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What is personalism?

A dialogue on Juan Manuel Burgos'

*An Introduction to Personalism*¹

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¹ Juan Manuel Burgos. (2018). *An Introduction to Personalism*. Translation by Richard Allen with the collaboration of Jim Beauregard. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press (from now on *An Introduction*).

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Notes on Contributors

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Introduction to the Special Issue

The very definition and meaning of personalism as a philosophical area or position(s) is a debated issue. The scope of personalism undisputedly falls within the broad framework of appreciation for human beings and their dignity. Quite a few positions can be found under its umbrella. There are, for instance, those who focus on tracing personalism's long past, if it does indeed have one, to those who consider personalism as a philosophical product limited to the last few centuries. This difference in focus naturally implies a different assessment of what constitute the appropriate categories, concepts, and representatives of philosophical personalism (herein, "personalism" will be understood to mean "philosophical personalism" unless otherwise stated).

This special issue of *Appraisal* aims to reflect on above noted decisive questions based on the book by Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, translated into English a few years ago by Richard Allen with some collaboration from James Beauregard and Benjamin Wilkinson. We hope that the reader will find here a robust evaluations of Burgos' work by personalists and philosophers of different orientation (Jose Seifert, Alfred Marek Wierzbicki, James A. Harold, Weronika Janzczuk, and Diana Prokofyeva) as well as equally substantive responses from Juan Manuel Burgos. We believe that this dialogue, which continues the exchange of ideas started years ago between the Ibero-American Association of Personalism and the International Conference on Persons (with Auxier, Bengtsonn and others) may be of interest to the personalist community and to those curious about personalism more generally. We hope as well that, as the title of Burgos' work suggests, this dialogue introduces those unfamiliar with personalism to the subject and area at hand.

James Beauregard and Abigail Klassen, Eds.

Comment by Juan Manuel Burgos

I would like to introduce this set of comments on my book *An Introduction to Personalism* (Washington: CUA Press, 2018) with some words of thanks. First, I would like to thank Richard Allen not only for initiating and undertaking the translation of *An Introduction*, but for giving it space and therefore an audience in *Appraisal* for a group of philosophers to comment on the book. I would also like to thank Jim Beauregard for his commitment and dedication in bringing this work to fruition, because Jim is the one who has done the tiresome work of writing to the commentators, soliciting their work, revising, and unifying it, etc. My most sincere thanks to both. And thank you also, of course, to all the scholars who have not only taken the trouble to read my book, but also to comment on it. I'm so very grateful to Josef Seifert, Alfred Wierzbicki, James. A. Harold, Weronica Janczuk and Diana Prokofyeva. Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Abigail Klassen for her careful and intelligent work in editing the final version of this set of reflections, which has made its publication possible. This joint work of so many people has made possible an interesting reflection on the identity and characteristics of personalism that can contribute to this debate, still open today.

The reviews are varied in length, in depth and in assessment and in perspective. Many of the reviews have been written by friends or acquaintances. These are people with whom, over the years, I have had an academic and personal relationship. As I hope the reader will see, this has not prevented them to express their opinions freely. The reviews are praiseworthy at times and critical at others. In the same way, I have also expressed my own opinion freely. That is, I am sometimes praiseworthy and sometimes critical of their views I have not answered all the ratings because, first of all, some of the criticisms are repeated in different reviews, so answering them in each of them would be repetitive for the reader, and second, because I have preferred to focus on what I deem to be the most relevant and crucial objections to my work so as not to lengthen the discussion excessively.

1. Josef Seifert, Excellence and Limits of Juan Manuel Burgos book: 'An Introduction to Personalism'

The book by the prominent Spanish philosopher, founder and President of the Spanish and the Ibero-American Association of Personalism, Juan Manuel Burgos, translated into English as *An Introduction to Personalism* (abbr.: *An Introduction*) deserves a deeper analysis than we can present here, but some thoughts about this precious book must be expressed in the present volume dedicated to a critical review of his work given the book's relevance and importance.²

1. *An Introduction* as an important contribution to a central chapter in the history of philosophy in the 20th century

The first chapters of the book make up an interesting and dense journey through many 20th century thinkers, schools and personalist movements operating in different countries, especially in Europe. Burgos understands "personalism" in the sense of one or more specific historical schools of anthropology that emerged in the first half of the 20th century (with a background in the 18th and 19th centuries) as a response to individualism and collectivism. In the face of individualism, personalism critically insists on the value and duty of man's solidarity with his fellow men; and in the face of collectivism, personalist philosophy points out the absolute value of each person, his rights, and even the absolute moral duties, which a person has towards himself and towards other persons.

Having had at first a certain political-social and activist character, the personalist movement of the twentieth century was later consolidated as a theoretical philosophy, maintaining as its central thesis the person constitutes the essential architectural category of anthropology, a thesis of most personalists and of Burgos himself.

Some of the other themes to which the personalism of the 20th and 21st centuries give special relevance are the irreducibility of the person or subject to mere matter in motion or to the animal nature. Thus, personalism sees an impropriety in defining man as an animal with the mere "specific difference" of rationality instead of as "a person-in-flesh", a "person-in-a-body" or "a person who has a body."³ It also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging persons' spiritual forms of affectivity⁴ and freedom where freedom is understood as self-determination but not only, and others.

Though Burgos does not mention in the *Introduction*, but does in his essay, "Three proposals for a personalist concept of human nature" (abbr: "Three proposals", wherein he criticizes the "rigidity" of the Thomist concept of "human nature"), a cardinal contribution of the personalist thinkers on free will. This contribution is the position that free will includes the capacity to give an

² The Bulk of this article was originally presented as a lecture in Madrid, and later published in Spanish in Josef Seifert. (2013). *Espíritu*, Vol. 62-145, pp. 165-182, and Josef Seifert. (2013. "Sobre el libro de Juan Manuel Burgos, Introducción al personalismo", *Persona. Revista Iberoamericana de Personalismo Comunitario*, vol. 22, pp. 12-21. The references of this book to *An Introduction* refer to the Spanish Edition.

³ On this topic also, see J. Seifert. (1995). "El hombre como persona en el cuerpo", *Espíritu* Vol. 54, pp. 129-156.

⁴ Burgos has translated into the Spanish the magisterial work on this topic by Dietrich von Hildebrand. (1967). *Über das Herz. Zur menschlichen und gottmenschlichen Affektivität*, Regensburg: Josef Habel.

intentional response that does not only decide between different means, but also between different possible ends, even the ultimate ends of free will. The latter is to say that the person can not only choose between different types of intrinsic values or goods, but also between the intrinsically good and the merely subjectively satisfying (even when the latter is intrinsically evil, but can motivate the will to do harm to others or to rejoice in their harm in sadism such as in the case of gloating joy or malicious glee). In this way, the person decides freely between objects or states of affairs of radically different kinds of importance.⁵ He is not always deciding between mere means towards a good that he would necessarily desire, but he can also decide between intrinsic values and goods and subjectively satisfying, but intrinsically evil actions.

Moreover, his will does not solely respond to states of affairs that are not yet realized although realizable through us,⁶ but responds to existing persons, affirming them in love as ends in themselves, as was especially stressed in the *persona affirmanda (Amanda) propter seipsam (the person ought to be affirmed/loved for her own sake)* of the Polish personalism of Wojtyła and his school, a school that Burgos very highly appreciates and to which he has dedicated a whole book. This account of freedom in relation to the ultimate ends of human acts is, according to Burgos (with whom I totally agree on this point), very important for all ethical personalism and for an authentic concept of freedom of the will and of natural law.⁷

Personalism also studies in detail empathy and the knowledge of the “thou”, interpersonal relationships (especially those between the first person – “the I” - and the second person – “thou”), and human corporeality as something essentially different from the corporeality of animals. Ours is fully open and destined to participate in human spiritual life. The themes and achievements of historical personalism, as Burgos presents them also include a deep consideration of the human person as male and female, an active commitment to social reality, and an openness to transcendence.

With respect to 20th century personalism, which certainly shows interest in many other contents and themes, we can reckon a limited number of thinkers, almost all of whom of a certain level are considered (albeit very briefly) in Burgos’ book.

The historical part of *An Introduction* explains the thought of different schools of personalism and various personalist thinkers, and thereby allows the reader to share in the vast knowledge and enormous competence of Burgos in the field personalism and its sources. This part of the book stands out especially through a certain ordering and systematization of personalist thought, which is not to be found in most of the historical personalist thinkers’ works themselves. In chapters 1 to 3 of *An Introduction*, Burgos reconstructs the genesis of personalist philosophy through the biography and the general lines of thought of its main representatives and schools.

⁵ These have been masterfully elaborated by Dietrich von Hildebrand in his *Ethics*.

⁶ As Hildebrand mistakenly stated in his *Ethics*. See Dietrich von Hildebrand. (1978). *Ethics*, 2nd edn. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, ch. 17. For a critique of his own view, see (1980). *Moralia. Nachgelassenes Werk. Gesammelte Werke*, Band 5, Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1980; see also Josef Seifert. (2017). *The Moral Action. What is it and what motivates it?*. Irving, Gaflei, FL, Granada-Spain: Iap Press/Kindle Book.

⁷ See Josef Seifert. (2016). “¿Qué es la ley natural? Su reforma y renovación personalista y axiológica con algunas observaciones críticas sobre su fundación aristotélica-tomista y eudemonista”, *Quién*, vol. 3, pp. 7-22.

The first chapter begins with a history of the political situation and of the most influential ideas of the last century, thus providing by means of an aetiology the most cogent and logical reasons why personalist philosophy emerged in 20th century Europe. To emphasize the seriousness of Europe's poor spiritual state, the author uses a powerful autobiographical text by Stefan Zweig on this subject:

For my life all the yellowish steeds of the Apocalypse, revolution and hunger, inflation and terror, epidemics and emigration have galloped; I have seen the birth and spread before my very eyes of the great mass ideologies: fascism in Italy, national socialism in Germany, Bolshevism in Russia and, above all, the worst of all plagues: nationalism, which poisons the flower of our European culture. I have been forced to witness helplessly and powerlessly the inconceivable fall of humanity into a barbarism such as had not been seen before and which wielded its deliberate and programmatic dogma of anti-humanity.

Awakened by the impact of the experience of the despondency and murder of millions of people during the first half of the last century, personalists carried out a political-social struggle of ideas and proposed a strong concept of the dignity of the person and an equally strong and imperturbable personalist ethics, requiring, in the face of materialism, evolutionism and liberalism, and, above all, in the face of Stalinist and Hitlerite collectivism, unconditional respect for each human person. Some risked their lives in their heroic struggle of reinforcing the dignity of the person and of personalist ethics.⁸

Burgos credits E. Mounier with ensuring that personalist philosophy not only attained great political and social importance, but also took shape as theoretical thought. But Burgos also details how personalism developed beyond Mounier through the contributions of philosophers such as Scheler, Maritain, Buber, Wojtyła, von Hildebrand, Marcel, Guardini, Julián Marías and others, thereby also analysing in a very competent way the influences of some precursors of the personalist philosophers. Kant, for example, inspired personalism by his famous formulation of the categorical imperative in terms that a person should never be used only as a means, that he is endowed with a dignity, a sublime value, which demands absolute and categorical respect for every person - without exception - as an end in itself. To these intuitions of Kant, Wojtyła and his school added that the person, who possesses a high intrinsic value, requires not only respect, but love: *persona amanda est propter seipsam* (the person must be loved for himself). The only adequate response to another person is to love him for himself because he possesses a high and sublime value in virtue of which deserves an adequate response of love, a radical yes or affirmation.

Burgos demonstrates how Kant's personalist formulation of one the moral categorical imperatives inspires the principle of Polish personalist ethics and especially its formulations by Karol Wojtyła, even though Wojtyła's epistemological and metaphysical foundations are radically different from those of Kant. Burgos also analyses the personalists before the 20th century, especially from the second half of the 19th century, and analyses the limited role of their ideas in the context of the

⁸ See, for example, Dietrich von Hildebrand. (2014). *My Battle against Hitler*. New York: Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project with Penguin Random House Company.

birth of the great movements of 20th century personalisms. In Burgos' first chapter, he furthermore considers the important role of Soren Kierkegaard, of Husserl, of phenomenology in general, and of Thomism, for personalism.

As Burgos believes that French personalism was the most important current of personalism, the author dedicates the whole second chapter of the book to French personalists, focusing on Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier and to the metaphysical personalism of Maurice Nédoncelle. The third chapter deals with Italian, Polish (to which, in its Wojtyłian form, the author feels particularly close), German, Jewish, and Spanish personalism.

2. *An Introduction as a philosophical work*

Notwithstanding the fact that most of the book focuses on explaining the history and thought of the most prominent thinkers of personalism, the author does not only present the different views of various personalists, but also philosophizes himself, seeks wisdom itself. Here, wisdom is defined as true knowledge of the most important themes of life accessible to human reason in which the person occupies an absolutely central place. As Plato so categorically formulates in *Politeia* 6.485, the search for wisdom is not possible without love of the truth about being and the essence of things themselves. Thus, the new work of our author is not only an important part of a history of contemporary philosophy, but also a fine example of authentic philosophy and genuine philosophizing.

The second and philosophically more interesting, but much shorter part of the book, Chapter 4, is an attempt by the author to make an assessment and a balance, with the intention of presenting a kind of synthesis of the main achievements of the various personalist thinkers and schools. He also speaks of a "personal synthesis" with which he tries to consolidate the bases of the personalism of the 21st century and which constitutes the philosophical substance of his work.

I am going to formulate aspects that I admire in this chapter, but also highlight what seems to me to require a critique or at least important complementation.

The basis of Chapter 4 is, on the one hand, the aforementioned historical concept of "personalism" that Burgos possesses, and, on the other, represents a certain tension between two intentions of the author that I consider to be conflicting or even mutually exclusive.

a) *The purely historical concept of personalism*

The author understands "personalism" and "personalist" almost only as attributes of a group of philosophers and a set of philosophies of the 20th and the present century, prepared by, but not existing in, previous philosophies. Without a doubt, Burgos is right at least in the sense that the schools he has in mind have made such significant contributions, one can restrict the term "personalism" precisely to this movement or group of philosophers. This is not only because they called themselves "personalists", but also to emphasize the novelty of their personalist thought compared to the traditional schools of Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy and others.

Consequently, Burgos implicitly and even explicitly rejects the distinctions that have been proposed, and does not distinguish the schools historically born in the twentieth century, which were and are called "personalist" from a "historical-ideal", which is to say a true, integral, and authentic personalism to be understood as the sum of the truth about the person as characterized by thinkers

of all epochs. Burgos also fails to distinguish both aforementioned forms of personalism from a perfect personalism understood as a transcendent ideal not yet realized and never fully realizable in the history of philosophy.

If something is true, it is never valid for only one epoch; it is true always, eternally. This "eternal personalism" coincides largely with the achievements of the personalist schools of the 20th century, but it also includes the knowledge of much greater thinkers than Mounier or others; thinkers who, in my opinion, were the greatest personalists of all times like St. Augustine. I understand this personalism as one of the central parts, or even as *the* central part of the *philosophia perennis* (understood here not as Thomism, but as the *summa veritatis* the authentic philosophical knowledge in all philosophers), which deals with what constitutes the centre of all being, being in the most proper sense of the word: the person. With this in mind, the realist phenomenologist Baldwin Schwarz puts Thomas Aquinas as *the* model of a philosopher and of a phenomenological realist.⁹

This ideal personalism, which potentially includes all philosophical truths about the person, is a profound and comprehensive philosophy that certainly contains, first and last, a metaphysics of the person, showing that being a person is absolutely better than not being a person and that being a person is a pure, greater perfection of which there is no other higher one, and that being a person allows for an infinite perfection, and hence must be attributed to God.¹⁰

So "person" is not the same as "man" or to a mere anthropological concept, but can and must be attributed literally, and infinitely more perfectly, to God. In fact, only there does it find its perfect reality. Only a divine personal being incorporates all the richness and depth of the idea of "person: perfect consciousness and self-consciousness, knowledge, and wisdom itself, perfect and holy free will, etc.; only a divine person is, in all truth and in all the senses that this name hides, "person". The human person, so to speak, is only a shadow, an image of what the "person himself" truly IS. The human person could never justifiably apply the phrases "I am He who IS", "I AM the I AM", or "I AM THE TRUTH" to himself¹¹ as such biblical phrases Edith Stein interprets as implying simultaneously the absolute being and the personal being of God.¹²

From all this it is also clear that I in no way, as Burgos seems to suppose, simply identify the concept of *philosophia perennis* with Greek or Thomistic philosophy, but I understand *philosophia perennis*, as Balduin Schwarz does, as nothing less than the totality of the important philosophical

⁹ Balduin Schwarz. (2000). *Ewige Philosophie. Gesetz und Freiheit in der Geistesgeschichte*. Leipzig: Verlag J. Hegner, 1937; 2. Aufl. Siegburg: Schmitt, pp. 120-123.

¹⁰ See Josef Seifert. (1989). *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, ch. 9 and Parts IV and V.

¹¹ Michel Henry does precisely this and thereby develops an idolatrous personalism. See Michel Henry. (1966), *C'est moi la vérité, un Christ d'éclat*. Paris: Seuil. (1997). *Ich bin die Wahrheit. Für eine Philosophie des Christentums*. München: K. Alber. See also the critique of this idolatrous personalism in Josef Seifert. (2009). *Wahrheit und Person. Vom Wesen der Seinswahrheit, Erkenntniswahrheit und Urteilswahrheit. De veritate – Über die Wahrheit* Bd. I. Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick: Ontos-Verlag, ch. 5: "Ich Bin die Wahrheit".

¹² See Edith Stein. (1962), *Endliches und Ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinne des Seins*. In: Edith Steins Werke, Bd. II, Hrsg. L. Gerber, 2. Aufl. Wien, 1962.

knowledge of the essence and dignity of the person and on all the other objects of philosophical knowledge: *Summa Veritatis*.¹³

Personalism, in the sense that the human person is the being endowed with the highest value (an immense dignity) among all beings on earth, and that the absolute being is a person is at the core of the Jewish and Muslim religions and, above all, of Christianity. If one believes that God is a most Holy Trinity and a communion of three persons, that man possesses such a high value that God assumed a human nature, became man, and that a divine person who became man has suffered the most horrible tortures and death by crucifixion for love of human persons, the core of personalism is obviously inseparable from Christianity and permeates all the thoughts and writings of the great Christian thinkers, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary, at least on the theological-religious level. To say that a Christian thinker is not personalist is to say that there is a

¹³ Baldwin Schwarz, *Ewige Philosophie*, pp. 120-123: "There was a great threat for the spiritual world to break apart, the old appeared worthy of respect but impotent; the new appeared fascinating but disruptive. It is the incomparable merit of Saint Thomas to have approached the situation of his time with no other question than with that of truth. Through the mere defense of a tradition, the mere hint at its greatness, at the authorities which stand behind it, one cannot banish such an elementary event as the becoming apparent of new aspects of reality. Thomas possessed the intellectual "nerves" – if we are allowed to use this term – to distance himself from the safe grounds of Augustinianism. Instead of seeking, to save as much as possible, a compromise with the New (i.e., with the Arab and Latin averroistic Aristotelianism), he simply loved the truth and was convinced of its unity, and thus began the gigantic process of the scrutiny of his opponent, the anti-Christian Aristotelianism, and of the clarification, transformation, and new rethinking of Aristotle. Simultaneously he also began a keen examination of the Augustinian teaching, to unite everything in the unity of the single great Corpus veritatis. Reneging not the slightest part of truth, never thinking in terms of schools or cliques, ready to learn from everybody, never forgetting the whole over the part, and seeing with incomparable intellectual strength everything in its connection, careful and generous, flexible for every nuance, but keeping his eye unwaveringly directed at the Totem, calm in the progression of thought, never in doubt and caught in details, this became the genius of the Summa, of a high point of human existence. The positive response to a crisis and its mastering probably never was accomplished in such great purity, so wholly convincingly, so universally and forcefully. Without the intellectual deed of Saint Thomas, the occident would have been ripped apart and deprived of its inner unity two centuries earlier, because it would not have kept present to itself the unity of being. But now again a whole and inclusive image of things was presented, in which everything known heretofore was placed at its right place, possessed its proper weight, as it befiteth the thing; and thereby it became clear in its unity and in its difference from everything else.

And at the same time the unity of the living spiritual stream was preserved throughout the centuries... The golden chain of history linked the present with the past.

