

this discourse, Hewitt acknowledges in the fifth chapter of this book the failure of Marxist movements to make redemption for the past victims of societal exploitation and suffering; and he highlights the capacity of Christian eschatology to serve the proper redemption for those who suffer from injustices and suffering. Thus, this book, at its core, recognizes the factual and evident points that Marx's assessment of society provides, including its role in reshaping the societal framework; and at the same time seeks the limitation of Marx's doctrines which can be fulfilled by Christian eschatology through its promise of the afterlife. It shows how Christian eschatology becomes completion rather than opposition to the materialist movement presented by Marx – it becomes the completion of Marx's emancipatory project.

At the end of this book, what Hewitt leaves to the readers is a hope that recognizes the betterment and constant critique of society, but in its most profound sense, a hope that is fulfilled in the afterlife – an afterlife that acknowledges the exploitation of humanity and not an afterlife that ignores the suffering of society. Hence, Simon Hewitt's "Life after Death after Marx" is a foundational book that opens new discourse among Christian theologians and Marxist scholars. It challenges the prevalent understanding of the two opposing movements to open an area of dialogue which will lead to a reconciliation of Marx's goal of liberating humanity from alienation and suffering and Christian eschatology's claim that human fulfillment takes place in the afterlife.

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Burgos, Juan Manuel. *Personalism and Metaphysics: Is Personalism a First Philosophy?* Wilmington, Delaware: Vernon Press, 2023. pp. 114. ISBN-13: 978-1648897177.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/3010pslxi186br4>

Metaphysics is known as the first philosophy according to Aristotle. The primacy of being has provided the stability of concepts and logic from which all philosophising proceeds. Modern Philosophers have attempted to challenge this as a form of rigidity and dryness, and hence the shift from the search for truth to the search for meaning. While this has led to an important appreciation of irreducible subjectivity, the shift from metaphysics (what is there) to epistemology (what can be known) has been critiqued for introducing instability, as the foundation is ultimately subjective and perspectival. We see this from Descartes onwards until it has been rectified, to an extent by phenomenology and the concept of intentionality. Nevertheless, the hostility or scepticism towards traditional metaphysics has never truly abated, and many thinkers have sought to move from

the so-called ontotheological nature of being and move to the subjectivity of Being (*sein*) and becoming. Most of these have produced equally radical results from Sartre's existence precedes essence or the *homo faber* of Feuerbach. But not all need to be this radical and subjectivist. That is where Juan Manuel Burgos comes in by making the case for personalism as the first philosophy in his latest book titled: *Personalism and Metaphysics: Is Personalism a First Philosophy?*

Juan Manuel Burgos, a professor at the Universidad Villanueva in Spain, is a leading figure in the school of European realist personalism. His intellectual project for several decades has been the systematic development of *Integral Personalism*, a philosophical framework that seeks to understand the person as a unified whole—unique, repeatable, and possessing a subjectivity that constitutes them as a person. As Burgos himself notes, his work is based on the anthropology of Karol Wojtyla as expressed in *Person and Action*, and the contribution of the author of these pages (p. vii). While other works that move away from traditional metaphysics, Burgos remains firmly in the realist tradition, with a method he calls the *integral philosophical keys* that allows personalism to stand on its own as a rigorous science rather than a mere subset of other disciplines.

Burgos' central argument is a radical and rather divisive one, especially for a subscriber to traditional metaphysics: personalism should be regarded as a *first philosophy* in anthropology (pp. 97-99). Burgos challenges the traditional realist view that metaphysics is the *most radical area of knowledge* upon which all others, including anthropology, must structurally depend. He identifies several fundamental premises that underpin his critique of the *status quo*. I would like to point to a few key ones.

First, Burgos questions whether universal aspects of everything real actually exist. He argues that attempting to find a least common multiple for entities as diverse as a rock, an amoeba, and a person leads to a level of vagueness that is incompatible with scientific precision (pp. 51-55). In this regard, he also claims that Aristotelian categories (substance, accident, etc.) exhibit anthropological deficiencies. Burgos argues these were conceived for things and thus darken and deform the specifically human reality of interiority, freedom, and subjectivity (pp. 38-44). Therefore, Burgos maintains that because the majority of humanity does not think in abstract universal categories, philosophy should instead start from the concrete person. He proposes personalistic categories (such as heart, subjectivity, and freedom) elaborated exclusively for human beings.

