

THE BECOMING OF THE PERSONAL SPHERE: A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

J. Edward Hackett

Abstract:

In this essay, I outline the metaphysical nature of reality of persons as the confluence of four modes of relating-to that I propose exist as the scaffolding of personal being. In effect, I am outlining the conceptual sketch of a philosophical anthropology that situates all forms of philosophical and scientific inquiry given that there is no perspective outside of being a person. While only a conceptual sketch, this article begins the speculative process to work toward such an account.¹ I would venture the bold assertion that all forms of personalism must assume the existence of all four modes of relationality that I am speculating about herein. My account attempts to capture the process-oriented view of the activity of being a person ('personing').²

Keywords:

Personalism, Whitehead, James, radical empiricism, philosophical anthropology

There are four basic modes of relational activity that constitute the becomingness of persons and these modes of relating-to radiate outward from the person's personing. Just like phenomenology's account of intentionality, these modes of relating-to are relations that can be read from the personal sphere outward to the object and to the object intending and constituting the sense of the act in the personal sphere. In this way, these four modes of relating-to run constitutively backwards and forwards. My attempt to render these four modes of relating-to intelligible is a work in speculative philosophy, not phenomenological description despite the fact that I am not rendering a description of these relations as much as attempting to articulate a vision in which such phenomenological descriptions would presuppose these four modes of relating-to. In the next section, I develop some basic propositions about reality and the process-orientation to my approach herein before explaining the four modes of relationality exhibited by all persons. These four modes of relating-to (personing) are: (1) Persons-to-Culture, (2) Persons-to-Nature, (3) Persons-to-Others, and (4) Persons-to-Self.

Let me describe how I will proceed. In the first section, I give a brief account of the assumptions that foreground my theorizing. By doing so, I cannot treat any one assumption exhaustively. Instead, I am letting the reader know why such assumptions have been made that inform the speculative efforts. In the second section, I outline the importance of what it means to theorize about persons. While such theoretical grounds about persons is content rich with thousands of years of reflection, the fact that I came at this question with a sense to move beyond Scheler should be highlighted for the importance the third section is making. Finally, the third section is where I describe the backwards-and-forwardness of the four modes of personing. One may be tempted to read my efforts there as a way one becomes a person as if personal being were not already underway even as I write and you read these words. One should not take it as the way we become persons as if persons is some Archimedean arrow of final becoming. Instead, the view here is to take seriously a Jamesian ontology

¹ This inability to transcend the perspective of personal being is the basis of metaphysical personalism, and to which even my version of integral personalism largely based on the Schelerian interpretation of sublimating drives, Jamesian freedom, and Brightman's processive notion of experience, must assume. See my *Persons and Values in Pragmatic Phenomenology: An Exploration of Mortal Metaphysics*. My conception of Integral personalism is given in Chapter 6: 'Persons Realizing Values,' p.116-123. Moreover, the date of this publication on which this chapter is based uses the term 'integral personalism' much earlier than Juan Manuel Burgos does in his article 'Wojtyla's Personalism as Integral Personalism: The Future of an Intellectual Project' p. 91-111.

² I owe these terms of art to Randall Auxier who brilliantly outlined these terms more concisely than anywhere else in personalist literature at a presentation he gave at the last Personalism meeting in 2016. The four modes of relating-to also harken back to discussions of Scheler's philosophy of culture and the selving process with Ken Stickers

that the only things that are real are aspects of ongoing onto-relationality of experience to which all metaphysics must answer.

1. Postulates of Process

Personing is the basis on which process approaches relate. The first line of John Cutting's translation of Max Scheler's *The Constitution of the Human Being* cuts straight down to the issue, 'Since every sort of knowledge and all sorts of cognitions are a participation by the knowing subject in a being which is independent from him himself, and actually exists, then metaphysics is equally the eternal attempt of human beings, by virtue of their spontaneous reason, to participate in the absolute reality of things themselves.'³ Scheler's error, however, resides in reifying the absolute, to insist upon the object relating-to as ontologically separate and absolute from the depths of participation. His accurate assessment was in the fact that all cognition is, thereby, an ontological participation in the universe from which the science of metaphysics seeks to render a conceptual whole by the limitation and view from within the part it inhabits.

However, Scheler has always been half-accurate. For him, phenomenology allowed him to arrive at the essences of those interconnections that open up conduits of intuition into the absolute reality we participate within. For Scheler, intuition was immediate and revealed the immanent acts of the personal sphere and the entire immanent onto-relationality expressed by and in the existence of the person. This immanence might be best described as being within and amongst relations. The withinness is almost always forgotten; persons almost always forget the very condition upon which the metaphysician is claimed to transcend the very own condition—the sphere of the personal. But can we?

This personal sphere is the ground of experience, the experiencing experiencer, and there is no position or speculation that ever is divorced from inhabiting the personal. Personing is, then, the ontological term that preserves this sense of ontological participation of the whole person in relation to that which they attend. By contrast, most phenomenologists, who have done so much to preserve and sustain an awareness of the personal sphere through systematic bracketing and description, lose sight of the personal sphere and the ground of mediation from which all perspectives obtain. In short, the point of speculative philosophy is to move past the descriptive limit. Scheler is no different as just one example. Much later in the same work, Scheler gives us a hint of his theistic, if not panentheistic commitment about the special place human beings inhabit in relation to their very own ontological participation. Scheler says, 'the human being's most profound sort of existence at all times is anchored in an absolutely superior and absolutely holy, but invisible, actuality.' However, Scheler commits no real interpretation of it, but calls it the origin of metaphysics. 'Whatever can fill this absolute sphere is remarkably varied...but whatever it is, it makes no difference to the fact that the absolute sphere is pre-given to human beings.'⁴ Scheler reifies givenness and the relationality of the phenomenological field to legitimize some aspect of the flux.

