

# The XIII International Congress of Philosophy

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*East and West met in Mexico City in the "freest Country in the world" to discuss man in his society. As frequently happens in an international gathering of this kind, the delegates represented the two mutually exclusive philosophies of man: the materialistic and the spiritualistic. This is a comprehensive report of the results of the Congress.*

The Thirteenth International Congress of Philosophy was celebrated in Mexico City from September 7 to 14, 1963. It was attended by 800 members from 48 different countries of the world and it was sponsored by three international philosophical societies: The International Federation of Philosophical Societies; the International Institute of Philosophy; and the World Union of the Catholic Philosophical Societies.

Two basic theories became predominant during the six days of congress discussions: *materialism* mainly represented by Russian and Communist delegates and *spiritualism* supported by the majority of congress members.

Spanish, English and French served as official languages, but the fourteen Russian delegates talked in their own language. However, a service of simultaneous translations to the official languages of the Congress operated during the general sessions and other meetings of the Congress.

The activities of the Congress were divided into three phases:

- a) The plenary sessions held in the big auditorium of the Medical Center;
- b) Symposia in the afternoon held in different adjacent auditoria of the same Medical Center;
- c) Free papers read and discussed every afternoon in the Philosophy and Letters Halls of the Humanities Building at University City.

The themes approved by the Organizing Committee to be discussed

during the Plenary Sessions were (1) *The Problem of Man*, and (2) *The Critique of our Epoch*. These themes were recommended by a previous preparatory congress held at the University of Santa Barbara in 1962.

President Lopez Mateos opened the Congress, encouraging the members of the Congress to freely discuss all problems of man and society for the greatest benefit of mankind.

The first plenary session was opened on September 9 under the presidency of Felipe Battaglia, former President of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies. Main speakers were Muñoz Alonso, M. F. Sciacca and G. Marcel.

Spanish philosopher Muñoz, in an oratorical manner and rather obscure language, centered his discussion in the problem of freedom which he defined as the original explanation of man. "Freedom like a compass measures the amplitude of the human personality."

Marcel's paper was on the existentialistic aspect of human dignity. "A genuine encounter of human ideologies is a pulsation of our personality."

**The Structure of Liberty in the Ontological Constitution of Man** was the title of the paper by the Italian Sciacca.

Among the participants of this plenary session we must mention here Jose Bacelar, S.J. from Portugal: "Man is the limit of the corporeal things and when he goes beyond himself he reaches for the Supreme of all."; Brand Blanshard from the U. S. A.: "Person and personality form a complete essence which cannot be separated, either psychologically or ontologically."; Octavio Dirisi from Argentina: "Human existence is a participation in the divine existence. Consequently atheistic existentialism is essentially and necessarily irreligious and immoral."; Diego Perez from Mexico: "The opinion about things rather than the knowledge of things is the real cause of our mental unrest."

The second plenary session was held on September 11 under the presidency of Russian delegate M. B. Mitin. Three outstanding philosophers took the floor: Von Tintelen, J. Zaragüeta and L. de Raeymaeker.

Raeymaeker stressed the increasing tendency of the common man towards the philosophical problems and towards the unity and integration of social groups. The vital problem is to effect this integration through peaceful ways.

German philosopher Rintelen discussed man's problematic existence and human values. Spanish born Juan Zaragüeta blamed the separation of

the biological from the metaphysical sciences as the factor responsible for the disintegration of the human personality. According to him, man is the consciousness of an organism.

During the discussion period, Professor Leroy of France pointed out that the wonderful semantic contact of so many ideologies during the Congress sessions, constitutes an excellent way for the understanding and fulfillment of the human personality.

Franco Lombardi from Rome admitted being an old-fashioned philosopher. In his opinion the problem of man centers on God as the problem of society centers on love. Peter Glassen from Canada blamed philosophers for making logic, the science of reasoning, a puzzle of incomprehensible symbols within the limitations of the human language.

Rumanian Joja rejected both the Aristotelian and the Hegelian definitions of man and exalted the Marxian discovery: "Man becomes man through the process of his work." Dr. Charles W. Kegley from New York discussed different opinions on man's personal survival after death. Dr. Jacobo Hogan from Buenos Aires maintained that the spiritual side of man is probed by the action of his will. "Since man can control the physical forms of matter, he can *a fortiori* control and transform his own internal natures."

Soviet philosopher Constantinov pointed out that since the physical discoveries made by man in the recent years can work against him, the greatest contribution of philosophers and humanists to mankind would be the prevention of war and the preservation of peace.

Dr. Veljko Koran from New York commented on the definition presented by Marx of man as a working animal.

The third plenary session was presided by H. W. Schneider and the main speakers were Miguel Angel Virasoro from Argentina and M. B. Mitin from Russia. Virasoro discussed the bases for a Philosophical Anthropology.

