowne's amplification with “living participation in the moral effort and struggle of humanity” [13, p. 259-262], W. E. Hocking states that “the philosophy can not lead to religion, because it can not lead us to the knowledge of God, and above all ... the philosophy will never be able to create a God who is worshiped” [30, p.97].

Revealing the insufficiency of the arsenal of the rational thinking for manifesting the self-experience such divergence of its definitions given by the metaphysics of the personality in the late nineteenth - early twentieth centuries proves that the communicative interaction of philosophical and theological discourses initial for personalism should be continued to ensure the potential of reflecting the ultimate situation of communication on the trajectory of the movement of the personalist thought to the Supernatural Revelation.

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