For Scheler, the problem of immediate experience, then, takes centre stage, and what follows are postulates of process that circumscribe my speculative efforts to move beyond what Scheler opened up. Since most of my work has been grounded in trying to reclaim aspects of Scheler's work in a positive light, I am now trying to speculate beyond its confines. In moving beyond those confines, then, let us introduce some postulates of process and not fall into the trap of reifying the "flux of life" as James calls it. The purpose of sharing these following postulates is not to give any specific proposition exhaustive treatment, but to be open of those assumptions that are working in the background of my speculative efforts.

1. The problem of immediate experience is a way into understanding reality as active and processive, and not only characterizing our own experiences but a clue into the ontological nature of reality as the whole. More succinctly put, the problem of immediate experience is a way to understand the problem of reality since it is in the part through which we characterize the whole. Partly, the background of Whitehead in this speculative attempt rings true. 'Speculative philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every

³Max Scheler, *The Constitution of the Human Being*. p. 11.

⁴ Scheler, *The Constitution of the Human Being*, p. 206-207.

element of our experience [personingin] can be interpreted.’⁵ Personing consists of four modes of relationality, and the world of experience constitutes as much of us as we do of it. By contrast, Scheler denied that existence arises out of the constitution of immanent acts of intentionality. For him, existence transcends the immanent, so no matter what immediate intuition reports about in terms of a mode of possibility about an experience, Scheler assumes the realism of the world⁶ Since immediacy is where and how we must navigate the concern of daily life (there is no perspective outside being a person), we should be open to the idea that the irreducible content of experience folds into the parts of the world and the parts of the world fold back in the same relation-to. The implication again for moving past Scheler is that I deny the separability of distinct ontological spheres of the external and internal.⁷ John Dewey in his *Experience and Nature* goes through great pains to show that philosophical reconstruction of the past and the present for all problems assumes the continuity of nature and the immediacy of experience as the primary datum from which all philosophizing occurs. While I am no Deweyian, I can appreciate the refocused attention to experience and its overall onto-relationality, and what it means to begin and reconstruct philosophy anew by urging us to take the creative and generative aspects of experiential activity as our starting place for metaphysical inquiry.

2. Metaphysics starts with the immediacy of experience and is limited by experience. For this reason, speculative metaphysics is a construction and interpretation of the most general elements of reality that we may experience and starts with the positing that all metaphysical claims are about relations. Again, I am taking inspiration from the opening of Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*.

The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought and the starting point of any thought [let alone Whitehead’s speculative philosophy] is the analytic observation of components of this experience.⁸

There is no single atomic unity in life or the cosmos that is not constituted by a field of relations on its own, nor are there modes of access to reality beyond the activity and process by which experience occurs. Whitehead began his elucidation in thinking that analytic observation could break down experience into component parts with what he called “imaginative construction.” In imaginative construction, likened to an airplane taking off and landing at many runways, our imagination takes flight to construct ideas. These constructions must find their bearing at observation of particular and immediate experience, Like Whitehead, I follow James in thinking that reality and experience are almost interchangeable terms. Like Whitehead, I embrace the role of imaginative experimentation and construction, and while acknowledging the role of logic and coherence in these constructions, Whitehead’s weakness is to move beyond and outside the onto-relationality of immediate experience to the play of the imagination unwittingly without abiding by the wise phenomenological constraint to which all speculations should arise. Many will come to defend Whitehead here, and they will appeal once again to logic and coherence in the very opening definition of *Process and Reality*. Through Whitehead, these speculative philosophers may imagine possible conceptual schemes about what reality is like and how human beings are situated in that larger reality.

The problem with following Whitehead entirely is that in presupposing his simultaneous embrace of imagination while thinking that a ‘synoptic vision has been gained’ by the embrace of the imagination without first thinking what the very ontology of experience looks like in terms of how

⁵ *Process and, Reality*, p. 3.

⁶ Max Scheler, ‘Idealism and Realism’ in *Philosophical Selected Essays* trans. David Lachterman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973): p. 288-356. Here, I cite Scheler, ‘Idealism and Realism’, p. 290. “Existence can never be in mente” despite the fact that existence can be given in phenomenological intuition. In this way, Scheler’s intuitions report about the pre-volitional and pre-cognitive disclosure of the world that is already there in existence. The impersonal arises in thinking that existence can be set apart from the onto-relationality participation that declares otherwise. This tension of indeterminacy of the ground of onto-relationality is just one more reason we must move past Scheler.

⁷ See ‘Idealism and Realism’, pp. 300-303.

