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IMAGO DEI, ONTOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS. INTRODUCING EDITH STEIN TO THE DEBATE

INTRODUCTION

The priestly account of creation, which states that human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27), is the point of departure for a long interpretative tradition which, at times, is rather polemical in character. This can be seen for instance in the works of Epiphanius of Salamis who, in order to preserve orthodoxy, refuses to consider the image of God as an object of research (Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion haer.*, 70.3.1 quoted in S. G. Hall, 2006, p. 37-38). The refusal to specify what it means to be an image indirectly shows the importance of the question. The image of God ultimately deals with the possibility of a personal relationship between God and human beings, and thus can be considered a concern for theology as a whole. As Gerhard Ebeling puts it, the doctrine of *imago Dei* is a "point of intersection for all central themes of dogmatics" (My trans. of Ebeling, 1979, p. 376, quoted in Pröpper, 2012, 124-125[1]).

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1   In his introduction to the chapter, Pröpper quotes another author on the *imago Dei*, Hans Urs von Balthasar, who compares the debate to a "battlefield" (125).

In this long-standing field of research, I shall adopt the customary terms of classification, and shall speak of an *ontological*, a *relational*, and a *functional* interpretation of the image (cf. De Cruz, De Maeseneer, 2014, p. 95-96). Although the functional interpretation is of particular importance to me in the context of ecology and the human role in the world, I shall concentrate here on the opposition, held by many authors, between a ontological and a relational interpretation. Karl Barth is very influent in this regard when he explicitly excludes human qualities as imaging God, and identifies the image – following Martin Buber's dialogical philosophy – with relationality itself. Numerous authors are in accordance with the main point of Barth's view: that there is an opposition between an ontological and a relational interpretation of *imago Dei* (D. J. Hall, 1986; LeRon Shults, 2003a; Cortez, 2010; Henriksen, 2011). The ontological image is often seen to be static and, consequently, to exclude relation (Aku, 2014). This is often due to a caricatural presentation of the ontological interpretation (Pesch, 2006, p. 241)[2] and to an uncritical adoption of dialogical philosophy, especially that of Buber and Levinas.

My own understanding of personal relation leads me to see the importance of considering human capacities and qualities as conditions of possibility for personal relation. How could one conceive a personal relation without freedom, or without love, or without mutual understanding? I shall therefore argue that a relational perspective on *imago Dei* presupposes an ontological perspective and I shall adopt in the present contribution an approach similar to that of Norris W. Clarke in his *Person and Being* (Clarke, 1993). Arguing from a philosophical perspective, Clarke states that in recent times "the being of the person has been explained so onesidedly in terms of relation and systems of relations that the dimension of the person as abiding self-identity, interiority, and in-itselfness has tended to disappear from sight, or at least lose all metaphysical grounding." (Ibidem, p. 4f). Clarke also notes the unhappy opposition between metaphysics and phenomenology: "Hence we are faced, on the one hand, with a rich older metaphysical tradition of the person that has left the relational dimension underdeveloped and, on the other, with a more recent phenomenological tradition that has highly developed the relational aspect but lost its metaphysical grounding." (Ibidem, p. 5). From his philosophical perspective, Clarke seeks to reconcile a classical metaphysical approach (the person as substance) and a modern relational approach (the person as relation). Admitted-

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2   This text is founded on an opposition between structural and relational approaches or even more on the substitution of structural approach by a relational approach: "The only question is whether the usual picture of the classical tradition, particularly in some protestant evaluations, might be a caricature, overlooking the not even hidden relational elements in the scholastic statements."

ly, the task is not easy. Nonetheless, I shall attempt to take on this same task here from a theological point of view.

Although the value of human relationality is indeed to be emphasized, I consider it to be a point of departure from which to reflect on what this relationality presupposes, i.e. a human person in its uniqueness. To help me in this endeavour I turn to Edith Stein (1891-1942), a phenomenologist of Jewish descent. With respect to the philosophers who contributed to the "turn to relationality" (LeRon Shults, 2003b), Stein remained closer to Edmund Husserl. For Stein, human subjectivity is a condition of possibility for intersubjective relation. As her philosophical training began with a PhD on empathy I may suppose that emphasis on the value of human subjectivity is not opposed to human relationality. Already in her early work, but mainly after her baptism in the Catholic Church in 1922, she opens up her phenomenology to concerns of ontology. One of her main concerns and a key issue for her anthropology is the human person's individuality. I shall see how this emphasis on individuality is not opposed to constitutive relationality, but is rather its condition. I shall first attempt to expose Stein's understanding of the human person's individuality. I shall then consider how this view can be linked to the concept of image as including two essential features: resemblance and relation to an origin.

