

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".

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

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 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.