⁸ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 4.

reality is given to the person.⁹ To put it in terms of the imagination is to also seek a synoptic vision that could be concealed over in the rigidity of methodological adherence to logic, not so much the coherence of experience's own intelligibility. In effect, we follow James as he ends *A Pluralistic Universe* since in desiring so much to interpret immediate experience through general categories of a conceptual scheme that the existential need of that adherence to logic may come at the very expense of what the imagination generates in its very construction. Hence, the artistic play of the imagination is more important to the metaphysician than simple adherence to logic. Consider James when he calls out the rule of logic of identity in Appendix C. Since reality is in flux and changing, the terms of any concrete series as contrasted against abstract concepts cannot be assumed to hold for all reality for all time. Our relations terminate and stop as our interest draws our attention to another aspect or new relation. What undermines the law of identity as a principle of all reality to which the Neo-Hegelians would have us believe otherwise is that reality is thoroughly logical in the presentation of how relations unfold, no matter if they external to the person or ones which we are undergoing. James insists that in rejecting a logical law as a principled part of reality will come down to adopting a metaphysics in which novelty may arise.¹⁰ In reality's unfolding and becoming nature, the only thing that may be said then is a phenomenologically-guided speculation that preserves novelty of how we live through our experiences rather than imposing our want through imagination. For this reason, we follow James on this point rather than Whitehead.

3. Given that the problem of immediate experience is our entrance into the speculation of totalities, a vocabulary drawn from experience and its temporal flow must privilege becoming over static being. Totality is what James called the all-at-once, and the ideal to which all metaphysical efforts attempt. Metaphysics aims for a vision of the whole, even if such vision can never be obtained. We should speculate as if our proposals about reality describe it but never in principle be so committed that what I offer as a speculative conception of reality is a finished product. The truest totality cannot be viewed, and the analogy of viewing our own relative position in the Milky Way Galaxy comes to mind. Whenever we want to imagine our galaxy, the very idea of the galaxy cannot get passed the fact of our vantage point conditioning the positionality from which we seek to reconstruct a totality of it. In this way, the true dynamism of reality is rendered in any conceptual scheme we propose. That which does exist must exist at the time of experiencing it. All concepts and understandings are within the temporal flow of time and space just as much as the analogy of devising a picture of a spiral galaxy is still within the galactic plane from which we are picturing and yet some of the complexity may be missed in my personing to which reality may in principle be flowing but my language and perspective cannot fully render adequate.

While certainly not as a heavy-handed interpretation to see oneself in the history of philosophy, I would like to warn of a tendency of human thought to reify aspects of our relations. This mistake has been made since Plato who regarded both the subjective act of knowing faculty like *Nous* from the object known like *Eidos*. Overturning this dangerous tendency is the goal of the speculative philosopher who must reawaken in all philosophy the absolute relationality of persons as the very condition of speculative metaphysics. Reifications of speculation and passing them off as the only dogmatic truth breeds a tribalism and inhospitality that damages our ability to live alongside each other peacefully, and this is especially true when the object of speculation is God. In this way, speculative philosophy qua radical empiricism is always a way into peace, a reminder of the necessity of a shared cosmopolitanism because of the limit of our shared intellectual imagination and subsequent metaphysical faculties to never be able to transcend the positionality and relationality of personing. To prevent such tendencies, let us then try and speculate from the personal sphere where I undergo experience and maintain intellectual modesty of all speculative impulse.

4. Relative-stability is never absolute-stability. There is no pure stasis, no immutable essence, except the description of the varying degrees of relative stability. Relative stability is the quasi-permanence of a structure relative to personal experience and inference about its structure must be taken as they are experienced within time. For instance, a river may cut and alter the landscape. To us, the river is relatively-stable since such changes do not drastically change our experience in our

⁹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 5.

¹⁰ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 395-400.

lifetime. The quasi-permanence of the river in relation to us may even generate a constant possibility that we must confront. The same fictitious river flows in such and such a direction and any attempt to ford the river must confront the current moving in said direction. The problem of reification occurs when people abstract relative-stability as an example of a stable and finished block universe as if all possibilities are known or could be known in principle. Relative-stable structures will change, however, to entire ecosystems. Given that the event of its structure is in constant relation to geophysical changes that take place for us in the inferences of geologic time, our river should be regarded as an unfolding and changing being.

There is an implication to such a postulate. Materiality thus expresses varying degrees of stability in which change manifests at varying degrees of intensity and experience. Some relations are more easily recognized in terms of the varying degrees of process and change inherent in what is being described and the relative sphere of our own becoming. Processes that last longer than human lives can only be posited by an accurate and scientific assessment of the change and effect relations that gives rise to the becoming and perishing that humans cannot see in their own temporal limits. Like metaphysics, such becoming must be imagined within a scientific frame of reference whereas our practical needs may reify the abstracted idea from the concrete instance of it. When regarded through such abstraction, the relations lose the lustre of their explanatory appeal.

5. Relatively-stable entities are made up of relations and causally in relation to the entire multiverse. By multiverse, I mean the many different qualitative ways and richness in how our relations may be experienced (and thus interpreted) from which differences of practice may result but from which no access to the totality itself can adjudicate more appropriate or less appropriate ways of practice. In that way, some may go to Catholic Adoration and be with Christ whereas the atheist janitor may come into the same space washing and cleaning before a piece of leaven bread. The Janitor may not have any shame in swearing before the bread in the monstrance since for him the claim of its sanctification is but pure myth. In this way, I observe along James that connections interpreted in the same changing flux of experience and activity may result in similarly repeated practices for some and not for others. There is no one single thread of privileged interpretation that runs through the experience of the same bread, yet there is some degree of sameness to which some communities may establish and stand in the same relation-to the bread. In more general terms, "Taken as it does appear, our universe is to a large extent chaotic. No one single type of connection runs through all the experiences that compose it."¹¹ The only commonality between them will be the causal relations of how bread breaks down organically. The many different ways in which the same irreducible content may be interpreted generates a pluralism on its own.