Personal Individuality

One possibility for emphasizing the value of relationality is to underline the importance of life circumstances in the becoming of the person. Social, cultural, religious, and family influences, as well as interpersonal relations in general are determinant factors in the life of a person. When interested in a person, I am much less interested in a substance than in a history, in the person's encounters, and lived experiences. The circumstances of a person's life and his or her different relationships are particularly important because they make the person who he or she is, unique and irreplaceable. In this respect, it is striking to see that two authors as different as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Eberhard Jüngel approach the question of individuality in the same manner. For both authors, it is precisely a person's story, his or her history, which makes up personal individuality. Thus Pannenberg affirms in 1983 in the final chapter of his important theological anthropology that "History is the *principium individuationis* [...] in the life both of individuals and of peoples and cultures." (Pannenberg, 1985, p. 485) Similarly, for Jüngel the implication of the *I* in history is such as to justify the following expression: "Tell me your story and I'll tell you who you are" (My trans. of Jüngel, 2010, p. 415). In the same context, in a footnote, Jüngel criticizes the expression *individuum est ineffabile*, saying that if

the individual could not be expressed in words, that would mean that the individual could not be identified with his or her story, which can be told (Ibidem, n. 3).

When, with Pannenberg and Jüngel, I consider history as principle of individuation, I am considering what is self-evident, as it is impossible for history to repeat itself in a perfectly identical manner. Twins for example can never have exactly the same history, because one of them was born before the other. They cannot both occupy exactly the same space and consequently their perception is different. As their lived experiences are different, their respective histories are also necessarily different. What is of interest in their regard is whether or not their development is entirely based on history. If this were the case, the twins would resemble at the beginning of their life a *tabula rasa* which neutrally takes in different impressions. In this perspective, the human subject, progressively conditioned by its context is, so to say, the product of this context. One can then add, with Pannenberg, that it is not only the events (*Widerfahrnisse*) of life that individualize, but it is also the intentions and actions of the subject faced with these events. What then is the role of the subject in the elaboration of its intentions and actions? To what degree is the subject conditioned or even determined by history? Is there a place for the idea of a qualified subjectivity concomitant to the consideration of its context?

I shall now proceed to approach these questions with Edith Stein. She shows continual interest throughout her anthropological research in the human person's individuality which can be considered to be one of the central themes of her work (cf. Betschart, 2016). This centrality has been recognized in secondary literature in various PhD dissertations especially in philosophy. At times the accent has been on medieval sources, such as Thomas Aquinas (Sarah Borden Sharkey [2010], Rosa Errico [2011]) or Duns Scotus (Francesco Alfieri [2014]). An important French contribution was published by Bénédicte Bouillot in which the author is especially attentive to Stein's early works and to her phenomenological sources (Bouillot, 2015). Finally, only one PhD dissertation on the topic has been written focussing on the theological dimension of Stein's doctrine of individuality, and is primarily concerned with her thought regarding the analogy between human and divine persons (Betschart, 2013).

In the present contribution, I shall base my research on Stein's early works – referring specifically to her PhD on the problem of empathy and her *Introduction to Philosophy* –, because, in these works, the main elements of her thought are already present. As it is not possible here to consider Stein's conception of individuality in all its complexity, I shall focus only on the material or qualitative aspect of the person's individuality. Stein, like Pannenberg and Jüngel, is attentive to the person's background, to the circumstances and influences of personal history, and

to their impact on the development of the person. This can be seen in the following quotation:

> The individual with all his characteristics develops under the constant impression of such influences so that this person has such a nature because he was exposed to such and such influences. Under other circumstances he would have developed differently. There is something empirically fortuitous in this "nature". One can conceive of it as modified in many ways. But his variability is not unlimited; there are limits here (Stein, 1989, p. 110).

