

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

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 Habbel.

thinkers on free will. This contribution is the position that free will includes the capacity to give an 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 Habbel, 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.