Thomas may be regarded as the classical type of the genuine liberator from a spiritual crisis. He represents in the history of the mind the good and truly living forces, which a man awakens in himself when he integrates in his life something which he encounters at first as something threatening, or fascinating, but at any rate as something revolutionary and disruptive. Condition [of such an integration] is that he leads the line of life upward, uniting in his vibrant vigilant strength force, audacity and reverence, does not reject anything valuable, but lets it become stronger, does not anxiously repress anything new, but confronts it, resists its assault, banishes its power to fascinate, transforming it into the force of truth and making it part of himself and of his world. One ought to look onto Thomas, to the silent audacity of his spiritual deed, and not on any one of the overbearing revolutionaries without sense of responsibility in the sphere of the intellect, to get a sense of the significant truth of the famous saying of Nietzsche: „How much truth does a mind bear, how much truth does he dare? This became for me more and more the real criterion of value. Error is not blindness, error is cowardice... Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge follows from the courage, from the harshness against himself, from the clarity vis-à-vis oneself”.

number three that is even or that a piece of wood is iron. A Christian who is not personalist is either not a Christian or does not believe or understand anything about Christianity, and so all authentic Christian philosophers were personalists. This personalism, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, should be expressly recognized without denying it the title of personalism.

Therefore, the word “personalism” certainly should not be understood only in such a restrictive historical sense so that only some 20th century philosophers could be classified as personalist thinkers and not a St. Augustine, a Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman, or a Soren Kierkegaard. However, my argument does not prevent someone, along with Burgos, from being able, for the reasons mentioned and others, to use the name “personalism” mainly in the more restricted sense of a specific 20th century school. For this reason, I propose to use, in addition to the notion of 20th century personalism, the more comprehensive notion of “perennial personalism” and of ideal or perfect personalism.

All of what I have argued does not mean that I intend that all personalist philosophers in the broad sense of the term and before the 20th century would have understood the full depth of the person and of personalism or of the sense of a *prise de conscience* of the dignity and the central role of the person for ethics, anthropology, or metaphysics. Personalism in the sense of a recent phenomenon would not have added anything new or would not deserve to be the only reasonable candidate for the significant though restrictive term of “personalism” as used by Burgos.

Besides personalism in Burgos’ sense and a “perennial personalism”, which includes all the historical contributions that clarify the greatness of the person, I would distinguish a “transhistorical or eternal ideal personalism”. This true personalism is, in my opinion, above all an ideal only partially achieved rather than a historical reality even if one considers the deepest personalists of history and of the personalist movement of the 20th century.

Moreover, if a knowledge of the person, reached by Augustine or Mounier, is true, then neither the judgment that expresses it nor (and even less) its truth belong to a limited historical period, but are eternal. Ancient thinkers, especially Jewish and Muslim thinkers, and, above all, Christian philosophers and theologians for more than 2000 years have found in the person a very important theme: it is clear that there were not only “philosophers of the person” but also great “personalists” before the 20th century (such as St. Augustine), and many of them possessed a deeper metaphysical foundation of personalism than most of the personalists of the 20th century. Moreover, ideal personalism also includes truths about the person and his central role in metaphysics, ethics, and anthropology, etc., not yet discovered by any philosopher. And so, true personalism is more a program for the future than a current or past reality. Thus, the content of this true and eternal personalism is much richer than the contents that have been discovered in the 20th century. The purely historical concept of personalism has much to do with the second point mentioned above.

b) Two potentially conflicting intentions of chapter four

What are the two potentially conflicting intentions in Chapter 4, and what are these two intentions of Burgos?

1. There is an explicit and open intention on the part of Burgos to formulate a common core among so many different 20th century “personalists”, to find a shared denominator or a personalist philosophical manifesto on which all 20th century personalists agree, or, more precisely, to show that this historical personalism “has all the elements to become a sound philosophy” (p. 179). The

author explicitly intends to expose “the central nucleus of the thought of the previously exposed authors” (p. 179) or of “the philosophical current or currents born in the 20th century that possess the following characteristics” (p. 194).

2. Burgos, however, in his fourth chapter, seeks to realize a second, more hidden and, in my opinion, more valuable intention: to formulate the authentic achievements or the truths that were discovered by different personalists. And to accomplish this, it does not matter in the least whether these achievements are recognized by all the personalists of the 20th century, only by a few, or only by Burgos. Although the author does not say so, and even denies having this more audacious intention by suggesting instead that he is carrying out a modest personal synthesis in order to elaborate a common denominator of the most important theses that, according to him, all the personalist thinkers of the 20th century have defended, it seems to me that he clearly has unconsciously this second intention. He sometimes calls this intention a “proposal” or a “personal vision”, having abandoned his earlier term of an “authentic personalism”.

Let us consider the long list of the contributions and themes of personalism given in Chapter 4 (pp. 203-233). These correspond to what Burgos and I would take as an account of traits and truths discovered by many personalists, but this magnificent list does not coincide with the opinion of all outstanding personalists. Therefore, it is not this nucleus of general consensus of all the personalists, but something very different and much better for which Burgos is searching. It is this respect that the author's other mentioned intention triumphs, an intention that he himself plays down and reduces to something different than an intention, calling it modestly “a (Burgos') personal vision”. This vision is to present the “truth about the person”, whether it is recognized by all, recognized by the majority, or recognized only by a few personalist philosophers. For example, neither realism, nor openness to transcendence, nor the subsistence (substantiality) of the person are premises? on which all personalists would agree. For this reason, the author truly proposes in the fourth chapter, instead of a vague and abstract nucleus of universal consensus, one on which all the very different “personalists” would agree, a more detailed and strongly contentful version, which, in turn, corresponds more to a “perennial personalism” or even to an ideal personalism more so than to the historical personalism of the 20th century considered as a whole.

This intention of the author to formulate the truths discovered by personalists rather than a mere universal consensus among them deserves praise, but it should not be hidden behind an attempt to merely formulate a consensus of all personalists.

3. Philosophical problems with Burgos' “list of characteristics” of personalism

In the list of characteristics of Burgos' personalism, there are not only important truths about the person and his dignity. There are also some problematic theses. They are problematic in the sense that they can easily be interpreted in a way that obscures authentic personalism: for example, the problematic thesis already mentioned that the notion of the person constitutes the essential architectural category of anthropology. This affirmation, although it expresses a true and very important nucleus of personalism, namely, the discovery that the most fundamental concept for understanding man is that of the person, poses a triple problem that I see in 20th century personalism, and, in part, also in Burgos' excellent *An Introduction*.

1. On the one hand, the frequent identification of “person” with “man” and vice versa, if one absolutizes this identity, is implicitly atheistic, and goes against a theistic metaphysics of the person. This is present in Burgos’ work and in the work of many other personalists (but these thinkers fail to notice the consequence of clearly distinguishing between the notions of “person” and “man”, which is necessary to see that man is neither the only personal being nor the most perfect one). In addition, despite the legitimate rejection of certain anthropologies (like that of Peter Singer), according to which many human beings would not be persons, and the important affirmation of many personalists that all human beings are persons and that in this sense “the notion of person constitutes the essential architectural category of anthropology”, the identification of “person” with “man” continues to be false. Why? Because while all human beings are persons not all persons are human.

Any authentic personalist metaphysics recognizes that the human person, despite his or her greatness, is the most humble and deficient form of person in the universe of persons. Moreover, this identification between man and person obscures the fact that an atheistic humanism, which denies a personal divine being, recognizing only the human person as a person, is not authentic personalism despite its recognition of the central role of the human person in the world and in anthropology.¹⁴ This is not only because the personal character of God and the ordination of the human person to God are indispensable for understanding the deepest levels of the human heart, but also because an anthropology that sees the origin of the only person who would exist (the human person) in something apersonal (the person is a manifestation of the brain, a fruit of chance, etc.); this view considers the person only as a product of the physical world and evolution. It cannot explain man's being a person and his essential traits such as free will, knowledge, etc.

2. The second problem posed by a total synonymy of the concepts of person and man is that it forgets the “specific difference of man” (between the human person and other persons). It forgets that the human person is characterized by something specific and radically different from his simply being a person: he is so because of his being-person-in-the-flesh and his incorporated and incarnated existence that does not derive from his being a person as such. Apart from this essential human trait, there are many other characteristics of the human person that distinguish the human person from other persons, such as his fragility and mortality, which characterize human life in terms of soul-body unity or even his capacity to laugh.

3. The third problem of an almost exclusively anthropological personalism consists in a false fear of any “dualism”. Without distinguishing the multiple forms and meanings of a false and true “dualism”, such a general fear gives rise to an attitude that, in turn, leads to a failure to see that without the clear recognition of a human spiritual soul, man's personhood cannot be well understood and recognized.

For this reason, an identification of the person with man, together with the lack of a metaphysics of the spiritual soul, opens the door to a materialistic anthropology, which, by rejecting a soul as essentially different from the body, does not recognize the ultimate foundations of the person-being of man. This lack of a more complete personalism is found in many phenomenological authors very close to personalism, for example in the humanism and atheistic personalism of Merleau-Ponty or of Sartre.¹⁵

¹⁴ See the classical work of Henry de Lubac. (1995). *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*. Edith M. Riley, transl. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

¹⁵ See Vincent P. Miceli's convincing critique of some atheist personalists and humanists in the 20th century (1971). *The Gods of Atheism*. Delaware/New York: Arlington House.

With respect to the category of substance, to the four Aristotelian causes, and to the notion of the soul, of a “Greek ballast”, Burgos forgets that the person (and the human soul) are substances (subsistent beings) in the most perfect form and categories unattainable by physical substances, and that the person gives the only and ultimate explanation to the four Aristotelian causes.¹⁶ It is true, however, that there are important elements of the classical Aristotelian doctrine of substance and the four causes that require radical rethinking to make this category applicable to the person. For example, rethinking is required to recognize that the conscience and free acts of the person are not mere accidents because although they do not coincide with the person who is conscious and performs his acts, they include an actualization of the subsistent person that itself includes an awakening and an actualization of the substantial being of the person himself. Therefore, they end up generating an essential shift from a series of accidental changes to an implied actualization and realization of the personal subject. All of this shows that the Aristotelian understanding of the relationship between substance and accidents is insufficient, and that Aristotle’s thesis that human acts like other accidents should remain outside the scope of metaphysics as a science of being cannot be defended. Burgos’ rejection of the “ballast of Greek philosophy” could be interpreted as a call to get rid of these ideas, which are inappropriate to capture the wonder of the personal being and to understand that the personal being is the being in the deepest sense. However, simultaneously, recognizing and perfecting the great Aristotelian intuitions is not only totally compatible with authentic personalism, but a condition of personalism’s perfect form. The full recognition of other essential traits of the person, of all in the person that cannot be derived from more general categories, of what is absolutely irreducible in the person as compared to animals and matter, must perfect and renew the classical philosophy of substance and reject all that is inapplicable to being a person. At the same time, we must in no way reject the classical formulation’s great achievements, including the discovery of *ousia* as a being that subsists and does not inhere in other kinds of entities and the spiritual substantiality of the person (and of the human soul). Similarly, to discover new personal relationships and causes that fall outside the Aristotelian categories and causes is a great philosophical task valid for any personalism, but which forbids a simple return to an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy. Simultaneously, it must not abandon any of the great or even the smallest truths that classical and medieval philosophy has discovered. What counts is the truth and not the modernity or antiquity of a philosophical achievement.

To recognize the human soul and the substantiality of the person, which can never be identical with the brain or with an epiphenomenon of the body, is thus a condition of humanistic personalism and of the recognition of free will, which could not exist in a world in which the person came from matter or from the animal world. It is also the only foundation for the internal unity of the personal “I” (apart from the absurd alternative proposed by Chisholm of identifying the soul with a micro-particle of brain matter). Recognizing a human spiritual soul is especially important for understanding the personhood of embryos, Alzheimer’s patients, coma patients, “brain-dead” persons, etc.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Josef Seifert. (1995). “A Phenomenological and Classical Metaphysics of the Person: Completion and Critique of Aristotle’s Metaphysics” in Richard P. Francis and Jane E. Francis (Eds.), *Christian Humanism. International Perspectives*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 213-225. Josef Seifert. (2012). “Persons and Causes: beyond Aristotle,” *Journal of East-West Thought*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-32.

¹⁷ See Doyen Nguyen. (2018). *The New Definitions of Death for Organ Donation. A Multidisciplinary Analysis from the Perspective of Christian Ethics*. Bern: Peter Lang; D. Alan Shewmon. (2012). “You only die once: why brain death is not the death of a human being. A reply to Nicholas Tonti-Filippini”, in *Communio* 39

Moreover, without recognizing the spirit, which in man is identical with the rational soul, the philosophy of death and immortality of personalist thinkers such as Gabriel Marcel, Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Edith Stein, Josef Seifert, and other personalists cannot be understood. Death should then be the end of the person's existence and eternal life a pure object of religious faith, a faith in the resurrection after a total death (Ganztod). The theory of total death, however, ultimately also destroys the foundations of faith in the resurrection. For this reason, I think that Burgos, such that he may be able to base his "rich manifesto of personalism" and his "personalist proposal" of the fourth chapter more convincingly, implicitly incorporates much more of classical and medieval philosophy than he admits and ought to do so explicitly.

In conclusion, I consider the fourth chapter of *An Introduction* to be its most important part. It is endowed with an even greater weight than its author understands, an author who is a champion in the struggle for the truth about the person. What Burgos actually does in the last chapter of his work is greater than what he claims he does: he has not made the case merely for the identification of a meagre "personal synthesis" or an object of a consensus of all personalists. No: it is the presentation of a core of undeniable truths about the person, without whose recognition one does not deserve to call oneself a personalist. But this list and the presented nucleus of personalism should be complemented by a far clearer personalist metaphysics of God without whose personhood there is no other person.

see also Josef Seifert. (1993). "Is 'Brain Death' actually Death?," *The Monist* 76, pp. 175-202. And many other papers in which I have applied true personalism against the error of "brain-death" definitions of human death.

Juan Manuel Burgos, Response to Josef Seifert

I am going to structure my reply to my friend and well-known philosopher Josef Seifert around two main axes that respond to the two components of his comments: the historical and the philosophical.¹⁸

1. Personalism as a specific philosophical school

The first point I want to address is important for the definition and to make distinct the nature of personalism, namely, whether one can speak of a personalism “prior” to that of the 20th century, an issue on which Seifert and I disagree. I have always maintained that personalism (although it depends on the old term “person”) is not a 2,000-year-old philosophical current, but a contemporary current that emerged in the 20th century, led by Emmanuel Mounier and by other contemporary philosophers such as Maritain, Buber, Guardini, Scheler, Marcel, etc. Therefore, this is my thesis, before the 20th century there has been no personalist philosophy although the term “person” has been used, less rather than more.

Seifert does not share this thesis or at least he does not share it completely. This is because, for him, personalism constitutes any mode of reflection interested in the person and that simultaneously recognizes their dignity. And, therefore, in addition to the contemporary personalists and, sometimes, above them, he would also count on philosophers from the past, such as Augustine or Aquinas. Personalism, considered as a philosophy that reflects on the person, could not be limited to contemporary reflection (that of the 20th and 21st centuries) but would cover, with greater or lesser intensity and success, basically the entire Christian period. This is so since Seifert understands that the attribution of an unrepeatable dignity to the person is linked in a way to Christianity such that “to say that a Christian thinker is not personalist is to say that there is a number three that is even, or that a piece of wood is made of iron.” Based on these premises, he proposes an interesting classification that distinguishes 3 types of personalism:¹⁹

1) historical personalism, which considers personalists as only those philosophers of the 20th century who have contributed a renewed vision of the person expressible in a relevant set of philosophical concepts: corporeality, affectivity, freedom as self-determination, interpersonality, etc.²⁰;

2) “perennial personalism” that includes all the historical contributions that clarify the greatness of the person, which would include figures such as St. Augustine or Aquinas, and that would constitute

¹⁸ This text is a revision of the answer that I gave to Josef Seifert (“Response to Josef Seifert”, *Persona*, 22 (2013), pp. 22-29) to his paper: Josef Seifert. (2013). “Sobre el libro de Juan Manuel Burgos, Introducción al personalismo”, *Persona*, Vol. 22, pp. 12-21. In this revised version, Seifert has removed some of the earlier criticisms such as his rejection of my thesis that the term “person” is an “invention” of Christianity.

¹⁹ In a previous work, Seifert had distinguished between adequate personalism (equivalent to contemporary personalism) and imperfect personalism (personalism understood in a broad or broad sense) that includes, for example, Saint Thomas. See Josef Seifert (1997), “El concepto de persona en la renovación de la Teología Moral. Personalismo y personalismos”. In AA.VV., *El primado de la persona en la moral contemporánea*. Pamplona: Eunsa, pp. 33-61.

²⁰ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2022). *Personalist Anthropology. A Philosophical Guide to Life*. Wilmington: Vernon Press.

“one or the central part of the perennial philosophy (understood here not as Thomism but as the *summa veritatis*: authentic philosophical knowledge in all philosophers)”;

3) “ideal transhistorical or eternal personalism” understood as the full truth of the person and, which would be “above all an ideal only partially achieved rather than a historical reality, even if one considers the deepest personalists of history and of the personalist movement of the 20th century”. That is, transhistorical personalism will be an ideal even referred to as “perennial personalism”.

This classification is very suggestive and is close to that of other scholars of personalism who tend to extend the historical beginnings of this current to the origins of Christianity. As for Seifert and I, we would agree in giving special importance to the personalism of the 20th century and we would disagree in extending this personalism towards the past (perennial personalism) and towards the future (ideal personalism). I am now going to explain the reasons why I disagree with his extension in two senses.

In the first place, and looking back, I consider that the category of “perennial personalism” to be the result of a reinterpretation of the history of philosophy based on the achievements at a given historical moment. The term “personalist” or “personalism”, in fact, appears only in the 20th century, but not by chance. It appears precisely because a group of philosophers from this period became so aware of the relevance of the concept of “person”, understood in a particular way, which made it the center of their philosophy. This did not occur, prior to the 20th century for reasons that I will not delve into now, and thus we find justification for why the philosophies of the past (read: those prior to the 20th century), which focused in one way or another on the human being have received other denominations. No one thought of calling Thomism “personalism” until personalism had been consolidated as a philosophical current. Until then, it is his dependence on Aristotle that had been insisted on. For this reason, calling Thomism a philosophy of personalism *a posteriori* is akin to something like a forced baptism. This, however, does not prevent us from finding in Thomas Aquinas an important reflection on the person.²¹

However, going one step further, the category of “perennial personalism” is simply unviable and, if it were viable, it would lead personalism to its very own dissolution. Why is it unfeasible? Because the various philosophical proposals that have focused on the person throughout history, although they have shared presuppositions, differ from each other in profound ways. This prevents a minimally solid unification (this lack of unification or consensus is confirmed later by the very powerful debates that have taken place between various personalists on crucial issues). Augustine, Duns Scotus, Saint Thomas, Kant, Mounier and Wojtyła have focused their attention on the person, but is it possible to create a consistent conceptual system that everyone could share? Obviously not, since, for example, Augustine has a Platonic epistemology while that of St. Thomas is basically Aristotelian and Kant has his and Kant has his own. The first two thinkers understand freedom as free will while Kant and Wojtyła privilege self-determination. The metaphysics of Thomas, Augustine and Duns Scotus are different from each other while, in reality, neither Mounier nor Wojtyła pay attention to metaphysics, focusing mainly on the person. Meanwhile, Kant, as is well known, wrote a devastating critique of metaphysics. Thomas describes the person based on the categories of substance and accidents. Wojtyła and Mounier reject this categorization and Kant develops an interesting theory of the dignity of the person based on his particular understanding of practical reason that has little to do with the just-mentioned philosophers. These examples of a deep lack of consensus seem more than sufficient to me to prove that the problem we must face is the following: if all the aforementioned are personalists, then what is personalism? I would say, nothing because it

²¹ See E. Forment. (1983). *Ser y persona* (2^a ed.). Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona.

could include any philosophy that considers persons even implicitly, or, if you do not want to be so drastic, any position that references the value and dignity of the human person. Now, can this subtle idea be the basis for creating a consistent philosophical system?

