

# On solitude, subjectivity, and substantiality. Response to Juan Manuel Burgos

*Sobre la soledad, la subjetividad y la substancialidad.  
Respuesta a Juan Manuel Burgos*

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**Abstract:** In his paper, “El yo como raíz ontológica de la persona. Reflexiones a partir de John F. Crosby”, *Quién* 6 (2017), Burgos, amidst much fundamental agreement with my work in personalism, raises some challenging objections to me. These concern mainly my use of the term “incommunicability” and my affirmation of “persons as substances”. I respond to these objections, but only after exploring an area of disagreement that Burgos did not mention: he thinks that he and I are of one mind on the “solitude” of the human person, but I ask whether on this subject he unwittingly inclines to an individualism that I want to avoid.

**Keywords:** person, incommunicability, self, subjectivity, Burgos.

**Resumen:** En su artículo, “El yo como raíz ontológica de la persona. Reflexiones a partir de John F. Crosby”, *Quién* 6 (2017), Burgos, en medio de un acuerdo fundamental con mi trabajo sobre el personalismo, me plantea algunas objeciones desafiantes. Estas se refieren principalmente al uso que hago del término “incomunicabilidad” y a mi afirmación de las “personas como sustancias”. Respondo a estas objeciones, pero solo después de explorar un área de desacuerdo que Burgos no mencionó: él piensa que él y yo somos conscientes de la “soledad” de la persona humana, pero le pregunto si, en este tema, se inclina involuntariamente a un individualismo que yo quiero evitar.

**Palabras clave:** persona, incomunicabilidad, yo, subjetividad, Burgos.

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I thank Juan-Manuel Burgos for his thoughtful paper on my book, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*. He pays me the highest possible compliment by examining my work so carefully. I am glad to learn that he and I agree on most issues of personalist philosophy, and I am also glad to be challenged by him on some points. But before I face his challenges, let me first say something about one point of disagreement that may have escaped Burgos.

## 1. The danger of individualism

In my book I speak of the “selfhood and solitude” of the human person, and Burgos agrees with what I say. In his article he gives particular attention to the solitude of the human person, especially in the place where, speaking of the *autopertenencia* of the person, he picks out the moment of *autocentramiento*, of which he says in a remarkable passage:

“In some sense we exist only for ourselves, independently of the rest of the world. We have the capacity to experience ourselves as alone in the universe, rooted only in our personal selfhood. ... I am alone with myself. This expression may seem egocentric, but it need not be. It rather points to the fact that, given my belonging to myself, I am closed off against the rest of the world... In the measure in which I am the lord of myself, I am a radical center into which nothing can come from the outside. I am a fortress, a castle in which I alone decide whether or not to lower the drawbridge so as to grant access to those who are outside. But however, I do it, however much I fill in the moat and destroy the bulwarks, no one will really ever succeed in entering into the interior of the castle; they will always remain outside, since my belonging to myself structurally blocks access to my interiority. Only I dispose over myself. The castle tower is always closed; it is inaccessible and incommunicable. I am the only resident and as a result I live in an ultimate solitude”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. BURGOS, “El yo como raíz ontológica de la persona. Reflexiones a partir de John Crosby” en *Quién. Revista de filosofía personalista*, 6, (2017), p. 47. My translation. The expression “ultimate solitude” is taken from Duns Scotus. Here is the passage in Spanish: “Existimos, de algún modo, solo para nosotros mismos, independientemente del resto del mundo. Tenemos la capacidad de sentirnos solos en el universo, radicados tan solo en nuestra mismidad personal. ... Yo solo conmigo. La expresión puede aparacer egocéntrica, pero no lo es necesariamente. Apunta a la *clausura* frente al resto del mundo que se aloja en la autopertenencia... En la medida en que yo soy el dueño de mí mismo, soy un centro radical en el que nadie puede intervenir más que desde fuera. Soy una fortaleza, un castillo en el que solo yo decido si bajo o no el puente levadizo para permitir el acceso a los que están fuera. Pero, aunque lo haga, aunque rellene el foso y destruya los baluartes, en realidad nunca nadie va a conseguir entrar realmente en el interior del castillo; siempre estarán fuera, porque la autopertenencia impide estructuralmente el acceso radical a la interioridad. Solo yo dispongo de mí mismo. La torre del homenaje siempre estará cerrada;

I must say that I am not entirely satisfied with this way of formulating the solitude of the person. Despite much agreement between me and Burgos regarding on this subject, there is perhaps also a certain point of unsuspected disagreement here. This point is worth exploring.

