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PRESENTATION

Ignacio Flagueras (University of Malaga)

TRANSLATION

Friendship in Aristotle (Miguel Martí & Philip Muller)

ARTICLES

Marga Vega (University of California)

What is the Mark of the Mental: Polo's Retrieval of Aristotle's *Energeia*

Juan Fernando Sellés (University of Navarra)

The Anthropological Foundation of Ethics and its Dualities

José Ignacio Murillo (University of Navarra)

Leonardo Polo and the Mind-Body Problem

Idoya Zorroza (University of Navarra)

Justice and Dominion in Light of Transcendental Anthropology

Blanca Castilla (Complutense University of Madrid)

Transcendental Anthropology and Foundation of Human Dignity

Daniel Castañeda (Panamerican University)

Requirements for the Study of Time and Action in Polo's Notion of Law

Aliza Racelis (University of the Philippines)

The Leader as Friend in Polo and Aristotle

CONFERENCES & NOTES

Juan A. García González (University of Malaga)

The Personal Being in Leonardo Polo's Philosophy

Gustavo González Couture (University of Los Andes)

A Brief Introduction to Polo's Ethics

REVIEWS & NEWS

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CONTENTS

Ignacio Falgueras Presentation	7
<i>TRANSLATION</i>	9
Leonardo Polo Friendship in Aristotle	11
<i>ARTICLES</i>	23
Marga Vega What Is the Mark of the Mental: Leonardo Polo's Retrieval of Aristotle's <i>Energeia</i>	25
Juan Fernando Sellés The Anthropological Foundation of Ethics and its Dualities	47
José Ignacio Murillo Leonardo Polo and the Mind-Body Problem	79
Idoya Zorroza Justice and Dominion in Light of Transcendental Anthropology	93
Blanca Castilla de Cortázar Transcendental Anthropology and the Foundation of Human Dignity	105
Daniel Castañeda Requirements for the Study of Time and Action in Polo's Notion of Law... and in Jurisprudence	121
Aliza Racelis The Leader as Friend: Implications of Polo's <i>Friendship</i> <i>in Aristotle</i> for Humanistic Corporate Governance	163

<i>CONFERENCES & NOTES</i>	197
Juan A. García González The Personal Being in Leonardo Polo's Philosophy	199
Gustavo González Couture A Brief Introduction to Polo's Ethics	215
<i>REVIEWS & NEWS</i>	227
<i>INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS</i>	253

What Is the Mark of the Mental: Leonardo Polo's Retrieval of Aristotle's *Energeia*

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ABSTRACT: Posing *qualia* as the mark of the mental presents problems for both reductionist and non-reductionist views on the mind. An alternative platform to understand the ontology of mental states is presented using Polo's retrieval of Aristotle's notion of *energeia*. My proposal is that mental states are characterized in terms of temporal integration, a feature of mental states by which they happen in time but they do not require duration in time. Other features like simultaneity, commensurability and non-failure are derived from this 'zero time' that characterizes mental states. Some consequences that the 'zero-time' approach entails for a theory of the mind, especially for our understanding of the relationships between consciousness and intentionality and the structure of the mind are presented.

KEYWORDS: Qualia, Intentionality, *Energeia*, Aristotle, Leonardo Polo

1. THE ONTOLOGY OF THE MENTAL

What is the mark of the mental?¹ Is it intentionality, consciousness, or something else? If it turns out to be, for example, that intentionality characterizes mental states, then, we have to question what the status of non-intentional states is, as well as investigate the relation of intentionality to consciousness. Would there be any ontological structure articulating intentionality and consciousness or is their existence a brute fact? Could all consciousness be reduced to intentionality, in which case explaining the mind would amount to explaining intentionality? If, on the contrary, we come to the conclusion that the mark of the mental is consciousness, then explaining the mind would amount to explaining consciousness. Also, other important questions emerge, like what is the status of mental states that are non-conscious, and whether is it possible to naturalize consciousness?

The relevance of what may be the mark of the mental is clear if we consider that what the mental is may dictate whether there is something common to diverse mental phenomena, and what kinds of explanations we can obtain in the sciences that study the mind or depend on a theory of the mind. The proposal in this essay is that *energeia teleia*, not phenomenal consciousness and *qualia*, is the mark of the mental. The motivation is not that *qualia*, consciousness, may be reduced to intentionality and then naturalized as many physicalists intend.² The reason is that the qualitative aspect of consciousness, the ‘what it feels like’ is not the root for mentality.

Leonardo Polo has retrieved Aristotle’s intuition about the distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis*, as it is presented in *Metaphysics* 1048b.³ Following Leonardo Polo’s thought, the notion of *energeia*

1 The notion of “the mark of the mental” has been used in the literature to refer to Brentano’s thesis that intentionality is what characterizes the mental. See for example, T. CRANE, *Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental*, Cambridge Univ Pr., 1998; D. MORAN, “The Inaugural Address: Brentano’s Thesis,” *Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume*, 1996 (70); R. RORTY, “Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 1970 (67); J. TARTAGLIA, “Intentionality, Consciousness, and the Mark of the Mental: Rorty’s Challenge,” *Monist: An International Quarterly Journal of General Philosophical Inquiry*, 2008 (91:2).