Spatiotemporal variation and many other circumstances evidently imply a considerable change as far as historical individuality is concerned, but, according to Stein, such changes do not modify what she calls "the personal structure" (Ibidem, p. 110) or the "kernel of the person [*Kern der Person*]" (Ibidem, p. 109). In other words, history cannot be considered the sole principle of individuation, but individual personal structure as interacting with the context must also be considered[3]. Stein's interest in the individual structure of the person refers to a unique manner of being in the world and, more precisely, in the world of values: The way the person "feels" esthetical, ethical, personal or religious values and responds to them personally (Bouillot, 2015, p. 103-124). Value feeling (*Wertfühlen*) is important because there is a correspondence between "feeling" something (for example the beauty of nature, i.e. an esthetical value) and "the feeling" as revelatory of something in the structure of the person (Stein, 1989, p. 98-99).

For Stein, this structure does not only refer to properties of the character, but she admits that there is a qualitative and irreducible element in every person:

> Such an individuality "conditioned from outside" belongs also to the character. And we know from our preceding considerations that the dispositions [*Anlagen*] of the senses and the intelligence belong to the exterior conditions of its development. But besides, it has an "interior" determination, which we designate as "personal singularity" ["*persönliche Eigenart*"]. The original disposition of the character is distinguished from all other dispositions of the person; in the sense that an ultimate, indissoluble, qualitative mo-

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3 I am not dealing here with variations in sense-capacities (for example a more or less acute sense of vision), in intelligence (the ability to grasp an idea more or less quickly) or in differences of memory, which can be explained by genetics or neurosciences.

ment indwells in it, imbues it completely, and gives inner unity to the character and its difference from all others (My trans. from Stein, 2004, p. 134).

Stein, who begins by referring to exterior circumstances and to diversity in dispositions of the senses and the intelligence, then moves on to consider "personal singularity" (*persönliche Eigenart*) as an "ultimate, indissoluble, qualitative moment" which gives unity and coherence to the character of the person. This qualitative moment is not an emergence of personal properties, but its indissoluble foundation that determines its coherence. It doesn't modify the personal structure as such, but it is "a simple *Quale*, which impresses its stamp on the whole character and every single lived experience [...]. It shapes [*gestaltet*] the person into a 'homogenous personality'." (My trans. from ibidem, p. 132)[4] And taking up the vocabulary of the type already used in her doctoral work, she introduces the new element of her conception in the following way:

> The character of a person – although every person can be brought under such a type – is not exhausted by being a singularization of a type, but manifests in its entirety as well as in its singular properties and lived experiences an "individual note". It should be noticed that this "individuality" or "personal singularity" manifests degrees [in its outer appearance], so that not all show it in the same proportion (My trans. from Stein, 2004, p. 132).

The "personal note" (Ibidem, p. 132f, 142f, 147, 176) or – as she writes as well – the "individual note" (ibidem, p. 133, 213) is not reducible to a more or less general type, but is absolutely individual and therefore unutterable. The person as an individual is not merely to be identified with his or her personal history or founded on his or her personal dispositions, but is unified by an individual note, and therefore the expression *individuum est ineffabile* applies well to human persons, because there is no proper name which could do more than simply indicate an individual. The individual note in question is not reserved to specific persons with a marked character and to whom we may refer as "personalities" (Stein, 2004, p. 103); it is a characteristic of every human person, independent of the way in which this "personal note" is concretely manifested in life.

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4   Stein takes up the term *Quale* (how) particularly in *Potency and Act*, where it always indicates the personal individuality which qualifies the *Quid* (what) of the person constituted of faculties with their respective dispositions (see Stein, 2009, p. 182-221, particularly p. 182 and 219). In *Finite and Eternal Being*, she adopts the Greek terminology ποῖον (*Quale*) and τί (*Quid*). See Stein, 2002a), p. 86-87, 501.

How can Stein assume that there is an individual note if this note is not necessarily manifested? In fact, not all lived experiences have a revelatory capacity like love which gives access to the depth of the person:

> We do not love a person because he or she does good. His value is not that he or she does good, even if it perhaps comes to light in doing so. Rather, he himself or she herself is valuable and we love him or her "for his or her own sake." And the ability to love, evident in our loving, is rooted in another depth from the ability to value morally, experienced in the values of deeds (Stein, 1989, p. 102).