The solution to this difficulty is simple: accept the history of philosophy as it is. Personalism is a philosophical movement that emerged in the 20th century and not an accumulation of eternal knowledge about the person or, more precisely, about the human being. And, exactly for this reason, personalism has limits and problems, but also potentialities and the strength of being contemporary. It has, of course, ancient roots. Others before, and very long ago, have of course concerned themselves with the person. Notwithstanding, they were not able to realize the power of this notion and nor did they create a system of thought around this concept. Moreover, they did not possess a set of modern and contemporary concepts to give it a specific content and character. Therefore, pre-20th century philosophies are not personalistic, but belong to or depend on other systems of thought be they Platonic, Aristotelian, Augustinian, Thomistic, Kantian, etc.

Let us now turn to the concept of “*philosophia perennis*” or, more limitedly, of “perennial personalism”. Is this concept simply possible? Of course, it is possible to understand what the concept means, but can *its content* be determined? because if it is not the case, then its role in philosophical discourse would be irrelevant. How is it possible for one to operate with a system the content of which is unclear or even empty? Well, this is exactly what happens. For example, who would have the authority to determine the content of perennial personalism, which, by definition, is “true philosophical knowledge” about the person or, more generally, about philosophy? A specific philosopher? Of course, this would not be achievable because other philosophers would quickly appear in disagreement with the specific philosopher’s proposed theses. A specific school? Assuming that the school managed to reach a unified position or philosophy, other schools in disagreement would quickly appear and, in turn, disagree. And how should the individual philosopher or school of philosophy be designated as the correct and reigning guardian of truth? By whom? By what criterion?

Any human reflection, whether individual or developed by a school, is limited and partial. And there is no human court that can determine its truth in an unquestionable way, particularly in the philosophical field whereas science can resort to experimental verification. For this reason, there is no practicable way to establish a corpus of true knowledge, that is, that we all consider true. Given this, the establishment of a perennial philosophy or personalism simply becomes an unfeasible proposal.

Finally, regarding ideal personalism, to the extent that Seifert posits it as an unrealized proposal, that is, strictly as an ideal, it must be understood not as a defined corpus of knowledge but as an impulse towards the search for truth about the person. In this sense, it seems to me a beautiful proposal, although, in any case, this impulse is the one that must intrinsically characterize all philosophical reflection, and particularly the personalist one.

In short, the classifications of philosophical currents must adequately reflect the history of philosophy. And what history teaches is that it is *only* in the 20th century that a reflection systematically based on the concept of person appeared, one that furthermore understands the person in an original, different, and powerful way while also maintaining a certain continuity with the

classic formulations of person²². This reflection on the person has defined itself and has been described by others as personalist philosophy. Therefore, we should reserve this name for it²³.

2. Two potentially conflicting intentions in Chapter IV

I will now proceed to analyse Seifert's comments on the fourth (and newest) chapter of my book in which I attempt to make a personal synthesis of personalist thought. Seifert suggests, kindly and sharply, that I am torn between two potentially conflicting intentions: one is to establish a corpus outlying the themes that various personalists have dealt with, which would then constitute personalism; the second, much more daring, but which I would hide consciously or unconsciously under the modest concept of "personal synthesis", would be to establish what personalists have discovered about the person, and, once determined, configure it as valid and authentic personalism, regardless of whether the ideas that constitute it are in a dozen personalist authors, in half a dozen, or only in one. Since Seifert considers that I accomplish this task, he eulogizes that "the new work of our author is not only an important part of a history of contemporary philosophy, but also a fine example of authentic philosophy and genuine philosophizing.

I thank Seifert for this assessment, but going to the problem he raises I have no difficulty in agreeing with Seifert on this point, since, at the time that *An Introduction* was being written in its original Spanish version (2013), I was in a peculiar period of my intellectual development that could be described as a transition from the general diffusion of personalism to the proposal of my *own* personalist position. *An Introduction* reflects that period of transition. On the one hand, I intend in my book to analyse personalism in general, as I did in a previous work from 2000²⁴, but, on the other hand, this approach now seems narrow to me. So, in *An Introduction*, I wanted to present my vision of personalism and not a mere synthesis or exposition of the ideas of the main personalists. Seifert detects this tension. Is my description of personalism sound for all personalists or does it only represent my way of understanding personalism? The reality is that, at this point in my intellectual journey, it is difficult to separate both elements. In *An Introduction*, it is stated that this is my vision of personalism, but perhaps not in a particularly of sufficiently emphatic way.

Let us consider an example to illustrate this problem. In Chapter 4, I define as personalism those philosophies with structures centered on the concept of person. Seifert previously noted that this definition has been proffered by many personalists, but it is not true. I do not know of any writing, apart from mine, in which it is stated that an essential feature of personalism is its articulation around the concept of person. Now, the personalists do in fact articulate their thinking around the concept of the person. So, that thesis is true, although no one has expressly affirmed it before me (as far as I know). And it is the same case with the claim put forth by/ that personalists use a modern concept of person. They do indeed use it, but to my knowledge no one has explicitly stated it before *An Introduction* either. Now, to define personalism with a certain philosophical force, it is necessary to indicate these features and many others. And this is what I do in *An Introduction*, but, there, I do

²² See Juan Manuel Burgos, *Person in personalism* (Springer, in press).

²³ See J. O. Bengtsson. (2006). *The worldview of personalism. Origins and early development*. Oxford; Oxford University Press; J. N. Mortensen. (2017). *The Common Good. An introduction to personalism*: Wilmington: Vernon Press. Th. R. Rourke y R. A. Chazarreta. (2007). *A Theory of personalism*. Lanham (USA): Lexington Books; C. Bartnik. (1986). *Personalism*. Lublin: KUL Press; A. Rigobello. (1978). *Il personalismo*. Roma: Città Nuova.

²⁴ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2000). *El personalismo. Autores y temas de una filosofía nueva*. Madrid: Palabra.

so without insisting too much that this is a specific proposal to understand personalism and rather only my personal synthesis of the ideas of the great personalists.

In short, I think that Seifert is correct in pointing out that a tension can be detected in *An Introduction* between the determination of what constitutes “personalism in general” and what I understand by personalism. In my previous work, *El personalismo (20000)*, this tension was not present since my only objective was to bring together the essential features of the main personalist authors. And, in later writings, this tension is not present either since I had already by then elaborated my own version of personalism, namely “Integral Personalism”,²⁵ and, for this reason, when I define a position or concept as personalistic, it is not necessary for me to resort to any specific author, but rather to present my vision of the problem.

3. The Philosophical Problems

Let us now turn to the list of problems that Seifert finds in my presentation of the anthropological features of personalism which, as I have just commented, is my synthesis and way of understanding some features that, however, are, I believe, present in all or in most of the personalists.

An implicitly atheistic position

In the first place, Seifert points out that “if one makes it [personalism] absolute, it is implicitly atheistic” for three reasons. It:

- a) rejects that God is the most perfect person referent;
- b) “obscures the fact that an atheistic humanism, which denies a personal divine being, recognizing only the human person as a person, is not an authentic personalism, despite its recognition of the central role of the human person in the world and in anthropology”;
- c) if God is rejected, the origin of the person could only be explained from evolutionary or biological processes, which would rule out free will and, more generally, the transcendent character of the person.

In these positions, I believe that two aspects must be distinguished: a discussion about language and a second, deeper problem. The discussion about names comes from the fact that, although it is true that I usually use the term ‘person’ to refer exclusively to man, or, in other words, I do not use the expression “human person”, but simply ‘person’, this does not exclude the acceptance of the existence of a divine Person. On the contrary, according to the main personalists, I understand that God is a Person, the You *par excellence*. I usually only use the term ‘person’ to refer to human beings for the sake of simplicity and this is a common practice in ordinary language, but I have no problem speaking of human person in principle. Therefore, both points: a) and c) (which depends on a)) can be resolved.

²⁵ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2019). “Wojtyła’s Personalism as Integral Personalism. The future of an Intellectual Project”, *Questiones Disputatae*, vol. 9, pp. 91-111; Juan Manuel Burgos. (2020). “¿Qué es el personalismo integral?”, *Quién* Vol. 10, pp. 9-37 and Juan Manuel Burgos. (2018). “Integral personalism, Some insights into a new philosophical proposal”, *Philosophical news*, Vol. 16, pp. 29-48.

However, point b) raises a much more complex question that could be summarized as follows: Is an atheistic personalism possible? According to Seifert's statements, it seems not, even if this personalism recognizes the "central role of the human person in the world and in anthropology. However, I believe that an atheistic personalism is possible. Our philosophical reflection starts from experience (understood in a Wojtylian sense).²⁶ The person is presented directly to our experience, without the mediation of other realities, including God. People are there, we can see them, touch them, and relate to them and, based on these experiences and, above all, on the experience of ourselves, we can develop a concrete and experimental conception of being a person. Faith does not seem necessary to recognize the value and dignity of the human person. It is true that all philosophical thought comes from a hermeneutical context, and, moreover, the context of personalism is the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus, it seems quite unfeasible that this philosophy could have arisen in another type of culture. But, once it is formulated, it can be assumed by anyone, including non-Christian thinkers, atheists, or agnostics. In short, the faith-philosophy interrelation in personalism is deep from the genetic point of view, but once a philosophical formulation has been reached based on human experience, sharing, or accepting such a formulation does not necessarily require belief in God.

On the other hand, we must not forget that we know God from the created world. And we know the personal God through the human person (and the man, Jesus Christ). Therefore, although we can suppose that the concept of person is realized in a supreme and perfect way in God, in practice, our knowledge of God consists in nothing other than attributing to God the highest degree the perfection that we see in the human person (eliminating the limits or defects). In other words, we cannot have a very different image of the perfect personal God than the one we have of the human person, which is the one we can really know, analyse, and understand in a philosophical framework.

Various problems

Lastly, I group together in this section a set of diverse considerations that Seifert's rich critique raises.

- Seifert points out that the person-man identification would lead to forgetting "the specific difference of man", that is, questions such as the fragility and mortality of man, his corporeity, etc. This thesis, very little developed, is hardly sustainable and demonstrates, in all certainty, on an incomplete knowledge of my work. All these topics are extensively treated in my anthropology²⁷ On the other hand, it is inevitable to address them, at least to some degree, since if the methodological starting point of anthropology is experience (integral experience), the first thing it encounters is actual men and not a non-existent perfect and divinized man.

- Seifert also criticizes that, due to a supposed fear of dualism, I do not use the term "soul", without which the personal uniqueness of man cannot be adequately recognized and thus "the door is opened to a materialist anthropology". It is true that I do not use the term "soul" in my philosophical anthropology, but from this, it does not follow that I do not affirm a spiritual dimension to the person. On the contrary, this dimension is expressly emphasized in my anthropology and in my diagram of the person²⁸. It seems that Seifert does not adequately distinguish, at least in this case,

²⁶ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2016). "Integral experience: a new proposal on the beginning of knowledge". In J. Beauregard, S. Smith (eds.), *In the Sphere of the Personal. New Perspectives in the Philosophy of Person*. Wilmington USA: Vernon Press, pp. 41-58.

²⁷ Burgos, *Personalist Anthropology*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

realities, and their expression through concepts. There is a spiritual dimension in man for which philosophy must account. Now, is the philosophical term “soul” the right one to accomplish this task? This is the relevant question for our topic and the answer is negative. It is not possible, within the realist philosophical tradition, to use the notion of “soul” without it being automatically inserted into Aristotelian philosophy. But, since I am not an Aristotelian, and wish not for Aristotelian implications to be thought to be inherent or implied in my own thought, I therefore do not use that term. I am not anti-Aristotelian either. Many of Aristotle’s ideas seem cogent to me, but his classic categories are an obstacle for contemporary anthropology and, therefore, I do not use them, which includes the concept of soul²⁹. I have no problem using the term in other linguistic contexts (literary or poetic) in which there is no possibility of appropriation of meanings. In these cases, I would even say that it is difficult to replace the evocative capacity of the term soul with any other term.

Finally, I will comment on another observation that Seifert makes based on my thesis of the “rejection of the Greek ballast”.³⁰ This thesis maintains that Greek thought, and in particular that of Aristotle, mainly developed concepts for things, and then, through a process of extension, applied them to people. But, by proceeding in this way, what is proper and specific to the person is obscured and masked in the typical characteristics of things. When Thomas Aquinas confronted Aristotelian philosophy, he solved this problem partially, but not completely, so residues remained in scholastic thought (including the Greek ballast), producing a vision of the world that did not fully reflect the novelty of the person in relation to the natural world. This is to say that it created an excessively rigid concept of nature (specific to plants and animals), which presupposes the primacy of the concept of substance over that of person, a vision of freedom as a mere tendential appetite, etc. In summary, the thesis that I support is that we must detect the Greek ballast in the classical tradition and reject it, or, more precisely, rethink the plausible elements that underlie these formulations and assume them in an anthropology derived directly from the person and with specifically personal categories.

Seifert, however, seems to have understood that I would reject “Greek philosophy” or the Greek tradition in general, which is certainly far from my mind. My position links me (voluntarily) to classical philosophy, but, at the same time, I consider that it is necessary to go further, which may imply that concepts such as substance or soul must be abandoned. This, in turn, means abandoning what such concepts inevitably carry with them, including the Greek ballast. However, it is possible to abandon aspects without implying that the abandonment of the positive elements that they contain can and should be undertaken. But there is no good philosophical reason why we should inevitably be saddled with such concepts if they prove unsatisfactory. As St. Thomas said, philosophy deals with the truth of things, not with what philosophers said.

One more example. Causality has usually been explained by means of the four Aristotelian causes. However, it is very difficult to give a satisfactory account of human freedom derived from any of them or even from all of them together. This problem was already observed by Kant who distinguished the causality of freedom from natural causality and later, by other personalists such as Bowne, Zubiri, and Seifert himself. All of them proposed a renewal of the notion of causality and this is, in my opinion, the proper manner in which to proceed. If it is necessary to revise or suppress Aristotle's categorization of the four causes to allow for personal causation, let us do so.

Seifert concludes his exposition by pointing out “that Burgos, to more convincingly found his ‘rich manifesto of personalism’ and his ‘personal personalist proposal’ in the fourth chapter,

²⁹ A more detailed explanation of this topic in Juan Manuel Burgos. (2023). *Personalism and Metaphysics*. Wilmington: Vernon Press.

³⁰ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2017). *Repensar la naturaleza humana* (2 ed.). México: Siglo XXI.

implicitly incorporates much more of classical and medieval philosophy than he admits". He may or may not be right. It is difficult to assess this claim. I consider my views to be in continuation with the classical tradition and, therefore, I assume many of the tradition's fundamental principles, but I assume them from a personalist perspective, which means that I only partially assume them and formalize them theoretically in a different way. For this reason, in general, my thought is not usually excessively well received in strictly classical contexts. Now, as Seifert quite rightly affirms, what counts is the truth and I try to arrive at the truth by way of propounding my understanding of personalism.

2. Alfred Marek Wierzbicki

Itinerary of personalism

The contribution of Juan Manuel Burgos' book, *An Introduction to Personalism*³¹, is twofold. First, the Spanish scholar offers an account of the historical development of the personalist movement and its main ideas. Second, he seeks also to put personalism in the terms of rigorous philosophical discourse. In other words, he attempts to show that personalism is not only a new wave in the contemporary mentality, but it is, or rather it should be, a new philosophy. I am going to comment on both aspects of Burgos' work. This allows for the opportunity to understand why personalism emerged relatively late in Western Thought. Further, it may allow us to prove whether a rich 20th century personalism has been achieved successfully to the point of a philosophical systematization.

1. Why in Twentieth Century?

Let me begin with the following question: Why did personalism came to the fore so late or why was it scarcely known and practiced before twentieth century? According to Burgos, the personalistic awakening was caused by the crisis of humanism in the age of the totalitarianism presented by communism, Nazism, fascism, and some other authoritarian ideologies. Because of the tension between individualism and collectivism, a value of the human individual as a value of the human community were overshadowed. Human dignity became subject to different kinds of violation and there was even the attempt to murder a whole ethnic or religious group as was the case of the Holocaust. In the face of such a denial of human dignity and real attack on human dignity, the scientifically oriented philosophy of positivism, which dominated in the last decades of the 20th century and in the first decades of 21st century, remained insufficient or even idle in dealing with the existential and moral questions of the men and women in search of the fundamental meaning of their lives. A more human-oriented philosophy emerged as a response to the anthropological crisis of the 20th century. Beside phenomenology, existentialism and Thomistic renewal, personalism also attempted to give an adequate intellectual answer to the most important questions of that era.

It is not easy to separate personalism from existentialism, phenomenology, nor from Thomism. Some eminent protagonists of personalism were adherents of those philosophies. Despite being involved in different ways of restoring personalist philosophy in the 20th century, and despite differences in their methods and sources, all the personalist thinkers propound the idea of the very exceptional significance of the reality of the human person. Therefore, the personalistic turn in philosophy seems to be broader than personalism or personalistic philosophy as declared by the philosophers who considered themselves to be the personalists.

It should not be forgotten that the name "personalism" was coined by Emmanuel Mounier to designate a revolutionary movement promoting the non-violent and non- collectivistic transformation of bourgeois society. In Mounier's understanding, the roots of personalism were primarily practical, for it aimed at providing an ethically consistent vision of social revolution. It would be pointless to speak about his alleged dependence on Marx since Mounier rejected violence based on a class struggle paradigm of revolution. He cherished a dream of the personalistic revolution, which would solve the practical antinomy between individualism and collectivism. He

³¹ Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*.

hoped for a culture, which would be able to recognize and to restore the irreducible place of each person among the community of the persons. His idea of non-violent personalistic revolution was intimately associated with the idea of community, which itself had deeply ethical content.

In the last years of his life, as Burgos points out, Mounier became aware of presenting personalism not exclusively in the terms of an ethical attitude aiming at non-violent revolution, but also in terms of a philosophical theory. It does not matter so much that he failed in this project; what really matters is that he realized the need of unification of praxis and philosophy. In my opinion, it is not necessary that praxis is always preceded by theory. What is truly needed is philosophical reflection on the intuitions that emerge within moral experience. In this sense, morality which manifests itself in the human experience is prior to philosophy, including ethics, which is nothing else but philosophy of morality. The experience of the dignity of the person is prior to any philosophy of person. On the other hand, philosophical systematization sheds new light on the content of experience. One may even speak about circularity between experience and theory or between praxis and contemplation. Personalism seems to be a case of philosophy that arises from a strong ethical concern for real human persons, but it does not follow at all that philosophy itself is reducible to praxis.

I would like to extend my remarks concerning the relationship between experience, theory, and praxis to the historical context of the work of Wojtyła. In his letter to Henri de Lubac, he testifies to how the contemporary history of sufferings of millions of the people and degradation of the uniqueness of the human person had a decisive impact on his personalistic research in philosophy.³² The shock caused by the immense denial of the dignity of the human person led him to think about mystery of the human person, which is endowed with the absolute dignity and, at the same time, vulnerable to a maximum. Behind his rigorous synthesis of the classical philosophy of being and the modern philosophy of consciousness stands his recognition of the reality and uniqueness of every human person. The realistic method to approach the reality (being) of the person requires the inclusion of consciousness as an essential aspect of the being of the person. His philosophical synthesis, which bridges two opposed philosophical paradigms, corresponds to the primordial data that awakened his sensibility to the truth about persons. Let me repeat once more: this is a concern for the good of the person, and in particular, a concern for the restoration of the violated good that compels a philosopher to rethink the whole philosophical tradition. In philosophy, On the one hand, Wojtyła's personalism is a response to the anthropological crisis and, on the other hand, to the weakness of philosophy which lacked realistic integrity.

How deeply his concern is practical is confirmed by the last chapter of *The Acting Person*³³ in which he discusses a theory of participation. In his vision, participation is just a remedy for alienation. He rejects the Marxist interpretation of alienation in terms of external economic and social relations. To understand the evil of alienation, one must grasp the truth about the self-fulfilment of the person in acting together with others. If a person is not affirmed for his/her own sake, there is no authentic participation, which presupposes not only sharing in the external goods, but first, sharing in the humanity of the other person. So personalism can be fully accomplished only if the practical level is achieved. Its philosophical novelty is related to its existential and practical vigour. Theory and praxis are inseparable and yet they are not identical.

Recognition of the practical character of personalism does not mean that every personalist book has direct impact on history. At the same times, the ideas and their creative potentiality go

³² See. H. de Lubac. (1993). *At the Service of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp.171-172.