2 M. TYE, *Consciousness Revisited: Materialism without Phenomenal Concepts, Representation and Mind Series*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

3 J. BARNES, *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1995. I will not be attempting here an

comes to light as an alternative path to both *qualia* and intentionality, about what may be considered the mark of cognitive mental states. The proposal is that cognitive mental states are not characterized mainly by consciousness, *qualia*, or intentionality, but by exemplifying, in a paradigmatic way, what an “act” is.

Nonetheless it is indispensable to note that there are more mental states than cognitive acts like perception and belief: desires, intentions, deliberation, emotions and feelings are also part of our mental life. However, I will restrict the search for the ontology of the mental to cognition for two main reasons. One is that perceptual states and beliefs take the center stage when the philosophy of mind tries to decipher the mark of the mental. The second is that figuring out the mark of the mental in the case of cognitive states may shed light on how other mental states may be understood.⁴

2. PROBLEMS WITH *QUALIA*

Non-reductionism appeals to *qualia*, the “what it feels like to be in a certain mental state,” as one of the most indicative features, if not the central one, of the mind.⁵ But also, many non-reductionist positions rely on *qualia* to argue for the irreducibility of consciousness to a physicalist explanation.⁶ For physicalism, *qualia* has turned the problem of consciousness into an intractable problem. Not in vain, some of the most popular objections to materialism rely on *qualia*:

exegetical analysis of Aristotle’s philosophy but I am trying to capture his insights and apply them to our contemporary concerns.

4 The goal is to bring close some of Polo’s intuitions to the current debates on the analytical philosophy of mind. In so doing, I will translate some of Polo’s questions into the terminology of this tradition. However, the reader must be alerted that in many cases, this transfer is not a faithful translation where the content of an original notion perfectly finds a replica in the analytic jargon. It is more like a temporary bridge that does not make up for the need of crossing over both sides of the river and fully understand their traditions.

5 Cfr. D. CHALMERS, *The Conscious Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996; J. LEVINE, *Purple Haze: the Puzzle of Consciousness*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001; C. MCGINN, *The Problems of Consciousness: Essays Toward a Resolution*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1991.

6 See for example D. CHALMERS, *Phenomenal Concepts and the Explanatory Gap*, Oxford Univ Pr, New York, 2007; J. LEVINE, *Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness*, Oxford Univ Pr, 2001; G. MADELL, *Materialism and the First Person*, Cambridge Univ Pr, 2003; N. MEHTA, “How to Explain the Explanatory Gap,” *Dialectica: International Journal of Philosophy of Knowledge* 2013 (67:2).

Nagel's bat, Zombies, the Chinese Nation, the Inverted Spectrum, Black and White Mary.⁷ Unfortunately, making *qualia* the defining feature of mental states has undesirable consequences for our understanding of the mental and even for defending the irreducibility of consciousness. I will review next some of the reasons.

On one hand, placing *qualia* at the heart of mentality does not yield the results that it promises as it leads to circularity or tautology. The reason is that if *qualia* expresses what conscious experience is but conscious experience is characterized as having a qualitative character, namely, *qualia*, then it looks like consciousness is nothing but having *qualia*, and that having *qualia* means nothing else but being conscious, having a first person experience. If this is the case, *qualia* defenders are not saying much about what the mark of the mental is and it is not clear what the role of *qualia* is in our picture of the mind after all. More than explaining the mind amidst the whole physical reality, *qualia* defenders seem to be referring to a phenomenon with very special features that is threatened to disappear in the physicalist worldview. But *qualia* defenders are not actually providing an account of what *qualia* are or why they are the way they are. This may be the source of why we still attempt at a physicalist reduction of *qualia*.

A second difficulty is that, if *qualia* are the mark of the mental, what is the status of non-conscious mental states? Should all mental states be conscious? The empirical evidence suggests that *qualia* and mentality do not always come together. Even if one is to agree with G. Strawson, J. Searle, and T. Horgan and J. Tienson that all conscious mental events have a qualitative aspect to them,⁸ the idea that all mental states are conscious seems questionable. Although this possibility would have horrified René Descartes, Brentano and even Sartre, there is evidence for it. The idea of mental states that are not conscious originated in a currently discredited Freudian unconscious but also

7 N. BLOCK, "Troubles with Functionalism," in N. BLOCK (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, Volume 1, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1980) 268–305; T. NAGEL, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *Philosophical Review* 1974 (83); F. JACKSON, "What Mary Didn't Know," *Journal of Philosophy* 1986 (83).