6. There is no absolute pluralism in which reality is completely incommensurable. Complete incommensurability is undermined by the manner in which our shared human experience tends (but does not have to) focus on present existential needs. What makes existentialism somewhat true is the shared attention to what we all have a selective interest in focusing the fields of our attention on, and thus generating cultural ways of coping with those same existential needs that cut all the way down into the personal sphere. The philosophical differences are the various manners in which various systems - whether religious ways of life like Christianity, Buddhism etc. and philosophical ways of being, say Stoicism, or more secular and creative ways like artistic exploration map onto our lived-experience. Given that these systems speak to some without causing harm to others, then there is a degree of pluralism. As James asserts his own belief, "that a pluralistic and incompletely integrated universe [is] describable only by the free use of the word 'some.'"¹² This incompletely integrated universe demands of us what is also in constant flux. In fact, we do not have access to reality in a static form to privilege any of these forms of life. We can only pragmatically assess them in terms of how they generate consequences and thus ethics, not metaphysics, is what limits the incommensurability we often find between the various orthopraxies generated in culture and within religion.

7. Built into human experience are the various forms of life. Forms of life generate particular applications of universal moral principles that are discovered by the rational form of human

¹¹ William James, 'A World of Pure Experience'. 24.

¹² *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 106.

experience, which we may call the form of personal life. The form of personal life is the phenomenologically constitutive feature of all human experiences that is reflected at the level of moral consciousness inside time. Many people confuse forms of life and the application and the moral principles that describe, at bottom, the form of personal life. In a way, morality is more closely known than forms of life, which are not the same. Morality is the form of personal life, and cannot ever be exhaustively prescriptive. Instead, morality is, at best, a regulative set of principles that are primitively basic to the form of personal life, detectable by phenomenological intuition of our shared affective experience and then reflected upon in terms of its coherence.¹³ Morality is an expression of human intrapersonal relations, common lived realities of our shared embodiedness, and the vulnerability we all share in relation to each other. The form of personal life is the absolute containing set of all other forms of life that inhabit the form of personal life. Forms of life refer, then, to the socio-political and economic arrangements that delivers the necessities of civilization and all conceptual tensions and ruptures the principles of the form of personal life generate in terms of how we organize the very materiality of our societies.

8. Given the limitations of experience and the tendency to reify aspects of experience, which may also change, we must be open to the possibility that the universe may change in some fashion beyond our ken to know. For this reason, we must be open to the proposition that just because something is not actual does not mean that the actuality is never possible. Instead, an openness to reality and experience must lie a conception of growth. All possibilities are, therefore, actual, even if not actualized. In this way, contained at the kernel of the universe is an organicity unearthed by Whitehead and James. The universe is James's stream, the Heraclitean river which may cut this way or that, and our humility in acknowledging this fact is a metaphysical recognition in the vast cosmological streams ability to flow differently than we might suspect or anticipate

II. What is a Person?

In this essay, so far, I have taken granted the ontological nature of persons. Given the overwhelming complex nature of this concept, let me review in a sense how persons have been understood historically and how this response to see the person as a set of ongoing composite relations in personing in the next section differs from those attempts that have existed to define its scope. Since much of this work is in contrast to a Schelerian framework, I find myself similarly fascinated as was Scheler on the question: What is a person? For this reason, I also ground my discussion of those past philosophical frameworks as Scheler understood them.

Scheler starts his *Human Place and the Cosmos* with three conceptions of the human person. In each conception, then there may be an element of truth. However, these three interpretive trends only refer to the problem of the person in Europe and European civilization. In this way, we should remain open that there are other interpretive renderings of the person in other philosophical systems the world over (for example like Buddhist interpretations of life as 'mind only' or as the natural state of being a spontaneous loving embodied creature). Scheler's clustered categories are not as set and rigid as Scheler's categories pretend. For him, they are irreconcilable and he is accurate that they are in constant tension with each other on a cultural level. Whether or not the tension in the cultural level of these categories is maintained philosophically is another matter. These categories of the person are:

(1) The Created persons interpretation is a result of the Jewish-Christian tradition. Scheler does not mention Islam as contributing to this conception of the person even though it is an Abrahamic religion like the other two just mentioned.

(2) The Rational persons interpretation is a result of Scheler painting with a large brush of our Ancient Greek tradition. Let me reproduce the entire passage,

...the human being is what he is through his possession of what is variably called "reason," logos, phronesis, ratio, mens—'logos' meaning here the possession of speech as well as the ability to grasp the "what" [the essence] of each and every entity. Closely connected with this view is the theory that there is also a reason above the human being that underlies the whole universe and with which the human being alone is in a state of participation.¹⁴

¹³ For the best articulation of this methodology, see Edgar S. Brightman's *The Moral Laws*.

¹⁴ Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, 5.

In this passage, we participate in a rational universe. This ontological participation harmonizes with the larger sense or order and purpose in it. Thus, we can see how and why Scheler may find the participation of persons within purpose meaningful since his phenomenology discerns the ontological relations through which we apprehend our involvement in meaning-making from beginning in an experience all the way through to an experience's end.

(3) The Naturalistic persons interpretation embodies a conception in which the human person "represents a late stage in the evolution of our planet."¹⁵ In this conception, persons are the product of energies and animal abilities we have inherited from our shared ancestral and evolutionary past. This naturalistic person view uncritically arrives at its ontological interpretation of the person from scientific categories up to and including evolutionary theories that define the human being as a toolmaker (*homo faber*) and nothing more.