For the first time in Stein I find here a draft of her thesis according to which knowledge of somebody else can become perfect only in love, because love is rooted in the depth of the person. This thesis is readopted in the *Introduction to Philosophy* with respect to personal singularity accessible only through love: "If and how I love somebody is based on the way in which his singularity [*Eigenart*] touches mine, and this is something plainly singular as this singularity itself" (Stein, 2004, p. 136). Further on in the text, Stein brings forth two examples of lived experiences that actualize the whole personality and that, at the same time, express the individual note: "There are lived experiences – such as loving surrender [*liebende Hingabe*] or religious ecstasy [*religiöse Ekstase*] – in which all the levels of the personal *I* are 'actualized'" (Ibidem, p. 176)[5]. Be it loving surrender to another human person – e.g. her love for Roman Ingarden[6] – or a lived experience of a religious nature called ecstasy, in both cases there is a personal relationship enabling one to know the beloved person in his or her singularity.

Through my examination of Stein's early works I have been led to an approach to individuation which differs from that of Pannenberg and Jüngel who place emphasis on individuation by means of personal history. Without neglecting the importance of history in the development of the person, Stein promotes the idea that this development can be more or less in accordance with what she calls the unfolding of the person and namely with the manifestation of personal singularity in lived experiences. The conception of personal singularity (*persönliche Eigenart*) as a qualitative, indissoluble moment designates an essential difference between all

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5 Text before correction.

6 Stein calls Ingarden in a letter dated December 24, 1917: "My darling" (Stein, 2001, p. 67). In a later version, Stein will eliminate loving surrender (*liebende Hingabe*) from the text, probably because of her experience of thwarted love in her relationship to Ingarden.

humans. These differences point out that every human person is more than a mere specimen of the human species, and has an irreplaceable value. Such differences are also the condition of possibility for an alterity that is not just a fact of different lived experiences, but is founded in the person.

THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE PERSON'S INDIVIDUALITY

In the preceding development I have shown that a priori individuality is not opposed to interpersonal relation, but is rather the guarantee of an alterity which integrates both the ontological and relational dimensions of personhood. I shall now develop a reflection on *imago Dei* which establishes the same connection to both ontological and relational interpretation. My starting point will be an important text of Augustine, where he reflects on what it means to be an image in comparison with likeness and equality (cf. Markus, 1864; Bochet, 2009; Boulnois, 2009):

> *Image* and *equality* and *likeness* must be distinguished. For where there is an image, there is necessarily a likeness, but not necessarily an equality; where an equality, necessarily a likeness, but not necessarily an image; where a likeness, not necessarily an image and not necessarily an equality (Augustine, 1982, p. 189-190)[7].

The main point here is that the concept of image necessarily implies likeness or resemblance (maybe even equality). In fact, in the case of total dissemblance nobody would speak of an image. But *image* also implies a relation to an original of which it is a copy. Augustine showed this, in a preceding question, with the example of a reflection, evoking a mirror which reflects the divine presence (Bochet, 2009, p. 258).

If, in an image, there is both resemblance and relation to an origin, it is not possible to oppose an ontological approach (which implies resemblance) and a relational approach (which implies a creational and re-creational origin), because the concept of image includes both approaches as *conditiones sine qua non*. I will now endeavour to relate this Augustinian approach to Stein's reflection in her major work *Finite and Eternal Being*, written in the Carmel of Cologne between 1935

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7   Latin text in *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, qu. 74, BA 10, 326-329: "Imago et aequalitas et similitudo distinguenda sunt: quia ubi imago, continuo similitudo, non continuo aequalitas; ubi aequalitas, continuo similitudo, non continuo imago; ubi similitudo, non continuo imago, non continuo aequalitas. Ubi imago, continuo similitudo, non continuo aequalitas".

and 1936. She develops her *analogia personae* starting with the book of Exodus: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, *I am who I am* (Ex 3:14) (Stein, 2002a, p. 342)[8]. The biblical text is interpreted by Stein in the Augustinian line, as a revelation of God's name: *I am*. God reveals himself as "being in person" or tri-personal being (Ibidem, p. 342, 355, 359), and, based on this revelation, the relation between Creator and creature is conceived as an *analogia personae*[9]. In chapter seven on "The image of the Trinity in creation" (Ibidem, p. 355-468), Stein speaks of an image not only for human beings, but for all creatures and consequently for animals, plants and even inanimate objects. In all creatures the two characteristics of the Augustinian image are to be found: all creatures have God as their ultimate origin and all creatures bear a certain ontological resemblance to him.