8 T. HORGAN and J. TIENSON, "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality" in D. CHALMERS (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, (Oxford University Press, 2002); G. STRAWSON, *Mental Reality*, MIT Press, 1994; J. SEARLE, *The Rediscovery of Mind*, MIT Press, 1992.

comes from the emergence of a hypothetical 'cognitive unconscious' in Cognitive Science, and from neurological evidence. There are mental states that normally would be accompanied by awareness, but they lack it due to some neural pathology. Blind sight patients report that they do not see objects, but if asked to take a guess about the object with which they are presented, they will guess correctly most of the time.⁹ In brief, these patients see, but they do not feel that they see. Therefore, blindsight shows the possibility of vision without the experience of perception. Another example is *petit mal* patients who are able to carry out activities in the absence of any awareness.¹⁰ What are we to do with mental states that lack awareness? A possible way out is to suggest some unconscious rule following, or to create a divide between *phenomenal consciousness* and *access consciousness*.¹¹ J. Searle has postulated the Connection Principle by which an unconscious mental state would be the type of thing that could be brought up to consciousness. Its ontology would be one of a neurophysiological brain state with the potential of becoming mental.¹² This view tries to circumvent the difficulties of having a full blown mental state in the dark attic of the unconscious, waiting to be shined upon by the light of consciousness. However, the problem is how the subject can have access to that information when she is not aware of its presence. For example, blind sight patients have access to a visual content although that content has not been brought up to consciousness yet. The question is what makes that content possible, and how we can possibly turn off consciousness and still have mental contents about the world.

A third difficulty is that, in order to make the world of physics compatible with mental states, *qualia* are reduced to a causally inert byproduct of brain activity.¹³ This has the undesirable consequence of making mental states that possess a qualitative aspect, like pain, causally inefficient. If the mark of the mental is *qualia* but there is no pre-

9 See B. KROUSTALLIS, "Blindsight," *Philosophical Psychology* 2005 (18:1).

10 Other examples that indicate that phenomenal consciousness is posterior and epiphenomenal to brain activity are Benjamin Libet's experiments, and cases of motor cognition where the awareness comes later. See B. LIBET, A. FREEMAN, and J. K. B. SUTHERLAND, *The volitional brain: Towards a neuroscience of free will*, Imprint Academic, 1999.

11 See N. BLOCK, "A Confusion about a Function of Consciousness", in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1995 (18), 227-47.

12 J. SEARLE, *The Rediscovery of Mind*, MIT Press, 1992.

13 J. KIM, "Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 1984 (9).

cise way of explaining where the features of *qualia* come from, and no way to know how *qualia* are related to other aspects of mental states like intentionality, then it appears that they are just like the steam that our brain gives off in its frantic neuronal processing. Although an attractive solution in many ways, epiphenomenalism leaves us clueless as to what are the obscure reasons that guide our behavior and decision making, since we cannot attribute causal power to mental states like desire, sadness and elation, and it would be up to our inaccessible neurophysiologic basis to take the lead for action.

A fourth issue is that a solution to the problem of *qualia* could suggest that the phenomenal character that some of our experiences exhibit can be subsumed under intentionality. That is what the representationalist accounts of consciousness by P. Carruthers, D. Dennett, F. Dretske, W. Lycan and M. Tye propose.¹⁴ As a representational state, *qualia* signify “a relation to a mind.” According to this view, *qualia* do not require any particular ontology other than the one given by intentional states. Moreover, intentional states are nothing but a causal functional relation to the world. The representational, not qualitative, character of *qualia* paves the way for the naturalization of *qualia* but it loses the element of subjective qualitative feeling. Moreover, these proposals fail to tell us what is so special about a mind that it is only in relation to mind that we obtain *qualia*.

Fifth, if subjective experience is the key to understanding the nature of mental life, explaining the mind amounts to explaining consciousness. For some (Nagel, McGinn),¹⁵ this is an endeavor bound to fail from the outset, whereas for others it is just a matter of time when science will produce an explanation of how the brain causes the mind. However, even if causation turns out to be the right model to explain the mind-body problem, and one day we are able to scientifically explain how the brain causes mental states, still our scientific explanation would obtain **something of the form**: “Neural activation

14 P. CARRUTHERS, *Phenomenal Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000; D.C. DENNETT, *Consciousness Explained*, Little, Brown, 1991; F. DRETSKE, *Naturalizing the Mind*, MIT Press, 1995; W. LYCAN, *Consciousness and Experience*, MIT Press, 1995; M. TYE, *Ten Problems of Consciousness*, MIT Press, 1995.

15 C. MCGINN, *op. cit.*; T. NAGEL, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*, Oxford University, New York, 2012.

XYZ causes consciousness".¹⁶ The problem is that providing the neuro-physiological basis for consciousness gives us a *genetic* explanation but it does not tell us what mental states *consist in* as opposed to non-mental states. We could state differences between mental and non-mental states by referring to the types of causes that sustain them, but we would still not know what a mental state is and why it has properties like subjective feeling and *aboutness*.

