

The Ambiguity between “Personality” and “Person” in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Theology

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Abstract

His late 1932 first-time public positioning to the radical socio-political changes of his context provoked Bonhoeffer to express his personal turmoil in a literary fragment. In working through his confusion, Bonhoeffer went beyond learned concepts towards a theology that elevated revealed content over formal authority and the concept of the person of Jesus Christ over a culturally understood concept of personality. This he based on the incarnation of God in the natural person of Jesus Christ, which added a spiritual dimension to the constitutional requirement for the institutional church to be centred on the juristic concept of the natural person. In Jesus Christ, the Resurrected One, the concept of the natural person proved politically untouchable. It contested the juristic authority over life that is limited by birth and death with the theological frame of sin and redemption by God’s grace and Jesus Christ’s Stellvertretung on the cross within earthly reality.

Keywords: Person; Personality; Private law; Constitution; Incarnation

Introduction

Inserting in late 1932 for the first time into the public space his position on the evolving socio-political and juristic manipulations of his context provoked in the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer an emotional turmoil, which he captured in a literary fragment (DBWE 11:394–396). Being led to clarify the theological ambiguity between the concepts of personality and person resulted in dropping the former concept and broadening the latter to an understanding that reached beyond jurisprudential conceptualisations. This changed his position in regards to cultural expectations and to the politically motivated attempts to restructure the Protestant Church’s institutional juristic form and relation to the state.

The story of the literary fragment is set in a school classroom where an official authority, a high-school teacher, provokes a pupil to an audible confession in front of all of his class-peers and to be non-compliant with the rules of his class. This results for the pupil in an uproar of confusing and terrifying internal anxieties, thoughts of vanity, humility, and of God. Despite chastising himself, he indulges in the attention from his peers and in perceived blessings of the Eternal on his teaching and knowledge. Feeling drawn in front of his God and his class, he summons his strength for the purpose of emerging as the hero from the fight against the mocking and maliciously sneering crowd, whose disdain he rejects. Even though it appears that he simply has to discard some weaknesses to become god-like – as the poet Schiller claims – thoughts of God and doubts as to his will to be victorious and strong creep into his mind before they dissolve in the reality of the work-at-hand (DBWE 11:394-396).

This paper diverts from commonly linking this literary fragment to Bonhoeffer's public admission of wishing to study theology (Bethge 2000:40; DBWE 11:394) to instead understanding this piece of writing as an attempt to mentally process the profound socio-political shifts in the forms of authority that happened within his context of the early 1930s. Taking Bonhoeffer's personal situation into account, this paper will investigate inasmuch cultural expectations and politically motivated juristic manipulations that focussed on destroying the concept of the natural person and absorbing it into a single personality, turned Bonhoeffer's theological response toward overriding the concept of personality with a concept of person of spiritual dimension.

Bonhoeffer's personal situation and socio-political context:

The literary fragment's actors and the classroom setting replicate Bonhoeffer's social position and the theme of making the private public. At the height of unemployment in Germany in 1932, Bonhoeffer began teaching at Berlin University (DBWE 17:70, 71), a position his father had arranged for him during his previous one-year study-sojourn to New York (10:288–89). This changed his situation from student to university lecturer, from accumulating to disseminating knowledge, and placed him in a position of authority. In early 1933, Bonhoeffer positioned himself publicly for the first time with regard to the dangers that the political change to a National Socialist regime entailed for the Protestant Church, theological academia, and every single human being. Previously in late 1932, Bonhoeffer and the constitutional lawyer Gerhard Leibholz¹ had together, but each from their own paradigm of theology and jurisprudence respectively, revised their earlier 1920s positive evaluation of authority (DBWE 10:342–378; Leibholz 1928; Radler 2018:689–690). They warned about an impending political collectivisation under a leader-principle, which negated individuality, and they ascribed almost verbatim reciprocal limits to the state and the church (Leibholz 1933:74; DBWE 12: 294).² Leibholz cautioned that a state which demanded faith unto death to one holy authoritative personality would absorb the spiritual content of the Protestant Church and prevent it from proclaiming God's revealed Word and thereby destroy the Church's constitutional form as well as the natural authority of office (Leibholz 1933:57, 60–61, 64, 66, 74). Bonhoeffer, more detailed, added that the authority of office, such as that of a teacher (DBWE 12:274, 279, 280), could not be violated or extinct because it was beyond personality. But the authority of a leader who demanded unconditional obedience based on a "political-messianic idea" (278) was limited in scope because it was dependent on the "virtue of his person" (279). However, both were tasked with leading human beings towards being ultimately responsible to God (277–281). Their respective critical reassessments of the scope and the dynamics of authoritative office (*Amt*) over others (DBWE 12:285-297; Leibholz 1933)³ call to mind the position of the teacher of the story, who as a civil servant exercises authority of office over the students.