³³ See. K. Wojtyła. (1979). *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, ch. VII.

beyond the books. The Polish workers who initiated the non-violent revolution of Solidarność in 1980 were not readers of Wojtyła's philosophical books at all. In fact, only a few Catholic intellectuals were somehow acquainted with the philosophical thought of Cardinal Wojtyła from Cracow before he was elected Pope John Paul II in 1978. Nevertheless, Wojtyła's personalism was a seed that was put in the fertile soil and, so, it could bear a fruit in the history of Poland and other nations of Eastern Central Europe together with the collapse of communism in 1989. The personalist vision of man, work, politics, and culture was a core of the ethical message in the teaching of John Paul II. The personalist ideas were spread in his sermons and coincided with sentiments and desires of the people who strived for liberation from totalitarian oppression. St. John Paul II could become the spiritual leader of the non-violent revolution not because he himself directed social actions, but because the social and political activists found in his preaching the clarity of ideas to which they were committed. Such a dense synergy of theory and practice is very seldom found, and it is almost a miracle or ideal, which in the given conditions may become flash.

The life of Dietrich von Hildebrand offers an example of a personalist philosopher who opposed the evil of Nazism based on his Christian faith and in very advanced philosophical studies on value, personhood, and community. He was deeply convinced that idolatry of state, racism, and antisemitism are contradictory with the personalist world outlook. In his anti-Nazi papers, he constantly refers to the inviolability of human dignity and calls for a respect of it in every person. His personalism allows for the rejection of social and religious prejudices, for due to his personalism, he was extremely immune to racist propaganda and to any abuse caused by hostile feelings. He declares: "God is offended regardless of whether the victim of a murder is a Jew, a Socialist, or a bishop".³⁴ His ethical universalism is justified on account of his philosophical insights into the essence and the value of person. His practical anti-Nazi attitude, or as he calls it himself, a battle against Hitler, is clearly motivated by his philosophical views. Though we cannot say that von Hildebrand developed his personalist philosophy in response to Nazism, it is the case, however that emergence of the Nazi totalitarianism in Germany in the 1930s turned his attention to the question of the relationship between person and community. Von Hildebrand was not a revolutionary. He was just a philosopher who felt a responsibility to bear witness to the truth about the person. For this reason, his Anti-Nazi papers should not be treated as his marginal writings, even if in the domain of philosophy, they are secondary with respect to his chief works. They show how much personalism in the philosophy of 20th century is rooted in the tragic and dark history of that age.

Personalism is a philosophy of 20th century. It emerged after the crisis of the First World War (1914-1918) and grew in many intellectual circles after the Second World War (1939-1945). According to Burgos, "The whole complex combination of problems merged slowly and in very diverse ways into what has been called 'the personalist awakening.' Personalists became aware that to face these questions and, above all, to surpass them, it was necessary to have recourse to the concept of person and to construct, from there, a new philosophical project, a new anthropology".³⁵ The world after atrocities of total war and massive genocide was not the same as it was before. This was almost a common experience after 1945. The philosophical expression of the catastrophic condition of humankind was given by Theodor Adorno. His claim that poetry is no longer possible after Auschwitz is not to be understood in the naïve sense that nobody would write verses thereafter, but that the humanism inspiring poets became dead together with the industrial, entirely depersonalized and systematized killing human beings. At the same time, Adorno claims that Hitler

³⁴ D. Von Hildebrand, (2014). *My Battle Against Hitler. Faith, Truth, and Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich*. New York: Image, p. 82.

³⁵ Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 2.

imposed the categorical imperative in a new way. Although according to Adorno, besides negative metaphysics, there cannot be any other philosophical way to ground a categorical imperative, the personalists point out the validity of a positive metaphysics of “person”.

There is obviously continuity between classical and modern philosophy of the person and contemporary personalism and personalist philosophy, and yet personalism is a new way of conceiving of human beings. This is because it bears the tremendous experience of the anthropological crisis of the 20th century. The Christian concept of the person supplemented a gap in the categories of the classical Greek metaphysics. Though it entered to the vocabulary of Christian theology to solve Trinitarian and Christological questions, it was a philosophical concept, which did not abolish a metaphysics of substance, but differentiated and enlarged it. The metaphysical significance of the category of person grasps the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas when he says: *persona est aliquid perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet substantia*. The ethical significance of the same category is only grasped by Kant in his famous personalistic formulation of the categorical imperative. However, it cannot be said about Aquinas or Kant that they were personalists, for they lacked the dark experience of the total negation of the human dignity by means of the political totalitarian systems. Personalism assumes its philosophical shape as a response to the radical negation of the absolute value of person or, in other words, it arises from the double awareness of the dignity of the person and its vulnerability.

Perhaps most contemporary people who live today, already 75 years after the end of World War II. is not capable of perceiving the true depth of the personalistic revolution in defence of the sinking culture of traditional humanism. Should this mean the end of personalism? Even if we do not face so extreme attacks on the lives of the human persons, our Western Civilization is far from being the best world among all possible ones. Human ontological greatness is constantly and almost progressively neglected. The amount of alienation is growing tremendously. Personalism was born as a pure voice in the time of darkness and somewhat similar voices are to be listened to also in our days without pronouncing a mere word “person”. It seems that words such as “tenderness” assume nowadays a cultural power to inspire spiritual revolution similarly like was once the case with the word “person” a few decades ago. It is the key concept in presenting Gospel by Pope Francis. The Polish Noble Prize Winner Olga Tokarczuk, who is the secular postmodern writer, presents the task of a writer to become a tender narrator. The great quest for spirituality in her novels does not come from Christian sources and goes beside Christian personalist imaginary and, nevertheless, it portrays the same sensibility to the uniqueness of the human existence, which requires a response of the human heart, a response which may be called just tenderness.

2. Is personalist philosophy accomplished?

As I have mentioned in the beginning of my essay, Burgos’ contribution to the debate about personalism is not limited to a mere historical account, but rather, the Spanish philosopher aspires also to outline the chief characteristics of the personalist philosophy. His true theoretical achievement, in my opinion, is a clear distinction between: 1) philosophy of person, 2) personalism, and 3) personalist philosophy. Philosophy of person is a part of the legacy of classical Christian philosophy and of modernity. Personalism is the spiritual idea of resistance against denial, humiliation, and the violation of the dignity of man and it assumes a form of a broad and non-unitary movement of “personalist awakening”. And, finally, personalist philosophy is a new philosophical system that puts the category of person at the centre of philosophical discourse. Now is the question that shows the problem to be discussed: Is personalist philosophy an entirely new school of

philosophy or should it be treated as a continuation of some previous philosophies in their new transformation?

Burgos maintains that most personalists make use of a specific personalist method. Instead of projecting the general categories of all manners of being, they seek to explore the richness of data accessible through the direct experience of the person. Thus, the analysis of the person's ego and its ontological density leads to grasping the difference between person and non-person, and further, to conceive of being in the light of disclosure of being in personhood. Though this method resembles the phenomenological method, according to Burgos, it is not identical with it. He argues that because of the use of *epoche*, the phenomenological method is deprived of realism.

His critique of *epoche* is correct. But already Roman Ingarden, as a young disciple of Edmund Husserl, pointed out that it deviated Husserl's philosophy from its original realistic aspiration and therefore moved phenomenology toward idealism. In fact, Ingarden and other realist phenomenologists do not consider *epoche* to be necessary in a phenomenological approach to reality. On the contrary, they see in it a source of some of Husserl's errors. This issue is broadly presented in an excellent book of Josef Seifert in which he attempts to lay bare the phenomenological foundations of classical realism.³⁶ He proves that knowledge of an object is objective and transcendent and does not presuppose a method of *epoche*, but that knowledge rather needs to be based on the direct intuition of a thing in itself. Without entering into the details at this point, we may notice inner controversy within phenomenology concerning the phenomenological method.

Burgos' distinction between personalist and phenomenological methods seems to be supported by an account of the philosophical methodology in a major work of Wojtyła. The starting point for the personalist analysis is the experience of a person in acting. But Wojtyła himself claims that his method is truly phenomenological and that any metaphysics of "person", which is accomplished as a goal of his philosophical investigation cannot be anything else than trans-phenomenology. This interpretation is entirely confirmed by the study of Rodrigo Guerra López on Wojtyła's philosophical method. According to him the metaphysics of person in Wojtyła's work possesses phenomenological foundations and therefore turns us back to things in themselves, which, in turn, means back to person.³⁷ At least with respect to Wojtyła's philosophical method, we should correctly say that his personalist method overlaps with phenomenological method, but it may be also extended to some other outstanding personalist philosophers to conclude that personalist method belongs to phenomenology unless one limits it to a work of its founder. Therefore, it is more so necessary to distinguish different currents of phenomenology and their correspondingly diverse methods than to separate personalist method from phenomenological method.

My objection to Burgos' view on personalist method does not touch the core of his claim concerning the existence of the original personalist school in philosophy. "This intellectual process which has transformed the anonymous rationalist subject into a singular and unrepeatable person, and converted a *what* with a human nature into a personal and irreducible *who*, can be described as the *personalist turn of contemporary philosophy*, to which practically all the personalist philosophers have contributed: Marías, Wojtyła, Marcel, Guardini, Polo, Zubiri, Mounier, and so on."³⁸ The

³⁶ See Josef Seifert. (1987). *Back to Things in Themselves. A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 77-117.

³⁷ See Rodrigo Guerra. (2002). *Volver a la persona. El método filosófico de Karol Wojtyła*, Madrid: Caparrós Editores.

³⁸ Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 223.

personalist turn consists in passage from cosmological accounts in anthropology like “homo animal rationale” or “homo microcosmos” to attention to that what is irreducible in man. That is, it turns attention to his subjectivity, which manifests itself in the lived experience³⁹. So, the personalist turn in philosophy involves a reversal of relationship between anthropology and a theory of being. In the cosmological approach to man, anthropology is derived from general ontology, while personalist philosophy discovers a new way to conceive of being. Robert Spaemann goes so far to hold that perception of person is a paradigm of perception of being.⁴⁰ Such a view does not abolish realistic metaphysics and cannot lead to subjectivism, On the contrary, it strengthens the evidence of the real existence of being in its tremendous ontological division in “Someone” and “Something”. Person is a paradigm of being since “Someone” possesses a higher ontological density than “Something.” In a certain sense, personalist philosophy arrives to the point, which was always in the horizon of the classical metaphysics, and which dared to ask a question about a real being (*ontōn on*). This question is not new, for it encouraged Greeks to think metaphysically, but new is an answer which is given by the personalist philosophers.

The personalist turn in philosophy corresponds to the original tendencies in phenomenology, existentialism, and renewed Thomism to put person at the centre of philosophizing, and probably without the impact of these philosophies, a new theoretical personalist orientation could never be achieved and personalism would have had to remain only a noble spiritual movement lacking philosophical consistency. Burgos outlines a proposal of a singular personalist philosophy by considering the main theoretical achievements of the personalists. Personalism in philosophy offers understanding of the subjectivity of a person, allows for a connection between objective and subjective dimensions of knowledge, for the recognition of the importance of freedom, to integrate subjectivity and emotionality, to understand the personalist meaning of body and sexuality, to analyze inter-subjectivity, to establish solid and realistic bases for communitarian culture, and, last but not least, to shed new light on good and evil, and thereby, to restore Ethics. I believe this is not an eclectic list of the personalist topics since they all may be derived from the same principle, and, namely, from an analysis of the difference between “Who” and “What.” Personalist philosophy has its own principle around which all problems of philosophy are set up. Even if concepts like subjectivity, identity, substance, subsistence, cognition, freedom, soul-body relations, and inter-subjectivity were discussed in the different traditions of classical philosophy and particularly in modernity, personalist philosophy gives to them fuller meaning in the light of *mystery of person*. Thus, personalism considered as an attitude from which arises personalist philosophy protects the “object of philosophy” which is a person from any reduction to a mere object. In this sense, we may say that personalist Ethics is not only a separate field of inquiry by personalist philosophy with its own subject matter, but it constitutes, above all, the hidden roots of personalist philosophy, for to know a person is to affirm him or her for his or her own sake. Similarly, to know a person is to be in relation to a person and to render to them their due value response. This ethical density of personalist philosophy corresponds to the metaphysical density of such a being like person.

It is necessary to agree with a paradox of Paul Ricoeur who says: “personalism is dead, the person returns.”⁴¹ Obviously, he expresses the critical evaluation of personalism as it had been conceived of by Mounier in terms of the social spiritual revolution. But his remark may be also referred to such as an equally ambitious claim/project like personalist philosophy. For the reality of

³⁹ See. K. Wojtyła. (1978). *Subjectivity and the Irreducible in Man*, “Analecta Husserliana”, vol. VII.

⁴⁰ See. R. Spaemann. (2017). *Persons. The Difference between “Someone” and “Something”*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur. (1983). “Meurt le personalism, revient la person”, *Esprit*, Vol. 73, n. 1, pp. 113-119.

the person is deeper and greater than any philosophical attempt, which aims to systematize it. The itinerary and goals of personalism cannot be concluded in philosophy, and yet philosophy is indispensable to make personalism alive. Practical and theoretical dimensions of personalism are intimately interwoven, and therefore, personalist philosophy has also a task to reinforce personalism as an attitude, a culture, and as praxis.

Juan Manuel Burgos, Response to Alfred Wierzbicki

1. Why in Twentieth Century?

I have found it truly fascinating and enriching the way in which Alfred Wierzbicki presents the reasons why personalism appears in the 20th century and, in particular, the connection it establishes with the terrible experiences that Europe endured through in its own two World Wars. The vital emergence of personalism is, without a doubt, linked to that experience as is reflected in the events and lives of Wojtyła and Von Hildebrand, both personalists and both struggling with collectivism that degrade and destroy human beings. Also, the distinction and connection that is made and highlighted by Wierzbicki between practice and theory also seems very valuable to me. Praxis can generate theory and theory can generate praxis, but they are not interchangeable and can remain independent. Not every vital or social experience produces a theoretical elaboration that provides it with self-awareness, which may cause damage to that experience which, lacking intellectual guidance and self-knowledge, may weaken or distort over time once the original impulse is lost or weakened. Fortunately, this is not what happened with personalism, which, created by Mounier to solve a social problem (and previously by Bowne in the United States), was transformed into theory and was thus able to survive over the decades. That is why we can still speak of personalism today.

I find some major discrepancy with the second part of his exposition, dedicated to personalist philosophy. Wierzbicki points out, first, that I distinguish between personalism and personalist philosophy. "Personalism is the spiritual idea of resistance against denial, humiliation and violation of the dignity of man and it assumes a form of a broad and non-unitary movement of 'personalist awakening'. And finally, personalist philosophy is a new philosophical system which puts the category of person at the centre of the discourse."

In fact, I do not really distinguish them, because for me they are identical. It is true that their distinction is interesting, but it seems to me too strong a distinction and, perhaps, the connection between praxis and theory that he himself postulated could be applied here. Is it possible to clearly distinguish the personalist movement from personalist ideas and their philosophical formulation? Mounier's personal struggle, for example, was based on a vision of the person crystallized in numerous works from which his followers drew, while those who opposed communism in Spain did not do so based on personalism (they were unaware of), but in his Christianity and in his search for freedom. For this reason, their battle was different. In the Spanish case, there was a vital response to an attack on their religion and his freedom, while Mounier, on the other hand, fought for a personalistic society founded on an intellectual project. That is why it was a different fight and why Mounier's fight lasted longer.

My point is, in short, that it does not seem possible to separate so easily personalism from personalist ideas or of the defence of a vision of the person understood from a personalist point of view. Personalists have not only defended the human being, something that Christianity has always tried to do, but also defended man understood as a person endowed with specific traits, which I point out in the book, and which Wierzbicki punctually collects thusly: "Personalism in philosophy offers understanding of the subjectivity of a person, allows to connect objective and subjective dimension of knowledge, to recognize the importance of freedom, to integrate subjectivity and emotionality, to understand the personalist meaning of body and sexuality, to analyse intersubjectivity and to establish solid and realistic basis for communitarian culture, and, last but not least, to shed new light on good and evil and thereby to restore Ethics". Whether this set of philosophical and anthropological ideas is structured is another question, and one which I will try to

answer below, but that does not mean that personalism, even reducing it to the thought of Mounier, which would be unfair to, is not based on a system of relatively structured ideas. It should also not be forgotten that the first personalist was Bowne, in America, who, already in 1905 wrote a book titled: *Personalism* (which influenced Martin Luther King). And this book brings us, once again, to the same point. I do not think it is possible to separate personalist attitudes from personalist philosophy. Both are inseparably intertwined if personalism is not confused with any movement that seeks the redemption of the human being.

2. Is personalist philosophy accomplished?

Turning now to the second part of Wierzbicki's comments, I will focus first on the subject of method. I must begin by pointing out, first, that the method proposed in *An Introduction* is not that of personalism in general, since personalists have used several, but the one that seems most appropriate to me and that is inspired by Wojtyła, that is, the method of "Integral Experience". I could add that this is one good example of the typical tension of chapter 4 (denounced with some reason by Seifert and to which I responded above) between a synthesis of personalism in general and *my* vision of personalism. In this case, however, there is no doubt about what I present is my position regarding the method that should be followed in personalism, which is inspired by Wojtyła, and which is the method that is adopted in "Integral Personalism".

Having clarified this point, I must add that I disagree with Wierzbicki when he affirms that this method, that is, Wojtyła's, is *the* phenomenological method⁴². This is obviously not true because Wojtyła does not expressly affirm it anywhere, indeed, he expressly separates himself from it by not using, for example, neither the *epoche*, nor the intuition of essences because Wojtyła does not expressly affirm it anywhere, indeed, he expressly separates himself from it by not using, for example, neither the *epoche*, nor the intuition of essences. And I am surprised that Wierzbicki affirms this so emphatically because we have talked directly about this topic, and I thought he shared my opinion. In any case, it seems easy to me to explain why Wierzbicki's position is not correct. Let us first provide a *direct* justification. Talking about a phenomenological method without *epoché* does not seem sustainable. *Epoché* is an essential key to Husserl's project and cannot be removed from phenomenology. If it is eliminated (as Seifert seems to do in the book quoted by Wierzbicki), we may have something akin to phenomenology and very interesting, but we certainly do not have phenomenology in the normal sense of the term.⁴³ Phenomenology bases its epistemology on the intuition of essences, an idea totally absent from Wojtyłian experience, which rejects any type of *a priori* structure in any possible sense. Finally, phenomenology performs a phenomenological analysis, but Wojtyła seeks an ontological analysis of reality, something very difficult to find in phenomenology.

We can now look to the indirect justification. *Person and Act*, surprisingly, begins with a small epistemological treatise which starts with a description of the experience: "Man's experience of anything outside of himself is always associated with the experience of himself, and he never

⁴² See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2009). "The method of Karol Wojtyła: a way between phenomenology, personalism and metaphysics". In A.-T. Tymieniecka (Ed.) *Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century*. Book II. Serie "Analecta husserliana", Vol. 104, pp. 107-129; Juan Manuel Burgos. (2014). "Wojtyła y Husserl: una comparación metodológica", *Acta philosophica*, Vol. 2-23, pp. 263-288.

⁴³ I have studied in detail Seifert's proposal and, more generally, realist phenomenology in Juan Manuel Burgos. (2015). *La experiencia integral. Un método para el personalismo*. Madrid: Palabra, chap. 3.2 y 3.3.

experiences anything external without having at the same time the experience of himself.”⁴⁴ Then, he goes on to explicate induction, the difference between experience and understanding, etc. Now, why does Wojtyła begin an anthropology book with epistemology? And, above all, what sense can these explanations have if Wojtyła uses the phenomenological method? If Wojtyła were using the phenomenological method, he would have limited himself to indicating this. But not only does he not say so, he starts by explaining his own epistemology because he is aware of its originality and, therefore, he must describe its main characteristics. Wierzbicki, on the contrary, states that “Wojtyła himself claims that his method is truly phenomenological”, but this claim is not found in *Person and Action* or in any other text of his, and, if I am wrong, I would like him to provide the reference. A separate question is to what extent his proposal is close to the phenomenological method, which it is, no doubt, in some respects, but closeness is something very different from identification.

I would add, finally, that it is often difficult to capture the philosophical originality of personalism and this problem can make it difficult to grant it the philosophical consistency it deserves. This was the case, for example, for Ricoeur, who limited personalism, as Wierzbicki very well points out, to Mounier. But, somehow, we can also find this problem in Wierzbicki himself when he points out: “The personalist turn in philosophy corresponds to the original tendencies in phenomenology, existentialism and renewed Thomism to put person at the centre of philosophizing, and probably without the impact of these philosophies a new theoretical personalist orientation could never be achieved and personalism had to remain only the noble spiritual movement lacking philosophical consistency”. I agree that personalism was influenced by these philosophical currents, but this does not mean that personalism is a mere corollary of those ideas.