It is of course true that another person can never be present to me as I am to myself. That other would have *to be* me to be present to me as I am to myself. In my self-presence I live from within the fact that I am myself and no other. In this sense I am inaccessible to the other, who always remains outside of my self-presence. And what holds for self-presence holds as well for self-determination; only I can accept or reject my being. I have a “privileged access” to myself that only I can have and no other can have. It follows that there is a certain inescapable solitude at the center of my personal existence.

One might ask: but what about empathy? Don't I enter by empathy into the experiencing of another? Doesn't another enter by empathy into my experiencing? Yes, of course; but the empathetic sharing in the subjectivity of another leaves intact the subject of empathy and the recipient of empathy as two distinct persons; in no way does empathetic sharing call for the two persons to blend into one person. Even in the most intimate empathy each person lives in his or her own self-presence, hence preserving his or her personal solitude.

Why, then, am I dissatisfied by this affirmation by Burgos of the solitude of the person? Look at his analogy with the drawbridge. Burgos seems to be saying here that I come out of myself and enter into contact with another only in virtue of a conscious act of self-disclosure. This seems to imply that, prior to the act of lifting the drawbridge and letting the other into the castle, I exist in a state of full belonging to myself; in letting the other into the castle I just exercise my already established belonging to myself. But this conception is open to the objection that I come to myself as person only *in* the encounter with others and not *prior* to them. It is in being seen by others, in feeling shame in their presence, in being spoken to by them, in being loved by them, that I quicken into life as a self-present person. Feral children exist in a shocking state of deprivation and degradation just because they were, in an early stage of development, neither seen nor addressed by any human other. Thus, the solitude of the person, which is based on the fact that only I can be present to myself, that only I can accept or reject myself, has an intersub-

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es inaccessible, indisponible, incomunicable. Yo soy el único habitante y, por eso, vivo en *ultima solitudo*”.

jective structure. I am able to accept myself, not just because I belong to myself, but also because another has first accepted me. If from earliest childhood I am surrounded by people who treat me as worthless, I am crippled in my ability to accept myself; the mere fact that I am a person who belongs to himself does not suffice to let me accept myself. It is as if the person inside the castle who opens the drawbridge has the strength to do this only because someone is helping him from outside the castle.

Of course, I do not mean that this help takes the form of increasing the lifting power of the person in the castle, as if lifting the drawbridge requires the strength not of one but of two strong men. No, the man in the castle lifts the drawbridge all by himself, but he is empowered by another to lift drawbridges at all, and that is what gives us an analogy to the intersubjective structure of personal solitude. Consider the case of speaking in a language. You are empowered to speak by all those who have spoken to you since you were born. Had no one ever spoken to you, you would not be able to speak now. But when you now speak, it is you who speak and no one else; those from whom you learned the language do not help you form your words when you speak, like someone who supplies you with words when you speak a language that you hardly know. Those who spoke to you have empowered you to speak at all, putting you in a position to speak on your own, but they do not enter in to your concrete activity of saying this or that. We should think about the intersubjective dimension of personal solitude in terms of an analogous empowerment through others<sup>2</sup>.

If we think about personal solitude without taking account of this intersubjective dimension, then our personalism runs the risk of being corrupted by individualism. We place an unjustified dimension of autonomy into the human person.

I do not think that I did justice in *The Selfhood of the Human Person* to this intersubjective dimension of personal solitude. So, I am not only disagreeing somewhat with Prof. Burgos but also with my earlier self. The revision of my position that is needed does not so much require me to withdraw what I said in that book about the solitude of the human person, but it does require me to insert all that I said in to another dimension of existence, the dimension of intersubjectivity, and to give more attention to a certain intertwining of self and other at the heart of personal solitude<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction between a co-cause and an empowering cause is made in a convincing way by Romano Guardini in his *Glaubenserkenntnis*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 1963, in the chapter entitled "Gottes Walten und die Freiheit des Menschen."