The concept of personality that Bonhoeffer employed at this stage reflected the early 20th-Century teaching outcomes of the curriculum for higher schools that demanded turning pupils into personalities of Christian character (Geck 2011:269). Just as Luther,

¹ Gerhard Leibholz had been married since 1929 to Bonhoeffer's twin-sister Sabine.

² Leibholz quoted Bonhoeffer's paper explicitly (Leibholz 1933:74–75).

³ Both Leibholz' and Bonhoeffer's essays were published in January 1933 and thus were overtaken by the actual developments which led to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933.

the “hero and teacher” (Treitschke 1920:6,19,21) and “great man”, similar to Schiller, Goethe, and Bismarck, the pupils were to internalise moral-religious values and be examples for the “gospels becoming one’s personality” and were to provide for a meaningful community beyond self-interest (Geck 2011:268–270). For Bonhoeffer’s teacher of a private seminar, Adolf von Harnack, (Bethge 2000:67) the values that needed to be internalized were “truth, love, social sensitivity, and selflessness” (Graf 1998:120–125, 129). Harnack’s conservative opponent Reinhold Seeberg, Bonhoeffer’s doctoral supervisor (DBWE 17:65), insisted on virtues with affinities to German mythology such as seriousness, bravery, defiance, and heroism (Geck 2011:279). Additionally, the fixation on Luther that had started with the Luther renaissance, which Bonhoeffer’s university teacher Karl Holl (Bethge 2000:68–69) had initiated (Assel 2015:23), reached in 1933 its climax with the 450th anniversary of Luther’s birth in 1483. For some, Luther was a political hero whose weak point was his theology (Chamberlain 1935:1007). Others understood him as an example for fighting Atheism and Marxism as vigorously as he supposedly had fought the enlightenment and liberalism (Lehmann 1999:292). Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer’s contact since mid-1931 (DBWE 17:70-71), provided a sobering voice by refusing to lift Luther to the status of a superior religious personality, symbol, or “the great German” who provided slogans. Instead, he saw Luther as a teacher in the Christian church whose work was sincere and of cohesive form and substance (Barth 1933:9–12). Being tasked with positioning himself publicly in relation to this polyphony of intellectually entrenched oppositional stances and cultural demands, Bonhoeffer, in an attempt to clear his mind, penned a fictitious story that included all major components of the confusing situation, such as the teacher, authority of office, and cultural anxieties.

The cultural personality, God’s personality and Christ’s person

In whom to place authority and to what extent was a contentious question in the early 20th century. This question closely interlaced the cultural understanding of personality with the juristic concept of the person. The supporters of Mikhail Bakunin’s collectivist anarchism fought for abolishing all authority and hierarchy, while the Marxist-Bolshevist position demanded authoritarian guidance, even though both envisioned the same result of total freedom and equality. However, economic liberation of the bourgeoisie from monarchic and aristocratic structures had already been achieved subsequent to the failed 1848/49 pro-republican revolution with the fight for the sub-constitutional 1897 Commercial Code and the 1900 Civil Code. These Codes defined associations (*Verein*) of monetary and non-monetary purpose grounded in the concept of the natural person and remained applicable beyond the 1919 changes from a monarchy to a constitutional republic. The new Weimar Constitution, which the jurist Carl Schmitt called the fulfilment of the aims of the bourgeois class of the 19th century (2010:57–60), not only separated the Protestant Church from the state (Art 137, para 1 Weimar Constitution) but prescribed for its juristic competency a public communal *corpus* (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*) that centred on the Civil Code’s rules, that is, the concept of the natural person and being organised as a registered association (*Verein*) of

non-financial purpose⁴ (Art 137, para 4 and 5 Weimar Constitution, Paras 21, 1 Civil Code). Thus, as an association (*Verein*) that is based on a juristic analogy to a natural person, the Church can participate in the public sphere as a carrier of juristic rights and duties.

