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A contribution to the history of the word person

Friedrich Adolf
Trendelenburg

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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE WORD PERSON.*

A POSTHUMOUS TREATISE BY ADOLF TRENDELENBURG.*

INTRODUCTION BY RUDOLF EUCKEN.

Trendelenburg's busy life in a great city and his many avocations prevented the completing of several large works he had planned. Had he been able to finish the Ethics and Psychology upon which he was engaged, our comprehension of his scientific method would have been enriched by many important touches. But a strict injunction not to publish any unfinished work made it impossible to fill up the gaps from his posthumous writings.

A paper was found, however, that could not be considered unfinished, and the author would certainly have published it himself in a collection of minor articles, had he found an opportunity for such a compilation. It is an essay dated January 20, 1870, entitled "A Contribution to the History of the Word Person."

This work, to be sure, is now exactly forty years old, but in spite of its small compass it may be regarded as a valuable expression of the individuality of this thinker and investigator, whose life-work retains its significance notwithstanding the fact that time has opened other paths since then. Here Trendelenburg's friendly relation to history, his eagerness to bring historical periods into close relationship and to let present conditions develop as much as possible from the past, are clearly shown in this treatise. One is equally impressed by the artistic charm of his presentation with its simple grace, as well as by the breadth of view, the balanced interest, the thought and care bestowed upon the work.

Trendelenburg's close attachment to the old philosophy did not permit him a near relationship to Kant, nor even a full appreciation of the revolutionary service Kant had performed. That he prized him very highly, nevertheless, is fully evident from this brief essay, for its whole trend of development is toward Kant, as its goal. Here we may see how Trendelenburg was prepared so very effectively by his historical labors in most diverse fields to deepen the concept of personality. In this way the whole leads up to the chief ethical concepts of Kant.

I.

KANT has redefined the concept of person in its relation to morals. A good part of his ethical doctrine is contained in the sentence, "Man is a person." As an

* Translated from the German by Carl H. Haessler.—This essay, written in 1870, was not published until 1908, when it appeared as a posthumous paper in the *Kant-Studien*. We wish to thank Prof. Rudolf Eucken, of Jena, who

antithesis to the concept of thing, Kant says in his *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten*¹ (1785) [Foundation of Metaphysical Ethics], "Rational beings are called persons because their nature distinguishes them as an end unto themselves; that is, as something that may not be used simply as a means, and consequently in so far limits all caprice and is an object of esteem." Since the rational nature exists as an end unto itself and not simply as a means to be utilized at the pleasure of this or that will, the practical commandment, says Kant, should read as follows: "So act that, in your own person as well as in the person of every one else, you always employ human nature never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end." "Man is, to be sure, sufficiently unholy," says Kant elsewhere,² "but human nature in his person must be holy to him. In the whole creation everything one wishes and which is under one's control can be employed simply as a means; man alone, and with him every rational creature, is an end unto himself."

If man as a rational being is a person, and as such an end unto himself, it follows that conforming to a rational end he is capable of a rational decision, and this is the essence of his freedom.

Kant therefore attributes freedom and end unto oneself to person, and in this personality that arouses esteem he sees the sublimity of human nature.

One of Kant's good services is that he has newly illuminated the worth of man (all things have value, a market price, but man alone has worth). This concept and that of esteem for man, who is in this sense a person, went hand in hand and together achieved growing recognition. This

edited the manuscript, and Prof. Hans Vaihinger of Halle, the editor of *Kant-Studien*, for their kind permission to publish both the essay of Professor Trendelenburg and their own comments made in this connection. Professor Eucken's introduction has been slightly modified to suit the present occasion. Ed.

¹ Page 56.

² *Krit. der pr. Vernunft* (1788), p. 155.

service has quietly directed life into better paths, and so far as its scientific significance is concerned, the concept has found its way even into theological ethics as, for instance, in Nitsch's^a system of Christian doctrine.

In the above sense, the concept of person or personality in man expresses for us the source and substance of his moral being. We would be at a loss to translate this concept back into Greek, the noble mother of our scientific ethical terms. Plato and Aristotle have no adequate expression for it. They talked about the man, not the person, when they wished to designate what was peculiar to man. A concept like that of Kant cannot develop where there are slaves, at any rate not out of the general moral consciousness. It denotes progress in scientific concepts when a later period is able to define such a concept as person.

In order to define our subject we ask how can "person", *persona*, that is, the mask held before the face to indicate the rôle assumed, become the expression of the inmost moral essence, the expression of that which is most characteristic in man? Scientific terms, for instance like subjective and objective, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, moral certainty in contradistinction to mathematical certainty, the ideal and the concrete, not infrequently have their history. It is my desire to make a contribution to the history of the word "person" within the scope of the question just raised: how did *persona*, the mask of which the fox in *Phaedrus* says, "What a mighty figure! but brain it has none" (I, 7,) how came it, in the progress of usage, to mean personality in the Kantian terminology?

II.

In discussing the history of a word one thinks in the first place of its pedigree. However, the etymology of the word *persona* has not been definitely settled to this day.

^a Karl Immanuel Nitsch, a German theologian, 1787-1868.

There is a well-known passage in Gellius^b V, 7, which reads:

Lepide mehercules et scite Gabius Bassus in libris, quos de origine vocabulorum composuit, unde appellata persona sit, interpretatur; a personando enim id vocabulum factum esse coniectat; "Nam caput," inquit, "et os cooperimento personae tectum undique, unaque tantum vocis emittendae via pervicem, quoniam non vaga neque diffusa est, in unum tantummodo exitum collectam coactamque vocem ciet et magis claros canorosque sonitus facit. Quoniam igitur indumentum illud oris clarescere et resonare vocem facit, ob eam causam persona dicta est, o littera propter vocabuli formam productiore."