In the aforementioned Wierzbicki quotation, for example, it seems to be taken for granted that many philosophies have put the person at the centre of philosophizing, but this is not the case at all. Existentialism, or much of it, did not even use the term “person” (Sartre, for example). And, Thomism, although it has used this notion, has never placed it as the heart of the matter either. This is because for Thomism and Neo-Thomism, the person is a substance, substance being the key notion of their anthropology. Lastly, and regarding phenomenology, Husserl did not think “from the person” nor did it consider the notion of person as the key notion of phenomenology., but rather focused on conscience. It is true we can find this philosophical approach in some disciples of the first hour, such as von Hildebrand and Edith Stein, this is precisely the reason that they are considered personalists.

I agree with Wierzbicki, finally, that personalism cannot aspire to fully explain the person, since the human being is not reducible to any philosophical categorization, including personalism. This mistake has been made many times throughout history and will probably continue to be made. I hope that will not be the case of personalism, but, at the same time, I hope too that awareness of their limitations should not prevent it to aspire to be the best philosophical categorization of the human being, that is, of the person.

⁴⁴ Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, p. 3.

3. James A. Harold, Review of *An Introduction to Personalism*

This book is a tour de force. It is particularly insightful to me, especially to someone like me less given to scholarship. I need to have the “lay of the land” laid out for me from someone who really is scholarly, and I got that from this book. I, therefore, have a debt of gratitude to Professor Burgos. Whatever criticisms I may have in the following text needs to be tempered through the prism of this gratitude, together with the realization of how much I have learned from his work.

Some of my criticisms may be reducible to misinterpretations or exaggerations of what was actually meant; they will hardly constitute an attack from an intellectual enemy. We are dealing here with a situation more akin the relationship Socrates to Theaetetus than between Socrates and Callicles. Neither of myself nor Burgos will be interested merely in “making points,” by fair means or foul, while continually arguing past one another. Even when one of the discussion partners is a Socrates, if the other is a Callicles, then the consequent discussion will tend to go nowhere, as a Socrates will have to fight through the mendacity, cynicism, and the intellectual and moral blindness of a Callicles. But if a discussion is one between people who are open to truth and to being corrected, the results will typically be far more productive. We shall see which of us will play the role of Socrates. Perhaps we can alternate. It is with the spirit of Socrates’ conversation with Theaetetus that I want to approach this discussion with Juan Manuel Burgos’ book.

In what follows I want to make seven points, which run the full spectrum of criticism, praise, as well as calls for clarification.

1. Where is Chapter One?

I had the feeling reading this book that topics seemed to me to be a bit out of focus. No doubt this will be partly my fault. I could bear down and better study a challenging work of philosophy. But I also wonder if that feeling is partly due to a missing chapter focusing not on schools of thought on personalism, but rather on the more fundamental question of “What is a person?” The person is, after all, the primary reality, and the various theories of personalism constitute the secondary, derived reality. There is with Burgos a strong tendency to look more towards scholarship than a direct seeing. He does a great job of mapping out the different schools of thought on personalism, but scholarship shouldn’t swallow up philosophy.

Someone could reasonably respond by noting the benefits of a scholarly review before stating one’s own position. While granting this point, one might also grant the advantage of an initial analysis noting what is clearly and sometimes even obviously given about the subject matter, namely, persons. That would provide us with a yard stick for then measuring the adequacy of the consequent scholarly evaluation. For example, that *Responsibility presupposes freedom*, that *The intellect and will are specifically and uniquely personal powers* and that *The value of the being of a person ranks higher than that of a pure animal* are all truths not difficult to see. And we all know that scholars will sometimes miss the obvious.

Perhaps some of the above points may need explanation. And further mysteries—as well as objections—lurk around every corner. Then the role of scholarship will be to investigate these mysteries and answer those scholars who deny those clearly given truths providing the structure for the mysteries.

This beginning chapter could have dealt some of the following topics: What distinguishes the realms of person and non-person? What is it that is unique about persons? Specifically, what is it that distinguishes a person from, say, a higher order animal? This distinction can go in two directions: outward towards knowledge of transcendent beings to the self and inwards towards personal subjectivity. Is it really true that a person is ordered to transcendence? And then what does that transcendence mean? Animals, after all, are ordered poised to pay attention to external objects given to them via sense perception. Are they then ordered to transcendence too? What is the difference? Furthermore, animals are conscious beings insofar as they possess the power of sense perception. Does that mean they have an interior life? What does it mean to have an interior life, which I would say uniquely characterizes persons? Just what is this subjectivity that Burgos at times mentions?

2. Overemphasizing what people think in contrast to asserting what is the case.

Notice the focus of the above questions: they are not directed primarily towards scholarship—that is, to what *people think* about the person as an end in itself—but rather to *the nature of the person* as such. In the end, the purpose of scholarship is to “stand on the shoulders of others only as a means to help oneself see fundamental, philosophical reality more clearly, which, in this case, concerns the person. Scholarship ought not dominate, much less replace this fundamental seeing.

Someone could grant the importance of “fundamental seeing” while thinking that perhaps I am still making a mountain of a molehill. There is, after all, not much difference between the content of philosophical scholarship from philosophy. Also, isn’t Burgos himself just one more scholar among others? What is so significant about his opinions?

There are at least two reasons why emphasizing this distinction—between scholarship and philosophy—despite the obvious overlap of content, is worthwhile. The first point concerns the role of truth, which I can illustrate with the following comparison: The assertion “ $2+2=5$ ” is obviously false. But the assertion that “Scholar A claims that “ $2+2=5$ ” could very well be true if, of course, scholar A asserts it. There is, in other words, all kinds of mischief possible if one is doing scholarship, for there is a real difference between what people think about numbers or persons as opposed to what is the simple truth about them. Secondly, it is not just that scholarship goes back to and is grounded in a “fundamental seeing,” but also that this seeing provides a crucially important three-dimensional experience which theory alone cannot replicate. Theoretical positions are always “limping” and one-dimensional compared to the infinite richness of a direct, phenomenological contact with reality itself. For example, it is not enough to have a theoretical contact with the notion of, say, intrinsic value. You also must go out into reality itself and grasp it. Scholarship alone is too theoretical, missing other important dimensions, easily leading to ivory towers.

It is unnecessary to speak in absolutes. There are times in which Burgos tells us what he thinks really is the case, thereby really making truth claims and thereby doing philosophy. However, the heavy predominance of his analysis, especially in the first three chapters, concerns what people think is true without sufficiently coming to terms simply with what is true. This was why I was a bit disappointed to read at the beginning of his last, fourth chapter. What follows in this chapter is intended to avoid this premature eulogy on personalism ... which, in the author’s opinion, “reflects

the nucleus of *the thought of the authors* surveyed above and, in addition, can ensure the future and fruitfulness of this philosophy” (179, emphasis added).⁴⁵

I do not understand why Burgos would look (in the above quote) for the “nucleus” of personalism in “the thought of the authors.” This strikes me as a kind of category mistake. He seems to be looking at one category of reality (scholarship about philosophical topics) when the answer is to be found in quite another—even if related—sphere (our lived experience). Philosophy investigates the nature or essences of things, including the person, which, in turn, is ultimately located in transcendent lived experience.

It is not as if Burgos does not care about transcendent reality, insofar as he rightly emphasizes the role of transcendence in the thought of the personalists. So, after the scholarly survey of the different schools of personalism in the first three chapters, I was looking forward to a turn to a direct contact with lived experience in Chapter 4. And, sure enough, in his last chapter he wants to find the “nucleus” or essence. It is just that you don’t do that by making yet another survey of what people think. In the end, to grasp the “nucleus” of personalism means to look at the source of all this scholarship: at the person to find the essence of this kind of being. The person is, after all, the primary reality, and people thinking about personalism is the secondary, derived reality.

I might mention that despite his threat at the beginning of Chapter 4 to do yet more scholarship, I did get from that chapter what he actually claimed personalism to be, thereby pivoting from scholarship to philosophy. Thus, he gave insights not going back to some consensus, but rather because they correspond to the transcendent truth about the person, such as the idea that a person “emerges forcefully from the world as radically distinct” (206) from all other non-personal beings. For example, freedom is found nowhere else than with persons. “Freedom is not a tendency, it is a response, freely caused by a man capable of self-determination and of generating an irreducible and unique decision” (206). Also, that what is subjective is “entirely nontransferable to what is exterior in objective terms” (207). Furthermore, that “personalism adheres to a realist epistemology” because—and this is the important point—“it affirms the human ability to know an objective reality that exists independently of him” (218); that “self-determination” exists “not in? Sartre’s vacuum, but [transforms] the person who already exists” (220); that “personalism fully adopts the basic presuppositions of realist ethics” (221); and that man is open to the “*religious dimension*”, asking and to some extent answering “*ultimate questions*” (221).

One of the best aspects of Burgos’ understanding of personalism is his continual attempt, in various ways, always to look for and find the unity of man: such as body and soul (specifically, “how the body is the somatic dimension of the person” (229); how the somatic, the psychological, and the spiritual are unified together; how the affective dimension can be incorporated into the spiritual dimension of the person; how the personal dimension is not merely intellectual, as in Aristotle, but extends also to affection, action and love. And finally, he discusses how the “personalist understanding of community and society” (231) can exist without “making the individual a mere appendix of the social body (collectivism)” (231).

In doing justice to Burgos’ work, it is important not to overemphasize his rather obvious heavy emphasis on scholarship, as if I am asserting that he simply omits looking directly at the content of our lived experience. That is not true. Thus, he states, “personalism has moved to a direct

⁴⁵ Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction to Personalism*, 179. All future quotations from this work will be followed by the pagination in parentheses in text.

experiential analysis of the human being, similar to the phenomenological method” (207). In this respect, I do not think the “phenomenological method” is just one more method among others; it is rather the method that all good philosophers must use, whether they call themselves phenomenologists or not.

3. Overemphasizing differences of positions.

Burgos gives a valuable set of distinctions of differing positions within the realm of personalism, but in doing so at least runs the risk of overemphasizing them, as if we are dealing with discreet wholes. That is, he seems to be at least implying that the emphases of one position are somehow absent or even insufficiently present in the others. For example, the heavy emphasis of Buber is on relationism, such as the ‘I-Thou’ relation. This is a wonderful emphasis, but it is not like it is simply missing in the other positions. It seems to me this relationism is fully present in von Hildebrand and the phenomenological position, even if it is not the defining moment of the philosophy.

4. Giving definition to personalism

I felt from this book that I got a good look at the “breadth” of personalism that I would never have received except from reading it. But there was also something missing. This breadth seemed to be missing definition. An idea receives its definition both positively and negatively. A reader needs to know the positive content of an idea. And part of getting this content is by distinguishing it from what is not. Thus, it is helpful to distinguish ‘this from that.’

It was not until the last chapter that I got any idea as to what the criteria is between a theorist who is a personalist from one who is not. Until that last chapter, I kept wondering why Plato, Aristotle and Thomas were not on the personalist list. But then in chapter 4, it seemed that he came up with at least three criteria for qualifying as a personalist: First, that personalism is a later, twentieth century phenomenon: A point which seems theoretically weak. Secondly, that personalism be a central feature of the philosophy, which does distinguish these earlier philosophers from the later personalists. And then thirdly, he clearly distinguishes personalism from what he calls the ‘Greek ballast.’ He explains,

By the ‘Greek ballast’ we mean the tendency, originating in Greek philosophy, to describe man by using philosophical notions developed to explain things or animals, applying minor modifications to them, with the result that what is specifically human, what constitutes man as person, is obscured, or even disappears, when one thinks about man as a thing or an animal, but with some special characteristics. ... [F]or example, we develop the category of appetite or tendency to explain the dynamism of the animal and vegetable world, and we then apply it to man, the peculiar characteristics of human freedom are obscured (205-6).

This point is extremely important and well worth making, by guarding against reductionism of freedom to instinct, knowledge and truth to sense perception, person to animal, while from the opposite direction anthropomorphizing animal experience. And this distinction helps give me definition to specifically identifying personalism as a philosophical position, distinguishing it from other systems which gloss over what is distinctive about the human person.

5. Does the Aristotelian/Thomistic philosophy on substance gloss over what is distinctly personal?

It is worthwhile giving the extended quote. Burgos explains, “Generally, personalism has no problem in taking up a philosophy of being as the final principle for explaining reality, but the same is not true of the Aristotelian categories understood as transcendental or a ‘deductivist’ explanation of reality. The concept or notion of being seems unavoidable for explaining the essential structure of what is real. But it is a very different question whether the Aristotelian categories can assist in interpreting all reality. In fact, it is not so. As we have mentioned in speaking of method, beings, and particularly man, *are so different as to require their own exclusive categories*. The indiscriminate application of some general concepts—such as the four causes, *substance*, or accidents—to any type of being is an unjustifiable application because of the complexity of existence” (210-11, emphases added).

Is it true that the Aristotelian notion of “substance” is inapplicable to persons because they “are so different as to require their own exclusive categories”?

In response, we might first notice that when Aristotle explains his notion of substance, all his concrete examples of them are of material, individual beings, which are admittedly “below” the level of persons⁴⁶. And, of course, there is a difference of kind between personal and non-personal being. Does that then mean that the notion of substance, explicitly mentioned by Burgos as inapplicable to the idea of person? If the notion of substance were a univocal term, this criticism would be justified.

The problem is that this idea decidedly not a univocal in nature. It is an analogous term, which grants a difference of kind between personal and non-personal being while at the same time noting a real similarity.

We can even grant that Aristotle may not have suspected the extent of the analogous power of his notion of substance, insofar as all his examples of substances are material in nature. But that doesn’t mean that it still cannot be used by philosophers to describe the personal soul, which is substantial in nature, albeit incomplete in nature calling for a body for completion.

Nor could Burgos claim that the notion of substance is more properly attributed to lower material things in nature, for just the opposite is the case. Not only is the notion of a personal, immaterial, substantial being perfectly reasonable, when we use the idea of personal soul as our example of what a substance is, we can have a far better understanding of what a substance is. This is because a person is a being whose centre lies “in itself,” insofar as it is a being that can will and think for itself. Only a being that is radically centred in itself can be free, while in contrast there is no “centre” of a mountain, with the result that everything purely material has the tendency to flow into everything else. Thus, while the notion of substance is less perfectly fitted to explaining material beings, it is perfectly fitted toward explaining the personal soul.

The analogical nature of substance even goes further. Not only is it better fitted to describe personal beings, but it is also perfectly fitted to describe the Absolute Being. The Absolute Being not only exists as centred in itself, but it is also in no way dependent on any being not itself. Thus, the notions of substantiality and absoluteness interpenetrate with the Absolute Being.

⁴⁶ Aristotle. (1941). *Categories*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Edited by Richard McKeon. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 9-14.

6. Investigating inner subjective life on its own terms.

This notion of subjectivity is extremely important for our topic of personhood because through it, we have a new way of studying persons. Persons are to be investigated not only via the method of objective analysis and reflection, but also via subjectivity. For example, consider Karol Wojtyła and Dietrich von Hildebrand on sexuality. It is one thing to investigate human sexuality objectively, with its emphasis on the purpose of sex on procreation and the moral law governing sexual behaviour. But it is another thing to see the subjective dimension of sex, which is oriented toward the inner experience of spousal love. This is the difference between *Humanae Vitae* and Wojtyła's *Love and Responsibility*. Nothing said in *Humanae Vitae* is denied by *Love and Responsibility*, but the latter work adds a whole new dimension missing in *Humanae Vitae*: the inner, subjective dimension of spousal love.

Analogously, something similar perhaps can be said with Burgos' *Personalism* book: It seems to be an approach to the person analogous to *Humanae Vitae*: looking at the person from a too exclusively objective a point of view, without bringing in the inner, subjective dimension. Certainly, Burgos acknowledges everything about this new dimension of personhood found in subjectivity, such as an inner subjective life, freedom, conscience, intellect, affection, etc., but he only seems to approach these topics from an objective point of view. It is like having a cool race car, talking (objectively) a lot about it, but then never (subjectively) driving it. In saying this, I am not espousing any turn to subjectivism. I am, rather, suggesting that an investigation of inner, subjective experience should not only proceed from an objective reflection, but also subjectively.

One evidence for Burgos finding refuge in the objective while avoiding subjectivity is his attitude toward Descartes cogito. Burgos states, "Modern thought's starting point was an error: the cogito of Descartes. This fact could not be denied, and the consequences were readily visible: the development of all the idealist philosophy with its atheist cadence..." (46). Here we notice in this quote Burgos' fear that an investigation into inner conscious states in their own setting and context will inevitably lead to subjectivism, relativism, and idealism. But does that really follow?

It seems to me this point does not necessarily follow at all. In fact, what the cogito unveils is not some transcendental ego, but the individual, concrete self who is consciously experienced as the one performing psychic acts. There is, in fact, no executing concrete, individually real psychic acts of loving and willing without a personal self who performs them. And, furthermore, this "I" who performs psychic acts is not merely the product of some inference—as Descartes mistakenly asserts when he famously states, "I think, therefore I am"—it is also the personal self that is immediately given in all cases of the performance of conscious acts. Thus, for instance, the experience is never "thinking has taken place," but rather "I think" and "I will." The "I" is directly and immediately given, albeit subjectively, in the experience itself.

Notice that if this "I" were some transcendental ego, it would not itself be directly given to us in experience, but would be continually veiled from us, as with all the other "things-in-themselves" in the idealist, Kantian worldview. But Descartes does not think this "I" is veiled, as he more appropriately says in the *Meditations*, "I think, I exist."⁴⁷ The existing "I am" is given in the thinking

⁴⁷ "Thus, after everything has been most carefully weighed, it must finally be established that this pronouncement "I am, I exist" is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceived it in my mind." Rene Descartes. (2000). *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Second Meditation). In *Readings in Modern Philosophy*, Vol 1, ed. Roger Ariew & Eric Watkins. Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 30.

for Descartes. And this “I am” given in thinking is also not some mere appearance of some other veiled noumenal reality, as no mere appearance can perform psychic acts. Only a really existing, in fact, a substantially existing being, can perform free acts.

It seems to me that the cogito is one extremely important “entry way” into the inner, subjective life of the person. Because it is through the cogito that one directly and immediately encounters the inner, conscious self. It is through the cogito that I get at this new world of subjective inwardness: of my own encounter with myself. I am, after all, present to myself as the one performing conscious acts. It is this lateral self-presence that I encounter myself *as a subject* as opposed to an object.

Not only is our inner subjective life revealed via lateral self-presence, but this inner life is also the condition for the possibility of the full grasping of transcendent objects. Certainly, pure animals possess sense perception, but they cannot grasp *that something exists* or *that it is such-and-such*, which requires a reflexive approach grounded in self-presence. Thus, for example, a horse can surely perceive me, and it lacks the inner resources to know *that* it is perceiving me. It cannot grasp transcendent facts. Thus paradoxically, if this is correct, a robust inner, subjective life is a necessary condition for getting at the full transcendence of things “in the world”.

7. Does the *cogito* really lead to a radical dualism?

Although Burgos states as his central problem with Descartes the threat of subjectivism, no doubt a second problem with the cogito is that it leads to a radical dualism. In his book, Burgos gives an extremely valuable critique of radical dualism with his work emphasizing the unity of human nature already mentioned above. The question, however, is this: Does the cogito somehow inevitably lead to radical dualism? Or can these two positions be separated? Granted that both positions are to be found in Descartes both the cogito and his radical dualism. The question is whether there is some kind of intrinsic connection between both ideas, as if his position on the cogito then makes necessary radical dualism.

What the *cogito* explicitly establishes is not some radical dualism as such, but specifically the distinction between body and soul, as only an immaterial substantial being can perform psychic acts of willing or thinking: for only a substantial being that “stands in itself” can freely will in its own name. In contrast, if a being were ultimately “grounded in something else,” then any kind of willing would go back to that being. Furthermore, it is completely unnecessary to suppose that the being who is the subject of free acts must therefore “stand in itself”, disembodied from its own body. No, the conscious self who is performing these acts is an embodied self, imperfect without its body, calling for a body to complete its being. As a result, this conscious self can then act in through its body, while the body, in turn, can be expressive of the soul.

Let us grant that Descartes was himself a radical dualist, who only admitted to causal interactions between body and soul. That does not mean his cogito then only makes sense within the context of his own radical dualism.