In his 1927 book *Sanctorum Communio* (DBWE 1), Bonhoeffer respected the constitutionally demanded juristic parameters for the institutional Church but reconceptualised them theologically. Thereby he set the Church spiritually apart from other structures that were “derived from the social sphere” (DBWE 1:131–132), such as the state and its theoretical foundation, which were of Leibholz’ concern. Attempting to overcome contradictions between sociological conceptions and revelation, he searched among existing institutional frameworks that were concerned with the inter-relations of natural persons (91, 175, 193, 253, 262) and settled on a form *sui generis* (193, 195). Keeping thus within the overall intention of the Civil Code, his form, though novel but derived from existing forms, merged the juristically grounded forms of community and society (*Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft*; 264, 266; Green 1972:94 note 46), and the Weberian sociological federation of authentic hierarchical rule (*Herrschaftsverband*; DBWE 1:59, 89, 91, 175). He determined that although the form *sui generis* displayed a similarity to an association (*Verein*),⁵ the spirit of the Church set it apart from those associations that were oriented toward a human goal (254–55). Even the constitutionally sanctioned collection of church-taxes (Arts 135–139; 146 para 2, 149 Weimar Constitution) was not to be understood as a rationally willed monetary purpose but was simply meant to sustain the life of the church family (DBWE 1:257–260). Instead of rationally willing to achieve God’s will, the empirical Church recognised the value of community, the “being-with” and “for”, in which God’s self was the means to God’s own purpose (88–89, 261–62). The church, although an institution *sui generis* in similarity to an association (*Verein*) of non-monetary purpose, must be understood as “Christ existing as church-community” (121, 189, 199, 211, 231, 260, 280, 288) because God’s spirit transcends the nature of the church and its sociality of sin and grace was not absorbing the single person indifferently into one united communal person. And with Christ being present in the sacraments, the natural person of Jesus, the God-become-human, is central to the church of Christian faith and exists as Church in the reality of this world. Thus, in a sort of ingenious Kierkegaardian jump from the juristic⁶ to the spiritual sphere, Bonhoeffer placed the spiritual element of faith in Christ in its identity with the natural person Jesus at the centre of the empirical church and thereby decisively differentiated the constitutionally determined institutional form of the Church from that of the state.

However, in 1928, Bonhoeffer clarified that the person of Jesus Christ, who is central

⁴ Associations with a financial purpose and a juristic competency based on a juristic person are subject to the Commercial Code (*Handelsgesetzbuch*).

⁵ The DBWE uses the term association for the three forms *Genossenschaftsverband, Herrschaftsverband, and Verein*, even though a *Verein* as a legally defined concept within the Civil Code (paras. 54-79) differs from the other two forms. However, Bonhoeffer appears to have recognised the difference when he stated that a *Verband* has “grown” and “previously existed” while the *Verein* is “made” and “willed” (DBWE 1:89; DBWE 1:57).

⁶ Both Green and DeJonge discuss Bonhoeffer’s person-oriented Christology, the former in terms of Hegel, the latter in regards to Lutheranism, but neither discusses the connection of the concept of person to the jurisprudential paradigm (Green 1972:61; DeJonge 2012:1–13).

to the Church, should not be understood as a personality (*Persönlichkeit*) in the sense of a cult-like figure with distinctive exceptional behavioural and emotional traits similar to a genius or a hero (DBW 10:303, 310, 312). This distanced the person of Jesus Christ from a culturally understood term “personality” which was used to transfer to socially high standing individuals the legitimacy for providing cultural values that unified and formed reality according to their own imagination. According to Ricarda Huch (1930), an influential historian whose books were known to Bonhoeffer, the action of such public personalities, such “great human beings” with exceptional character and spiritual depth, infused history with godly-natural forces. As statesmen, princes, authors, and revolutionary leaders, they acted out of and for the self and represented powers that intended to rule through them. Usually they were of aristocratic background, of higher education, imprinted by a stern but loving father-personality, grounded in a Christian piety, had a well-rounded character with a solid common sense, and left testimonies of their potency (Huch 1930: preface, 143–144, 539). The traits Huch used to describe such leaders matched Bonhoeffer’s societal standing and personal situation (Mai 2009:74–76; DBW 8:397–98; Bethge 2000:44). But for Bonhoeffer, elevating to a personality in this sense Jesus Christ – the human, second person of the Trinity – completely missed the essence of Christianity. The Christian essence, if understood properly, was God’s personality (DBW 10:426); the God who was the absolute sovereign transcendent (313–314, 316) and simultaneously present in historic reality (426–428). Matching Bonhoeffer’s hierarchical understanding of the church, God was the eternal distant other personality who revealed himself to the children, the weak, the plagued sinning masses, the lowest economic estates, and the apparently worthless (308) not by teaching ideas but in the person of Jesus Christ, who as God-human was present in the world. Phenomenologically speaking, Bonhoeffer intended to correct the idealist perspective of subjectively realising objective reason within history, of faith in unlimited possibilities of the human spirit, and the tendency toward attesting some godliness in the human self (317–18, 427).