[Neatly and cleverly, by Hercules, does Gabius Bassus expound whence *persona* is derived, in books he has written on the origin of substantives. For he conjectures this substantive to have been made from *personando* (sounding through). He says, "By means of a mask covering the head and face on every side, the voice issues, strengthened and reinforced without being scattered or dissipated, through a single opening, and becomes clearer and more melodious. Since, then, this mask makes the voice resound clearly, it is called *persona* for that reason, the letter *o* being lengthened on account of the form of the substantive."]

According to this, *persona*, the mask, obtains its name from its property of concentrating the voice and letting the sound come out stronger and clearer. Apart from the contradictory quantity (*persōno* and *persōna*), this would derive the name from an attribute instead of from the essential nature of the mask, viz., its characteristic facial features.

J. C. Scaliger^c questions this origin, but the derivation he suggests, *peri soma** [around the body] or *peri zoma*† [around the waist], is still further from the mark.

An ancient vocabulary brings a deeper meaning into

^b Aulus Gellius, a Roman who died about 180 A. D., is known for his *Noctes Atticae* [Attic Nights] a book into which he put everything interesting he had heard or read.

^c Julius Cæsar Scaliger (1484-1558) was a famous Italian scholar, very much at home in the classics, and a leader of science in his time.

* περί σῶμα.

† περί ζῶμα.

the word, explaining *persona* as *per se una* [one in or of itself].

The latest derivation I have seen gives a still deeper meaning. Since *ona* in Latin words signifies fullness (which may be true, as in *annona* [the yearly yield], *Pomona* [the goddess of orchards], *Bellona* [the goddess of war]), then *persona*, that is *per se ona* means fullness in or of itself, just as the person of Christ is regarded as the *pleroma*, the fullness or fulfilment.

In his academic treatise of 1858⁸ Jacob Grimm is not indisposed to classify *persona* in the group of masculine name-words represented by feminine nouns. He accepts the derivation from *personare* in so far as the change of quantity, which also occurs elsewhere, does not disturb him; but he explains the sense in a different way. The meaning does not come from a mask that heightens the sound of the voice, but *persona* might in itself indicate the speaker who gives sound to his speech, in the same way that *vocula*, used as an epithet, signifies one speaking softly, although in itself it is nothing but *parva vox* [little voice]. This etymology is very circuitous and hardly agrees with the customary usage of *personare*.

In our perplexity we are almost driven to another derivation suggested by Forcellini.^d If the mask came from Greece to Rome along with the theater, it is possible that the word *prosopon*‡ [face] or *prosopeion*** [mask], as a foreign word, underwent a violent transformation, somewhat as the foreign plant name *hyoskyamos*†† became *iusquiamus* [henbane, an herb] and the analogy becomes

⁸ *Denkschriften*, 1858, *Ueber die Vertretung männlicher durch weibliche Namensformen* [On the Representation of Masculine Substantives by Feminines], p. 49.

^d 1688-1768. An Italian philologist.

‡ *πρόσωπον*.

** *προσωπεῖον*.

†† *ὑοσκύαμος*.

closer when we assume (with Schwencke)^e that *prosopon* or *prosopeion* was transformed into *persona*, so that *persona* might stand for *prosopina* by the reverse of the process through which *Persephone* became *Proserpina* [queen of the lower world].

In this wealth of doubtful and uncertain conjectures, we may see that the family relationship of *persona* has not yet been discovered. Accordingly we shall return to the meaning which alone concerns our present purpose.

III.

In Luther's translation of the Bible, the word "person" has several meanings. In telling the story of a betrayal, Luther translates 2 Macc. xii. 4: *Sie ersäufeten sie alle an die zweihundert Person*†† [They drowned them all to the number of two hundred persons]. He renders Luke xix. 3, where Zacchaeus had climbed a mulberry tree in his desire to see Jesus: *Denn er war klein von Person* [Because he was small in person]. In the first passage, the Greek text and the Vulgate have only the numeral, and Luther, it seems, selected "persons" to include both men and women. In the second passage, the Greek describes Zacchaeus as *helikiai michros*,* the Latin says, *quia statura pusillus erat*. In the usage, *Er war klein von Person*, the outer appearance is an essential idea, as is the case with the mask, but it is here regarded as the appearance of the whole body.

Other constructions are more germane to our subject. Even in the Old Testament recurs the expression, *ohne Ansehen der Person* [without respect of person]. In Deut. x. 17, we read: "God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward;" in 2 Chron. xix.

^e 1853-.... A German philologist.

†† Hirschberg's edition has: *ersäufeten sie sie alle, in die zweihundert Personen*.

* *ἡλικία μικροῦ*.

7: "For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons"; Job. xxxiv. 19, "That accepteth not the persons of princes." The Hebrew expression has more meaning. "To accept the countenance," *basha' panim*.† can only mean to accept another's look, that is, to be well disposed toward him. When the Septuagint renders this phrase *thaumasai prosopon*‡ (2 Chron. xix. 7; cf. Deut. x. 17 and Job xxxiv. 19), it is a question whether "to admire a countenance" should be understood literally or whether the usage of *prosopon* had already assumed the conception we find it to have in Polybius for instance, namely, the conception of the rôle one plays in life. The Vulgate translates Deut. x. 17: *Deus qui personam non accipit* [God that accepteth not the person]; 2 Chron. xix. 7, *personarum acceptio* [acceptance of persons]; Job xxxiv. 19, "*qui non accipit personas principum*" [that accepteth not the persons of princes]. *Prosopon*, which does not yet signify the person before the court in Attic Greek, has become *persona* in the legal sense in this translation, and hence Luther's *ohne Ansehen der Person*. The *accipere personam* [to accept the person] explains itself in such terms as *persona accepta* and *persona grata*.

In *prosopon* as a mask, is always implied the carrying out of a rôle, the assuming of a character. New Testament expressions, reminding one of those just quoted from the Old Testament, are in still closer accord with this meaning. In Acts x. 34, 35, after the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius, Peter exclaims: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Similarly, in Rom. ii. 10, 11, the apostle Paul writes, "Glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the

† פָּנֵי אִישׁ

‡ θαυμάσαι πρόσωπον.

Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.” (Cf. also Gal. ii. 6). The Greek expressions are,

οὐκ ἔστι προσωπολήπτης ὁ θεός (Acts x. 34);

προσωποληψία (Rom. ii. 11);

πρόσωπον ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει (Gal. ii. 6), which corresponds to the rendering of Lev. xix. 15, in the Septuagint:

οὐ λήψῃ πρόσωπον πτωχοῦ οὐδὲ μὴ θαυμάσης πρόσωπον δυνάστου.

[Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty.]

The Vulgate translates by *personarum acceptio* (Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11) and *Deus personam hominis non accipit* (Gal. ii. 6). Whereas the legal usage of person is clearly apparent in this Latin translation, the Greek *prosopon* still has the particular conception in mind as represented by the mask, the sense being that in Christendom no respect for the person, that is for racial features, Jewish or Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, would obtain.

In the expression, “without respect of person,” there enters into the language the notion of a privilege to which some persons lay claim on some particular ground (for instance, superiority of race) as against the universal. In Latin, this conception of the particular is easily recognized when, for example, Cicero says in a letter to Pompey (*ad. Att.*, VIII, 11D) on the connection between the party which he had joined and the rôle he had played:

Ut mea persona semper ad improborum civium impetus aliquid videretur habere populare.

[So that my rôle seemed always to have something in it, inviting the attacks of the wicked.]

IV.

The conception of *persona* as a part played becomes still more probable when we see *prosopon* become *persona*



in the ethical sense among the Stoics whose concern in life was harmony with oneself, and consistent character. The Stoics are fond of comparisons and carry them even into their doctrines.

Thus we read in the brief ethics of Epictetus (*Encheiridion*, ch. 17):

Consider that you are the interpreter (*ὑποκριτής*) of a rôle whose character is determined by the Master (*διδάσκαλος*); if he wants a short rôle, short it is; if long, long; if he wants you to portray a poor man, see to it that you play the poor man with spirit; in the same manner when your part is that of a lame man, of a magistrate, or of an ordinary man. For to play well the assigned rôle (*πρόσωπον*) is your business, but to choose the rôle, the business of another.

In the same sense, chapter 37 has it:

If you take upon yourself a rôle beyond your power, you will play it poorly and awkwardly, and neglect another which you might have filled acceptably.

In his Dissertations Epictetus bids us, in the same sense, to learn the rôle assigned or assumed, to know what we wish to be, and not to forget our particular rôle. In the Dissertations I, 2, 12, we read:

When Florus asked Agrippinus for advice as to whether he should go to Nero's spectacle and accept a position there, Agrippinus answered, "Go ahead"; and when Florus inquired further why he did not go himself, Agrippinus replied, "I would not consider it for a moment, for whoever once looks upon such things, who examines into and estimates the value of externals, is not greatly unlike those who have forgotten their own rôles."

So, according to Stoic doctrine (Diog. Laert. VIII, § 160) the wise man will be like a good histrionic artist, *hypokrites*.**

These thoughts are not peculiar to the doctrine of Epictetus, the Stoic of Nero's time, but belong to the oldest of the Greek Stoics. At any rate we have a fragment of

** *ὑποκριτής*.

Teles, probably a contemporary of Chrysippus,^f similar in tone to the sayings of Epictetus, with this difference, that Tyche (Fortune) and not God in his providence composes the parts. The use of *persona* in this ethical sense of an assigned or assumed rôle is familiar to Cicero, for example in *De officiis*, I, 28 and 31.

In this interpretation we can easily recognize the essential feature of Stoic ethics. The well written rôle is in accordance with nature, as demanded by the first proposition of the Stoics, to live in accordance with nature; that is, to follow the dictates of reason which is the fundamental element of nature. The well written part, furthermore, particularizes the universal in accordance with the nature peculiar to each individual and grounds it in a rational mean.

In this way the aim of the Stoics is realized. The universal law of nature works in agreement with the individual will. For everything is as it should be and the course of life is beautiful when the will of the universal disposer and the *daemons* of the individual are in harmony. Inasmuch as the rôle is subordinated to the drama as a whole, but has its being nevertheless in the particular part, it is an artistic way of stating the Stoic doctrine. Moreover, the well written part is true to itself like the *vita sibi concors* [life consistent with itself] to which Seneca directs us. Accordingly, the wise man, who ought to resemble a good histrionic artist, must not only write the part himself but must also interpret it.

We have here, it is true, an ethical significance for *persona*, of characteristic stamp, but not the significance that expresses, as in our day, the essential principle of individual morality. In the German we still find traces of *persona* as mask or rôle; for example in the connection,

^f Died 208 B. C., a Stoic philosopher of great ingenuity in verbal subtleties.

^g In Greek thought, the spirit attending a man from birth to death. Cf. Roman *genius*.

er hat seine Person gut gespielt, gut vorgestellt [He played or portrayed his part well].

V.

The same term, *agit personam* [he plays a part] said of an actor on the stage, is a legal expression, when *agere apud iudicem* [to plead before the court], *actio* [suit] is used of the complaint. The plaintiff (*actor*) and the defendant, in plea and counter-plea, resemble the masks, the persons, on the stage. Different rôles in this play are assigned, as it were, to the plaintiff, the defendant and the judge. And so when the word *persona* became a legal term it had a correspondingly definite and physical meaning. Accordingly, *persona* is a favorite expression for plaintiff and defendant; as for instance in the *Institutiones* of Gaius,^h IV, § 86:

Qui autem alieno nomine agit intentionem quidem ex persona domini sumit, condemnationem autem in suam personam convertit.

[But he who pleads in another's name, (as a *cognitor* [attorney] or *procurator* [agent]) takes the accusation indeed from the person of his employer, but turns the condemnation on himself.]

In this way, it appears, *persona* became a strictly legal term.