<sup>3</sup> One of the personalists who influenced me in this direction is Metropolitan John Zizioulas. See his "A Patristic Reading of Dietrich von Hildebrand's *The Nature of Love*," in

## 2. Incommunicability

I turn now to the critical questions that Burgos puts to me, and first to the question of retaining the term “incommunicability”. If I read him rightly he gives three reasons why we should drop this term within the setting of personalist philosophy. First, there is the semantic problem that the term suggests to the reader ‘some kind of impediment to communication’, whereas the personalist meaning of the term has nothing to do with this problem. Second, the term is negative, helping us only to say what personal existence is not; it should be replaced with a term that expresses positively what personal existence is. Third, incommunicability is found in all individual beings and not just in persons, hence it fails to capture what is proper to persons and to distinguish them from all non-persons. Burgos does not deny that incommunicability can be truly predicated of persons, but he thinks we would do better to replace it with terms that are positive and that capture what is specifically personal.

*Is the term “incommunicability” misleading?*

The first objection is the least weighty, as Burgos realizes. I would just observe that it happens all the time that terms having an everyday meaning are given a special philosophical meaning. Take the term “intentional”, which in everyday usage means one thing (“was the killing intentional or only inadvertent?”) and in the setting of the phenomenological theory of “intentionality” means something entirely different. The proximity of the philosophical term to the everyday term is surely no good reason to abandon the former; it is just a good reason to warn the reader not to conflate the two meanings.

*Is the term “incommunicability” too negative?*

Much weightier is the second objection. It is true that the verbal form of the word “incommunicability” is negative: in-communicability, which means ‘not communicable’, that is, not common to many. The objection rests on the assumption that we want to know what personal being is, not what it is not, and that our personalist language is much more revealing of the person when it expresses positive and not negative meaning content.

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*American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* no. 91/4, 2017, pp. 553-566. See also my response to him: “Is Love a Value-Response? Dietrich von Hildebrand and John Zizioulas in Dialogue,” in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, no. 15, 2015; pp. 457-70. Zizioulas certainly merits a place in the narrative that Burgos gives us of 20<sup>th</sup> century personalism. Cfr. J. M. BURGOS, *An introduction to personalism*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2018.

Rudolf Otto has given a memorable response to this objection as it comes up in the philosophy of religion. He points out that when mystics use negative language, they are often expressing religious experience that is full of the most positive content. He warns against letting their negative language obscure the abundant positive content of their experience<sup>4</sup>. If we apply Otto's insight to our question about the term "incommunicability", we are led to ask whether in this term too, as in the expressions of the mystics<sup>5</sup>, positive and negative are not closely interwoven. It is not difficult to answer this question by formulating the entirely positive meaning that the term incommunicable typically has for us: to call a being "incommunicable" is to say that 'it is gathered into itself as something of its own and is set off against everything else'. We may amplify this affirmation with certain negatives, as when we say that an incommunicable being is 'itself *and is not another*'. The negative "is not another" is obviously embedded in the affirmation of "being something of its own" and just serves to bring this affirmation into focus.

This dialectical interplay of positive and negative meaning content is equally found in the terms that Burgos finds to be sufficiently positive. Consider his *autopertenencia*, which we could translate as 'belonging to

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<sup>4</sup> R. OTTO, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Who does not feel the exalted sound of these words and the 'Dionysiac' element of transport and fervor in them? It is instructive that in such phrases as these, in which consciousness would fain put its highest consummation into words, 'all images fall away' and the mind turns from them to grasp expressions that are purely negative. And it is still more instructive that in reading and hearing such words their merely negative character simply is not noticed; that we can let whole chains of such negations enrapture, even intoxicate us, and that entire hymns—and deeply impressive hymns—have been composed, in which there is really nothing positive at all" (p. 34). See the probing discussion by Max Scheler of this passage of Otto: Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, Hamden CT, Archon Books, 1972, pp. 169-172. Among other things Scheler observes: "Negative theology' has also been a frequent victim of the misunderstanding that it employed negations to define the divine theoretically and not, on the contrary, to prevent its being prematurely defined in rational terms *before* its essence had been grasped" (p. 171). Otto, too, is one of those thinkers who certainly merits a place in the narrative of 20<sup>th</sup> century personalism that Burgos has sketched out. Cfr. J. M. BURGOS, *An introduction to personalism*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> One might object that the mystics have a legitimate need of negative language that we, in the setting of this article, do not have, since God is hidden from us whereas the human person is well known to us from within. But this misses the point. What I want to show in the case of the mystics is a use of negative language that *coheres with experiencing the object spoken of as entirely positive*; this should help us understand that the negative language used by personalists can cohere with an entirely positive intuition about the human person. The thought of Scheler, as of all the phenomenologists, is that whenever we experience an *Urgegebenheit*, that is, a primitive, irreducible datum, we cannot directly utter what we experience, but can only point indirectly at it, and demarcate it from other data by negative statements—though the experience of the *Urgegebenheit* remains something eminently positive, eminently a matter of something that is seen by us.