Now, I would like to suggest the metaphysical direction of my speculative efforts. I think there is strong enough reason to see this possibility as a fourth conception of the person, even though it is not supported in Scheler's overall narrow view of Western philosophy. We can call this the onto-relational view being developed that incorporates the four relational modes of personing. While I cannot in this sketch fix the permanent mystery answer for all time which of these conceptions must be or how they extensively differ from what I am proposing here, I will only say at this point that if someone were to take up and argue for any of these interpretations of the human person, then they must make clear how Being becomes in the personal sphere as I indicate in the next section.

III. The Four Relational Modes of Personing

In the first part, I gave some postulates that condition and give rise to some thoughts regarding the four modes of personing. Other times, I have called these four modes: modes of relating-to. While one may be inclined to abstract persons out of these relations, there are only these relations. Like James, I am inclined to accept that relations exist thoroughly and while we may abstract *relata* from these relations, even to the point of analysis or some other creative endeavour, there is no true abstraction of one end of the relation in experience from the entailed end. Persons are thoroughly ontologically related, and any philosophical anthropology investigating persons must regard persons as developing expressions of these fundamentally ontological relations. Whenever I talk about the person singularly and do not mention the opposite object of its relation, then that should be understood as a convention. Lurking in back of my mind constantly is the fact that only a relational ontology of persons captures the unfolding essence of personing.

These relations are not phenomenological descriptions. They are the various modes in which phenomenology takes place internal to each of the ways these modes of relating-to occur. In other words, my onto-relational hypothesis of the four modes is a necessary precondition for phenomenological reduction and the epoché. Part of my problem with phenomenology has always been its inertia. When the phenomenologist has completed her descriptions and she has figured out how much of the description prefigures our pre-theoretical understanding of the appearances of phenomena. However, the phenomenologist never asks what lies beneath whatever word they use for 'intentionality.' Instead, no matter the phenomenologist and no matter the Husserlian heresy of the phenomenologist some aspect of the description becomes reified, and phenomenology then becomes a narrow ontological interpretation of some type of relation it exposes as ontologically basic to experience. I propose then that these four modes of relating-to are either the devolution¹⁶ I am open to either interpretation of the four modes of relating-to, though I am currently favouring the latter over the former.

These fundamental personing relations are:

1. Persons-to-culture: In this relational field of inquiry, the social sciences study the various way these relations manifest at the level of aggregate intrapersonal relations. In philosophy, this relation

¹⁵ idem.

¹⁶ I know this is a rather robust claim to make. This claim is a characterization of the entire phenomenological tradition whether we are talking about the bodily intentionality of Merleau-Ponty or the care structure of Heidegger's being-in-the-world. This claim also reveals my dissatisfaction with phenomenologists who claim their descriptions are ontologically neutral.

entails assessments about the social and political conditions of society's design and the ends to which it aims. With persons relating to culture, questions of philosophy of religion and art also belong since art and religion are modes of culture that inform questions about the end to which society aims. This relation presupposes the personal ground of freedom inherent in personing. To question the end or set of ends to which society aims requires freedom.

2. Persons-to-nature: In this relational field of inquiry, the natural sciences study the various ways these relations of the person relate to the environing world and to what implications obtain with the causal knowledge of those natural objects that do not possess any freedom. In the person-to-nature relation, we can also discern the metaphysical questions about the status of objects, our embodiment, and the questions that have long belonged to philosophy of mind and previous philosophers positing unchanging substances to account for some natural objects. In a process-based account, however, natural objects are in constant relation to other modes of other natural objects or to me. One should understand the perishing and rising of natural objects appear and are given phenomenologically more as an emerging event, and for this reason, I do not understand natural objects through older more antiquated conceptions of substance, or even to describe matter itself as a substance.

The difference in the passive relations of non-life is in their inability to affect change, appearing as it were to be wholly complete in their determination, though these natural objects are still in active physical relation to other processes, even processes that unfold in geological or stellar time. When contrasted to persons, these natural objects are actively undergoing mostly passive relations to other causal objects and laws proximate to the object and others remote from it. The physical relation and processes may even be blind to the human eye. This contrast reveals the stark division persons feel towards the inert objects of experience and how the basic constituents of space, time, and our most developed science at the time inform this relation. In addition, life manifests as the potential for freedom to manifest at the most basic levels of being an embodied and affective organism.

This freedom is characterized by the complexity and embodied organization of the type of cognition and relations an organism may have with the world. One should not think as a species and privilege the human sphere of the personal over the ability of living animals to have similar if not different levels of freedom and relational possibilities. The human sphere is only a limit of our ability to relate to the world (and conceive of it), a mediating field from which our Being expresses its Becoming. Given that life is simply Being expressing its Becoming in embodied materiality, our personal sphere is a limit to our relation to other personal spheres of the many ways in which life can become. As a limit, it may blind us to the personhood and manifestation of the personal in other forms of life.

3. Persons-to-others: In this relational field of inquiry, ethics studies the various ways persons relate to and reciprocate such that every other is also a person. One might even venture to claim that ethics consists in proposing principles to judge the best type of human conduct, and these principles define the scope of the best relations Persons-to-others may take¹⁷ This relation manifests in the activity of living in community with others, and also reveals the basic laws of ontological vulnerability and interdependency inherent in the human condition. The reason why we question what we ought to do in intrapersonal relationships with others is because we are in community with others. Inherent in community is also the freedom to question which judgments we should value, and how the affective dimension of experiencing these relations uniquely situates us to call into question constantly the manner in which our freedom manifests in these ethical relationships. The exercise of this freedom in terms of the cultural modes of religion, art, science, and politics and the constraints of practicality and institutionalization of habit underlies questions of ends in the person-to-culture relationship.