Persona, then, indicates those who bear characteristic legal relations which are to be distinguished, as in the example of *persona domini*, *persona procuratoris*. Just as *persona* in its proper meaning of mask points to a particular or individual feature which has developed in the universal human physiognomy, so also the same term indicates, among the rhetoricians for instance, the relation to be distinguished between individuals:

Ut Hector ad Priamum persona filii est, ad Astyanactem persona

^h A. D. 110-180. The most famous authority on Roman Law. His *Institutiones* was a favorite hand-book of law, and forms the foundation of Justinian's "Institutes."

patris, ad Andromachen persona mariti, ad Paridem persona fratris, ad Sarpedonem amici, ad Achillem inimici.

[Thus Hector stands to Priam in the relation of son, to Astyanax of father, to Andromache of husband, to Paris of brother, to Sarpedon of friend, to Achilles of enemy.]

The relations enumerated here with *persona*, especially those of kinship, might almost all become particular legal relations. As a rule one individual bears but one relation in one and the same legal matter, but it may happen that he bears several at the same time; for example, when a consul emancipates his son, the *persona patris* [paternal relation] and the *persona magistratus* [magisterial relation] by virtue of which he performs the ceremony are borne by the same man. Hence the expression:

Unus homo plures personas sustinet.

[One man sustains several rôles.]

Cicero, *De orator.*, II, 102, says:

Tres personas unus solus sustineo summa animi aequitate, meam, adversarii, iudicis.

[Three rôles do I sustain with the greatest equanimity, my own, that of my opponent, that of the judge.]

We can see that *persona* still has much of the original meaning and that *persona* and *homo* are not yet synonymous. In a related sense the term *persona* can be applied even to a thing, as an inheritance, as having legal relations; cf. Ulpian¹ in the title, *De dominio acquirendo* XLI, I, 34, *hereditas non heredis personam sed defuncti sustinet* [On acquiring right of ownership XLI, I, 34, the inheritance sustains the person not of the heir but of the deceased], which is expressed in the Institutes, II, 14, 2, thus:

... Nondum enim adita hereditas personae vicem sustinet non heredis futuris sed defuncti.

[For an inheritance not yet entered upon, sustains the place of the person of the deceased, not of the future heir.]

¹ A. D. 170-228. Next to Papinianus the most famous Roman jurist.

Roman law goes a step further in the usage of the word *persona*. Inasmuch as strictly speaking only human beings and not things can have rights, the result was, that in legal terminology *persona* designated the rights of human beings without distinction. We read for instance in the Institutes of Gaius, I, § 8:

Omne autem ius quo utimur vel ad personas pertinet vel ad res vel ad actiones.

[However, every right of which we treat pertains to persons or to things or to lawsuits.]

And further, § 9:

Et quidem summa divisio de iure personarum haec est, quod omnes homines aut liberi sunt aut servi.

[And indeed the highest division of persons in law is this, that all men are either freemen or slaves.]

Freemen and slaves, otherwise opposed to each other in legal relations, are all termed *personae* here. *Personae* stand opposed to *res*, persons in contradistinction to things. In this significance *persona*, proceeding from the differential particulars of human relations, is stripped of all particularity and fades into the conception of man in general.

From this source springs, even if indirectly, the German usage of person that we find in Luther's translation of the Bible, 2 Macc. xii. 4, "*Sie ersäufte sie alle in die 200 Person.*" The Latin expresses "no one" by the negative with *homo*, *ne* + *homo* = *nemo*; the French has it *il n'y a personne*. So indefinite has the definitive word *persona*, "mask," become. In this direction we have come to be far removed from Kant's pregnant proposition, "Man is a person"; for with this meaning the proposition would be the reverse of pregnant, it would be tautological. Ay, in this particular the usage has sunk even below the noble meaning of man, for we ask slightly, "What does this person want?" (*Was will die Person?*)

VI.

Perhaps one other scientific application of the word had its part in this process of generalization.

When the Greeks, probably the Stoics who were the founders of our modern grammar, gave the name *prosopon*, countenance or mask, to the significant inflectional ending that we call the "person" of the verb, they undoubtedly had the drama in view where persons really move as "I" and "you."

This relation which has been lost in the technical expression clearly appears again in a related instance in Lucian (*De calumni. c. 6*):

τριῶν δ' ὄντων προσώπων, καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς κωμωδίαις, τοῦ διαβάλλοντος καὶ τοῦ διαβαλλομένου καὶ τοῦ πρὸς ὃν ἡ διαβολὴ γίνεται.

[There being three persons just as in the comedies, the slanderer, the one slandered, and the one who hears the slander.]

The mask with which the conversation opens, usually the first in order of appearance, is called the first; the one addressed, the second. Generally speaking, every conversation has its inception in the fact that one of two persons thinks of or desires something, and either imparts his thought or states his desire to the other. It was proper to call that person the first person, in whom rests the impulse and likewise the initiative of the whole conversation.

On this we support a psychological meaning in which the "I" is called the first person because to every one the "I" is first and closest. Or we may defend an idealistic significance in accordance with which the "I" is designated as the first person because it spontaneously and creatively brings forth the concept of everything that is "not-I."

If it is probable that the term *prosopon* for the first and second person arose from the dialogue in the manner indicated above, then the one of whom they were talking

was differentiated from the first and second persons automatically, as it were; and if he entered into the action he was naturally called the third mask. And indeed the designation of a thing is also put in the third person, either because with reference to a thing the verb is expressed in the third person, or because a pronoun like "it" is referred to a thing. But it is not hard to explain. When, as in the third person, the conversation is of a personal subject (he, she), then this becomes of its own accord a kind of object with reference to the "I" and "you," and in this respect there is a certain relationship between the "he" as person and the "he" as thing, whenever a noun is used in the masculine gender as in the Continental languages; both are objects. And *vice versa* language sometimes represents things as being alive, especially in those languages in which masculine and feminine genders are assigned to words, and thereby a thing is approximately treated as a person.