Resemblance

For Stein, resemblance between God and human beings is in keeping with the *analogia personae* and implies, like every analogy between Creator and creature a *maior dissimilitudo*[10]. Analogy has indeed been used in the development of the concept of person – for humans, angels, and God – since Boethius (Boethius, 1973, p. 84, I. 37). Stein's approach to analogy is however original, because she combines in her work scholastic and modern conceptions of the human person. It is not possible here to consider all the implications of the analogy of person, but if there is an analogy of person, then qualitative individuality of a human person must find its original (*Urbild*) in God[11]. The qualitative individuality or the individual note of a person is to be considered as an image or a reflection of the uniqueness of divine nature. The particularity of this approach is that the image of God is not primarily and uniquely to be considered in what persons have in common, but in what makes them unique. The individual note cannot be explained with respect to genes or circumstances of life, but refers to the subjective *Geist* in its individuality. This does not mean that only the spiritual dimension of the person is image of God,

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8   Stein mentions as another possible translation *I will be that I will be*, which might be closer to the imperfect tense of the verb הָיָה used in Ex 3:14.

9   Even if Stein doesn't use the expression *analogia personae*, the idea is present; see Tommasi, 2015, particularly p. 267-68.

10 See IV Latran Council in DS 806.

11 The question of individuality in God includes a double aspect, i.e. numerical individuality and qualitative individuality (in fact, the question of numerical and qualitative individuality is not present in this article). Numerical individuality is attributed to the *Träger*, i.e. the hypostasis, whereas qualitative individuality is attributed to nature. This distinction allows for differentiation between the individuality of the divine persons, formally distinguished through their mutual relations, and qualitative individuality of the unique divine nature.

excluding the lived body. It rather means that the person as incarnated is spiritual, and its individual note can be manifest, for example, in a smile or in a gaze. The fact that qualitative individuality is irreducible to something common indicates that the value of the human person is not only to be seen as relative to the human species, but is also to be seen, and perhaps even more fundamentally, as relative to the person's individual property.

> The individual soul with its "unique" individuality is thus not something transitory, destined merely to impress upon itself for a limited span of time the stamp of its specific particularity, and during this span of time to hand on this specific particularity to its "progeny" so as to preserve it beyond the duration of the life of the individual. Rather, the soul is destined for eternal being, and this destination explains why the soul is called upon to be an image of God in a "wholly personal manner." (Stein, 2002a, p. 504)

The irreducibility of the human person to the human species manifests its personal destiny and vocation in an eternal communion with God. The human person is not simply a human exemplar, but it is, in a wholly personal manner, the image of God. This idea is already present in earlier texts often with the light-metaphor and, more precisely, with the idea that every person reflects in its individual note a ray of the divine essence (cf. Stein, 2001b, p. 19; 2009, p. 401; 2005, p. 63). On the one hand, the metaphor of the ray of light respects the distance between the Creator and his creature, as the ray depends on, but is not identical with, its light-source. On the other hand, the metaphor indicates an essential affinity between God and the human person founded on a singular and irreplaceable relation, because of the singularity of the persons themselves. Stein quotes a passage of the book of Revelation where it is said that the victor will receive "a white stone, with a new name written on it, known only to the person who receives it." (Rev 2:17) and she comments:

> [A]re we not to assume that this name signifies a proper name [*Eigenname*] in the strict and full sense of the term, i.e., a name which enunciates the innermost essence of the recipient and reveals to this recipient the mystery of his or her being that is hidden in God? (*Finite and Eternal Being* 505 revised [423]).

If every person receives from God in his innermost essence a proper name, and if this name expresses the image of God in a personal manner, it becomes even more important to ask what makes unity among persons. Stein shows that individ-

uality does not imply individualism; in fact, ontological (and not only historical) alterity is the condition of possibility for true complementarity in an interpersonal relation. To go further it would be interesting to follow the developments of Christological reinterpretation of the *imago Dei*, because this would show how individual notes are prefigured in the fullness of Christ's human nature.

