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THE CONCEPTION OF A HUMAN PERSON
ACCORDING TO SAINT THOMAS'S PHILOSOPHY

While reading an extensive literature on the topic of a person and personality one can notice that unequivocal reading and understanding of the above mentioned notions is not entirely possible. The word *person,* which comes from the Greek *prosopon* ($\pi\rho o\sigma o\pi o\nu$) and Latin *persona*, has an ample history and meaning. The case is similar with words such as *personality* and *personalism*, which originate from it. Nevertheless, one thing is certain – everything took its beginning in the ancient Greek culture. At first the Greek word *prosopon* signified a mask used by an actor on the stage while playing the role of mythical hero or gods. As the time went by this term was used to signify the actor himself. Christian religion was a powerful impulse in the process of crystalisation of the meaning of the word *person.* It should be remembered that in the Bible God is a person. The Hebrew word *phaneh* should be translated as: *the figure, or countenance* expressing the whole human individual or God himself.

Usually the way Boethius formulated this notion is treated as elementary: *persona est naturae rationalis individua subtantia* (a person is an individual substance of rational nature). The conception of a person suggested by Saint Thomas is characterised by the following features:

- the notion of the person consists of autonomy, reasoning and individual existence;
- this notion also includes wholeness, therefore separately existing human soul is not a person;
- the name of the person indicates inseparability or individuality of entity existing in any nature;
- a person signifies a concrete man, and this stands for uniqueness and exclusivity;
- a person is something far more than an individualised nature;

- not every individual entity is a person, although it is included in the generic notion of substance, but this refers only to an entity that exists by itself (*per se*);
- a person also signifies independence from any whole. A human person cannot be reduced to any worldly value, as man consists of both body and soul, which is spiritual, non-materialistic and timeless;
- only a man can be called a person because he is the only singular entity (*singulare*) characterised by thinking nature that exists in natural world.

Saint Thomas preserves the substantialistic theory of human person while referring back to both Aristotle and Boethius. Nevertheless, he sees the ontological condition of a person in a different element than Boethius. He assumes that the condition of the reality of the substance is the act of existence. Such attitude is a typically existential formulation and it is based on ascribing real existence to something only then if a given substance was originated by the act of existence.