The grammatical term *prosopon* as personal ending is found as early as in Aristarchus^j (under Ptolemy Philometor) and from this it is not unlikely that *prosopon* as person in grammar goes back to the birthplace of our modern grammar, the Stoic school, which also applied *prosopon*, the mask, in an ethical sense. The pupil of Aristarchus was Dionysius Thrax,^k and the Greek grammar which has been preserved under his name appears really to come from him, even if only in an extract.⁴ It defines the *prosopa* [persons], thus:

πρῶτον μὲν, ἀφ' οὗ ὁ λόγος, δεύτερον δὲ, πρὸς ὃν ὁ λόγος, τρίτον δὲ, περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος.

[The first, by whom the word; the second, to whom the word; the third, of whom the word (is spoken).]

^j About 156 B. C. Famous grammarian and critic of antiquity.

^k About 80 B. C. His book *Τέχνη Γραμματική* became the basis for all succeeding grammars.

⁴ Joannes Classen, *De grammaticae Graecae primordiis*, 1829, pp. 18 f., 99.

We have followed this simple explanation.⁵

M. Terentius Varro¹ who was Cicero's senior by ten years, is familiar with the grammatical usage of *persona* translated from *prosopon*; with Cicero begins the legal usage of *persona* which attributes to it the rôle of bearing a particular legal relation. Varro, for instance, has it:

Quom ita personarum natura triplex esset, qui loqueretur, ad quem, de quo.

[Since, then, the character of the persons is threefold, he who speaks, is spoken to, is spoken of.]

It is then possible that the grammatical and legal usages of *persona* helped each other along in the course of the generalization in which finally *persona* and *homo* became synonymous.

VII.

It is a fact in the history of the term "person" that an entire church council was held to investigate and determine its meaning. This happened at Alexandria in the year 362 in the time of Julian the Apostate. The question at issue was the orthodox conception of the Trinity.

The Greek church distinguished Father, Son and Holy Ghost as three *hypostases*†† of such a character that the one divine essence (*ousia*, *physis**) pervades all three *hypostases*. It had raised this doctrine into the Nicene symbolism under Constantine. The Latin fathers, however, saw in this expression *hypostasis*, *hyphistamenon*,† *subsistens*, an inadequate term that set up three self-sufficing

⁵ Schömann indicates the relation to the stage in his essay, *Die Lehre von den Redeteilen nach den Alten*, 1862, p. 87; cf. also on *πρόσωπα* Classen I, 1, p. 82; Steinthal, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Logik*, pp. 624; 652 f.

¹ B. C. 116-28. Known as the "most learned of the Romans," as he was the most voluminous.

†† ὑποστάσεις.

* οὐσία, φύσις. The latter term means "nature."

† ὑπόστασις, ὑφιστάμενον.

essences and lost sight of the one divine substance above them. For them God was only one hypostasis.

The Greek fathers feared that such a conception would precipitate them into the Sabellian heresy, a doctrine that regarded Father, Son and Holy Ghost as merely different manifestations of the supreme entity which revealed itself in the creation and history of the world, as a triad. In the Roman church Tertullian had, indeed, written in opposition to the monarchist Praxeas who wanted to make the distinction of Father, Son and Holy Ghost not real but ideal, but Tertullian proposed at the same time to distinguish the three:

Personae, non substantiae nomine, ad distinctionem non ad divisionem.*

[By the name of person, not of substance, for the purpose of distinguishing not of separating them.]

And so the result was that the bishops of the Roman church would not accept the expression *hypostasis* and those of the Greek church refused the expression *prosopon*, *persona*. In that council, bishops from Italy, Arabia, Egypt and Lybia met with Athanasius, archbishop of Alexandria. Recognizing each other as orthodox in the mat-

* Tertullian, *adv. Praxeam* c. 12: "Qui si ipse Deus est, secundum Joannem, Deus erat sermo, habes duos, alium dicentem, ut fiat, alium facientem. Alium autem quomodo accipere debeas iam professus sum, personae, non substantiae, nomine, ad distinctionem, non ad divisionem. Ceterum unique teneam unam substantiam in tribus cohaerentibus, tamen alium dicam oportet ex necessitate sensus eum qui iubet et eum qui facit."

[If he is really God, according to John (i. 1) the *Word was God*, you have two, one saying that it should be performed, the other performing it. But how you ought to accept the other I have already set forth; by the name of person not of substance, to distinguish not to separate them. On the other hand, although I hold that there is one substance in three closely connected forms, nevertheless I shall say there ought to be another, from the necessities of the meaning, one who orders and one who performs.]

Augustine, *De trinitate*, VII, 7: "...dictum est a nostris Graecis una essentia, tres substantiae; a Latinis autem una essentia vel substantia, tres personae, quia sicut iam diximus non aliter in sermone nostro id est Latino essentia quam substantia solet intelligi."

[It has been said by our Greek friends that there is one essence and three substances; by the Latins, however, one essence or substance and three persons, because just as we said, in our tongue, that is, in Latin, *essentia* is usually understood no differently than *substantia*.]

ter, they declared the controversy over *hypostasis* and *persona* as a quibbling about words.

After that, the word *persona*, or *prosopon*, became synonymous with *hypostasis* and *idioma* ‡ [character] and legitimate in the Christian church. Gregory Nazianzen^m (died 390) says, for instance, in one of his sermons (*Oratio* 39, p. 630) :

A threefold light flashes upon us at the mention of God, threefold with respect to his peculiar characteristics (*ιδιώματα*), hypostases, or rather persons, one might say ; but one-fold on the contrary when we regard the substance, that is, the godhead.

In this way they came to a verbal agreement but in so doing really concealed the differences concerning a subject not clearly understood.

In the meantime, the characteristic meaning of the word *persona* came once more to the surface. Servetusⁿ used it in his essay *De trinitatis erroribus* [On the Mistakes in (the Doctrine of) the Trinity], 1532. He declared the three persons in the godhead were three functions in the same sense as three rôles and because of this original meaning of *persona* he died the death of a heretic at the stake on Calvin's accusation (1553). That the controversy raged around this first definition of *persona* is clear, among other things, from Melanchthon's *Loci* [Points]. We read there (ed. 1559, Berlin, 1856, p. 6) :

Lusit homo fanaticus Servetus de vocabulo Personae et disputat olim Latinis significasse habitum aut officii distinctionem, ut dicimus. Roscium alias sustinere personam Achillis, alias sustinere personam Ulixis, seu alia est persona consulis, alia servi, ut Cicero inquit : magnum est in republica tueri personam principis. Et hanc veterem significationem vocabuli sycophantice detorquet ad articulum de tribus personis divinitatis.