4. Persons-to-self: In this relational field of inquiry, the person becomes an object of self-examination, description, and evaluation. The person-to-self relation is the study of self-conception as it matters for the actualization of freedom into concrete and possibly ideal conceptions of faith, vocation, and duties of self-perfection that confronts the projected unity of our own becoming self. In this relation, persons confront the basic nullity existentialists rightly insisted

¹⁷ This sense of ethics takes its inspiration from Edgar S. Brightman's *Moral Laws*.

upon, and they identified the very freedom at the ground of all mediation and personal activity of life. The personal sphere cannot help but experience itself as that which can freely relate-to in the manner the person decides. This freedom becomes from its very form we enact. Persons decide upon the relational self-image of projected possibility in this fundamental relation. In this way, every choice is seizing upon and taking a relation to the ideal and possible formations of our own projections in our individualness, otherness, and culturalness. At the heart of the person-to-self relation is a type of striving, wrestling with desires, the potential to realize them, and the actuality of success and failure.

To end the person-to relational side of the four modes, the very freedom that underlies the manifestation and activity of personing in all spheres of personal life are generative of meaning inside time. In the dynamic unfolding of these relations, meaning and values are generated. The space of meaning, the space of reasons, the meaning of art, and the communicability of language all manifest in the in-between-ness of being a person in the space and time of the modes of relating-to. Persons are their very activity manifesting in the very intentional acts; each person a personal sphere of generativity. The transcendence of the world is achieved in the aggregate coalescing of every person's freedom both authentically or inauthentically expressed, and only in reciprocal relation of personing does the concrete world find existential density between us to be shared.

As in Edmund Husserl's co-constituting relationship of intentionality, the intended objects also constitute the first-personal dimension of experiencing the world. Therefore, there are corollary relationships based on the four fundamental relations above. These are:

1. Culture-to-person: An inauthentic freedom is one in which the freedom of the person is overtaken by the sociality and burdens of already decided modes of being. Habits can become so engrained that they become tradition, and tradition can be so oppressive in this form that the practical exercise of cultural freedom in terms of art making, religious ritual, and any other cultural activity (even secular modes) may be banned or strictly controlled. Culture can also enliven the ends to which persons are gravitating, and when we see the authentic bursting forth of freedom, we see the richness that culture can provide as often is the case with many sources of identity, community, history, and tradition. Pluralism is just the recognition of the many sources in which personal freedom and interpersonal communities intersect. The more free we are, the more a reservoir of possibility underlies how culture can inform the ground of freedom for persons in community, and the greater range of experimentation societies may explore. As with anything, persons also constitute the possibility of culture itself, and so the cultural spaces come back to enliven, empower, or deaden and harm. Persons are the immediate locus of value-creation of persons inhabiting these cultural spaces.

2. Nature-to-person: Nature has a givenness that constrains the realization of meaning and value. Nature provides the very physical precondition of how bodies interact, the set of capacities our bodies possess, the energy of psychic drives and the manner in which persons exist as an embodied and affective organism. The natural sciences lift up the very envioning world, and illuminate the many ways in which nature is an organized chaos. The natural sciences give us knowledge of the envioning world's scaffolding in terms of causal relationships, generalized laws, and powers inherent in relational bodies, and eventually what limits to embodied existence circumscribe our practical realization of a person's freedom. In this way, nature affects us often in explicit ways in which causality manifests in the order of our lived-body. Our lived-body is part of the envioning world coalescing as a nexus between many different modes of relating-to. The envioning world is the nexus of causal relationships that all sciences help to discern (both natural and social sciences), and it's in the expression of the unity required to be a science that often makes us think of personing in relationship to only causal laws. Moving into the 21st century, our interconnectedness to this causal structure of nature may unfold in new ways as epigenetics discerns the stimuli and material conditions that gives rise to changes in the lived-body produced by more exact models.

The problem of phenomenology and the natural attitude only arises when we think of nature is exactly the same orientation we have to every other fundamental relation. For the non-philosopher, this means that we think of the entire field and sphere of being a person from the third-person and impersonal view of science, describing the relationship of persons through the imagined view of God's perspective looking in upon the world. In this way, we think of the natural objects and include the human person among them, generalizing away from the inescapable first-personal point of view

that gives rise to generalized and impersonal views in the first place. When we do so, the natural attitude to see subjective life impersonally takes over, filtering out the proper perspective of persons relating to the world—that is, personing. In my language of relational ontology, when nature is emphasized beyond the relation to be all that is, we often see persons as merely a distanced and separate physical object divorced from the modes of relating-to that constitute every position persons could take.

3. Others-to-persons: Given the reciprocity of persons and the mutual ontological interdependency between persons, one person's other becomes a person to your otherness. In other words, the terms of this very relation are in complete reciprocation. For Emmanuel Levinas, this occurs in a type of transcendence, a givenness in which the metaphor and analogy of height stand for the more general personalist truth that persons are of absolute dignity and worth. In being so absolute and unique, there is a radical givenness to which others truly possess since in being transcendent in relation to others, persons are the origination of value and ultimate source of meaning. All persons in their relation transcend in value the object of their relation, and if this object of one's relation is another person, then they transcend in value equally. This givenness can be limited by the cultural ethos that conditions and socializes us in varying social, political and economic systems to be blind to this radical and transcendental givenness of all persons. One mundane piece of evidence for such phenomenological truth is readily apparent whenever we fill out paperwork to be hired. We go to "human resources," and in that department's namesake stands the ultimate truth that we are not persons before the institutions that govern us in Western and capitalist developed countries.