Burgos frames his argument within the context of a sectorial analysis of reality. He proposes moving away from a linear metaphysical cascade—where

one starts with the general concept of *ens* and adds determinants until reaching the person—and toward a knowledge network atom. In this model, sciences like anthropology and ethics are interdependent but epistemologically independent from metaphysics in their own spheres. His primary methodology is the analysis of Integral Experience, which he defines as the original source in which everything real is given. This experience is both sensory and intellectual, providing direct access to the person without the need for metaphysical mediation. Through a process of induction (as described by Wojtyła), the mind captures units of meaning from lived experience to construct a critical comprehension of the person.

While Burgos presents a well-researched and comprehensive argument, his claim that Wojtyła was not a Thomist or that personalism must be first philosophy necessitates some important caveats. Readers of Karol Wojtyła's works will recognise the distinction he made between the *cosmological* and *personalist* views of man in his essay *Subjectivity and the Irreducibility in Man*. These are complementary, not mutually exclusive, for Wojtyła. The cosmological view presents an objective view of man, preventing him from being reduced to pure subjectivity. Likewise, the personalist view highlights his richness and irreducibility as a subject, preventing his reduction to a mere object in the world, which the cosmological view tends to do inasmuch as it makes important distinctions and nuances. Nevertheless, Wojtyła maintains that the cosmological view and, therefore, metaphysics remain as the foundation of any phenomenological method. This can be seen in his *Habilitationsschrift* on Max Scheler, in which Wojtyła expresses the inadequacy of Scheler in building a Christian Ethics despite the usefulness of his phenomenological method. The cosmological-personalist distinction can be seen throughout his works, such as *Love and Responsibility*, where he makes a metaphysical, psychological, and ethical analysis of love. Moreover, the original English translation of *Osoba i czyn* by Ana Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, known as *The Acting Person*, has been critiqued for removing all references to St. Thomas Aquinas, thereby diluting the metaphysical underpinnings of the work. *Ergo*, scholars such as Rev. Grzegorz Holub, Adrian Reimers and Grzegorz Ignatik have affirmed that Wojtyła remains firmly grounded in the philosophy of being (metaphysics).

Burgos's attempt to establish personalism as self-sufficient runs the risk of falling into the same phenomenological trap of presupposing existence as mere givenness. If one presupposes the person without an absolute backstop in the metaphysics of being, the foundation may ultimately remain subjective. This is perhaps why thinkers like Edith Stein insisted on a return to God and objective

ontology to avoid the limitations of pure phenomenology—a voice notably missing in Burgos’s dialogue.

Furthermore, Burgos’s claim is best understood not as a claim to ultimacy in the absolute sense, but as a first in its sector. Much like Levinas asserted ethics as first philosophy, Burgos asserts anthropology as first in the realm of the human. However, as the realist tradition maintains, one cannot deny the primacy of being without eventually relegating all meaning to subjectivism. Burgos admits that metaphysics can provide an auxiliary general vision of the cosmos, but he insists it cannot modify the structure of anthropology determined by direct experience. It would have been beneficial had there been more engagement with a Thomist and a Thomistic scholar of Karol Wojtyła to better refine this important and timely work.

In conclusion, *Personalism and Metaphysics* makes a significant contribution by daring to pose new perspectives on the relationship between ontology and anthropology. Its most successful achievement is providing a rigorous grammar for articulating personal structures like self-determination and affectivity that traditional Scholasticism often left in the shadows.

However, the book should be read through the specific lens of an anthropological point of view rather than a total replacement of the metaphysical backstop. Burgos successfully demonstrates that anthropology does not require permission from any other science to validate its specific contents. Yet, for those who believe that the person is fundamentally an *ens* participating in the *Ipsum Esse*, metaphysics remains the ultimate stabilizer. While Burgos’s work is a fascinating and in-depth study, his *Integral Personalism* is perhaps more accurately viewed as a necessary enrichment of the realist tradition rather than its total dethronement. For a student of philosophy, this book is an essential invitation to look beyond dry categories and confront the overwhelming factual phenomenon of the human person directly.

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Braver, Lee. *Heidegger on Thinking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024. pp. 61. ISSN 2976-5668.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997/3011pslxi186br5>

This work by Lee Braver is part of the *Cambridge Elements: The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*, which focuses on presenting Heidegger’s thinking of thinking. In this brief work, Braver puts flavor to Heidegger’s endeavor