[A fanatical fellow named Servetus has played with the word

‡ *ιδίωμα*.

^m About A. D. 325-390. A learned orthodox ecclesiastical writer.

ⁿ 1511-1553. He was a physician as well as a polemicist.

“person” and denies that the old Latin meaning was habit or the distinction of office, as we say. Roscius sustained now the person (rôle) of Achilles, now that of Ulysses; or the person of the consul is one thing, that of a slave another, as Cicero says: It is important in a republic to protect the person of the chief executive. And this old meaning of the substantive he underhandedly distorts to his statement on the three persons of divinity.]

The ecclesiastical elucidation which Melanchthon also gives, runs otherwise:

Persona est substantia individua intelligens incommunicabilis non sustentata in alia natura.

[Person is a rational individual substance, incommunicable, not sustained in another nature.]

Thus in theology, *persona*, denoting the mask of the stage, gains the meaning of an individual, intransmissible (incommunicable), rational essence which is self-existent.

In this sense the Augsburg Confession of 1530 declares:

Und wird durch das Wort *persona* verstanden, nit ein Stück, nit eygenschaft in einem andern, sondern es selbig bestadt.

[And by the word *persona* is understood not a part, not a quality (rooted) in another, but that it exists in itself.]

The word *persönlich* (personal) in this meaning had already passed into German through such mystics as Meister Eckhart.^o In God, power, wisdom and love (benevolence) are seen in person and essence, and with this God man should unite himself. This idea, since Abelard and still in Leibnitz's *Systema theologicum* was the foundation of the three persons of the trinity.

Ach, lieber Mensch, was schadet es dir, dass du Gott vergönnest, dass er in dir Gott sei? (Meister Eckhart, ed. Pfeiffer, p. 66, 36).

[Ah, my good man, how will it hurt thee to concede to God that he exists as God in thee?]

Wenn sich Gott dem Menschen giebt, ist die erste Gabe die Minne, in der er alle Gabe giebt, die Minne er selber persönlich und wesentlich (p. 328, 10).

^o 1250-1327. The first great speculative mystic.

[When God gives himself to man the first gift is love, in which he gives every gift,—love, which he gives in person and essence.]

Inasmuch as man possesses God, continues Meister Eckhart, (p. 245, 13) he has power, wisdom and benevolence in person; he has their properties, all three in one essence. By this admixture is the essential in this power, wisdom and benevolence defined. Theology borders close on ethics here; it is not a far cry to say that whoever receives and possesses God's power, wisdom and benevolence, all three in person in one essence, becomes himself thereby "personal" or "a person."

VIII.

Once more we return to the legal usage to gain from it also an ethical significance. We saw that in Roman law *persona* meant man in general and that it included both freemen and slaves, as for instance in the expression *ius personarum*. This meaning gradually disappears and only the freeman is termed a person.

It is frequently declared that a slave has no right, for instance *Dig. IV, 5, 4 (De capite minutis* [On the loss of civil rights]) *servile caput nullum ius habet, ideo nec minui potest* [A slave has no rights and therefore cannot be deprived of them], and concerning the day of manumission it says: *hodie incipit statum habere* [On this day he begins to have civil standing] (*ib.*). The point is raised, that in the eyes of the law, slaves are on a level with the four-footed animals: *servis nostris exaequat quadrupedes* [Our slaves are on a level with the quadrupeds], *ad legem Aquiliam, IX, 2, 2, § 2; Quod attinet ad ius civile, servi pro nullis habentur* [With respect to civil rights, slaves are regarded as nobodies] (*De regulis juris*) L, 17, 32; *Nulla cadit obligatio* [No obligation is incurred]; (*In personam servilem*) L, 17, 22; and in a legal sense: *servitutem*

mortalitati fere comparamus [We might almost compare slavery with death] (*De regulis iuris*) L, 17, 209.

Since under this conception a slave is legally disqualified, he is also eliminated from the category of persons (*Nov. Theodos.*, c. 17); *servos quasi nec personam habentes* [Slaves (are regarded) as having no person].

In Justinian's time the doctrine obtained that slaves were not persons; for Theophilus, the Greek translator of the Institutes, says a slave is *aprosopos*,** a term already defined (*Theophilus ad § 2 Inst. de hered., instit., et princ. Inst. de stipulatione servorum. Inst. III, 18*) for which a corresponding Latin expression, such as *impersonalis*, did not arise.

Savigny^p observes that this theory developed comparatively late.⁷ Since Justinian it has been established that the legally qualified man is a person and none other. The slave is a thing. *Persona est homo statu civili praeditus* [A person is a man possessed of civil standing] and freedom is exclusively an attribute of a person. Should we inquire further what is freedom, Roman law explains it as the natural power to do what you please unless you are prevented by force or by law. (*Inst. I, 3, 1.*)

In this concept of person there is implied more than in the previous conceptions of the word which Kant made use of to express the ethical idea of man. If what is merely a means by which, is called a thing, then a being that is a rational end unto itself and may never be merely a means must be a "person."

In his letter to Wagner (*De vi activa corporis, de anima et de anima brutorum* [On the Active Bodily Energy, on the Soul and the Soul of Animals], 1710, ed. Erdm., p. 467) Leibnitz applied the legal concept of person to the deeper

** *ἀπρόσωπος*; i. e., un-personal.

^p 1779-1861. A celebrated writer and professor of Roman law.

⁷ Savigny, *System des heutigen römischen Rechts*, Vol. II, 1840, p. 32, n.

characterization of what is human. He considers that consciousness of self and capacity for communion with God are privileges of the human soul, and thinks that when once it has participated in this communion it will never relinquish the person of a citizen in the commonwealth of God (*Sentio nunquam eas deponere personam civis in re publica Dei*). The right of a person to citizenship in the commonwealth of God appears in this connection as the special dignity (*Würde*) of mankind.