This analysis of the *cogito* is extremely important for Burgos’ topic, which is the person and personalism, as it is through the cogito—specifically the dimension of lateral self-presence given through the cogito—that we get at this dimension of subjectivity. We do not merely possess objective being, but also possess an inner life: the inner life of self-presence. I am present to myself

as the one performing conscious acts. It is through self-presence that I directly get at my own "I," not objectively as some object, say, of a self-reflection, but subjectively as the one performing other conscious acts.

Burgos does not seem to ever make use of this subjective approach, so important for getting at the inner life of the person. Because of this inwardness of self-presence, I can then not only perceive, but know *that* I am one perceiving states of affairs. This power of grasping facts is crucial to then attaining to truth, which is the adequacy of a judgment to some fact of reality. Here we come to a unique characteristic of persons: the power of grasping the truth of reality.

And, what really makes the cogito important is the further notion of lateral self-presence, insofar as a person can only get at one's self subjectively via self-presence. Granted that we can also reach the self objectively via self-reflection; it is through self-presence that we get at the self subjectively.

All this, perhaps, sounds more of a criticism than it really is. This is because I emphasized the problems or at least questions I had instead of praising the ocean of agreement. It is not only this agreement, but there is also a real sense of gratitude for explaining the world of personalism to me.

Juan Manuel Burgos, Response to James A. Harold

First, I thank James A. Harold for his reading of the book and his evaluation and, in particular, his indication that it offers an overview of personalism that is difficult to find elsewhere. As this is the objective of my book, by which I believe it should be valued and judged, I feel comforted by this indication even though several criticisms, questions, and comments are added to it and to which I will try to respond below.

1. From my point of view, I understand that many of the criticisms presented by Harold are due to an initial blurring of his reading since it seems that he is not reading an *Introduction to personalism*, but reading, or better stated, wanting to read what would be called an *Introduction to person*. And this wrong approach would explain some of his arguments, beginning with the first in which he asks, "Where is Chapter One?" Harold, in fact, considers that my text lacks, just at the beginning, an exposition on the person that would explain issues such as "What distinguishes the realms of person and non-person? What is it that is unique about persons? Specifically, what is it that distinguishes a person from, say, a higher order animal? (...) Is it true that a person is ordered to transcendence? And then what does that transcendence mean?" As I claim, this book is not an essay on anthropology (or at least not directly), but an introduction to personalism. Therefore, the answer to Harold's objection is that Chapter 1 is in its place since it offers the set of socio-philosophical elements that gave rise to personalism, which is what this book is about. This does not mean, however, that I have answered all the questions he raises, but only that I do it by means of elucidating the thought of personalist thinkers so that it is known to the reader what they think, or, to state my point different, so that it is known to the reader what the personalists think about the person.

The problem that is identified in Harold's approach also affects point 2, according to which I overemphasize what people think in contrast to asserting what is the case. Harold's blur is still lurking behind this objection because what this book intends to do is to explain what personalism amounts to, and, since I have not invented personalism, it seems quite sensible to expose what the personalist authors have so far claimed as a means of the reader coming to know what personalism is. Logically, through personalism, a vision of the person is derived, but this cannot be invented *a priori*. Whatever concept of a person is arrived at is the one created by the personalists. It is true that it would have been possible to have started with a general vision of the person, one which is the synthesis of the positions of the personalists (I suppose that is what Harold would have wanted), but I have preferred to follow my own path so that it would be clear that the synthesis, which is offered at the end of the book, fits what the personalists actually claimed. From this perspective, one could also say that the chapter that Harold looks for is indeed to be found in the book, but it constitutes the last chapter and not the first.

2. A second problem is his reductive and perhaps somewhat naive view of scholarship. Harold frequently complains that I am not addressing real topics, but instead what the authors think of those topics. I have already indicated why I do this, but a further reason would be that, in philosophy, it is not so easy to separate reality from interpretations. The history of philosophy is philosophy. It is not possible to achieve pure visions of reality uninfluenced by interpretations. For this reason, a good part of the philosophical task consists of having knowledge of what others have said and the humility to recognize that often, one's own thoughts rely at least implicitly on those of others. Whether or not this task is considered "academic" (in the pejorative) is irrelevant. It is a necessary task that every philosopher knows that he or she must perform. This task, however, does

not prevent the development of one's own vision. On the contrary, it consolidates and reinforces it if it is done correctly. I have no difficulty or fear in expressing my own view of the person (as Harold seems to suppose) and it can be found in many of my other published books, most notably in *Personalist anthropology: a philosophical guide to life*. But *An Introduction* was not the place for it.

For the same reason, the suggestion that I must speak from the person's inner vision is inconsistent. How can the philosophy of other authors be exposed from one's own subjectivity? It does not seem the most appropriate perspective to do them justice. What one should do is attempt to present one's thoughts as objectively as possible. But it should be recognized that philosophers are not only thinking minds, but concrete people with a personal and collective history. And precisely for this reason, to attend to *their* subjectivity (not mine), their biographies and stories are presented with the brevity allowed by the structure of the book.

3. Harold also comments, finally, on two important issues: my view of substance and my assessment of Descartes. In relation to both topics, the first thing that must be considered is that, since this book is an introduction, it must be taken for granted that the topics cannot be dealt with in depth. If I had delved deeper in depth, the book would double or triple its length, ceasing to be an accessible introduction, which is the objective with which it was written.

In any case, starting with the issue of substance,⁴⁸ Harold indicates that my criticism of substance is unsatisfactory because it does not take into account that substance is analogous and affirms the existence of a subject in itself. Actually, I am not only aware that these elements are present in the notion of Aristotelian substance, but I also appreciate them, most particularly, the affirmation of the existence of a subject in itself. Analogy seems to me, on the contrary, too easy a way of solving problems without solving them, by the convenient procedure of indicating that what is affirmed is not exactly what is affirmed, but that it is a little different and depending on the case. The point is that I assume the central idea present in the Aristotelian substance, namely the subsistence capacity of some entities. Now, what Harold does not consider, if I am not wrong, is 1) it is very difficult to assume Aristotelian substance and leave aside the rest of the notions of Aristotelian teleology: accidents, four causes, etc. and 2) it is impossible to introduce subjectivity, so valuable to Harold and to me, into Aristotelian teleology. This is why the notion of substance has been frequently criticized within personalism (Marías, Zubiri) and, much more frequently (Polo, Wojtyła, Stein), it has simply not been used at all to avoid falling into a simple teleology. In short, the main distinction that should be made here, and which Harold does not make, would be the following. 1) Substance understood as a formal Aristotelian concept within the framework of his teleological theory is clearly inadequate to develop a contemporary anthropology that considers subjectivity and therefore, I reject it. 2) The main ideas underlying the Aristotelian notion of substance, namely permanence in time and self-centeredness, are necessary ideas in the definition of person, but they can be assumed without using the Aristotelian theological concept or, as Wojtyła does, speaking of auto-teleology.⁴⁹

Finally, as far as Descartes is concerned, Harold's text seems to me really confusing. On the one hand, he considers that I am "afraid" of subjectivity for which he provides support by elucidating

⁴⁸ See also my answer to Seifert on this same topic.

⁴⁹ Regarding substance, see my dialogue with John Crosby: Juan Manuel Burgos. (2017). "El yo como raíz ontológica de la persona. Reflexiones a partir de John F. Crosby", *Quién* Vol. 6, 33-54; John F. Crosby. (2018), "On solitude, subjectivity, and substantiality. Response to Juan Manuel Burgos", *Quién* Vol. 8, pp. 7-19; Juan Manuel Burgos. (2019). "De la sustancia al yo como fundamento de la persona. Respuesta a John F. Crosby", *Quién* Vol. 10, pp. 27-44. And about the Aristotelian categories, Juan Manuel Burgos, *Personalism and Metaphysics*, chap. 2.

this statement about Descartes: “One evidence for Burgos finding refuge in the objective while avoiding subjectivity is his attitude towards Descartes’ *cogito*. Burgos states, ‘Modern thought’s starting point was an error: the *cogito* of Descartes. This fact could not be denied, and the consequences were readily visible: the development of all the idealist philosophy with its atheist cadence...’ It seems to me this point does not necessarily follow at all.”

Now this text is misguided in many respects. In the first place, I do not take refuge in objectivism for the simple reason that it is one of my enemies. On the contrary, one of the main objectives of my anthropology, in which I follow Wojtyła, is to integrate subjectivity, an idea that is presented in *An Introduction*, as one of the central features of personalism by showing the relevance of affectivity and subjectivity (pp. 225-226). Harold’s second important error is that, in the quotation he presents, I am speaking of Maritain’s position, not mine, a nuance that seems significant if he wants to determine what *I* think (and not what Maritain thinks). The third error is that both in my opinion and in that of personalism in general, Harold seems to forget the places where it is indicated that personalism saw *positive* elements concerning modern philosophy and, in particular, in the Cartesian *cogito*, as, for example, the following. “The conclusions which some personalist thinkers have made have led them, on the one hand, to reject the basic approach of idealism and, on the other, to try to *take up some of the fundamental concepts of modernity*—subjectivity, consciousness, “I,” etc.—reformulated or modified as necessary” (p. 209).

Finally, the fourth error or problem is that neither the personalists in general, nor I, in particular, have considered that relativism is automatically derived from the *cogito* or from subjectivity. Maritain himself (*An Introduction*, p. 48) sought to integrate subjectivity into his anthropology. And my opinion is this: “Subjectivity and subjectivism are two very different concepts. Subjectivism is a relativistic epistemological attitude. Subjectivity is an anthropological datum. Man possesses subjectivity as a matter of fact” (*An Introduction*, p. 226).

Harold, finally, proposes the possibility that the *cogito* does not lead to a radical dualism. If we understand by *cogito* a simple recognition of subjectivity, obviously it does not have to be that way. Now, if we understand the *cogito* in the sense in which Descartes understood it, it would be really striking to think that it does not generate dualism, since it was generated by Descartes himself, who had no choice but to resort to the strange solution of the pineal gland to try to remedy how two wholly different substances could interact. But perhaps Harold may be able to find a solution to the problem.

I conclude. Although I respond with some force to Harold’s statements, I do not, of course, do so from any academic enmity. I have limited myself to pointing out, what constitutes an objectivity that will always be a little mixed with subjectivity, my opinion about his evaluation, for which I sincerely am thankful.

4. Weronika Janczuk, *The Fundamental Value of the Person as Origin of Philosophical Inquiry: A Response to Burgos' An Introduction to Personalism*

The human person comes into ideas in multiple ways: certain ideas are given to him, others are generated in him in response to different stimuli, and even others he himself generates.

Given their intellectual nature, once comprehended or generated, ideas retain an intrinsically interior mode of being, with the potential to inform external actions. It is thus that St. Aquinas could teach us that action *sequitur esse*—that action follows being. These ideas serve an infinite number of purposes, but it might be said that, among that infinity, one purpose served is the provision of the necessary theoretical framework by which the person copes with and articulates reality, which includes the breadth of his experience—from which he can never be separated. This is so if we agree with Aquinas, that sense experience is the original source for all knowledge, and with the general personalist tradition, that there exists an inherent potential for subjective experience and consciousness in the human person as a natural necessity of his own nature.

It could be said that one way the human person receives ideas is in the passive impression they leave on the intellect, and there retain a sort of passive quality. The human person can observe the way his intellect is formed in the movement of ideas, whatever their origin, even as those ideas remain solely interior and self-contained by the intellect. Persons can then pose the question about the origin of these ideas and engage the project of purifying and crystallizing their own intellectual life.

I can remember, for example, the first time that a Thomist taught me to understand that, when I say something is a tree, I perceive an object that I understand to share essentially in certain characteristics that makes the said object this object rather than another object, that is, the recognition of these characteristics that I boil down into a particular word given to me in the structure of my language to refer to “said object, with said characteristics.” From then onward, I can know this idea and rest in it.

It might also be said that these ideas, whatever their origin, have the power to become the framework toward which the human person directs all his reality, choices, and experience. Ideas thus bear a potentially generative and creative power on the person, in that, beyond a sort of passive receptivity at the level of the intellect, the human capacity to reflect on his own ideas and to direct his will means that the person can engineer reality—in his actions, in his projects—from within those ideas that he has either passively received or into which he has reasoned.

It is within this context that persons are given a unique choice:

They can either (a) develop and adopt ideas that are never tested by a broader intellectual or experiential body, and thus, let their personal limitations determine the scope of reality to which they are exposed (i.e., I read about the communion of the saints and understand from self-professed theologians who aren't immersed in a life of deep contemplative prayer that the communion of the saints is reserved to Heaven alone, but over the years, my own deep prayer teaches me that I can walk in the communion of the saints and meet them thought to thought, heart to heart, in a walking interpersonal communion) or these persons can (b) seek transcendence in their intellectual and

experiential inquiry before said reality, one discovered—as can be argued—in relationship with others, including the Trinitarian persons themselves.

The 20th century witnessed certain political, economic, social, and cultural infrastructures—including different forms of totalitarianism and communism—rise and then collapse. Their collapse was, arguably, the logical consequence of problematic anthropological foundations upon which each was built, and it gave rise to one of the most profound movements in the history of philosophical inquiry. The movement came to be known as personalism.

Personalism sought to return to an intellectual primacy centred upon the existence and subjectivity of the human person—as one built within his human nature for a unique transcendence, and thus a unique body of experience. With some variance, personalism’s “starting point is the phenomenon of the person which, since it is accessible from the start in a realist way, becomes the key, the model, and the criterion for understanding being in general”⁵⁰. Within personalism, therefore, when it is compared to a coherent metaphysic, “knowledge of reality is of a ‘personal’ type because the person not only knows nature, but also transforms and personalizes it. The person is the third type of being, in which the *contractio entis* takes place, because he not only possesses a material and spiritual dimension but is body and spirit”⁵¹.

A departure of this form from Aristotelian-Thomism meant “reworking the traditional metaphysical categories of an Aristotelian stamp, which structurally depended on the notion of *ens* [being, abstracted], and taking a step further into other, new categories that derived from the notion of the person, beginning with the first of them, the category of ‘being’”⁵².

At its apex, personalism proposed and continues to propose a “‘cultural matrix’. that is, a living framework of ideas, shared by many and capable of orienting new generations of intellectuals who, in addition, have creatively and ingeniously applied them to new spheres”,⁵³ including economics, law, and bioethics.

A recent and key 20th and 21st-century contributor is Spanish personalist Juan Manuel Burgos, who today serves on the faculty of the Universidad Villanueva and is a member of the Jacques Maritain International Institute.

His text *An Introduction to Personalism* provides a brief, concise, and insightful summary of key historical and intellectual developments that have fostered the evolution of personalism, along with an analysis personalism’s promise for the decades to come.

Burgos makes it his project to explore the origins of French, Italian, Polish, German, Spanish, British, and American personalism, or to state his project differently, to explore the response of personalism to the socio-political conditions of the time. That is, he attends to the practical versus academic commitments of key personalist thinkers, among them Maritain, Marcel, Wojtyła, and Guardini, the latter two being priests of the Catholic Church. He furthermore attends to the conversations that those personalists had with Thomism, each other’s bodies of thought, and the intellectual currents of the time, and the rise of phenomenology from within personalism’s infrastructure, which is iconized in the lives of thinkers such as Dietrich von Hildebrand, Max Scheler, and Edith Stein.

⁵⁰ Juan Manuel Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 117.

⁵¹ Id., 118.

⁵² Id., 93.

⁵³ Id., 100.

These thinkers advanced theory on questions of empathy, interpersonality (the structure of the I-Thou relationship, which proposes that two persons relating to one another do so not just from a place of objectivity, as two objects, but from an inherent place of subjectivity, that is, as two subjects possessing incommunicable subjectivities, the affective life, virtue, value, mysticism, ethics (including debates about the relativity between metaphysics and experience, particularly ethical and between ontology and the structure of ethics), historicity, and more. Their thought stands informed by a spectrum of religious, ethical, political, social, and cultural commitments, and within the religious context, for these thinkers, it was often clear in principle that “there is no strict separation of philosophical and anthropological subjects from Christian and theological ones, ... [with Christianity] a holistic proposal for the interpretation of reality”.⁵⁴

A small anecdote from the life and thought of philosopher-theologian Edith Stein helps further make concrete the relevance and influence of personalism, illuminating the intellectual and creative heart of Burgos’ text. Prior to her conversion to Catholicism, and thus prior to the revolutionary *summas*, she would write about the nature of the human person, spiritual life, and woman’s vocation, among other questions. Stein completed a little treatise titled *An Investigation Concerning the State*. A phenomenologist and personalist trained by Edmund Husserl and Adolf Reinach, the founder of the school of phenomenology and one of his early students, Stein stands as a fundamental contributor to the philosophy of the last century.

In her text, Stein examines the process by which the state comes to be, along with the state and the law’s essential natures. For her, the state is an entity that requires the individual intent of individual members (“I want this”) to be made a collective intent as the state is brought into existence (“I want this” and “you want this,” and therefore ‘we agree mutually that we want this”). Once such a condition exists, the state is then maintained—the conscious and shared intent of these individual members is the causal pre-requisite to the state itself. Stein perceived truthfully that the infrastructure of the state follows from the persons who make it, and even more so, that the interior nature of the state will be contingent upon the interior nature of the persons within it.

This necessary grasp of causality—causally, the state cannot and would not exist without its members—illuminates a certain irrevocable cause underlying the different, broken infrastructures that the personalists of the 20th century observed, namely human persons.

These persons founded those very infrastructures that later fell, for no communism and totalitarianism exists without their makers. Those persons produced texts—be they books, political slogans, legislative justifications, or otherwise—that justified systems that later collapsed, as grown from within their own ideas and bodies of experience, but never tested against the essential nature of the human person and the structure of his potential.

Personalism’s profound illumination is that the subjectivity of the human person is one of the essential planes upon which reality evolves—for it is the human person who serves as the irrevocable instrument of and within this very reality—and this subjectivity can be acknowledged, understood, and formed. Stein remains, as far as I know, the only canonized saint who explored in a systematic way the notion of the formation of the human person—again observing and making concrete the reality that the making of our own persons is contingent upon others. Furthermore, she elucidates how our own development is subject to the instrumentality of other persons, a premise and theoretical body further solidified by the work of contemporary psychologists and psychiatrists, including Conrad Baars, Anna Terruwe, and J. Brennan Mullaney, each of whom suggest the true

⁵⁴ Id., p. 141.

depth of correspondence to the structure of reality discovered within personalistic philosophy with their own works.

Burgos demonstrates the relationship between this human subjectivity and philosophical development with great clarity by evaluating the lives, and thus, the bodies of experiences of those key personalists who were responsible for the articulation of its theoretical body. Karol Wojtyła, for example, experienced a change in plans to study theatre with the Nazi invasion of Poland and the Second World War, and as bishop “had to firmly take on Marxism on a pastoral and intellectual level”⁵⁵. Von Hildebrand, on the other hand, whose legacy is housed by the Hildebrand Project at Franciscan University⁵⁶, sought to engage the immense, intentional project of dehumanization in the creation and maintenance of concentration camps during World War II, among other violations.

Burgos fails, however, to provide the same exploration of the personal subjectivities of the key thinkers that brought into existence those systems, which the personalists came to reject—even as those thinkers, including men like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, became phenomenal instruments of “failed anthropologies” that he conflates, even if microscopically, with political or social movements, as if those movements were person-less.

Therefore, in some ways, *An Introduction* prompts the following theoretical questions about the nature, structure, and evolution of personalism’s philosophical potential and capacity. What, exactly, lies at the foundation of these failed anthropologies to which personalism responded? Is it a failure in ideas, or even a priori we need a rule about whether this term is italicized or not, is it a failure in the discovery and the development of a form of lived experience on behalf of those minds who brought those anthropologies and their associated systems into being? In other words, is it—actually—a failure to expose oneself to a potential for lived experience with potential to shatter those ideas to which one has been exposed?

When Burgos evaluates Europe of the 1970s, during which the continent “was swept by powerful currents of thought which significantly influenced the future ideological configuration of society”, including a rise of attacks on tradition manifested in a special way in the sexual revolution, “which increasingly promoted a way of understanding and living sexuality that was very different from the traditional one”⁵⁷, he neither proposes a framework for grasping the full causality that underlay these changes ideologically nor evaluates the personal subjects that, causally and undeniably, were the fundamental instruments of the rise of these problems in the first place. I assume here Burgos’ own first principle, that experience generates and shapes ideas: if Wojtyła’s lived experience as a Pole, a contemplative, a priest, and a pastoral leader were all conducive to the generation of his personalism, why is there no parallel exploration of the interiority of the lives of those who generated structures antagonistic to personalism’s mission? In the same way, when Burgos scaffolds out the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989, which led to certain cultural repercussions in Europe, he fails to break down and diversify the potential causes at work. In the same way that communism cannot arise without its members, it also cannot fall without certain ideological and

⁵⁵ Id., p. 104.

