

# The Real Distinction between Spirit and Soul according to Leonardo Polo

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**ABSTRACT:** This is a study of the real distinction between “spirit” and “soul” in man according to Leonardo Polo, which is equivalent to the real distinction between *actus essendi-essentia*; additionally, it is equivalent to the classic distinction between “person” and “immaterial human nature”, or the modern distinction between “being” and the superior human “having”. It points to the environs of the human personal “act of being” and the “having” or essence of man.

**KEYWORDS:** spirit, soul, Leonardo Polo, act of being, having.



## AN APPROACH

It may seem shocking that the distinction between spirit and soul in man may be real, but it is good to recall that this can be found in many passages of biblical revelation. For example, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it”<sup>1</sup>. It is also important to remember at the same time that this distinction is found in the tradition of the Church, for example, in an author of the Fourth Century, Didimus the Blind, who commenting on this Pauline passage, wrote: “Just as one thing is the soul and another the body, so the spirit is distinct from the soul such that, on account of its place, it is connected in a special way. As such it seeks to be maintained as soul and body, and it would be unbelievable and blasphemous that the apostle would ask that the Holy Spirit would irreproachably conserve it, since it cannot be subject to either reduction or to progress”<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence, if by “spirit” we cannot understand the Third Divine Person who inhabits man in grace, it would be a human distinction from the soul. Also in medieval Christian tradition there exists a document, still in Latin, entitled “*De spiritu et alma* (Of the Spirit and Soul)”<sup>3</sup>, who some attribute to an anonymous author known as Pseudo Augustine, and others sustain that it originates from Alcher, a monk of Clairvaux from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and which is directed to Isaac of Stella when he writes his work “*Epistola de anima ad Alcherum*” (The Epistle of the Soul according to Alcher).

On the other hand, it is clear the Magisterium of the Church does not admit the existence of two *souls*<sup>4</sup>. Here we are not trying

<sup>1</sup> I *Thes.*, V, 23-24. The Old Testament repeats this distinction. Cfr. *Mk.* VII, 22; *Job.* XII,10; *Dn.* III, 86; II, *Prov.*, XV, 13. In fact the Old Testament revelation retains this within Judaism; it makes a real distinction between ‘*ruah*’ (spirit), ‘*néfesh*’ (soul), y ‘*basar*’ (flesh). Additionally, it is shown in the New Testament. Cfr. *Mt.* XII, 18; *Lk.* I, 46; *Hebr.*, IV, 12; I *Cor.*, 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> DÍDIMO EL CIEGO, *Tratado sobre el Espíritu Santo*, Madrid – Buenos Aires – Bogotá – Montevideo, ed. Ciudad Nueva, 1997, n. 242, pp. 163-4.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Migne, PL., vol. 40.

<sup>4</sup> “The Old and the New Testaments teach that man has one rational and intellectual soul and all of the Fathers inspired by God and teachers of the Church affirm the same opinion; there are, nevertheless, some who opine that

to establish that there are two souls in man, but rather to distinguish between “soul” and “spirit”. Of course, we do not want to introduce any duality of souls, nor go against the doctrine of the Church. What we seek is to really distinguish the soul, whose end is to vivify the body (and the immaterial potencies), from the intimate reality in us that has no finality to vivify anything inferior to it, given that God is its exclusive end: the *person* or *spirit*.

We intend to assert something very simple but not so clearly recognized in daily language, when we say that “We are a person.”, whereas we also say that “We have a soul.”. On the other hand, it is unusual and incorrect to say that “We are a soul.” and that “We have a person.”. And a similar pattern can be observed with respect to the body; for instance, it is correct to say that “We have a body.”, but not “We are a body.”, because in the case when we maintain this last phrase, the day that our body is sick, wounded, or impeded, we would also have to maintain that “We are less of a person.”. But both ways of expression are erroneous. Well, if in such a simple and ordinary way we distinguish in ourselves between “act of being” and “having”, why do we not make this a valid distinction in philosophical anthropology? In a strict sense, theoretically speaking, this is trying to distinguish between the immaterial dimension and the material dimension of man, in Aristotelean terms between act and potency; or in Thomistic terms between *actus essendi* and *essentia*. Besides, if we consider that this ultimate distinction is the greatest discovery of classical philosophy, as applied to man, one can realize that we are dealing with a very relevant theme.

This approach does not contradict Christian doctrine, because if the person were its soul, knowing that the soul gives life to the human body (besides activating the intelligence and the will), after death we would not be able to speak of a state of perfection or of happiness, but we would have to speak of imperfection. But in Heaven there are completely happy people, (especially those

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man has two souls, and confirm their own heresy with certain irrational arguments.” E. DENZINGER, nº 657. “Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit... The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul... “Spirit” signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 367.

who we treat as “persons” and not as “souls”), even though their souls do not fulfill at the moment, a part of their role, that is, of vivifying their respective bodies; souls will return to carry this out by divine power at the end of time, after the universal resurrection.