IX.

A psychological concept of personality naturally precedes the ethical idea of personality that we sought in the origin of the name. This concept represents the power of man to be conscious himself of his identity in the various states of his existence (*Einleitung zu den metaphysischen Anfangsgründen der Rechtslehre*, p. xxii). Without this faculty of continuous self-consciousness there could be no morality, that is to say, no accountability. Even before Kant had put deeper ethical significance into the word person and had in this way defined the idea of human nature, Leibnitz, and after him Christian Wolff,^a had associated the word person with the conception of a self-consciousness identical with itself in the passage of time.

In the above mentioned letter to Wagner (*loc. cit.*, p. 466) Leibnitz had designated self-consciousness and recollection of a former state as attributes that elevated man above the beast, and this superiority he termed *personae conservatio* [preservation of person]:

Itaque non tantum vitam et animam, ut bruta, sed et conscientiam sui et memoriam pristini status, et, ut verbo dicam, personam servat.

[Therefore not so much life and soul in common with the beast, but both consciousness of self and recollection of a former state, and, if I may use the expression, his person, does he preserve.]

^a 1679-1754. He methodized and systematized Leibnitz's philosophy.

On this word Chr. Wolff in his *Vernünftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt, und der Seele des Menschen* [Rational Thoughts on God, the World and the Soul of Man], 1725, § 924, remarks:

Since we designate as person, a thing that is conscious of having been the same thing previously in this or that state, animals are not persons. On the other hand since human beings are conscious of having been the same previously in this or that state, they are persons.

In the same sense Jacobi,^r for instance, opposing the doctrine of blind dumb necessity that he detected in the teaching of Spinoza, claimed that there was a personal God, and that we mortals derive little satisfaction out of an impersonal cosmic reason as the ultimate idea on which to rest.

When man became distinguished from the animal by the concept of person with the notion of self-consciousness pervading human existence, it easily happened that the distinguishing ethical essence, the idea of human nature, was transferred to the same word.

Thus we see the word person applied in various sciences. Although on the one hand it has been generalized in common usage, on the other the sciences attach a deep significance to it. They keep the word elevated and finally make it possible to have the stamp of a fundamental ethical concept impressed upon it.

We can see from the word "personality" and its parallel "individuality," which also has its history, that they have not developed among the masses. But such words coined by science have great value for the commonalty if they become current and are true to their significant content, for they may become standards in public judgment

^r 1743-1819. A philosophical writer of the intuitionist school and Goethe's friend.

and even volitional impulses. Consequently, it is the duty of writers not to wear down and dull the definition.

* * *

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL COMMENTS BY DR. HANS VAIHINGER.*

The exceedingly attractive essay found among Trendelenburg's posthumous papers, and printed as the leading article of this number is supplemented and well substantiated by various publications of recent date.

In the first place, concerning the remarkable previous history of the term *persona*, Dr. Siegmund Schlossmann, professor of law at Kiel, has recently published *Persona und πρόσωπον im Recht und im christlichen Dogma*¹ [*Persona and πρόσωπον in Law and in Christian Dogma*].

The author starts out from the legal concept of person, citing much literature of great importance, with the express purpose of ridding the legal conceptual system of this "nuisance," since the concept is vague and indefinite. We must content ourselves with a mere mention of this learned work in which classical philology, archeology, church history, and jurisprudence have a rendezvous.

In the second place we should like to draw attention to a treatise which chance brought to our notice, by Professor Dr. Sawicki of Pelplin (in West Prussia near Danzig), *Das Problem der Persönlichkeit bei Kant* [The Problem of Personality with Kant], in *Der Katholik*.² The author uses as a starting point the thesis of D. Greiner³ on *Der Begriff der Persönlichkeit bei Kant*, of which a review by the present writer appeared in the first volume of the *Kant-Studien*, p. 439.

The character of Sawicki's treatise is of course readily determined from the fact that the work appeared in a *Zeitschrift für katholische Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben* [Journal of Catholic Science and Church Life], edited by two professors in the episcopal seminary of Mentz. Nevertheless it gives evidence of gratifying objectivity, is decorous and reasonable in tone, and is praiseworthy testimony to the fact that the war against Kant can be waged even on the conservative side in a spirit that need by no means be as

* An editorial in *Kant-Studien*, XIII, 1 and 2, pp. 194 ff.

¹ Kiel and Leipsic, Lipsius and Tischer, 1906, pp. 128.

² 87. Jahrg., Mentz, Kirchheim & Co., 1907, pp. 44-66.

³ In *Archiv f. Gesch. d. Phil.*, X, 1896.

bitter as that of Willmann. Sawicki's essay is, furthermore, a noteworthy commentary on the treatise of Dr. Bauch in *Kant-Studien*, XIII, 1 and 2, p. 32, entitled *Kant in neuer ultramontan- und liberal-katholischer Beleuchtung* [Kant in the Light of the Newer Ultramontanism and Liberal Catholicism].

Among other things Sawicki says: "The concept of personality has privileges of long standing in the domain of philosophy. But the ancient world contented itself with the metaphysical concept; its application to ethics is the work of modern times. The development of the concept is to be regarded as most happy, because the concept of ethical personality suitably designates a moral ideal that is at the same time eminently Christian."

Here Sawicki refers to his essay, *Ernst und Würde der Persönlichkeit im Christentum*⁴ [The Gravity and Dignity of Personality in Christianity].

"The employment of this concept in an ethical significance goes back in its essentials to Kant. He did not simply introduce the concept but also worked it out and defined it. All subsequent achievements in this field have at least their germ in his work."

Sawicki cites Höffding's fine saying:

"Apart from the forced derivation, Kant first enunciated a great and pregnant principle. It is the principle of personality in its noblest form, a thought that will live long after the fact of its establishment by Kant has been forgotten. It is a thought of great ethical importance not only in opposition to the principle of authority when this oversteps its purely educative province, but also in opposition to the doctrine of outward utility and success which is satisfied with the husks and forgets the kernel."