⁵⁶ I am grateful to James Beauregard, PhD, for the opportunity to write this reflection on Burgos’ text. Jim and I had the pleasure of a mutual participation in the inaugural residency of the Hildebrand Project in 2019. Note also that the historical context surrounding von Hildebrand’s work, as alluded to, is further explored in his biography, (2014). *My Battle Against Hitler: Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich*. NYC: Crown, written by founder and president of the project John Henry Crosby, son of John F. Crosby, whose work lies at the heart of North American personalism today.

⁵⁷ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 146.

experiential shifts in the subjectivities of those who are living within it—to suggest otherwise is to deny the very heart of personalism, that the person is the prime agent responsible for the shaping of reality.

Unfortunately, therefore, it's difficult not to read Burgos here as placing a sort of causality in and determinism to social movements, failing to work out the necessary conclusions to which his personalism should bring him. He almost forgets that those movements essentially arose from within the subjectivities of persons which were in some essential way different from the subjectivities of the personalists, phenomenologists, and religiously committed intellectuals of the time that lived out an intellectual, affective, and spiritual clarity about the human person to which personalism aspires. The others, in other words, obviously didn't, and so the unanswered question becomes why.

Human nature is such that one has the potential for living out what personalism deems to be a person's fullest potential. As such, humans possessed the potential for carrying out communism's destruction (in certain parts of Europe); where Burgos makes it evident that the structure of the formation of the personalist's experience is conducive to the generation of personalism's greatest content, the real question becomes what about the structure of the non-personalist's experience made participating in the personalist's experience impossible? For example, why, in their intelligence, did Hitler and Stalin never aspire to personalism's beauty, truth, and goodness or to its grace, substance, and generosity of spirit?

Given that history shows that systems continue to shape experience, as much as it shows that persons rebel against systems that foster abusive experience, as with Poland's Solidarity Movement, it seems that the essential question which personalism must engage that of the point of contact between objectivity and subjectivity, and how one responds to the other in the development and maintenance of the interior integrity of the human person involved in engaging reality.

A more apt scaffolding over the historiography provided in the book, over the development of personalism, would have included a greater sensitivity to the causal forces underlying the development of subjectivity. Where personalism continues to assume a sort of natural, in-born capacity to understand the fullness of subjectivity in a natural evolution from birth—even if most personalistic theory never engages with this developmental question (to its own detriment)—the diversity of externalizations of the human person, in action, in infrastructure, and more suggests, at least, the possibility of a more “complex” structure to and evolution of the human interior life. In other words, if personalism's beauty and potential is so intuitive for personalists, why is it not for those who never engage personalism's dynamism and interiority?

The development of this interiority, and its rising to consciousness through moral experience, lies at the heart of Wojtyła's *The Acting Person* as well as, in a sort of secondary way, Dietrich von Hildebrand's *The Heart*. Where Wojtyła assumes the life of integrated experience and consciousness in the agent he is exploring, von Hildebrand pushes beyond him to suggest a differentiation in interior, subjective content when he explores a spectrum of subjectivities of the heart, including loveless hearts, tyrannical in their morality, selfish, and sentimental, each a form of heart-level experience distinct from the heart fully spiritualized by grace in Christ.⁵⁸

It is with the lack of an underlying structural framework of the kind proposed above that Burgos moves beyond his fundamental historical and contextual analysis, which demonstrated in many ways ‘that personalism consists of a diffuse social and ideological movement which contributed

⁵⁸ See Dietrich von Hildebrand. (1977). *The Heart: An Analysis of Divine & Human Affectivity*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press.

original ideas in the middle of the twentieth century but which cannot demonstrate that it has a solid and common body of principles and ideas, “making it so that [one] cannot claim an uncontested ‘centre’ of personalism”⁵⁹. Entering the 21st century, the “school” of thought that has been deemed personalism did not itself propose or adopt a conceptual clarity regarding whether it might be considered a philosophy, a system, a movement, or some other type of intellectual and applied work. One remaining project for thinkers is the integration and classification of the different conceptual hierarchies within which personalism has evolved.

Within this diffusion of entry points, questions, and answers, Burgos judges it possible to make a proposal for the development of personalism moving forward. The substance of his proposal is as such: in being “structured around a modern concept of the person,” and with the concept “understood to be the anthropological perspective [which chooses to emphasize or study] some or all of the following elements [—the] person as ‘I’ and ‘who’; affectivity and subjectivity; interpersonality and the communitarian aspect”⁶⁰, etc., personalism can, in fact, be deemed a philosophy.

The fundamental qualifying characteristic of personalistic philosophy is that it “[announces] straight away [its] set of principles and ideas”⁶¹, as those engaging with the person. One fundamental principle to which personalistic thinkers adhere is the dignity of the person, given that experience, consciousness, and subjectivity in the human person all unfold in an internal, independently-directed dynamism beyond the choosing of persons themselves, both observable and testable by experience. Life is given to us rather than generated by us, and therefore, there exists a set of obligations imposed upon us by the telos, or end, moving within us. To deny that we move toward an end that is not of our own choosing is to deny the structure of our own experience, subjectivity, and consciousness. Another fundamental principle is the structure of relativity, or interpersonal community, into which persons are born and through which they develop. A third fundamental principle is the admission of the existence of a universal human nature. A fourth is the recognition of human freedom. A fifth is the generally causal recognition of the givenness that exists in personhood, which suggests a being—a person—of some kind, from whom the human person receives himself; here personalism respects its Judeo-Christian origins as well as aspires toward the fullness of religious experience, understood this way.

In its unfolding over time, personalistic thinkers—in some sense, with Wojtyła at their head—came to understand the need for a method through which the different conceptual strands would be read. Now “it [can] be said that the personalist method is an ontological analysis of reality based on an integral concept of experience which includes, simultaneously, objective and subjective elements”,⁶² and herein Burgos touches upon the phenomenal challenge of philosophical inquiry in the 21st century, one informed by philosophical currents over the past several thousand years, as well as by contemporary developments in non-philosophical disciplines. These disciplines include endocrinology and psychiatry, for example, and create a philosophical system, and a method for inquiry about reality, that can give a totally integrated and coherent objective, metaphysical, subjective, or personalistic and/or phenomenological grasp of the structure and evolution of the person. Here, endocrinology, might give categories that suggest that not all human bodies develop in the same way, and therefore, the possibility that not all embodied persons experience reality the same way; here, psychiatry might provide categories that suggest that the external infliction upon

⁵⁹ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ *Id.*, p. 194.

⁶¹ *Id.*, p. 195.

⁶² *Id.*, p. 207.

the human person of trauma or neglect, among other issues, means that not all human interiorities develop in the same way.

Burgos calls this kind of underlying methodology *integral experience*, and the challenge lies in developing the broadest and deepest metaphysical framework, as well as experiential body, to test the implications of a metaphysics in its concrete unfolding—ideally, in the integral experience of every human subject, and where the experience is not integral in a natural way, in the re-ordering of experiential bodies into their fullest integrity. Here lies the challenge of personalism applied: the development of formational, academic, pastoral, and other programs that profess the unity of the personal being, the potential of particular forms of experience, and the tools by which those experiences come to be.

A concrete example lies in Wojtyła's suggestion of a conjugal spirituality: if there is a potential for a fully integrated unitive-procreative act, ideally immersed in the integrity of deep contemplation, how do persons come to live within this sort of intellectual infrastructure over their entire lives? If Jacques and Raïssa Maritain could profess that marriage includes a sort of guardian angelship over the deepest corners of the heart and the unity of the incommunicable between two persons, personalism's concrete question must become How is this so? And how do we replicate this in the lives of those who aspire to personalism's potential?

Historically, the integration between metaphysics and personalism and/or phenomenology has been deemed impossible and unlikely by thinkers on both ends of the spectrum, but the evolution of interdisciplinary disciplines in conversation with personalism suggests the possibility of restructuring both problems by asking in new categorical ways how accounts of experience shape our metaphysics, and vice-versa.

This integration would give the set of ideas to which all behaviour and experience would be directed and experiential accounts would then testify to the ultimate internal potentiality of the human person as determined by his nature (sanctity, for example, or the fullness of interpersonal community), so that the fascination with—for example—technological development might come to be subject to a fascination with something like mysticism and integrated sexuality, both grounded in a human interior rather than exterior. It is personalism that has suggested this as the starting and ending place of human life and the abstraction of a metaphysical system that has forgotten the vitality of the interior life. The development of an adequate, integrated ontology “[restates] the primacy of personal being as the paradigm, the principal analogue, of any categorization of being”.⁶³

What is interesting about the intersection of metaphysics and personalism, and Burgos makes this explicit, is the challenge posed by a more deeply intimate and interior exploration of the interior life—and, specifically, the recognition of a third dimension to the human structure, that is, beyond the standard bipartite rational (intellect-will) faculties. This third dimension von Hildebrand and Stein called the heart, and others in this tradition, originating even in exegesis of the Pauline epistles, have suggested it to be the human spirit, definitions and systematizations of each outstanding. Additionally, personalism gives rise to unique questions about the nature and structure of the feminine and masculine lives, not just purely embodied but also deeply interior, so much so that Stein suggested—and this conceptual work deserves to be tested and integrated—the potential of gendered souls, to help explain different experiential contents in the lives of men and women.

⁶³ Id., p. 211.

In conclusion, it becomes evident that the foundational integrative work Burgos has done—opening personalism up to a deeper contemplation of the person and reality in the 21st century—suggests, as already alluded to, the following problems:

1. What is a fully integrated metaphysic of the 21st century? How do metaphysicians integrate in their abstracted systems all the variances and potentialities in the development of human nature and experience? In 2017, I wrote that it is essential to assume ‘a particular but vital relationship between lived experience and a philosophy of human nature: that, if a philosophy is accurate in abstracting and articulating the nature of man, it must necessarily—in its application—encapsulate the entire spectrum of possible human capacities and experiences, including disorder to the nature with which a person begins, and offer the framework by which to understand this spectrum. Capacities, experiences, and actions uncontained by any single philosophy of nature thus demonstrate its insufficiency or incompleteness, insofar as that activity seemingly originates unrooted in nature, absurd wherever nature is assumed’.⁶⁴ Personalistic thought, in studying these experiential bodies and building tools for this exploration, continues to source evidentiary bases to challenge standard historical metaphysical categories.

2. What are possible human experiences? What is the difference between different bodies of experience? Which ones are authentic and integral, and which ones give rise to the fullest form of the good, true, and beautiful, to the highest form of ecstasy and pleasure, to the highest manifestation of the human person in his/her engaging of reality? How do we discern the differentiations in experiences, in the structures of others’ experiences and our own?

3. How do we form the human person into the highest forms of experience?

Whether the questions begin after one finds a coherent metaphysical logic model in Aquinas, after one discovers new bodies of experiences in the personalists, in novels or films, in conversations with persons of all kinds, or after one discovers new metaphysical doors in thinkers like Stein, the project of integrating these different modes of thought continues without question into the 21st century.

I would insist that Burgos’ framework found within this introduction provides an essential scaffold for the personalistic project, even as his scaffolding illuminates those unanswered problems and needs, which now, here and otherwise, remain the fascination and challenge of many philosophers and intellectuals today.

⁶⁴ Weronika Janczuk. (2018). “The Place of the Heart in Integral Formation”, *Logos* 21, 1. In some ways, this paper paints a broadly personalistic picture of the problem posed by advances in research in psychology, and illuminates the metaphysical-phenomenological crisis suggested here, providing an incipient bibliography and case studies for thinkers looking to engage the problem.

Juan Manuel Burgos, Response to Weronika Janczuk

Weronika Janczuk, if I am not mistaken, shows a general positive evaluation of my work, and, based on this evaluation, focuses her analysis on paths of experience. My sense that this is her overall view and concern is made explicit in an initial critical comment that indicates that my book does not explain the context that led some of the greatest leaders of collectivist projects, such as Hitler or Stalin, in a negative and dark direction. In my opinion, it is very easy and very difficult, at the same time, to answer that question. Each person has their own irreducible path that depends on the social context in which they are born, but that is also capable of being modified by freedom. As I am not at all a determinist, I understand that man has his destiny in his hands and, therefore, the same socio-cultural context can generate very different attitudes in the same way that a great personal misfortune can bring God closer or can lead to the loss of faith, as was the case with Lenin. There are no written paths for man and, therefore, philosophy cannot access them a priori. All one can do is to recognize that they exist potentially and marvel at the hidden mystery of the person and his decisions. It is true, however, that a more detailed explanation of the historical and cultural context in which the leaders of the collectivist projects of the 20th century lived would allow for a better understanding as to why they made the decisions they did and led their nations to such a dark destiny, but that task was not part of my presentation on personalism and, therefore, it is not present in my writing.

This first explanation or justification serves, in any case, as an introduction to the three final questions that Janczuk proposes. The first of these concerns the relationship between personalism and metaphysics. This is a complex issue, which I have addressed in some detail in a recent work and to which I refer for those who want a deeper understanding of my position.⁶⁵ I can point out here, however, that the possible resolution of this issue begins with an adequate delimitation of the meaning of the term "metaphysics", which is polysemic, powerful, diffuse, and quasi-mystical, as Julián Marías would say. In any case, and to be able to offer a substantial answer, I will focus now on the classical model of the metaphysics of the being. To do so, I distinguish in this metaphysics a transcendental level (essence-act of being) and a categorical level, that is, the interpretation of reality through the Aristotelian categories. The first level, in my opinion, is perfectly compatible with personalism, although the matter would require more elaboration, but we have not enough space for that discussion. But the second, the categorical, is not compatible with personalism because these concepts (matter/form, etc.) are inadequate to explain the human being. On the contrary, they distort what is specific about human reality. For this reason, as I have also pointed out in the comment to Seifert's review, I believe it is time to abandon the impossible task of integrating these concepts into contemporary personalist anthropology. Those concepts had their moment, and they rendered a great service to philosophy and to man, but that moment passed. Today, they are only part of the history of philosophy, and it is not sensible to insist again and again that they must be considered in personalist philosophy. If they are useful, and to the extent they are, we can go ahead with them. But if they don't work, let them live only in the history books. So, I fully agree with Janczuk when she states that "[p]ersonalistic thought, in studying these experiential bodies and building tools for this exploration, continues to source evidentiary bases to challenge standard historical metaphysical categories".

As far as the paths of experience are concerned, these must be fully explored. Therefore, when Janczuk asks herself: "What are possible human experiences?", I think some answers can be

⁶⁵ See Juan Manuel Burgos, *Personalism and Metaphysics*.

found. For instance, in my last book,⁶⁶ I have referred to the possible connection of experiences, as I understand them, with Gardner's multiple intelligences understood as a way of cataloguing the different types of experiences (types of intelligence, for Gardner). And, in another context, I have also distinguished different types of experiences, namely, original, ordinary, innovative, and configurative. These classifications and distinctions, together with others that could be added, facilitate the exploration and understanding of the vast array of experience, but it must never be forgotten that they will always be partial since the world of experience is, in some way, the entire world of man. This is because experience is a significant personal activity, that is, the basic and original interaction of the person with the world (of course, in a Heideggerian sense and not merely a physical sense).⁶⁷ For this reason, it will certainly be unfeasible to completely structure the experiential world, but it will be possible to describe and point out some of the main paths along which it runs.

In this way we could try to establish the steps that must be taken to reach "the highest forms of experience" (referring to the third question of Janczuk), but also, it would be necessary to make some nuances, because, for example, it does not seem that the same path can lead to the highest levels of aesthetic experience and moral experience, since the two do not coincide. As von Hildebrand already pointed out, not all those with a high aesthetic sensibility have a high moral sensibility and, we might add, the opposite can be also true.

In short, personalism opens the path of experience, in particular, the Integral Personalism that I propose, but I believe that, fortunately, this path cannot be determined in a logical, linear, and structured way since it includes the multiform diversity of the person and the world.

⁶⁶ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2023). *La fuente originaria. Una teoría del conocimiento*. Granada: Comares.

⁶⁷ See Juan Manuel Burgos. (2018). *La vía de la experiencia o la salida del laberinto*. Madrid: Rialp.

5. Diana Prokofyeva

1. Personalism and the “human crisis”

An Introduction to Personalism contains a serious and diligent analysis of the history of personalism. It includes personalist ideas of thinkers from France, Italy, Spain, Britain, America, Poland, and Germany. The origins of this philosophical movement, and the common ground, as well as the differences among its main representatives was surveyed and assembled in this one work. It is also important to understand what personalism amounts to today, identifying its weaknesses and strengths. Research and reflection on those questions are found in the second part of his book, which is less historical, while offering important observations upon basic principles of personalism and its place in our contemporary times. This movement unfairly lost the attention of philosophy during the latter half of the 20th century. In the 21st century, we have the opportunity to revive it, bringing it back into philosophical academic discourse and inserting its ideas into our society’s public discourse.

It is obvious that our world faces multiple crises in many spheres such as global politics, personal identity, and international interrelations, which involve different levels of social politics, economics, education, and so on. The most complicated matter is the way that our problems may be more than “crises”, but representative more of a broader global instability, which might be solved by applying political power or pressure at both individual and public levels in individual countries and on the world stage. Of course, we cannot compare today’s situation with the world crisis and horrors of two World Wars during the first half of the 20th century. But, these days, we get news and information through mass media all over the world about troubled economic circumstances and political conflicts such as authoritarian actions or violent clashes in various countries, which reflect not only on those countries, but also affect the people who live there.

The main problem arose (and still arises) when people who have opposite views come into conflict, while each feel sure that they are right. This reason for conflict might become a justification for war, whether a “real” war, a “cold” war, an economic war, a virtual (cyber) war, or an information war. Also, postmodernity has brought its own changes and challenges for people who must respond to what is happening in the surrounding world and in that social environment. And in this situation of instability and crisis, it appears that there is an absence of “real” and fundamental values, able to be shared by most people, including people in power. This difficult process increases an interest in philosophy since people and society still need something that can be considered as a core basis, which can be clear to all. In my opinion, this must be a significant time for personalist philosophy, which is based on authentic and comprehensible humanistic values. These fundamental values should become part of a new worldview.

The new worldview needed by all societies resonates with personalists’ idea of engagement, which was introduced in the middle of the 20th century⁶⁸. The only pathway towards the “sane society”, according to the personalists, is the education of publicly involved, open-minded, and highly responsible persons. The personalists proclaimed that human individuality and respect for the individual should become the highest principle for every society. The “creation” of self, its formation, is the growth of an active and responsible person able to affirm reality and the world around her. In its metaphysical meaning, a person is originally and initially free, entirely and completely. She

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Mounier. (1999). Манифест персонализма [The Personalist Manifesto]. Trans. by I. Vdovina. Moscow: Respublica (In Russian)

possesses the freedom to choose her own path. From an understanding of this existential premise, a person can begin exploring and understanding the world.

An individual's engagement within society, undertaken with a renewed sense of self-determination and self-actualization, is an activity which can overcome a feeling of despair in situations of conflict and division. During one's life, a person encounters manifestations of estrangement in different spheres of life and on different social levels. For this reason, in general, a human life is a permanent rotation among different types and modifications of estrangement and personal efforts to overcome it – what we mean by “engagements.”

Personalists proceeded from the fact that the “human crisis” is a consequence of the crisis of civilization, which was obvious in Europe in 1920s and 1930s. However, since a person is a co-creator of historical events, one's activity and development in a particular direction of action can lead to various forms of estrangement, and hence, helped bring civilization to that crisis. In essence, this is a dialectical process. One's personality has influences upon society and one simultaneously experiences those effects upon oneself. The influence of the individual over society and that historical process usually appears to be negligible. Yet, like a mosaic, individual actions build up a picture of society and life as a deterministic process. The probability that a single person can influence another person by some action, and hence, that one can consequently determine the further possibility of a chain of events, forces us to consider each individual as a valuable and valued member of the entire life process. Recognizing this, personalists turned to the philosophy of the person (“Le personnalisme”), since only spiritually healthy and properly oriented subjects could rise out of the crisis. In other words, the individual's engagement with the social situation can be considered as the way to soften or overcome alienation or even the way towards estrangement's “removal.”