oneself'. It has indeed a positive meaning content, but cannot be explicated without certain negations, as when one says that "each person belongs to himself *and does not belong to another as property of another, nor does he exist as a mere part or extension of another*". Indeed, it seems to me that there is just as much positive meaning content in the fully explicated term "incommunicability" as in the term *autopertenencia*; and no more negative meaning content in "incommunicability" than in the fully explicated term *autopertenencia*.

Burgos seems to have no difficulty with the negative term "unrepeatable" for characterizing the person: why then would he have any difficulty with the term incommunicable?

*Does the term "incommunicability" fail to capture the proprium of the human person?*

We come to the third and final reason Burgos gives for dropping the term "incommunicability": every real being, not just persons, has something incommunicably its own. Thus, a plant growing in my garden is incommunicably itself and is nothing else. It follows that incommunicable does not capture the *proprium* of personal existence, but only a general ontological structure that persons share with all other real beings. Perhaps Burgos could express his point by saying that incommunicable is a term that is too "cosmological" and too little "personalist".

I quite agree that "incommunicable", when used without any qualification, expresses something that persons share with all non-personal beings; as such the term does not capture what it is that makes a person to be a person. It does not work like terms such as "self-presence" or "subjectivity" or "I" or "being *sui iuris*", all of which express something proper to persons and only to persons. In chapter 2 of *The Selfhood of the Human Person* I am well aware of this breadth of the term "incommunicability". And so, as soon as I bring incommunicability into my discourse on persons in chapter 2, I begin looking for the specific measure of incommunicability that is proper to persons. I begin looking for that in a person in virtue of which he or she has an eminent incommunicability.

And I found it in thinking about this statement by Wojtyła: "The term person has been coined to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within the concept 'individual member of the [human] species,' but that there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in

the manner of his being...”<sup>6</sup>. I interpret Wojtyła as follows: we can take a human being simply as an individual instance of the human kind. Taken this way any human being replaces any other one, since each is modelled on the same form. Even here we find a certain incommunicability, for each instance of human nature is itself and is not another instance, and thus has something of its own. But we find incommunicability of another order altogether when we take a human being as something more than an instance of the human kind, that is, as having a personal identity that can never be found again in any other human being. Here, then, is the special measure of incommunicability proper to persons that we are seeking: persons are unrepeatable in a way in which mere instances are not, hence each person has far more being of his or her own than a mere instance of human nature has.

For Wojtyła this difference in incommunicability has the greatest metaphysical significance, for it is just this greater incommunicability that makes man a person<sup>7</sup>. A human being would not amount to a person if he were nothing more than an instance of the human kind. Only that incommunicability that is manifested to us by unrepeatability is properly personal.

My response to Burgos’ third objection comes to this. We can distinguish incommunicability in the broad sense and incommunicability in the narrow sense: the first is the incommunicability found in all real beings, the second is the incommunicability proper to persons. His objection seems to assume that there is only the first incommunicability. By bringing forth the second incommunicability—the one based on unrepeatability—we defeat his objection. For now, we have the incommunicability that expresses a defining feature of personal being.

I might add that even the broad sense of incommunicability has its use in personalist philosophy. For it is important to recognize that the signature incommunicability of persons is already “prefigured” in sub-personal beings. They, too, each in a different measure, have something of their own. Distinctly personal incommunicability can be thought of as that which results when incommunicability in the broad sense is raised to a higher power and transposed into a new dimension of existence. Per-

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<sup>6</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Love and Responsibility*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 1981, p. 22. In his essay Burgos quotes certain passages in Wojtyła’s *The Acting Person* in which the same thought is expressed.