Mitin's pronouncements were received by the public with surprised interest. He insisted that the Marxian theory of man does not exclude the spiritual capacity and the development of human personality towards this aspect. He also contrasted Existentialism and Marxism. While the present philosophy of the West insists on death, agony, guilt, conflicts, etc., the philosophy of the Communist world stimulates life, reform, happiness and prosperity. Mitin was dramatic when he quoted Kant on the condemnation of the belligerent Prussian government—a government that tried to impose eternal peace by converting humanity and the world into a gigantic

graveyard. "Man," Mitin said, "is potentially omnipotent but his creative forces and social environment can block the process of his work. Behind poverty and squalor, Marxism discovered the greatest force of mankind and the most constructive principle of human history."

Chief delegate of the Russian representatives Peter Fedoseyev, Vice President of the Moscow Academy of Sciences, also presented to the public the Marxian philosophy in his "privilege" speech: *Humanism and the Modern World*. The problem of man pivots around the relations that must exist among men, persons, groups, classes, nations and states, he said. He attacked traditional institutions and bourgeois philosophy. "The capitalistic social system is incapable of creating conditions for a comprehensive development of the individual. . . . It is impossible to be a real Communist without waging a struggle for peace and social progress, for human life and prosperity. Communists are undoubtedly the most consistent humanists. Communism is real Humanism." Fedoseyev defined the "cold war" as the utilization of all economic, diplomatic, and political means, economic pressures and threats in order to extend hate and mass hysteria among men.

The Russian delegates brought with them a printed volume in English and Spanish of their reports to the Congress of Mexico. One thousand copies were distributed to the members of the Congress.

Other reports presented by the Russians have the following titles: *Man as an Object of Philosophical Investigation; The Individual and Society; The Concept of Dialectical Contradiction in Quantum Physics; Man and his Alienation; The Dynamism of our Century, Materialistic Dialectics is the Logic of Modern Scientific Development; Dialectic Materialism and the Philosophical Problem of Microcosmos.*

In general, the Russian activities and declarations during the Congress stirred up strong reactions of opposition and criticism. Some delegates claimed that the Russian representatives came to Mexico to attempt a definite political program of Marxian indoctrination. Others accused the Communists of being hypocritical and of contradicting themselves, for, while insisting on Communist freedom and dignity of man, they confessed they could not move alone through the streets of Mexico but must be accompanied by other Russians. A "cold war" between Communist and Western philosophers continued during the extension of the session on September 12.

The fifth plenary session was presided by Dr. T. P. Raju from India and Vera Yamuni from Mexico. Francisco Larroyo from Mexico, President of the organizing committee of the Congress, Dean of the Faculty of Phi-

losophy and Letters of the University of Mexico and elected President of the International Federation of the Philosophical Societies for the next five years, discussed the necessity of inventing a machine to understand human problems and control human conflicts. He favored the national and international plan to elude social anguish. "Planification is a socio-technical complexity. It is the prevision and invention of a collective way of life." He also evaluated the American contribution to culture, the "Americanicity" inspired by a quotation from Hegel: "America is the land of the future. . . . A nostalgic country for all who are disgusted with the historical 'museum' that is Europe." He regretted the years of sorrow following the Second World War which have been vainly counteracted by an increasing world of entertainment as never before existed.

Dr. Herbert Schneider from America was the second speaker. The title of his discussion was *Global Orientation*. He analysed the causes of the Social insecurity, cold war, the anarchy of human goals and confusion of creative interests. He called the U.N. "a world forum" which has helped to develop a critical attitude towards a better understanding of nations. War and neutrality are antiquated realities, but peace may become likewise meaningless in a world where fear is the origin of prudence and collective security.

In line with the theme of the main speeches, several delegates offered diverse suggestions. Among these were Leopoldo Baeza who sponsored a "metaphysics of hope"; Vernon Bourke from St. Louis University (USA) who was elected President of the World Union of Catholic Philosophical Societies, commissioned the present philosophers with the task of composing a universal language for a better understanding of mankind; Carl Cohen who expressed the idea of a relative and subjective concept of democracy; Herbert Feigl, who defended the possibility of a peaceful co-existence between the dialectic materialism and the religious faith. Richard De George from Switzerland and James Dye were opposed both to criticism and to dogmatism. Russian delegate Koursanov pointed out the advantage of a unique philosophy among the Soviet people. Santiago M. Saen said that the best weapon to rule the world, ideas, is in the hands of the philosophers. Dr. Gunther Heyden from East Germany stressed the objectivity of the historical process. "The revolutionary ideas of Marx," he said, "were not focused on the interpretation of the world, but rather on the transformation of the world."

Dr. H. M. Loenen from Holland proposed an international authority to avoid wars. "Since the plurality of sovereign states is the origin of wars,

if we want to suppress wars we should internationalize the states and create the 'League of World Citizens.' " Lastly, ex-journalist Sam Lambert declared that the best means to avoid nuclear wars and cold wars was the development of a "cultural pluralism."

Finally, mention should be made of a lively discussion in one of the meetings of the Juridical and Political Philosophy section in which Lucien Goldman from France spoke on the philosophy of revolutions and counter-revolutions, of the distinction between economic and individual freedom, the latest danger in our present world.