By the "metaphysical" concept of personality was meant, according to Sawicki, a rational self-conscious substance. Kant overthrew this metaphysics and warned expressly against the "paralogism" of personality. Thereby the concept of personality lost its power as the distinctive mark of substantiality, but Kant enriched the concept in its ethical application. However, one must distinguish in this ethical concept of personality between personality as basis, postulate or predisposition, and personality as the goal of the development and complete realization of ethical life.

⁴ Cologne, 1906. In this connection may be recalled the pronounced efforts of liberal Protestantism in recent years for "personal Christianity," and also the leaflets published by Dr. Johannes Müller for personal life and the like. Personality, personal life, etc., have become commonplaces of late years in connection with the new romanticism.

In the first sense, Sawicki contends, transcendental freedom is the most intrinsic content of human personality, but merely as a foundation upon which to lay real moral greatness and not as moral greatness itself; for that is the end, not the beginning of development. In just this sense ought Kant's saying, that "Man is personality according to his calling," be understood. One ought also to distinguish in Kant's meaning between negative freedom, which is self-assertion against all nature, and positive freedom, or autonomy. Two other definitions that are related to this are that of personality in Kant's sense as end unto itself (*Selbstzweck*) and final aim (*Endzweck*) and personality as the realized idea of mankind.

"We gladly acknowledge that the essential points of the concept as they appear in Kant are justifiable and true. . . . It is a noble conception of the ethical problem of life to define it as the realization of the idea of mankind or as cultivation of the noblest possessions of the spirit, and this conception coincides with the truth when freedom is considered as the highest perfection of the spirit.

"A spirit strong and great in itself, free inwardly and outwardly, is Kant's picture of the moral spirit, and it is a true picture of moral personality. Equally accurate is the concept of end unto itself (*Selbstzweck*) used by Kant as the characteristic of personality. . . . Man as a moral being is an end unto himself and must not be used as a mere means to the realization of an ulterior end; . . . and this applies, as Kant justly emphasizes, even to God. If God has created man as a rational being, he has pledged himself to respect man's intrinsic worth and not to destine him for an irrational life-goal."

"Kant's regard for the social character of man also deserves full acquiescence. . . . Finally, recognition is due Kant when he includes all men without distinction as possessing the dignity of personality. . . . However, these merits in the ethics of Kant are offset by serious errors and weaknesses."

As examples Sawicki calls attention to the purely formal character of the moral law, its purely *a priori* character, its want of union with experience; and especially the want of distinction between personality and individuality, and the deficient recognition of the latter. Kant, he says, understood by personality the realization of the universal idea of mankind in each individual without distinction, but he failed to see the importance of particular differ-

ences between individuals, or of individuality in its distinctiveness and in its ethical significance which was later justly emphasized and exalted by Schleiermacher.

According to Sawicki, Kant's final error is his doctrine of complete autonomy, and this is natural because Sawicki holds that human morality is not purely autonomous but contains necessarily a heteronomous element of dependence on God as the highest source of moral law, and that religion alone, an inner relation with which Kant neither held nor taught, can make possible the highest perfection of personality.

In this connection I should like to call attention to another recent publication, one by Prof. Victor Delbos, *Maître de conférences* of the faculty of literature at the University of Paris. He has edited a new translation with introduction and notes of the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, under the title *Fondements de la métaphysique des mœurs*.⁶ This entire work derives particular importance with regard to the meaning and range of Kant's ethical concept of person from the fact that in it Kant had formulated the concept for the first time. Accordingly the editor has very properly examined the concept in detail, and altogether he has done everything possible in his introduction to make the perusal of the work profitable and fruitful. The introduction consists of sections on the life and works of Kant; the moral concepts of Kant in the antecritical period; the morality of Kant in the period of philosophical criticism; the preparation for ethics by the criticism of speculative reason; its preparation by the philosophy of history, etc. The seventy pages of excellent introduction are followed by the translation with a running commentary in which the concept of person receives intelligent appreciation.

The concept of personality is also presented in an interesting manner in *Personalismus und Realismus*, by Hans Dreyer.⁷ Here it is stripped of the dogmatic character that had continued to burden the "intelligible" character of Kant's concept. Personality becomes the idea of union between personal "faculties" and "qualities." This idea is then understood as a "task" in Kant's sense, and Dreyer says, "The task of man is, to become a personality" (*op. cit.*, pp. 71 f.).

Dreyer refers to the purely conceptual, not metaphysical, distinction between the three chief points, self-consciousness, individuality and character, distinguished by B. Bauch in the work *Glück-*

⁶ Paris, Ch. Delagrave, Rue Soufflot 15.

⁷ Berlin, Reuther & Reichard, 1905.

*seligkeit und Persönlichkeit in der kritischen Ethik*⁷ [Happiness and Personality in Critical Ethics]. For Bauch also, character means the task of "making the individual qualities. . . . an antithesis to everything vague, unstable, uncertain and indefinite" since, through the self-conscious will, these qualities experience "a definitely fixed tendency toward oneness" (*op. cit.*, pp. 19 f).

Dreyer also calls attention to an expression of Goethe's that accords almost exactly with this conception. In the "intelligible" character of Kant two definitions lie side by side, of which one can be considered as a purely regulative principle or task, but the other, probably by means of the concept of the thing-in-itself, as a kind of metaphysical entity. Goethe has also conceived of character purely as a union of the qualities of personality. He observes, as Dreyer emphasizes, that the word character is employed "when a personality of notable qualities is persistent in habit, and will be turned aside therefrom by nothing whatsoever."

⁷ Stuttgart, Frommann, 1902. In *Kant-Studien*, VIII, pp. 478 f., I have treated this noteworthy work at some length and need not enter into greater detail here. In the third chapter (on the place of personality in critical ethics) personality is elaborately and fittingly dealt with.