At this time there is an argument on the part of some thinkers of the revealed Christian-Judeo revelation, that fall into two groups: Those who defend the theory that man is composed of two different elements, one material, the body, and the other immaterial, the soul. This thesis has come to be called a “*dichotomy*”. The other group of people are those who sustain that, besides the body, that has a plurality of dimensions, in the immaterial human there is also a composition at least in conformity with “spirit” and “soul”, which is called a “*trichotomy*”<sup>5</sup>. In a strict sense, if one looks closely, these two approaches, more than being opposed, follow along the same lines, that of realizing that man is not a simple being (only a divine nature is simple) but made up in such a way that the “trichotomy” is a broadening of the “dichotomy”. Noting the lack of simplicity in the human being in no way implies that human beings are not one reality.

Furthermore, if you admit that not only the human body and spirit are composites, then the previous positions are reductive, as has been made known through one thinker in the 20<sup>th</sup> century –like the case of Nédoncelle–, that man has more layers than an onion<sup>6</sup>. As mentioned, the fact that man is composed or is formed by a multitude of layers, does not indicate that it is not one, but that the superior connects and unites to the inferior, the active to the potential, and not the inverse. One last bibliographical reference is from Michael Fromaget who has made news recently with his tri-partite human vision of man in his book *Corps-âme-Esprit. Introduction à l'anthropologie ternaire*<sup>7</sup>, a new edition of another work without a subtitle published in 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. In Google, for example, “What is the difference between the soul and the spirit?” in [www.vidaeterna.org](http://www.vidaeterna.org)

<sup>6</sup> The comparison to a vegetable comes from Arabic philosophy and is taken up again by Nédoncelle: “Les Arabes comparent la moi à un oignon dont il faudrait retirer une à une les enveloppes”. NEDONCELLE, M., *Vers une philosophie de l'amour et de la personne*, Paris, Aubier, 1957, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> FROMAGET, M., *Corps-âme-Esprit. Introduction à l'anthropologie ternaire*, Almora,

Leonardo Polo, a philosopher on whose writings we will center our attention in this work, when writing about this subject only refers to the Thomistic tradition: “the soul, it seems to me, belongs to the essence; it is the in realm of the essence. The soul is not the person. The fact is that the soul is not the person, St. Thomas Aquinas says exhaustively<sup>8</sup>. But I give a little more attention to this distinction, precisely because it seems to me that the real distinction must be used decisively. When dealing with the human being, Thomas Aquinas insists less in the real distinction of essence and act of being, since he formulates his theory in a very global manner”<sup>9</sup>.

This means that Polo really distinguishes in man –aside from the human body– between spirit and soul. He indicates that, leaving aside organic nature, the distinction between the two is that which mediates between act of being and the essence, which is the Thomistic real distinction, or in other words between the human person and nature, which is the real distinction that was present in the first centuries of Christianity. In early Christianity the distinction between human person and human nature can be found in the patristic period, as well as in Thomas Aquinas. It was forgotten in anthropology after the Common Doctor until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a century in which the real distinction was recovered by anthropological thinkers like the second Scheler, and the already mentioned Nédoncelle, Victor Frankl, Guardini or Ratzinger.

One way in which this article can contribute to the philosophical conversation is to clarify this distinction in anthropology and to improve the ordering of the more important classical philosophical terms that are most relevant to man: nature, person, soul, I, body, act of being, essence, life, principle, substance, form, matter, innate habit, acquired habit, immanent operation, known object... And, consequently, it could contribute to improve the ordering of the different types of privations that affect each one of those human dimensions, with special attention paid to the topic of death. Also, one can imagine the advantages for theology, since it could help pose questions about those human dimensions

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<sup>8</sup> “Anima non est persona”. AQUINAS, *Super Sent.* l. III, d. 5, q. 1, pr.

<sup>9</sup> POLO, L., *El conocimiento del universo físico*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. XX, Pamplona, Eunsá, 2015, p. 296.

about the initial state of man (before original sin) or in his definitive state in the future life *postmortem*. To bring about this ordering in the brief space of this article requires an intense work of synthesis.