We could object that we do not apply such an exhaustive criterion for other scientific endeavors, namely, we seem to be happy saying that water is H₂O, that gravity is caused by the attraction of masses, without further trying to understand what on earth gravity *really* is.¹⁷ Why not to say that consciousness is the way it is in the same way that gold and iron are, and so on? In other words, at some point our inquiry about what something is has to stop with the brute fact that those things happen to be they way they happen to be, period. Consequently, why not just be content with saying that a neural activation of such and such characteristics causes consciousness? That answer would be satisfactory if the relation between the mental and the physical was one of identity. We would be able to apply both and ontological and causal reduction and say that consciousness is caused by this brain configuration in the same way that water is H₂O. Yet again, giving the causal basis for a type of consciousness, would explain how that type of consciousness came to happen, but not what the mental consists in.

It is possible to object that we *do* know what the mental is: it has first person ontology, qualitative character and subjectivity. Or perhaps is it that it has intentionality and *aboutness*, and that *qualia* could be subsumed under intentionality? Far from having a ready answer to what the mental is, there is still much to do in understanding what is common to mental states that have intentionality versus those that do not, those that have consciousness versus those that do not, and those that have a qualitative aspect versus those that do not. We need to know what makes possible a first person experience and intentionality in the first place.

¹⁶ See for example J. SEARLE, *Mind: A Brief Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

In brief, there are at least two main reasons for advancing the question of what a mental state is. One is that finding the neural correlate of consciousness is not philosophically sufficient as an explanation of what constitutes a mental state. Another reason is the disunity between consciousness and intentionality. Between the cracks of this divide some scholars pay attention to mental states that are not conscious, but that still bear information. They opt for understanding all mental states as representational and intentional so that the mind can be reassumed in a general theory of input-output relations of the organism and the environment. Alternatively, others focus on *qualia* and minimize unconscious mental states as the type of state that could be brought up to consciousness. Among the latter, some wish that consciousness may run free, possibly paying the price of epiphenomenalism. In the end, we are left with the following situation: If we place the mark of the mental in *qualia* but *qualia* are not able to tell us much about what a mental state is or why its first person experience is able to produce *aboutness* in the case of intentional states, then it seems that *qualia* are unable to shed light on the nature of the mind. On the other hand, if we opt for naturalizing *qualia* and intentionality, the nature of subjective feeling seems to suffer to the point that it becomes unaccounted for. This great divorce between *qualia* and intentionality seems to signal that none of these options, *qualia* irreducibility or *qualia* naturalization, solely are the adequate platform and that some more basic feature is at the root of the mental.

Is there any other option between the Cartesian approach that privileges consciousness and the pseudo-Freudian Cognitivism that highlights information processing in a functionalist fashion? Or does one of the options need to engulf the other?

3. *ENERGEIA VS. KINESIS*

As stated earlier, the purpose of this paper is to present an alternative candidate for the mark of the mental other than *qualia* or intentionality. The proposal is that the mark of the mental can be a type of *energeia*. More specifically what Aristotle calls *perfect energeia* (*energeia teleia*) can circumvent some of the problems that arise from a

defective characterization of the mental.¹⁸ In particular, Leonardo Polo's reading of this notion sheds light on the question of what the mark of the mental may be.

Aristotle distinguished two types of actualizations relative to different types of potentialities in the *Metaphysics* Bk. VI, one he called motions, *kinesis*, or *energeia atelés*, the other *energeia teleia*, that is, *actuality proper*.¹⁹

Kinesis is the “act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency”²⁰ because it is the actualization of something as far as that actualization is still lacking. Motions, *kinesis*, are defined for having *peras*, limit. When an alteration or event has a limit, *peras*, the event does not reach its end during the motion until it is completed. But once the end is achieved, there is no motion. The end of the motion is achieved only after the motion has stopped. Therefore, the end, the final state, is external to the event, and the end and the process of achieving it never happen at the same time: “Since of the actions which have a limit none is an end but all are relative to the end, e.g. the process of making thin is of this sort, and the things themselves when one is making them thin are in movement in this way (i.e. without being already that at which the movement aims), this is not an action or at least not a complete one (for it is not an end)”.²¹ An example among others offered by Aristotle is building which, in terms of temporal logic, can be expressed as:

18 In this regard Polo states: “Aristotle uses in a strict way in some passages of Book IX of his *Metaphysics*, the term *energeia* to refer to the cognitive operation.” L. POLO, *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, vol. 4/1, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1984, p. 53. On Polo's interpretation of the *energeia* see among others Miquel Bastons, “Movimiento, operación, acción y producción: explicitación poliana de la teoría aristotélica de la Acción,” *Studia Poliana: Revista sobre el pensamiento de Leonardo Polo*, 2004 (6) and Genara Castillo, “El incremento de la filosofía sobre lo intemporal y lo temporal: balance poliano de los aportes y límites de la filosofía aristotélica,” *Studia Poliana: Revista sobre el pensamiento de Leonardo Polo*, 2003 (5).