<sup>7</sup> Wojtyła does not consistently use the term incommunicable in discussing the difference between an instance of the human kind and a person, but the term lends itself to discussing the difference, and this is the way I have used the term.

sonalists go too far when they treat persons as utterly incommensurable with everything else in the universe. They should not overlook the lines of continuity that connect personal and pre-personal beings. They should not overlook the place of persons in the great chain of being.

### 3. Can persons be considered to be substances?

Finally, we come to the issue of “substance”: how can personalists, Burgos asks, speak of the person in terms of substance, as Boethius did? Substance seems to fit objects and not subjects; when we are speaking of persons we should drop substance and should instead use terms like subjectivity, selfhood, self-presence, all of which express what is distinctively personal. If we say that selfhood or subjectivity needs some deeper ontological foundation, and that that foundation can only be a human substance, then we put ourselves in the untenable position of grounding the personal in the non-personal, of grounding what exists as subject in what exists as object.

Here is a first response to the objection: why does substance have to be defined in terms of object? If we think of Aristotelian substance we immediately notice that it centers around the idea of independence in being: “substance” is for Aristotle that which stands in itself, needing nothing else for its existence, being neither a part nor a property of anything else. By this definition of substance, a person counts eminently as a substance; as a being of freedom and self-determination a person is a substance in a far more proper sense than a plant or animal, for these beings do not stand in themselves like a self-determining person does<sup>8</sup>.

It is true, as Burgos says, that “substance” does not distinctly express specifically personal structures in the way in which “selfhood” and “self-presence” do<sup>9</sup>; but it expresses an ontological structure that is exemplified by persons more properly than by non-persons. To call persons substances (in this Aristotelian sense) is entirely true, indeed more true in a way than to call animals substances; it is just not the best way to capture what is distinctively personal.

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<sup>8</sup> Josef Seifert has developed this idea that the person exists as substance in an eminent sense; see his *Essere e persona*, transl. Buttiglione, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 1989, pp. 326-354. He says on 326: “Essere reale, autopossesso, autonomia ed autarchia sono realizzati nell’essere della persona in modo più elevato che nelle sostanze non-personali.”

<sup>9</sup> In a very nuanced examination of the text of Wojtyła’s *The Acting Person*, Burgos speculates that this is the reason why Wojtyła never in that work speaks of the human person as substance (pp. 50-52).

Burgos seems to think that “substance”, since it does not express the personal in the way in which selfhood and self-presence do, must exclude selfhood and self-presence, and hence be predicable only of non-persons. But this does not follow from the logic and meaning of “substance”. Personalist philosophers like von Hildebrand<sup>10</sup> and Scheler<sup>11</sup> speak of human persons as substances without in any way compromising them as persons. Just as we can truly call persons incommunicable, as we saw, even though incommunicable does not explicitly express distinctly personal features, so we can truly call persons substances.

We would indeed fall into a depersonalized conception of the human person if we thought that substance was a more significant predicate of persons than self-presence and selfhood, that is, if we thought that substance was a truly “metaphysical” predicate of persons, and self-presence and selfhood were merely “psychological” predicates of persons<sup>12</sup>, that is, if we thought that substance names the innermost being of the person, and self-presence and selfhood name only a thing of appearance. Burgos would be quite right to protest against this way of prioritizing substance in the philosophical account we give of the human person. He would be quite right to insist that we capture the very being of the person when we speak of it in terms of selfhood, self-presence, subjectivity, etc., and in fact capture it with greater precision and concreteness than when we speak of it in terms of substance. But the mere fact of speaking of persons as substances in no way implies any depreciation of the distinctly personal features of the human person. Just the contrary: if we say that these distinctly personal features yield an eminent substantiality that surpasses all non-personal substances, then we employ the concept of substance in such a way that, far from depreciating the properly personal, in fact shows forth its special dignity.

One of the main tasks for us personalists is to set personalism in relation to the philosophical tradition that we inherit. If we discard the

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<sup>10</sup> D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Die Metaphysik der Gemeinschaft*, Habel Verlag, Regensburg, 1955, Part 1, ch. 1, pp. 17-21.