For Bonhoeffer, the distance between human beings and God was bridged not with Huch’s cultural personality but in the act of faith in God’s authoritative grace to reveal His personality as His gift to human beings (DBW 10:314–316). This divine formal authority over His self-revealing gave weight to the revealed content of the absoluteness of God’s authority that was visible in the cross of Jesus Christ. Just as it had happened in the distant Roman past, the turn from person to object (*von Person zur Sache*) was happening again in the contemporary time of dissolving values and of yearning for content beyond banalities (310, 319, 321). His transcendent personality of absolute formal and material authority God made known in Jesus Christ, the cross, and in the immanence of man hearing in the Holy Spirit God’s own word. Nonetheless, it is in the human act of faith that “the personalities of God and of man come in contact with each other” (431-32).

The cult-like personality expunging the natural person

By 1932/33, the romanticised cultural personality, envisioned as genius (Geck 2011:255) and infused by Goethe’s perception of an outer life with inner meaning, became absorbed into a Germanised personality with a personified essence, which proceeded to eliminate the concept of the natural person. The term “personality” turned into a label for a

personified German essence (*Wesen*) when the 19th Century's naïve equation of Germanism (*Germanentum*) and Germanness (*Deutschtum*) was fused with an imputed decision of the pre-medieval German tribes for accepting Christianity. This idea of a Germanic faith (*Deutschglaube*) that was infused with a German spirit was presented in a decisionist language reminiscent of the jurist Schmitt's theories. This Germanic faith turned the Lutheran Reformation into a movement for finding a metaphysical essence and a conscious self for the German people that was imbued with a mature, free Germanic spirit in independence from the Roman papal church, its religious order, and especially its legal forms (*Eigenkirchenrecht*; Maron 1983:315–317). The very person of Luther (*Höchst-Persönliche*; Jaeger, 1999:1337) became portrayed as the “ideal-personality” (Preuß 1913:19–20; 59). Despite being internally tormented, Luther's deep, golden heart, strong iron will, and his characteristic, specific essence (*Wesen*) had freed Christianity from Roman ties (Bauer 1930:46–47; Geck 211:265). For Seeberg (1914:343–46; 359–361), Germanism and Romanism were incompatible because Luther, the “leader-personality” (*Führerpersönlichkeit*), had ingrained his own craving for justice through faith into the conscience and soul of those German personalities who reached for uniting with the Godhead. Through synchronising personal faith and freedom of conscience into a concept of God of German yearning (1917:82–84), Luther, this “greatest German human being”, served Modernity's need for German spirit (1933:51).

The germanisation of religious faith Schmitt transferred into the political sphere. Although sensing since the 1920s an “anti-Roman affect” (1923:5), he ascertained that the authority and dignity of the Roman Catholic Church's pope and office provided an organisational structure for the modern state. Just as the pope personified the idea of Jesus Christ and represented through his office this idea to believers, a political figure personified a political idea, a programme, and represented it to the people of the modern state (2005:36, 45–46). Nonetheless, in 1933 he insinuated in a republication of his earlier theories an affinity for the Germanic faith (2005:2). The turn to a Germanised political faith became visible when during the Luther Jubilee a postcard was widely circulated that fused the veneration of Luther's personality with the political “Führer” who in his person represented the National Socialist idea. A subscript to a portrait of Adolf Hitler misquoted Luther as supposedly encouraging to keep the faith that *through him (durch ihn)* God would do a great deed (quoted in Geck 2011:277–278).⁷ Replaced were Luther's original words *with him (an ihm)*, which spoke about a God who in His grace works in every faithful human being and were not addressed to a particular great human being or an exclusive group of people. This quasi-religious, cult-like “Führer” quickly consolidated his political power by fusing the authority of his political office with his person to which he synchronised (*gleichschalten*) all institutions.⁸ Ironically, this double-reduction of otherness that initially collapsed single persons into a German group identity and subsequently into the leader identity destroyed the liberal concept of individuality only to end in one natural person, albeit the sole individual with inherent value, freedom, and dignity, who represented all other persons.