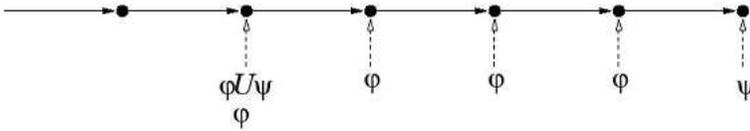
19 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1048b 18-23. For some studies on the interpretation of these Aristotelian notions see G. A. BLAIR, “Unfortunately, It Is a Bit More Complex: Reflections on *Energeia*,” *Ancient Philosophy*, 1995 (2); M. F. BURNYEAT, “*Kinesis* Vs. *Energeia*: A Much-Read Passage in (but Not of) Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,” Oxford Science Pub/Clarendon Pr, 2008.; S. MENN, “The Origins of Aristotle's Concept of *Energeia*,” *Ancient Philosophy*, 1994 (14:1); Ronald POLANSKY, “*Energeia* in Aristotle's *Metaphysics IX*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 1983 (3) and Ricardo YEPES, “El origen de la *energeia* en Aristoteles,” *Anuario Filosófico* 22 (1989).

20 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1065b, 14-15.

21 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1048b 18-23.

$\varphi \cup \psi$

ψ holds at the current or a future position, and φ has to hold until that position is reached. At that position, φ does not have to hold any more.



Example: *start building* (φ) a house (ψ) \Rightarrow *build* (φ) until the house is finished (φ).²²

For this reason Polo notes: “Transitive movements are continuous which does not mean that they cannot be interrupted but that interrupting them amounts to making them fail, because they only take place as far as they proceed to their goal: an external action is not achieved all at once (...). Therefore, it is possible for actions to fail, to remain half done. On the contrary, in the case of seeing that is not possible”.²³

Events that have *telos*, instead of *peras*, are said to achieve their end product simultaneously with the action and they are called *energeia teleia*: “at the same moment (*hama*) we are seeing and have seen, are understanding and have understood”.²⁴ As noted by L.A. Kosman, the use of the perfect in Greek does not have primarily a past tense, but it is related to the aspect. “I have seen” does not mean “I saw”, but “I am (presently) in the state of having completed (i.e. perfected) an act of seeing”.²⁵ The awkwardness of Aristotle’s use of present and past tense is elucidated by Kosman: “The present and perfect of an actuality verb are simultaneously true, not because of

22 Some Aristotelian examples are “but it is not true that at the same time we are learning and have learnt, or are being cured and have been cured” (*Metaphysics*, 1048b 24-25). See also *Metaphysics*, 1048b 29, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a 20-30.

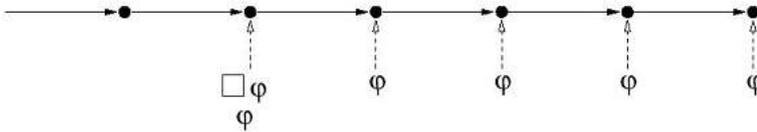
23 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

24 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1048b 22.

25 L.A. KOSMAN, “Substance, Being, and *Energeia*” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 1984 (2), 121-149, p. 124.

facts about the actuality's past and its present, but because of two facts about its present: it is happening, and it has accomplished in that happening the perfection marked by our saying it has happened".²⁶

Unlike *peras*, *telos* is not a limiting condition that stops the process, but what makes the actualization present. As Polo states: "To know in act, if the act is an operation, is to possess what it is known. We need to add something else: it is to possess *already* what is known, in a perfect tense. In knowing *already*, we have already known, and what is known has the character of a present perfect. The cognitive operation does not proceed gradually towards a result, but it has been *already achieved*".²⁷ In temporal logic this could be expressed:



Examples: Start seeing the house (φ) \Rightarrow *Seeing the house* (φ)

Energeia teleia is not the act of what is potential as far as it is potential, but the act of what it is in act, because it is being simultaneously actualized. For this reason, *energeia teleia* can be described as the "act of the perfect", *entelés*: it is completed at the very same time it is performed: "Seeing seems to be at any moment complete, for it does not lack anything which coming into being later will complete its form".²⁸ *Energeia teleia* then, as opposed to *kinesis*, is the act of something existing in act. For this reason, it would make no sense to us to say that we are exercising our capacity for seeing but that we are not seeing and that only when we stop seeing, then we see the house. The act of seeing and the object of seeing are simultaneous, and this is possible because seeing is the kind of activity like living, being hap-

26 L.A. KOSMAN, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

27 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

28 ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a14-15.

py and so on, that attains its goal in its very own activity: “To possess what is seen is not a passage from potency to act, or from act to act, but simultaneity. The passage from act to act is to persist seeing”.²⁹

Polo takes this Aristotelian discovery to be the foundation of his axiomatic theory of knowledge. The notion of *energeia teleia* is formulated in Axiom A:³⁰ “knowledge is always active”. However, in the case of human cognition, the active character of knowing is first noticed in operative knowledge. This is not, however, the only way in which cognition as act is found. Habitual knowledge is also an act, as well as knowledge as Being, which is the kind of knowledge proper of the Absolute Being.³¹ Next I will spell out some of the features of mental states that we can derive from the notion of *energeia teleia* as presented by Polo.