4. Self-to-person: Given that the self is a unified projection of possibility in relation to myself, it constitutes a sense of what might be and this can completely overtake a person in much the same way that I relied earlier on an existential vocabulary in the Culture-to-person relation. One can easily become deluded by self-ideals to the point they hinder rather than enhance and facilitate one's own becoming. The ground of freedom can intimidate even the possessor of such freedom. In the face of our overwhelming lack of determination persons flee from the very freedom that is the source of that mode of relating-to. The existentialists called this inauthenticity, a lack of possessing ourselves, and here, I think, persons are thrown upon themselves in ways that our cultural resources might not anticipate. Self-imposed projections often come with the institutional resources and habits that can undermine or enhance the person's exercise of freedom. Habits may also anesthetize us to the exercise of our very own freedom. In this way, I am unsure if the existentialists capture inauthentic resolve and interpret a lack of freedom correctly in de-personalized representations.

In these relationships, then, there is a back-and-forthness to the personing. Personing is being-in-the-world-as-a-person and in that relation there is also being constituted by the generative realities of culture, nature, the self, and others. There is no perspective outside of being a person and in relation to these four modes. We may be temporarily confused as to taking aspects of our relation at face value, seeing culture or nature as distinct things apart from the persons that inhabit them. Such a view is illusory, however, even if natural and social scientists are trained to conceive of their regional field of inquiry as ontologically privileged. Disciplinarily focusing your attention on some natural or cultural aspect does not cut off that phenomena from being mediated through the personal sphere. As persons, we are always in relation-to. In fact, there are only varying degrees of selective attention directed outward and then communicated to other persons about the aspects of these relations. All concepts are derived from percepts, perceptual particulars and aspects of experience in order to interpret and make sense of the particulars derived from these four modes of relating-to. In other words, there is never a time where concepts about culture or nature are constructed outside of my personing. All knowledge and science issue forth from the sphere of personal acts and the relational aspects of act-objects.

While I have attempted to propose a sketch for a personalist framework for philosophical anthropology, much turns on the concept of relation. The two most likely candidates are that relations manifest externally in the world or that they manifest inherently in the mind. My silence on the ontology of relations is due in part to what phenomenological analysis requires to claim neutrality. I have also indicated in this essay how fraught with difficulty such claims about the neutrality of phenomenology are. The consequence of this lack of neutrality is inevitable. A reification will occur

in the attempt to describe what we experience, some assumption will become so essential to the background that all else will centre on it to receive its light. For me, the concept of relation is that concept. The initial reviewers of this essay were right to point this assumption out.

One will note that all four modes of relation-to take their cue from the person. For any person, there is no perspective of relation outside the personal sphere. In this way, a consequence of my idea of relation must at least be consistent with this fact. Relations may be impersonally constitutive of the universe beyond my ken or they may not be. The fact is that relations are limited to how they become in the person and I could not know those impersonal relations constitutive of the universe beyond my ken. The implication is a twofold dilemma. I cannot in principle know such relations at all or in imagining relations externally independent from me is to still arise within the generative play of the imagination within me. If we go with the latter, then my very personal sphere is still constituting what we abstract from us as an external relation. For now, I am dedicated to this latter hypothesis.

So far I have said nothing concerning where the ontology of relations falls. Initially, I took my cue in thinking of relations from the types of phenomenological domains I felt were describable by many phenomenologists such as Husserl, Levinas, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre and De Beauvoir¹⁸ In this way, I am at least provisionally dedicated to the fact that only relations exist and that to focus on the reified side of the subject for an idealism or the to focus entirely on the external for a realism is to miss the point. What both a realism and idealism would still require is the presupposition of a processive account of experience that is the precondition for all philosophical speculations¹⁹

My lack of commitment now also does not rule out in principle that various answers to the question ‘What are persons?’ can be supplied. Ready-made interpretations such as evolutionary, theological, or the Greco-Roman rational animal are all answers to what persons are, yet there is no decisively satisfying one answer since in answer in any one of these ways, the scientist, theologian, or classical philosopher has pushed one salient mode of relating-to as the conception that which we should be privileging, rather than exploring the fact that persons are ontologically relational through and through and becoming in those relations through and through. Philosophical and conceptual disagreement still ranges between these conceptions, and these are not the only interpretations of human life compatible with this personalist framework for philosophical anthropology.

Another impression my efforts here may suggest is that these four modes of relating-to are the ways that one becomes a person—that is thinking that the personal sphere was not already underway and that the process is co-constituted by the field of relations with others such that becoming a person is a crescendo in an overall process, an event in itself. One might think of my efforts here resembling something like the Ubuntu perspective. Unlike the Ubuntu perspective in which one acquires value by developing into a person because the development of *ena* (selfhood) is an achievement, persons always possess the inviolable dignity because the ontological status of being a person is something

¹⁸ The omission of Heidegger from this list is on purpose. As personalism is both a metaphysics and an ethics of what it means to be a person, no respectable personalist who is inspired by phenomenology should ever draw an account from Heidegger. Heidegger purposefully avoided values as part of his fundamental ontology and that weakness is in part responsible for his choices. As a Jamesian, I believe philosophies are always generated by the felt needs of those who build them. A phenomenological ontology not concerned with ethics is abominable. Let this footnote be a testament to my lasting intellectual judgment that Heidegger is a Nazi stooge, an abomination whose fundamental ontology contains within it the avoidance of the ethical from which history should forever condemn him and the failure of *Being and Time*.