Spanish Dominican Todoli made a brilliant defense of state intervention in matters of public morality and a general cultural orientation without interfering with private research. He defended private property but condemned its abuse.

Karl Kosik from Czechoslovakia expounded on the idea of liberty as understood in Communist countries: "Liberty is not only responsibility or the power to say "no." Liberty is a total reality and must have an impact in the historical development of mankind."

Nath Pandaya Amar from India proposed equal liberty and opportunities for men and women. "Freedom is recognized in the power to say 'no' to satisfactory situations." He also pointed out that most revolutionary leaders were not free because they did not know what they wanted. Finally, Hector Rodriguez from Mexico, reflecting a common position of the Mexican intelligentsia, accused both the religion of the Vatican and the Kremlin for imposing restrictions to our human liberties.

### **Outstanding European Philosophers Who Attended The Congress**

1. Spanish born Dr. Garcia Bacca, a graduate from the University of Barcelona and a self-exile. He is the author of a 1,200-page *Metaphysics* published in Mexico several years ago. Convinced of metaphysical "vacuity," he pursued mathematical and physical studies and in 1962 enrolled in Political Economics in Cambridge University to become more acquainted with the modern world of values and ideas so different from the Greek and Medieval worlds. He manifested to a group of journalists that some philosophers still prefer to live in a museum of abstract ideas. He said that such ideas have already borne fruits but they are no longer palatable to the modern taste not because old ideas are true or false but because the old ideas have been superseded by new ones, as the ox cart has been replaced by the automobile.

2. Louis de Raeymaecker who was a common soldier in the First World War is today the Pro-Rector of the University of Louvain, President of the Higher Institute of Philosophy in the same university and past President of the World Union of Catholic Philosophical Societies. Pope Pius XII made him a Domestic Prelate. He was a popular personality to the members of the Congress. He said that the atheist is erroneously convinced of the existence of God and that a man can be a good believer in God but a bad philosopher. There are philosophers who may badly present the true doctrine and philosophers who may wisely discuss false doctrines. "Catholic philosophers must carefully study opposing philosophies to understand them and get what is true and genuine. Opposition to others' opinions and ideas should not be conducted in a dogmatic, systematic and primitive manner, but with an analytical method and a rational approach."

The Belgian philosopher believed that the universal technical progress of mankind has given to the poor the opportunity of a higher education in colleges and universities. "Mass education is not an ideology, but the logical consequence of a historical economic process." The greater the number of university graduates, the greater the chances of a peaceful co-existence among men."

3. Polish Dominican J. M. Bochenski, head of the Department of Philosophy in Fribourg University, Switzerland, is today an international authority in Symbolic Logic and Communistic philosophy. He is also the founder of the World Union of the Catholic Societies of Philosophy. In one of his interpolations during the Congress he made it clear that the weakest argument in philosophy is authority and only reason and ideas are true arguments.

4. Felipe Battaglia, last president of the International Federation of the Philosophical Societies, favorably commended the great desires of the Russian, the American Peoples and the Pope to establish peace permanently among men. "Peace is the goal and we will arrive at it through different ways."

5. Jean Wahl, President of the French Society of Philosophy and of the College of Philosophy in France. Vice President of the International Institute of Philosophy and professor of Theoretical Philosophy and Modern History of Philosophy in the University of Sorbonne, made some references to the atomic weapons which he termed as "the equilibrium of terror." He also considered Capitalism and Communism as negative philosophies and Heidegger a pro-Nazi philosopher.

6. Felipe Pardinás from Portugal presented a paper on Philosophical Anthropology. He sought in the variety of cultures and subcultures different processes of the same truth. Therefore philosophy should not be defined as the search for the truth but as the search for wisdom.

7. Dr. Guisá y Azevedo, the bearded Thomistic philosopher of Mexico, made a deep impression by his remarks against dialectical materialism and Communism. He appealed to the order in nature which like a mathematical formula operates above the forces of nature. He refuted the affirmation of the Russian delegates that the victory of Communism is unavoidable, precisely now that Communism has begun its disintegration from within by compromising with private property and peaceful co-existence.

### Conclusion

The XIII International Congress of Philosophy was well planned and organized. It was a complete success. The hospitality of the Mexican people and their interest in philosophical problems are strong indications of a rapid economic and cultural progress. Mexico is a great country and its growing nationalism is oriented towards the high ideals of liberty, social justice and peace.

Dr. Ignacio Chavez, President of the University of Mexico gave the last remarks of the Congress with a call for the integration of philosophy and the natural sciences; for if these two intellectual activities are joined together, the world will soon experience security and order.

Mexico is a land of contrasting cultures, physical structures and architecture which combine balance and symmetry with beauty and grandeur. Hundreds of pagan temples are being discovered which show the great Mexican civilization of the pre-Hispanic era. During the Spanish regime, thousands of baroque churches were built which are today the admiration of tourists. And modern Mexican architecture and mural designs are among the finest in the world.

Mexico is also, in the words of President Lopez Mateos, "the freest country in the world." It was just and meet that such a free exchange of ideas towards a common goal was held in the capital city of Mexico.

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