4. SIMULTANEITY, CONMENSURATION AND ZERO TIME

The alternative platform to understand the ontology of cognitive states presented in this essay relies on the notion of *energeia teleia* as it is recovered by L. Polo. In saying that cognition is an *energeia teleia*, we are not just saying that cognition is act, but that by exploring the peculiarity of cognition, we come to understand better what an act is, namely, a perfect actualization, as opposed to *kinesis*. Therefore, in reference to this perfect actualization, we may be able to understand what the status is of other mental states like intention, desire, emotions and feelings. L. Polo’s proposal for the ontology of those mental states is not presented here, but his insight about cognition as a perfect act allows us to draw some conclusions about whether intentionality or consciousness should be regarded as the mark of the mental. It also permits us to draw a preliminary sketch for the structure of the mind.

29 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

30 “El axioma A se formula así: “el conocimiento es siempre activo” L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

31 “Cognition is an act. It is not always act as operation; it may also be act as habit: the habit is another act. It can also be act as Being; in that case we have God’s knowledge. Divine intellection is the Divine Being” L. POLO, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Also: “Although it is not necessary (*ex supposito*) that the act be operation, it is necessary in CTC I, because organic faculties only allow for operative knowledge” L. POLO, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

a) Simultaneity

From the notion of *energeia teleia* with which Aristotle characterizes cognitive states, we can see that there is simultaneity between a cognitive act and its end. Only if the mental act is taking place, there is the achievement of an end, and vice versa: having the end means that there is a mental actualization taking place. Only if someone is engaged in seeing a house, the house can be seen, and if a house is seen then there has to be an act of seeing. This simultaneous correlation between activity and end is the relation between a mental activity and its object/content,³² that is, its end and completion. The aspect that should be noticed here is that there is no actualization without its simultaneous completion or completion without simultaneous actuality.

The notation for the modal operator ALWAYS from temporal logic, mentioned earlier, tries to capture this intuition about simultaneity, but only to a certain extent. The logical form could also accommodate the idea of constant conjunction through time, or of two events coincidentally happening at the same time. However, that is not what Aristotle's *energeia teleia* expresses. Another possible difficulty with Aristotle's notion is that it would seem that *energeia teleia* is only a matter of linguistic parsing of events in terms of identity of the activity in question. In other words, it would seem that all Aristotle is saying is something like 'if I see, I see', which would be similar to saying 'if I am walking, then I am walking', 'if I am building, then I am building'. That may be trivial for any other activity, and not specific to cognitive acts. The notion of *energeia teleia* would constitute a projection of ontological existence into a statement about identity or a tautology.

On the contrary, the kind of simultaneity that is described with *energeia teleia* is not the one of simple identity of events and tautological parsing. The simultaneity proper of cognitive acts derives from a peculiar kind of relation to the end. *Energeia teleia* happens in

32 In order to keep the commensurability between the cognitive act and its end in cases where the act is not an operation, and therefore there is not an intentional object, I will refer to the end of the cognitive act as content/object. Habits would have operations as their content whereas operations have objects.

time, but does not take time.³³ Conversely, *kinesis* requires time to achieve its completion. Cognitive acts happen in time, but if they took time like other processes do, they would never achieve their content. Because cognitive acts happen simultaneously with its end, **content/object, it is possible for them to acquire their content:** “Cognition is not an imperfect act, namely, it is the act of the being in potency as far as it is in potency. From this perspective, the perfect actuality is immobile. That is what the notion of *simul/signifies*”.³⁴

Since action and completion cannot happen separately, there is a special unity between them that grants what we could call with contemporary terminology a quantized, non-divisible, structure.³⁵ A corollary is that there cannot be mental content that is separate from an act of cognition. Thus, the cognitive act is enactive of the mental content and the content is actually not separate from the activity. Whereas completion is not a necessary or sufficient condition for regular processes that Aristotle calls *kinesis*, completion is a necessary condition for having a mental act at all. In other words, it is not possible to have a mental act that lacks attainment, namely, that has not been satisfied.

From this simultaneity enclosed in Axiom A, Polo derives two lateral axioms, E and F. “Axiom E establishes the correlation of the object with the operation: **there is no object without an operation**”.³⁶ It also has a complementary formulation, Axiom E’: “if there is no object without operation, there is no operation without object”.³⁷ In other words: “it is not possible a knowing that does not know anything’, ‘knowing something that is not known in connection with an act of cognition, is not possible either’”.³⁸ Aristotle’s way of saying this is that “actual knowledge is identical with its object”,³⁹ which expresses the simultaneity of the mental act and its content. The content is nothing but the end term of the operation, its *telos*: “But that which the mind thinks and the time in which it thinks are in this case

33 A. KOSMAN, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

34 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

35 Quanta are considered to be discrete packets of stored energy. I am using this terminology in a metaphorical way.

36 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

37 *Ibidem*.