<sup>11</sup> M. SCHELER, *The Nature of Sympathy*, Hamden CT, Archon Books, 1973, p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of how “metaphysical” can be played off against “psychological” so as to depreciate the distinctly personal structures of the human person, see VON HILDEBRAND, *Ethics*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1972, pp. 28-30. Among other things he says, entirely in accordance with Burgos: “It is of the utmost importance from a metaphysical point of view that we free ourselves from any state of mind in which impersonal beings, impersonal relations, and impersonal principles function as a pattern (*causa exemplaris*) of the higher [personal] sphere. If we do not overcome this approach, we are in danger of failing to grasp the specific nature of such acts, or of falsifying their nature by reducing them to a mere species of movements or tensions, to be found only in the non-personal world” (29).

category of substance as being irrelevant to persons, then we present personalism as involving a fundamental rupture with the tradition. But if we follow Seifert and others in seeing persons as the most perfect substances in the finite world, then our personalism, for all its novelty and originality, is shown to have a certain continuity with the *philosophia perennis*. I think that the reception of our work within the Christian intellectual tradition will be greatly facilitated if we avoid all needless assertion of rupture with that tradition<sup>13</sup>.

Another task for us personalists is, as I just mentioned above, to avoid making persons appear to be incommensurable with all other beings. We have to show the continuity of personal being with the finite beings that “precede” persons in the hierarchy of beings. This we show quite convincingly when we show that the substantiality found in plants and animals is not surpassed altogether by persons but is raised to a higher power in them.

### *Avoiding actualism*

Finally, a word on why in *The Selfhood of the Human Person* I made a point of bringing “substance” into my discourse on persons. I was not aiming to stress the continuity of my personalism with the tradition, or to stress the continuity of persons with plants and animals, but I had a different purpose in mind. When we focus on what is specifically and properly personal in man, and express it by speaking of subjectivity, interiority, self-determination, and the like, we are clearly dealing with forms of conscious life. There arises the temptation to think that a person exhausts his or her whole being in consciousness, and that apart from consciousness he or she disappears from being entirely. I wanted to resist this actualism, as this view is sometimes called, and it seemed to me that the substantiality of the person enabled me to affirm something in the person that is not exhausted by the conscious life of the person. For “substance” is not a “subjective” term like self-presence or interiority, as we were just saying, but seems also to express something rather more “objective” and thus able to survive the intervals in which a person is not conscious.

At the end of his paper Burgos shows himself to be quite sensitive to this problem, and he wants to exclude actualism no less than I do.

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, it is also possible to *understate* the originality of personalism in relation to the tradition, as when one says that the concept of man as person is already in Plato and Aristotle.

He tries to accomplish this without invoking the substantiality of the person; he says “*Cabe distinguir entre autoconsciencia del yo y existencia del yo*” (53). He is saying that the “*existencia del yo*” is irreducible to the “*autoconsciencia del yo*”. But I am aiming at just this irreducibility when I speak of the person as substantial, and I am aiming at nothing more than this. So, it is *prima facie* not clear to me that Burgos and I have any real disagreement here; we seem to say the same thing, one of us saying it with and the other saying it without making use of the concept of “substance”.

But on closer inspection we can perhaps detect a respect in which Burgos’ way of putting the matter is preferable to mine. He is concerned that by speaking of persons in terms of substance we will end up grounding what is distinctly personal in what is impersonal, which makes no sense. This concern is not without some basis; just recall the claim of Locke that one and the same human substance can be inhabited successively by different persons<sup>14</sup>. Locke seems thereby to imply that persons are just superimposed on human substances, and that the substance itself is nothing distinctly personal. We can, of course, try to replace Locke’s notion of substance with a notion that lets substance and person form an indissoluble unity<sup>15</sup>. But Burgos may have a point when he suggests that we would do better to bypass this complex discussion and simply distinguish between the “*existencia del yo*” and the “*autoconsciencia del yo*”.

And yet, and yet... there is still something paradoxical about the “yo” being taken in a way that prescinds from self-presence. I suspect that we have not yet gotten to the bottom of the matter and have yet to find the best argument against actualism. I encourage Prof. Burgos and his collaborators at *Quién* to keep working on this important unfinished task of personalism!

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<sup>14</sup> See JOHN LOCKE, *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 27, section 16.

<sup>15</sup> This is what I try to do in ch. 4 of *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, cit., pp. 138-40.