Fully synchronising the Protestant Church to the single “leader-personality” required purging from the Civil Code the concept of the natural person, which anchored over

⁷ The original reads: Niemand lasse den Glauben daran fahren, dass Gott an ihm eine große Tat tun will.

⁸ A summary of the legislation used in this process can be found in Frank 1934: XVI–XIX, XXIII.

against the ruling authority (*Obrigkeit*) the freedom to incorporate, and the constitutional independence of the Protestant Church. To denounce the Civil Code’s positivist, abstract, normative legality, the oppositional attitude to the Romanist school’s backing of the Code during the Romanist–Germanist discord of the 19th century (Radler 2019:87) was rehashed. The Code was decried as pervaded by the foreign Roman *corpus iuris civilis* and oriental (read: Jewish) influences (Lange 1934:39), as inflating a degenerated individualism, and as bourgeois materialism that uprooted and de-souled the people (Frank 1934:933; XXIV). Supposedly, the Code replaced the once inner freedom of the duty-bound personality with an outward freedom that was only interested in pursuing and protecting the materiality of bourgeois property ownership. It allegedly dissolved the subjective authentic rule (*Herrschaftsmacht*) of the master into two contractual adversaries whose insistence on their subjective rights and obligations (*Schuld*) disengaged them from the rest of humanity (Lange 1934:10–11) and forced the unprotected human subjects (37, 63) of the working class to slave under contracts that provided only for a freedom to non-freedom. With abstracting the *persona* (*Herr*) from *res* (*Sache*) (10, 56, 63) the transfer of the subject matter (*Sachübertragung*), the property, was disconnected from the underlying contractual transaction (*Schuldverhältnis*) for the purpose of protecting property ownership from violations of the contractual obligations (*Schuld*). This protection of property was further enhanced by ascribing legal responsibility and binding commitment only to the Code’s fictive juristic person of Roman law, such as an association (*Verein*), even though it essentially lacked an own will and needed for juristic acts a natural person who stands in the place of (*Stellvertretung*)⁹ this artificial person (Lehnsen 1933:20,22–23, 27–34). Thus, a restrengthening Germanist school ascertained that the German popular consciousness rejected the Code’s association (*Verein*) and demanded that a corporation must be understood as a grown group of single persons (*Verbandspersonen*) with a real, not just imagined, common human nature. And in support of the masses’ fight against the imbalances of power in the bourgeois patriarchal conditions (Lange 1934:56–57), Paragraph 19 of the popularly perceived “classless” 25-point program of the National Socialist Party (Hidden 1996: 69–78) needed to be implemented. This constitutional provision of the first order, as Schmitt (1936:181) called it, demanded a decisively German community law (*Gemeinrecht*; Landau 1989:11).

The *Academy for German Law* under Hans Frank took reshaping of the Civil Code to a community law of the German people (XXII, 933) into the realm of faith. For Frank, conforming the subject matter (*Sachgestaltung*) to match the deepest revelations of the Germanic spirit (Schmitt 2004:97) was a holy idea and an eschatological fulfilment of Germanic history in the present time. The bourgeois concept of the natural person that was seizing with the Civil Code “individuals at every turn of life, from the cradle to death” (Frank 1934:933) needed to be replaced with a new legal vitality, a law of life that infused the Code’s formal regulations with “the substantial core of reality” (Frank 1939:1141), the five values of the life of the nation – soil, race, state, honour, and work (*Boden, Rasse, Staat, Ehre, Arbeit*; 1934:XV). Similar to the Germanisation of Christianity, discarding the Christian–Roman legal tradition in favour of returning to a

⁹ The meaning of the term *Stellvertretung*, of “standing in for something”, became in the political-constitutional developments of 19th century Germany a concept of the Civil Code, which markedly difference from political representation.

supposed law of Germanic tribes from a distant Germanic legal history (Schwab 1969:60) would uplift the people above both the person and the object (*Sache*). Not formal law, but the veneration of the heroes of Germanic ancestry would enable a this-worldly religious final order for human social existence. However, apparently, Frank did not comprehend the contradiction entailed in normatively binding natural human beings to a law that negates the natural human being (Willoweit 1989:32–34, 36).