¹⁹ Much of this essay takes its inspiration from Whitehead and James as one reviewer noted. I have been silent on where the metaphysical reality of personing resides in the hopes that whatever conception of the whole proves to be true, these four modes of relating-to will be constitutive of that open conception. In light of this attempt, the reader will have to wait to see exactly where James and Whitehead differ with respect to where the reality of the world resides in both process thought and radical empiricism. In the meantime, in a recent book by Gary Herstein and Randall Auxier entitled *The Quantum of Explanation: Whitehead's Radical Empiricism*, Auxier and Herstein have engaged this question directly and probably can do the relation between James and Whitehead better than I ever could.

nobody can take away from individual persons, even if some person decides by their own agency to reject the source of that dignity they share in and become a moral monster. All moral monsters still and will always in my ethical system to which this ontology of relations undergirds, always be persons. Dignity is a value that no human community can ever take away from the personal sphere. The personal sphere is that which is no object, not determined in any way that the person could ever be an object despite some people treat other personal spheres as objects. The reason for this inability to turn a personal sphere into an object is because the ability the personal sphere has to transcend its very own immanence in the freedom to take on the relations is evidence that it is the source and constitution of all meaning and value in the world in the first place.

One will also note that this personalist framework is silent on God, and nowhere in the four modes of personing is God located. At present, this author is confused about the nature of God. I can offer a tentative hypothesis that may be true given the limits outlined herein and the consequent pluralism of those limits. The reader must understand that this author is not orthodox regarding the hypothesis of the Divine. Instead, I use the term ‘God’ because that is how I grew up Catholic, and being in the United States that term is interchangeable and a limit to which most people conceive of the Divine. With that said, I wish to embrace James’s sense of the fringed more offered at the end of ‘A World of Pure Experience.’ Like me, you may be dissatisfied with that answer of James’s later writings. He gives us glimpses of a system that calls for completion. In that essay, he writes:

[W]e at every moment can continue to believe in an existing beyond. It is only in special cases that our confident rush forward gets rebuked. The beyond must, of course, always in our philosophy be itself of an experiential nature. If not a future experience of our own or a present one of our neighbour; it must be a thing in itself in Dr. Prince’s and Professor Strong’s sense of the term—that is, it must be an experience for itself whose relation to other things we translate into the action of molecules, ether-waves, or whatever else the physical symbols may be. This opens the chapter of the relations of radical empiricism to panpsychism into which I cannot enter now.

The beyond can in any case exist simultaneously—for it can be experienced to have existed simultaneously—with the experience that practically postulates it by looking in its direction, or by turning or changing in the direction of which it is the goal. Pending that actuality of union, in the virtuality of which the “truth,” even now, of the postulation consists, the beyond and its knower are entities split off from each other. The world is in so far forth a pluralism of which the unity is not fully experienced as yet. But as fast as verifications come, trains of experience, once separate, run into one another; and that is why I said earlier in my article, that the unity of the world is on the whole undergoing increase. The universe continually grows in quantity by the new experiences that graft themselves upon the older mass; but these ever new experiences often help the mass to a more consolidated form.²⁰

In the passage above, there is a sense of more, a sense of beyond to which the relations in my system point. They intend this deep sense of more at the fringes of experience. Perhaps, I speculate that the totality of this more indicates that the divine is either a growing totality to which all relations aim and facilitate growing in the fact that they intend the proximate and the distal remote beyond from which also comes in its own way by way of relation to us. In this way, we exchange relations in mutual reciprocity with a sense of this beyond and more, the Jamesian unseen order. The simple fact that we grow in proportion to that which we experience and accumulate them means in mutual reciprocity that while we are not together with that sense of the more we may yearn – separated as individuals – there may exist a time where we acquire more depth and feeling of relating to the beyond. What this beyond is cannot be said, but it is there and so for now let the Jamesian hypothesis stand where I have been silent.

J. Edward Hackett

²⁰ James, *A World of Pure Experience*, 46-47.

Bibliography

- Brightman, E.S., *The Moral Laws*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1933
- Burgos, J.M., 'Wojtyla's Personalism as Integral Personalism: The Future of an Intellectual Project' in *Quaestiones Disputatae* vol. 9 no. 2. Spring 2019.
- Dewey, J., *Experience and Nature*, New York, Dover Publications, 1925.
- Herstein, G., and Auxier, R., *The Quantum of Explanation: Whitehead's Radical Empiricism* New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Hackett, J.E., *Persons and Values in Pragmatic Phenomenology: An Exploration of Mortal Metaphysics*, Willmington, DE, Vernon Press, March 2018.
- James, W., *A Pluralistic Universe*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- 'A World of Pure Experience' in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, New York: Dover, 2003.
- Scheler, *The Constitution of the Human Being*. Trans. John Cutting, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008.
- 'Idealism and Realism' in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. David Lachterman. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- Whitehead, A.N., *Process and Reality*, ed. D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sheburne, New York: Free Press, 1978.