2. Individuality, individualism, and collectivism.

The individualism of the 20th century (which is common to the European and American societies) was a natural development of European individualism, which began to fully develop with the theological reforms of Martin Luther and John Calvin. There is also an important difference between that individualism having an estrangement or alienation from others and from oneself as its consequences, on the one hand, and, on the other, that same individuality displaying the uniqueness of each person as an important positive phenomenon. On mere individualism, being an individualist means the separation of oneself from the others and caring about own interests. Such a person might lose an important connection with the Other and may become detached and lonely. Reflecting on estrangement from oneself, I would like to mention one key manifestation: losing interest in developing one's own individuality and holding onto a desire to follow accepted social models of life, even if they do not resonate with one's essence. To achieve a certain social status, “to be successful”, one needs to fit the mould. This is to say that one must have a certain type of car or watch or earn a certain level of income. That habit of “corresponding to the status” stems from childhood when we are taught how to behave properly. We are taught how to dress, express ourselves, to act like a boy or a girl, how to show that one is a child from a good family, how to be a decent person, and so on. We are often guided by the stereotypes dictated to us from above since our childhood and we continue to follow this path by inertia, often without thinking about any rational explanation for our actions or about clarifying our desires and motivations, but instead we are guided only by the standard telling us “this is normal.” A person thereby loses his or her essence, and it becomes a natural state where one feels quite comfortable.

Even though many people find this sort of “normal” life to be satisfactory, self-realization is still necessary. It is necessary to inspire people to be further-reaching and that helps to define an artistic elite. And, here, help arrives from the outside, that is, from mass media. However, mass media only imposes a new cult upon us, namely, the cult of consumption. This cult has captured America and Europe from the 1960s-70s and then reached the developing countries with its usual delay. We are told everywhere that it is necessary to buy something to feel happy, to get rid of problems, and to gain more free time. The paradox follows that a person spends his or her free time watching advertisements for a “necessary” product or object... So, we may lose ourselves by cultivating laziness, idleness, and our own alienation.

As *An Introduction to Personalism* recounts, personalists defended individuality (in the sense described above, that is, in a sense different from the standard individualist model) while speaking out against individualism as one of the core problems of the person. According to a religious approach (here we refer to the Christian notion), each person is unique and special, having one’s own talents and an imprint of God’s image within them. It means that each person is an individuality. The communitarian spirit, counter to selfish individualism, means the reduction of estrangement between people through sincere communication and a solidarity among people, due to mutual feeling and a mutual understanding of our species-essence.

An opposite phenomenon of individualism is collectivism. I disagree that only until the 20th century were these paired trends of individualism and collectivism presented.⁶⁹ These trends were represented in the world in earlier European and Eastern (including Slavic and Russian) civilizations and cultures. They have their long origins and slow development, but it is true that their strong opposition perhaps only became apparent by the 20th century. However, it cannot be said that the confrontation between countries (or blocs of countries) was rooted precisely in this division and the ideological differences based upon them. In my opinion, individualism and collectivism only reinforced these differences, making them more obvious.

In Russia in particular, the word "collectivism" is associated with the Soviet past and the name of Karl Marx. In his works, the phenomenon of collectivism is closely connected with the class consciousness. It means that an individual understands oneself as a part of the group of people (the class), of the species-essence, and a part of society. It is a vast question, if Marx subordinates everything, including the person, to the single large goal of establishing communism (as Burgos claims on page 13 of *An Introduction*). According to Marx, communism would come about inevitably when the crisis of the capitalist stage of development would become obvious and unavoidable.

Unfortunately, on the practical side of the matter, Marxism was politically realized as totalitarianism, or, as the total submission of a person to the endeavours and interests of the ruling party. In fact, this result discredited Marx’s theory in the eyes of different countries and societies, especially those that did not try to “build communism” but were witnesses to what was happening in and on account of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Antonio Gramsci wrote about the danger inherent to a dictatorship of the proletariat, which easily becomes the dictatorship of one political party in his *Prison Notebooks*.⁷⁰ And in that sense, personalism opposes the vulgarized and simplified perception of Marxism.

⁶⁹ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 30.

⁷⁰ Antonio Gramsci. (1991). Тюремные Тетради [Prison Notebooks]. Electronic Library “Civil Society in Russia”. Electronic resource: <http://www.civisbook.ru/files/File/Gramshi,tetradi.pdf> (In Russian), pp. 351-352.

3. An importance of humanities and creativity in education

Juan Manuel Burgos mentions an interesting matter when he writes, “the atmosphere of scientism which influences, by way of reaction, many personalists, driving them to proclaim the primacy of the spiritual”⁷¹. I would like to add to this that the tendencies of anti-scientism, an assurance that the world cannot be comprehended only with logic and reason, all gave rise to various irrational philosophical studies and inquiries since the late 19th century. Without doubt, the development of science inspired positivism and strengthened people’s belief in science and human intelligence. But any action arouses a counter reaction. The stronger the scientific tendencies, the brighter become the trends of irrationalism. In many ways, religion was rejected as a part of an “outdated” worldview, which for many scientists and thinkers of those days (such as Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx, all under the great influence of Charles Darwin) was something that weighs down upon science and society in general.

At this present time, there is a similar contest in attitude towards science and humanities. The former are placed on a pedestal while the latter are declared secondary and less important. Governments and funding sources invest money mostly in the sciences (especially technosciences and the life sciences) while the role assigned to humanist knowledge is to “service” those “real sciences”. Humanistic disciplines have a far greater value than just that service. They tell us about past struggles to raise humanity to the level on which we are now and offer a vision of the mature human and what to expect from oneself. Persons cannot be understood without the humanities because people are complex creatures that cannot be reduced to biological processes.

Although personalists opposed the absolutization of science, they did not oppose science as a whole. They were attempting to overcome the tendency to regard the scientific method of knowing and its understanding of humans and reality as the only correct knowledge. Personalists also resisted a tendency favouring the utilitarian view that everything must be reasonably practical and provide a profit.

The great problem of our modern age is that almost everything is designed for satisfying that main criterion of utility. At an ordinary level, this represents comfort, welfare, entertainment, convenience, and the satisfaction of desires. People of “higher status” are attracted not only by wealth, but also by power. If these requirements are met, then no other aspirations are motivating. Pragmatically oriented people are not interested in happiness of the others. Utility for its own sake has turned into a romantic plan for another world reconstruction accompanied by plenty of impulsive actions and bloodied victims. Certainly, dreams of a better future and peaceful coexistence among people are fine and the utopian nature of such dreams does not mean that we cannot accept them as a model. We should always imagine the result by thinking about what we are striving for, what we are reaching for, and what we are trying to achieve. However, it is very important to evaluate such goals and ideas strictly and cautiously; they should not be cultivated and declared as the only true ideals. If we do not blindly follow dogmas and avoid fanaticism, it will help people to improve their lives, to be inspired by great ideas, but not to be use violence for implementing them.

While recounting the origins of personalism, Burgos pays attention to existentialism and mentions Søren Kierkegaard who is considered as one of its influential precursors. Before Kierkegaard, there also was Blaise Pascal, who influenced existentialism, and it is not fair to ignore him. The history of personalism is quite rich and it is appropriate for this author to highlight the ideas of principle thinkers who can also be considered as Personalists. Mentioning Mounier as one of the

⁷¹ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 4.

most influential personalists, the author tells us that he had a positive perspective on technology.⁷² But I would not say that Mounier was optimistic about technology since he well understood how technology is an instrument and, thus, any consequences of using it would depend on who uses it and how it is used. He wrote that if people allowed technology to dominate life by itself, we would immediately be led to complacency (comfort), a loss of independence (rigid centralization), and disunity (specialization), that many complications would be introduced into our lives (civilization), and finally, it would lead to alienation.⁷³ So, there is a danger of "enslaving" a person by technological progress and all kinds of technical means. We can see modern mass-media as an example of thoughtlessly using advanced technologies.

Juan Manuel Burgos rightly notes that there is no common goal to encompass all the members of this philosophical tradition. He does provide a list of countries that have "generated" these prominent representatives of personalism.⁷⁴ For my part, I would like to say a few words about the Russian personalist Nikolai Berdyaev who was mentioned several times by the author. Engagement has been identified in this essay as one of the most important Personalist ideas. It is closely related to the development of the creative nature of an individual, especially through an engagement in the arts. Here, we can find similarities between French and Russian personalists. The Russian personalist and Christian thinker Nikolay Berdyaev held that creation is the road towards an individual's freedom and the blossoming of a true spiritual self.⁷⁵ In accordance with the analogy of the human-creator, an individual, who creates, at the same time attains the role of the original creator (God). Any sincere act of creation can be compared with the creation of our world. Since God has absolute freedom in this world, humans who become closer to God get closer to their own freedom. So, according to Berdyaev, acts of creativity lead to more freedom for an individual. Certainly, a creative and artistic activity brings pleasure and satisfaction. The more creative and self-realized a person can be in a career, the freer and happier she would be in general, for example. There is an understanding of a person (personality) in the Russian Christian tradition, which is grounded in conceiving of the human being after the image and likeness of God as a Holy Trinity. In this long-standing Russian tradition, philosophical ideas about persons operated within that religious worldview.

According to Berdyaev, any profession may be creative by opening a person's potentials and skills. So, there is no necessity for young people to get the ideal diploma or be an exemplary scholar just to attain social status. If someone feels that he or she has found an activity which satisfies his or her own heart, then one should go with that opportunity. There is not only one way to open one's inner creativity, to find the creative self, because every person can display their own special talents in some field or another. Education should help every person through this difficult task of finding an individual path. Both a person and society (including the state) should be principally interested in the development of personhood and the disclosure of the best essential features of a person. This is an important task for any person and for her teachers, and ultimately, to the surroundings and society. The fruits of human activity and creativity are necessary for a person to live a full and complete life, and society also needs these goods. It turns out that this is a mutually beneficial process.

In our society, an employed person often perceives oneself as a thing that should be "rented". If her qualities are not attractive enough for the market, she loses confidence and feels disposable. Even the term "labour market" itself equates a person and her capacity to work to a

⁷² Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 77.

⁷³ Mounier, *The Personalist Manifesto*, p. 73.

⁷⁴ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ Nikolai Berdyaev. (1994). *Философия свободного духа* [The Philosophy of Free Spirit]

commodity for sale. Personalists criticized their contemporary society in which the possession of material goods was placed above the spiritual development of the individual. These factors of a market-driven society show us different manifestations of alienation, which were noticed by many philosophers and psychologists of the 20th century.

4. Personalism, ideologies and propaganda

In his book, Juan Manuel Burgos raises an important question: is personalism a philosophy, an ideology, a movement, or just a doctrine? Today, we can observe that personalism is not an accomplished and finalized philosophy. This is one of the reasons why it is not so widespread and well-known even in the broader discipline of philosophy. It combines elements of a social movement, intellectual action, and, of course, philosophy. Another important question is whether personalism is an ideology. Important personalist thinkers, such as Jacques Maritain and Jean Lacroix, criticized this assumption. According to them, personalism is not an ideology and cannot even become such a thing. Yet, at the same time, in our world today, most ideas could be converted into an ideology, if those ideas were found to be useful. This does not mean that personalism is an ideology, but it could be applied and considered that way. Of course, there are positive and negative aspects to this. On the one hand, personalism is based on positive ideas such as humanism, defending the dignity of the person, critical thinking, human freedom, and Christian values (as listed by Burgos). We cannot say that these values are harmful or negative if people start to share them and strive for them. It is obvious that governments use mass-media, internet, movies, books, and, of course, education, to promote preferred ideas. So, how could it be wrong if people have the same sort of opportunity to learn more about humanistic values? If those values were considered and presented as a truly normative standard for action in life (and not merely in words), that reception would help to spread the main personalist ideas.

Mass media has a huge set of tools for information transmission, including endless staff to receive and process information, a bright and entertaining form of presentation, opportunities to share information remotely, and many more simultaneous functions. Mass media can surely be used as a tool for educating and enlightening people. Broadening intellectual horizons online on the internet, along with educational TV and radio programming, offers greater accessibility than the route of obtaining a professional education. However, at the same time, it has its weaknesses because mass media does not use methods of teaching. This is because it lacks sufficient knowledge, skills, and abilities in the field of pedagogy. In addition, the information given by a teacher is typically verified first, and, as an academic, a teacher tries to convey emotionally neutral information to listeners. By contrast, mass media usually resorts to adding emotional colouring to the information provided.

On the other hand, if we are talking about ideology, we know that there are some special methods (including propaganda), that are used to spread ideological ideas. Here, those methods try to avoid any judgment from critical thinking, as we have already mentioned, and they also violate or attempt to bias the human freedom of choice. To succeed, any ideology needs the peoples' support, rather than any analysis and freedom of thought. Hence, transforming personalism into an ideology would diminish its philosophical component and would go against its basic tenets and principles. Philosophy should not be transformed into ideology to maintain its core and independence.

5. Conclusion

In the section “Concepts, Definitions, and Clarifications”. Burgos informs us about key characteristics of the terms “personalism” and “personalist” philosophy that were formed in the 20th century.⁷⁶ He also reflects on three dimensions of the person: the somatic, the psychological, and the spiritual.⁷⁷ Here the author refers to Karol Wojtyła and Viktor Frankl, and writes about body and soul, and the theme of personal embodiment in two genders (male or female). We must admit that today’s realities of life, with regard to gender, we no longer need to talk about limiting ourselves within that binary of a male/female system. Looking beyond that system, as we now can see that a person may not feel sure about one’s own gender or that a person may refuse to identify with one gender.

This example illustrates another important point, specifically, that personalism should consider all the personal and social changes that happen in life. As personalism upholds the person as its basic value and focal point, these changes must be noticed and considered for personalist philosophy to remain lively and relevant. That flexibility does not mean that there is no stable foundation to personalism, in which its principles are key points able to address the changes and needs of one’s time. The basic ideas of personalism must remain the same, as discussed by Burgos (Chapter 4). Therefore, this timeliness is about modifying the view of a person with the consequence of gaining a new understanding of a person as one’s self. Society should change to increase freedom in people’s lives and historical progress displays that increase to us. According to that trend, a person obtains more freedom for learning and understanding oneself. That is why we can ask more questions that should be considered by modern philosophy, including personalist philosophy.

Another important point here is religion. Traditionally, personalism is Christian or Judeo-Christian humanism.⁷⁸ This history raises the question whether it is possible to “extend” personalism towards an atheist humanism (Burgos, 2.1.3: “Personalism and Humanism”) or towards Buddhist, Muslim, or other sorts of religious humanism. This is also a question about origins, traditions, and further possibilities of development for personalism. I cannot see serious obstacles that might prevent this widening of personalism. Christian and Judeo-Christian traditions are common to European culture where personalist philosophy itself arose. At the same time, our globalizing and changing world could bring new influences and philosophical ideas that might also have the same basic humanistic ideas but may differ in their religious approach. Overall, religion itself should not become a stumbling block to bringing together people who share personalist views. Christianity itself teaches that a person should accept other people, to never condemn and judge them, and to try to look positively on the other and to regard them as “brothers” and “sisters”. Christian ethics promotes an engagement with human society, emphasizing love, loyalty, and compassion.

Burgos’s important and timely book reminds us about key points of personalism and its main representatives. It also raises questions, which are still highly relevant ever since the beginning and middle of the 20th century. These questions seem even more important today (questions such as: What is person? Who might be considered as a person? What is a person’s freedom and limitations? How can we defend human dignity? How can people become engaged in their lives and the life of society? How can one resist alienation? and many further issues connected with valuing persons and personhood). Discussing those questions in the personalist manner, and bringing up this discussion

⁷⁶ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 194.

⁷⁷ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 224.

⁷⁸ Burgos, *An Introduction*, p. 196.

beyond narrow bounds, would help to increase interest in the personalist philosophy and personalist ideas.

Juan Manuel Burgos, Response to Diana Prokofyeva

Diana Prokofyeva's comments reflect the author's sensitivity and balance and provide the reader with a good group of interesting considerations that complete the content of a book that, due to its own configuration, is inevitably incomplete. It is always possible to dedicate more time and space to a certain author, to a particularly congenial current, or to a subject that is not sufficiently treated. In this sense, I find particularly suggestive Diana Prokofyeva's contributions on the Russian personalist Berdyaev or her accurate considerations on technique, highlighting not only its positive aspects, but also its negative aspects, which I barely mention in *An Introduction*, but which are well present in Mounier or in Gabriel Marcel.

I also agree with Diana Prokofyeva when she points out that personalism should not necessarily be linked to a religion but open to any perspective of the human. This is, in fact, my position and, therefore, I almost never speak of Christian or Judeo-Christian personalism, but simply of personalism⁷⁹. This openness, however, should not prevent us from accepting and recognizing that, as a matter of fact, personalism has emerged on Judeo-Christian soil, and, more specifically, a Christian soil. This is a fact that is certainly not accidental, but generated by the vision of man that this religion possesses. But I completely agree that the awareness of this origin, very present in Russian culture, as she herself points out, does not imply, and should not imply that a rigid connection is established between personalism and Judeo-Christian religion that would prevent access to those who follow another religion or none. Personalism is, mainly, a proposal about *persons*. And, therefore, it must be open to all people and the best way to achieve it is to present it as a philosophical proposal, so that anyone, regardless of the religion they profess, can assess what personalism thinks and affirms.

The mental openness of personalism and personalists must also imply openness to new trends and currents that continually arise because history does not stop. New problems and new scenarios unfold before our eyes, like the waves of the sea, which never stop or run out. And personalism must face them without remaining locked in bounded, safe and known terrain. Now, facing changes does not necessarily mean assuming or assenting to them since not all change is necessarily positive, a point that leads me to a first discrepancy with Diana Prokofyeva on the topic of gender. To properly analyse this difficult issue, it is essential to, it seems to me that a clear distinction must be made between gender theory and gender ideology or Queer theory (Judith Butler). The former maintains the importance of culture in determining the experience of sexuality, a valuable contribution that has produced a great deal of interesting research in the last decades. But the question changes in a remarkable way for Queer theory, according to which, the human being could construct, as he/she wishes, his/her own sexuality. To begin with, I don't think this is possible since there are two primary sexual identities defined by biology and personal structure, male and female. The family, life and society are built on them. And, therefore, they are the central sexual identities. This is what classical personalists such as Edith Stein, Karol Wojtyła or Julián Marías have also thought, differentiating between man and woman, not on a whim, but because that is what universal experience shows us. If some people want to identify themselves sexually in a peculiar way that would be placed in the middle of both, they have the right to do so, but it should not affect the essential order of society, which is and must be heterosexual, because it is the most suitable for people and the only one capable of generating life. And this, leaving aside, that this intermediate construction is possible, and not just an unattainable desire, since the biological sexual configuration,

⁷⁹ See my comment on Seifert about this topic.

which affects the entire personal structure, is in every human cell. Hence, for example, the serious physical and psychological problems that affect trans-people. It is, in any case, a complex issue that requires further development. Here I only want to point out that it is problematic, that it is far from the postulates of the classical personalists. And, finally, that it should not be accepted simply because it is the dominant position, although I understand that this is not a motive that affects Prokofyeva.

Finally, I do not want to avoid the comment in which Diana Prokofyeva seems to distinguish between Marx's theoretical and original Marxism (which, it is true, I present in my book in a simplified way) and real Marxism applied in societies. The latter, argues Prokofyeva, is ethically negative since the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes, almost always, the dictatorship of a party (as Gramsci himself recognized), but this result would not necessarily affect original Marxism, which would deserve, according to Prokofyeva, if I am not wrong, a much better evaluation. I can understand that Prokofyeva being Russian and, being true at the same time, that Marxism arises in part from the desire to achieve social justice in the face of savage capitalism, an attempt is made to justify this philosophy. But this position has to face a big problem: the results of the application of Marxism to the real world have *always* been negative, which means that there is something intrinsically wrong with it, and not only in its application. Many place this intrinsic defect in Marxist anthropology, materialistic and atheistic, which not only is against violence but, at the contrary, postulates it -class struggle- as the best way to solve problems. This implies that Marxism does not respect human dignity because it has no qualms about sacrificing as many lives as necessary to achieve its goals. So, it is not surprising that its application has always generated dictatorships and massacres of millions of people. For these reasons, and agreeing with Prokofyeva that the presentation of Marxism in *An Introduction* is not developed, I do not hesitate to maintain my opinion on the topic.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ For a deeper analysis of Marxist ideology see Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism* and Karol Wojtyła writing like John Paul II in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus* (nn. 13, 25, 27, 29, 41).