Leibholz recognised in late 1932 that the juristic manipulations disguised as a faith-movement aimed to dissolve the corporate status of the Protestant Church as a juristic person, as an association (*Verein*) built on a federation of natural persons. If successful, the Church would lose its constitutional status and would expose each single member to the danger of being legally absorbed into the state-identity (Art 137, para 4 Weimar Constitution, paras 43, 45, 46 Civil Code). Therefore, he warned that the state was not “the only holy place” (Leibholz 1933:74). Similarly, Bonhoeffer realised the dangers located in a supreme human being, a *sicut deus*, who legitimised himself with a messianic idea. Shifting away from his 1928 closeness to Seeberg’s theology (DBWE 10:359–378) and a meeting point between God’s and man’s personality, he instead assured that personality was by nature an a-personal concept that was the opposite of a person (DBWE 12:311).

Bonhoeffer: Person, not Personality

Bonhoeffer recognised that placing mutual limitations on the state and the church was no longer sufficient and turned to override the term “personality” with the concept of the person. A personality *sicut deus* may absorb into a Germanic communality the juristic natural person of the constitutionally grounded institution of the Church, but in the *Sanctorum Communio* the God-human, the incarnated God in the natural person of Jesus Christ, remained the spirit at the centre of His Church and thus a reality within the world. To this end, Bonhoeffer assured in his *Lectures on Christology* (DBWE 12:299–360) that Christ is not simply an influence in history, an essential power who is a personality in the sense of “the fullness and harmony of the values that are summed up in the phenomenon of Jesus Christ”. This kind of personality was “the opposite to what is meant by person” (311). Rather, he clarified and warned that glorifying and surrendering to a god-like human personality who bears human ideas transferred dangerous ultimate authority to a human being (DBWE 12:278–280). This personality differed fundamentally from God’s self-revealing incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was not a transient teacher within history who distributed God-authorized human ideas of faith that were derived from within the human system of ideas. Similar to his earlier assessment in *Act and Being* (DBWE 2), Bonhoeffer asserted, that this would leave unrecognised the content of God’s will and truth, His Word from beyond human ideas. Therefore, formal authority of office must be tied to obedience to God’s limitations on power, while the message’s content was determined by God’s self-revealed Word. Because it was apparently no longer sufficient to separate God’s authority in a formal idea of authority and a material message of the absoluteness of His authority, any possibility of a meeting point between a divine and a human personality was discarded.

For Bonhoeffer, personality as a value-concept was realised in power and value, and thus within history, and stood in opposition to the person which was “beyond influence and image” (DBWE 12:311). Personality as a concept was a carrier of ideas based on

work and authority of office, but Jesus as an essence and being was more than his works (311). In distinguishing between human personality and the person of Christ, Bonhoeffer built on his previous separation of human history from the primeval history of God’s sphere that lay beyond human influence. According to his *Creation and Fall*, the instance of the Fall of humanity from God’s Grace, which foreshadowed the Christ-event of the cross, was the “event at the beginning of history, before history, beyond history, and yet in history” (DBWE 3:82). Since transgressing God’s prohibition, humankind acted in the earthly dominion between life’s limitations of birth and death out of their own resources as *sicut deus* (113). Responding from eternity to humanity’s cries, God took with Jesus Christ’s cross in the middle of earthly time the place of humanity to stand in *Stellvertretung* for humanity’s sins, (DBW 1:90–100, 117, 128; 6:256–258). This messianic idea of the Easter event (92), at which God was “entering into history and having to die within history” (DBWE 12:326), became the middle of the human condition and nature. This was hidden behind the state’s idea of creating order and this determined its laws as affirmed or ultimately broken and abolished (12:326). Not a human personality absorbing as *sicut deus* godlike powers that determined life between birth and death, but God’s salvific act of *Stellvertretung* in the person of Jesus Christ directed laws, limited the state, and ruled the human being’s life and death within history.

