

## 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 personalism<sup>79</sup>. 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,

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<sup>79</sup> 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 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.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> 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).