(Re-)Creational Relation

There is a second essential element of an image as stated in Augustine: relation to an origin. What Augustine considers as the relation to an origin is present in Stein's work as relation between an *Urbild* (proto-image) and an *Abbild* (image as a copy). The most fundamental relationship between Creator and creature is the *relation of creation*, not only at the origin of the universe, but rather as a permanent relation[12] that might be differently understood with a greater insistence on creatural autonomy in Thomas Aquinas or with a greater insistence on dependence on God in Bonaventure and Duns Scotus (Emery, 2013, p. 27-30, 30-34, 37-41). In every case there is simultaneously the alterity or transcendence of God (as expressed in the Hebrew בָּרָא – *barah, create* – uniquely with God as subject) and dependence on the creative origin. It is not a neutral relation, but a possibly "personal" relation, as Guardini states in his *The World and the Person*: "Things originate by God's command; the person by his call. But this means that God appoints the person as his You – more precisely, that he determines himself as the You for humans." (My trans. of Guardini, 1952, p. 145).

The distinction between the creation by command and the creation by call interprets the priestly text, where in Gen 1:28 God addresses his human creature for the first time. He blesses man and woman and gives them their mission in creation. The image of God has to be read in this dialogical perspective in which God and the human being are *You* for each other. If, in the priestly text, God calls the human person, nothing is said about an answer. Let us admit at least a *capacity* to answer, because it would be nonsense to seek a dialogue with a creature ontologically incapable of dialogue. For Thomas Pröpper, to be created as image of God signifies to be *capable* of personal relation with him, and this capacity finds its realisation in the covenant. Of course, the free human answer must be subordinated to historical conditions, especially the fact of sin and of Christ's liberation of humanity from sin, so that the realisation of the possibility of a personal relation depends first on

12 See Thomas, *ST* 1, q. 45, a. 3 ad 1: "creatio active significata [i.e. to create] significat actionem divinam, quae est eius essentia cum relatione ad creaturam" and ad 2 : "creatio passive [i.e. to be created] accepta est in creatura, et est creatura".

God himself. The idea of partnership or of covenant indicates the necessity for a dynamic *relecture* or an eschatological interpretation of the image. The eschatological interpretation however presupposes a protological interpretation, i.e. the human being's *creation* as image of God.[13]

Turning now to Stein, she does not address the question of the relation to God directly in link with the question of the image. All the same, in her last work *Science of the Cross*, she introduces the question of union with God distinguishing three modes, essential union (or relation of creation), union by grace and union by transforming love (Stein, 2002b). This tripartition, which appears several times in John of the Cross's work (1991, p. 163-164, 511, 713-714; San Juan de la Cruz, 2009, p. 227-228, 631, 870), helps to show the progression of union by love with God inhabiting the human person. It is a progressive enrichment, or – to use the phenomenological term – a "completion" (*Erfüllung*) of the relation between Creator and creature. Stein writes:

> It is the same one God in three persons who is present in each of the three modes, and his immutable being is the same in all three modes. Still the indwelling is different because that wherein dwells the one and same, unchanged deity changes its mode of being each time. Thus the nature of the indwelling is modified (Stein, 2002b, p. 175).

God is faithful in relation to his creation and his covenant, but this relation changes when the human person is transformed. With Guardini, I have stated that the relation of creation is, for a human person, a singular call seeking a personal and singular answer in a common history. For Stein, this personal answer presupposes a transformation of the person, the person's assimilation to God. Although I cannot expose here all the implications of this assimilation by *transforming love* and the role of human freedom, it may suffice to recall that Stein's view is in keeping with that of the Spanish mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila and with the tradition of divinization. To consider how love and vulnerability are related in Stein's approach I may examine her very personal interpretation of the Cross as a place of union with the Crucified and in him with the triune God and with all human beings. Stein writes:

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13   Here, I agree with the analysis of LeRon Shults: "An eschatological interpretation does not exclude the other interpretations but may incorporate and integrate them." (LeRon Shults, 2003b, 237). LeRon Shults seeks to articulate between image by creation and becoming image, but he does not do the same thing with respect to structural and relational interpretations of the *imago*. According to him, the "turn to relationality" requires the substitution of a structural interpretation by a decidedly relational interpretation. It is already clear that I am not in agreement with this thesis.

> [W]hoever, in deep recollection, enters into the attitude of the Saviour on the cross, into the love that surrenders itself to the limit, will thereby become united to the divine will, for it is the Father's will-to-save that Jesus fulfils in his love and surrender as Saviour. And one's being will be united with the divine Being, which is self-surrendering love: in the mutual surrender of the divine Persons in the inner-trinitarian life as well as its outward activity. For this reason, self-fulfilment, union with God, and labouring for the union of others with God and for their self-fulfilment belong inseparably together. It is the cross, however, that gives access to all this (Ibidem, p. 284).