38 *Ibidem*.

39 ARISTOTLE, *De Anima*, 431a 1.

divisible only incidentally and not as such”.⁴⁰ The peculiarity of this relation is that there is not a separation between cognitive acts and their content. Aristotle expressed this by saying that: “but it is the same thing that at the same time has seen and is seeing, or is thinking and has thought”.⁴¹

b) Commensuration

From the simultaneity condition we can derive a commensuration constraint: “There is not a “knowing” prior to what is known, or a “known” prior to knowing. Neither more knowing than known, nor more known than knowing. Simultaneity implies commensuration”.⁴² In this sense, we cannot have more mental activity than what the mental activity obtains, and this is in virtue of their simultaneity: “This can be expressed in the following way: as much cognitive operation as cognitive object. The operation and what is known are strictly commensurate. If there was more operation of cognition than known, a ‘portion’ of the cognitive operation would be blind. If there was more known than what is known through the operation, what is known would be alien to the operation; there would be a ‘portion’ of what is known that would not correspond with the operation. Therefore, simultaneity leads to commensuration: as much act, as known; as much known, as act. The cognitive act cannot be less than the act; the act cannot be less than what is known. This commensuration can also be called ‘congruence’”.⁴³ In brief, it is not possible to say that someone sees but that she is exercising more act of seeing than object seen or that there is more seen than what the activity of seeing allows for: “Since there is not known without knowing, nor knowing without known (as much operation, as known), the commensuration is reciprocal, although not symmetric. If the act was “wider in scope”, then it would know more, but each cognitive act knows what it knows and not more, but not less either. This reduction excludes the operation measuring in a unilateral way, and instead instates commensuration”.⁴⁴

40 ARISTOTLE, *Ibid.*, 430b 16.

41 ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1048b 34.

42 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

43 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

44 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

The simultaneity and commensuration between the mental event and what it obtains, seems to be more constitutive of the cognitive acts than *qualia*. For cognitive acts, the content that is acquired in the act of cognition, that is, the attainment of the content, and not just the “what it feels like” to have that content, is a necessary condition. What is characteristic of cognitive states is not that they are brain states, but rather is that they are conscious, and that they have a qualitative feel to them. We can isolate any of these features, and still have a cognitive act. As different neuropathologies show, consciousness and intentionality are separate in some cases. However, subtracting consciousness from some forms of intentionality does not amount to saying that consciousness is epiphenomenal or that there is a divide between *access consciousness* and *phenomenal consciousness*. Namely, it does not amount to saying that intentionality is representational and consciousness is not. Consciousness cannot be cashed out as intentionality in the way of blind information processing either at the level of neurons, or at some functional level that runs hidden from our consciousness. Information processing, either neuron based or representation based, follows the model of the *kinesis*, which, if applied to mental life, hinders the achievement of content, as the process and the end of the process are not simultaneous.

Still, both unconscious cognitive states, as well as conscious ones, have this simultaneity because they do not require any duration in time even if they happen in time. Therefore, consciousness is only one of the modalities of the mind, and figuring out consciousness (sensible consciousness) does not amount to figuring out mental life.⁴⁵

This proposal does not force us to conclude that all cognitive acts are intentional because they all have content. If we understand the mind as a plurality of activities, each one commensurate with its content, then a hierarchy of operations follows, in which some activities

45 The qualitative feeling that consciousness provides seems to be more of a second order cognitive act, that is, a mental act that has as its content another mental act: of experiencing seen the ocean view, of having perceived the steps approaching. This is the role that Polo gives to the common sense, at the level of the sensibility (when we experience that we see). Because the mental act is commensurate with certain content, the mental state is about the content and not about the mental act itself. From this follows that, for example, in order to experience that we see, a different cognitive act is required, a mental act that has as its content the act of seeing.

are intentional whereas others verse, or have as its content, mental operations: they are second-order activities. There is then, a modularity of different operations that are both quantized and further integrated according to different actualizations and potentialities. This structure that is both quantized and hierarchical allows for both diversity of capacities and unification of those capacities under a higher activity. But in all cases the mental is characterized by its zero time, that is, its simultaneity, which does not have a relation of causation but which is not merely coincidental, either.