For Bonhoeffer, asking about “personality” meant asking “how” and “what”, but “in asking about person, one asks “who.”” (DBWE 12:311). A “personality” may carry ideas and religious consciousness and as a concept “personality” was based on work, action, and authority of office. The person of Jesus Christ, however, was neither a phenomenon, a hero, a brave man similar to Goethe or Socrates (306, 312) and was not simply dismissible in the sense of the proletarian class’s good human being and a church-disassociated Jesus (306). Rather, the ontological structure of Jesus Christ’s existence made coherent the revealed logos of God (304) and the “who” of Jesus Christ. God’s “logos became flesh, a human being” (301). This determined the “who”, the “being”, the essence and nature of Christ (304). That Jesus Christ’s nature was fully divine and fully human and the content of God’s Word and Jesus Christ were one in substance had already been determined in the *Chalcedonian formula* and the *Formula of Concord* (342–343, 345–347, 350). The “who” of Jesus Christ was the One in unity with action and work. In this God-revealed essence of the combined oneness of person and action, Jesus Christ is fully present in the world as His own work of divine office and Word (311–312). Because it is only in the God-human that “Jesus Christ is God present”, a God remaining in “timeless eternity is *not* God”, just as Jesus Christ as a human being “limited in time, is *not* Jesus Christ” (313). God revealed His word hidden in the worldly presence of the person of Jesus Christ and not in the sense of God as Christ or Christ as God. The Trinitarian God, the “who” of the ultimate mystery, was, according to Bonhoeffer, distorted into one of the worst heresies, if His humanity, His incarnation, His being human was declared a necessity for God’s appearance of His Word in history (337). To separate appearance and idea in Jesus Christ would turn His humanness into a comprehensible human idea and completely miss the impossible, incomprehensible, irreducible mystery of God’s coming as a human being into historic reality (332, 335, 337). Such a separation would turn the “who” of the person of Jesus Christ into a human personality, functioning within a process of “how” to represent human ideas.

Overall, Bonhoeffer directly defied the cultural developments that led to a political

movement of faith in a human personality and that directed Frank's holy idea and eschatological vision of determining all aspects of human life between cradle and death with a Germanic community law that demanded destroying the concept of the natural person by juristic means. Bonhoeffer assured, that in contrast to mortal god-like human personalities, God remains in the person of Jesus and as the Christ, as the "Crucified and Risen One", eternally present in the reality of the world (DBWE 12:310). Confirming the *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer showed that He was "indeed present in the church as person", where He is proclaimed and the sacraments are carried out (310). Indeed, it was in the encounter with the mystery of the Trinitarian God, with the "Resurrected One" (305), that life and death, salvation and damnation, depended on. A human personality can be ignored, Jesus can be killed on the cross, and the Word become human in the person of Jesus Christ can be fought, "but against the Resurrected One the human being has no power" (305). Thus, turning the focus from a revered human personality of authority and power to the natural and divine person of Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer provided, centred in the resurrected One, a faith content, a spiritual message of mystery and essence, that is in its form and content untouchable by human powers. Political manipulations can obliterate the juristic concept of the natural person, but Bonhoeffer's spiritual concept of the person of the resurrected One of Word and nature in Jesus Christ proved indestructible and protects humanity from dehumanising political programs of a human personality and the Protestant Church from being absorbed by the state.

Conclusion

In the 1932 literary fragment, Bonhoeffer gave expression to his confusion that was provoked by taking a public theological position to the cultural and political developments he observed and the juristic manipulations Leibholz pointed out. He was confronted with an educational system that demanded of members of his bourgeois social class to become strong, heroic personalities and authoritative state officials who fought, won, and ignored personal dreams, as the *Studienrat* of the story did. Going beyond the previously learned concept of personality, he overrode the cultural and especially the politicised cult-like understanding of personality with a theology of person that was inclusive of a natural and spiritual dimension. He shifted from a focus on official formal authority to divinely revealed content and a spiritual concept of the God-human Jesus Christ, "who" exists in this world and the Church beyond destructive juristic manipulations. Thereby he theologically grounded the constitutional specification that centres the church on the concept of person. In the process, Bonhoeffer contested exclusive juristic authority over life that was framed by birth and death with the theological limits of sin and redemption by God's grace and Jesus' *Stellvertretung* on the cross, which turned concepts of the Civil Code in on themselves. Despite his critical assessment running counter to the despising, mocking crowd of his class peers, Bonhoeffer remained caught in the hierarchy of his social class, as is shown in summarily assessing the proletariat as disassociating Jesus. However, "between the impossibility of an individual exit from the collective attitude of one's period in time and actively confessing to it lies the freedom to critically reflect on the self" (Simon 1989:176). Bonhoeffer took this freedom to reflect when he described in the literary fragment the confusion of the pupil, which in the final result led him to replace a contaminated concept of personality with a theologically defined concept of person that remains present in

historical reality and is beyond destructive political and juristic means.

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