More than mere suffering, the Cross manifests both Jesus's vulnerability and his free, self-surrendering love. Vulnerability, freedom, and love in its highest form of self-surrender are conditions for complete interpersonal union. Here again I find the *leitmotiv* of personal individuality, because a person's love, rooted in the depth of the person, does not only reflect lived experiences, but also reflects the person's individual note. It is, so to say, a love coloured by personal individuality. Love, on the one hand, seeks union, and seeks to overcome every dissemblance: "the lover is transformed into the beloved", Stein says, with John and Teresa. On the other hand, however, love reveals the ultimate difference, not only the alterity of another subject, but the individual note apparent in the person who loves, a personal qualitative alterity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the two major results of the present essay may be summarized as follows:

The first result touches on the complementarity between an ontological approach and a relational approach to the *imago Dei*. An image is composed of two essential elements: resemblance, which may be linked to an ontological approach, and relation to an origin, evidently linked to a relational approach. This integrative interpretation of the *imago Dei* is an alternative to the very common opposition which tends to consider an ontological approach as incompatible with relationality and likewise incompatible with human becoming. First, this contribution focussed on showing that the creation of an opposition between relationality and personal being, present in several contemporary theological perspectives, does not allow for the recognition of these two necessary conditions for every image: to resemble and to be related to a prototype. I must therefore conclude that maintaining an ontologi-

cal interpretation of the *imago Dei* cannot necessarily lead to the exclusion of a relational interpretation. Second, an ontological interpretation of the *imago Dei* cannot exclude a dynamic view of the human person because relations in general and the relation with God in particular transform the person. This is particularly true for loving relations directed to the person's relational fulfilment, mainly introduced with Stein's *Science of the Cross*. A thorough theological study of this dynamic and even eschatological aspect of the image of God would require an examination of Paul's reinterpretation of the image – Christ as image of God (2 Co 4:4; Col 1:15) and human transformation in accordance with this image (Rm 8:29; 2 Co 3:18; Col 3:9f.). As my focus in the present contribution has remained on the interpretation of the *imago Dei* in reference to Genesis, my treatment of this second aspect of the image of God has been very limited. The more modest aim here has been to emphasize that an ontological account of the image of God is fully compatible with a transformative account of the image by grace, and, further, that the ontological account even requires the transformative account.

The second result of my research concerns personal individuality understood with Stein in a qualitative sense as a condition of possibility for complementarity that is not only enrichment by other lived experiences, but an interpersonal enrichment in a more fundamental, ontological sense. The focus on the person's individuality, which *prima facie* seems to be opposed to relationality, is on the contrary the condition for radical, ontological alterity in personal relations and at the same time the condition for irreducible novelty. Moreover, personal individuality in Stein's sense cannot be discovered and lived out in an isolated, static manner, but is found mainly in loving relationships with one another and ultimately with God. This is another way to show the necessary interdependence between the ontological and relational interpretations of the *imago Dei*. In this sense, the turn to relationality should seek to integrate rather than to contest an ontological approach to the human person and to his or her subjectivity. In other words, I think it is both possible and necessary to conceive the *relation* between subjects without refusing to consider the *subjects* in relation. Both Clarke, quoted in the introduction, and Stein, referred to throughout this paper, are able to offer an integrative view of the human person and may help to better grasp the full meaning of the *imago Dei*. Stein's attention to the person's individuality enables to discover the image of God in what all human beings share, i.e. their uniqueness.

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IMAGO DEI, ONTOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS. INTRODUCING EDITH STEIN TO THE DEBATE

SUMMARY

The complex theological treatment of the person as imago Dei has focused on ontological, functional, relational or eschatological interpretations, which either belong or possibly belong to all human beings. It is however unusual to encounter a reflection on the person's intrinsic uniqueness as imago Dei. For Edith Stein intrinsic or a priori individuality refers to a unique quality of the person's soul which unfolds more or less fully in the unity of the person's body-soul-spirit unity: «the soul is destined for eternal being, and this destination explains why the soul is called upon to be an image of God in a "wholly personal manner."» (FEB 504 [422]) This ontological approach contributes to a consideration of interpersonal enrichment through love, as a way to personal fulfilment and to complementarity through communion. An ontological approach to personal individuality thus paradoxically leads to the discovery of the existential primacy of relationality.

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