c) Zero-Time

The kind of act that the operation is takes the intentional object out of the temporal flow. Although this is not Polo's terminology, this actuality could be understood as 'zero-time' of cognition. In the sense explicated by the lateral axiom E, which states that there is no object without act of knowing: "If I see, I necessarily enact a content of seeing". However, mental events are not productive of their contents or objects.⁴⁶ "Immanence does not mean that the object proceeds from the operation (among other things because they are simultaneous. Aristotle states that we call simultaneous that which does not have a mediating relation of cause and effect). The operation is not the cause of the object: sustaining otherwise incurs into physicalism (or psychologism). Stating that there is no operation without object is not the same as understanding it as the cause of the object, because the object is end, and the notion of "end of the cause" makes no sense. The end is the first of the causes. Besides, in cognition, not even the end should be understood as a cause. The end is cause when the cause is the efficient cause. But now it should be understood as the possessed end, which is the most adequate status of the end".⁴⁷

The lack of *kinesis* that characterizes cognition places the *energeia teleia* in a different level than that of the physical causes. Although, as Aristotle noticed, the understanding of physical motion, *kinesis*, paves the way for our understanding what is not *kinesis* but perfect actuality, *energeia teleia*, its discovery leads us to suspend any com-

46 This may sound like it implies an internalist view, but that is not necessarily so, although discussing this corollary is not the scope of this paper.

47 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

parison of cognition to events where cause and effect are at stake. The actualization of cognition and its completion do not relate to each other as cause and effect: “Without cognition, the end would remain in a very peculiar impasse, namely, causing actions but remaining always external, remaining outside, refusing itself, because the action can never reach it or, if it does, it brings about its death”.⁴⁸

Cognitive acts are not caused by their content, nor is their content caused by their cognitive act: “Cognition is not a transitive action. Since it is not a physical action it has no effect. What is known (the object) is not the effect (*peras*), but the end (*telos*): a present perfect in a strict relation of being possessed. Such is the drastic difference that separates what is physical from what is cognitive”.⁴⁹

The Aristotelian idea of *energeia teleia* clashes with our current understanding of the physical world. The only case in physics that seemed to violate the principle of relativistic causality (the principle that says that causal influences cannot propagate faster than the speed of light) was what Albert Einstein called the *spooky action at a distance*. Quantum physicists like Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen⁵⁰ found a way of interpreting such a phenomenon that did not violate the principle (the hidden variable approach). But even if a physical phenomenon is to be considered instantaneous because it happens faster than the speed of light, the kind of instantaneity that we find in the physical world still entails that there is some time involved in the completion of the activity, not a pure ‘zero time’. However, the notion of *energeia teleia* suggests that mental acts do not happen just instantaneously, which involves some arbitrary division of time, but simultaneously.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has reviewed two existing strategies to provide a mark of the mental in the philosophy of mind. One solution is to claim that all mental acts can be reduced to some form of intentional content,

48 Ibidem.

49 L. POLO, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

50 A. EINSTEIN, B. PODOLSKY, and N. ROSEN, “Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?,” *Physical Review*, 1935 (47:10).

including *qualia*. The second strategy is to demonstrate that mental states possess an irreducible and intrinsic qualitative and phenomenal aspect to them. However, if we take *qualia* or intentionality to be the mark of the mental, we are taking an attribute that only some mental states possess to characterize the essential attribute that all mental states exhibit. Such an approach is faulty because it takes the part for the whole.

There is also a variety of positions between these two approaches. It is possible to defend the phenomenal character of certain states while endorsing the intentional character of others and their prospects for naturalization or, at least, their reducibility to a representationalist account. Nevertheless, maintaining this later view assumes that there is not a common denominator for mental states and leaves us with very little understanding as to what the mark of the mental is.

This paper has provided evidence for the insufficiency of either of those approaches, *qualia* naturalization or *qualia* irreducibility, to sufficiently account for the ontology of the mental. The contribution to the debate has been to present the notion of *energeia teleia* as characterizing the mark of the mental. Corollaries on simultaneity, commensuration, and zero time are presented to express the contribution that the notion of *energeia teleia* brings. Mental events are not characterized by their subjective feeling or by their intentional content, but by having a commensuration that is only possible if there is a relation of simultaneity made possible by a zero time. This feature characterizes non-intentional cognitive acts as well. Non-intentional cognitive acts need not be assimilated to blind information processing of the kind that takes place in a computer but according to *energeia teleia*. It remains to be explored why some mental states have qualitative feeling, and why others also include an intentional content. We can find in Polo's philosophy a reply to those questions, however, his answer would require a separate treatment.

Presenting *energeia teleia* as an alternative to *qualia* and intentionality implies that it is not possible to fully naturalize the mind, at least, not in the fashion presented by reductive physicalism. Ultimately, the ontology of the mental dictates the kind of approach to mentality that the sciences of mind can procure. If the brain causes the mind, then how can something that undergoes alterations of the kind that Aristotle calls *kinesis*, produce a kind of actuality that is an *energeia teleia*? What then is a brain? Here, the difficulty is not the

dichotomy between something that is material and something that is immaterial, as both Cartesian and post-Cartesian understandings of the mind claim, but between processes that take time and acts that do not take time for their completion. If we maintain the Aristotelian intuition about the *energeia teleia* for the ontology of mental states, then a better philosophical understanding of the physical world and its causality is required.

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