# 1. "ACT OF BEING AND ESSENCE" IN MAN IS EQUIVALENT TO "SPIRIT AND SOUL", "HUMAN PERSON AND NATURE", "CO-EXISTENCE AND AVAIL OR HAVING"

Before explaining such equivalences according to Polo, it is necessary to indicate that he accepted the Thomistic real distinction between act of being and essence in man. It is convenient at the same time to explain with brevity, how he understood it. And to point out that even though all creatures admit of that real distinction, in the non-personal creature it is made in one way and in the person in another way, since "the essence of a person is not the same as that of the personal *esse*, since the essence of an act of being is not personal, and the act of the being of the universe is not a personal act of being"<sup>10</sup>.

If the human act of being is active, the essence of man cannot be pure potency, because then it would not really be distinguished from it. Therefore, it must be active, even though obviously less than the said act. This indicates that, for Polo, "the human soul has been created like an agent essence"<sup>11</sup>. The essence is spoken of as 'potency', only with respect to the act of being which in no way indicates that it may be purely mental potency, since being a purely mental potency would not activate the body and the immaterial potencies. At the same time, if the personal act of being has its own characteristics, distinctive of itself, those of the essence of man should be proportionate to them and should manifest in a certain way the said particularities of the act upon which they depend. Moreover, if after the discovery of the Thomistic real distinction one has to sustain that the personal act of being is not reduced to any of the Aristotelian meanings of the act – "the human *actus essendi* is really distinct from the human essence, and it can be reduced to any of the meanings of the act in

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>11</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. XV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 521.

Aristotle”<sup>12</sup>–, and neither is the *essence* of man reduced to the meanings of the act as discovered by the Stagirite.

Both human dimensions –*actus essendi-essentia*– are alive, but one –the personal act of being– is *living*, meanwhile the other –the essence of man– is a higher vital manifestation of a living being: “evidently man is a living being, and the notion of life, is a supremely important notion. The spirit also is alive; there is a spiritual life in the person as well as an essential life”<sup>13</sup>. Both distinguish themselves from the rest of living beings: the life of the essence of man, because it is immortal; the life of the human act of being, because –as it was said in medieval tradition– it is ‘evo,’ a word that indicates that a personal creature enters eternity, which is God. But it is clear that ‘immortality’ and ‘eternity’ are not equivalent, at least because it is revealed that many immortal beings do not enter into eternity, in God<sup>14</sup>.

If the ‘essence’ of man is immortal, man does not belong to the universe. Consequently, even more so then, neither is the human ‘act of being’ ‘cosmic’. “If the human soul is directly created by God, it has a very unique act of being and does not belong to the creation of the universe; to create the universe, the complete predicamental order, is not to create a human soul”<sup>15</sup>. Finally, the personal act of being ‘is not’ time nor the world, but is ‘in’ them; as such, just as the essence of man is concretized with the personal act of being and is united to it, it is ‘not’ time nor the world, but is ‘in’ them. With this it is sufficient to try not to base –as the moderns tried to do– the soul in the pineal gland, or to try not to localize –as current day scientists suggest– immaterial potencies –the intellect and will–, in the brain.

Consequently, if Aristotle said that the soul is the ‘first principle’ from which are born the faculties or the ‘second principles’. after the Thomistic discovery of the real distinction *actus essendi-essentia* applied to man, it is necessary to consider the soul in another way, because if the soul is the immortal part of the na-

<sup>12</sup> POLO, L., *La esencia del hombre*, en *Obras Completas*, vol., XVIII, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.

<sup>14</sup> Those who are condemned are said to be immortal but not eternal because they do not exist in God.

<sup>15</sup> POLO, L., *El conocimiento del universo físico*, ed. cit., p. 231.



ture of man, the essence is also really distinct from the human *esse*. “The *soul* is in the order of the essence. The person is the *esse animae: distinction realis*<sup>16</sup>. The separated soul is not a person, but neither is it united to it. If we decisively apply the real distinction that has no place<sup>17</sup>. We will further explain the equivalencies –according to Polo– of the terms *human act of being* and the *human essence* with other anthropological names.

a) *Spirit and soul*. The Polian proposal says it this way: “according to the approach that I propose, the person is really distinguished from the soul and the body in such a way that none of them is the essence of man. Nevertheless, as the two depend upon the person, the soul belongs to the essence upon acquiring habits, which have a repercussion in the body”<sup>18</sup>. In more explicit words, the person is the “act of being” of man, the unique new and unrepeatable who, the act that is the ‘spirit’, because “the spiritual act of being is the personal act of being. The created personal act of being possesses a nature, that must develop itself with the attention of the person<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, the soul seems to be in the realm of the human nature, which –Polo says– becomes the “essence” thanks to the habits.

That which was just stated before implies that, to explain man, we have passed from the Aristotelian duality of ‘soul-body’ to the Thomist ‘act of being-essence’. Such a passage is justified if one admits that the Thomistic real distinction goes deeper than the Aristotelian finding of *act-potency*. Since, if with the Aristotelian model the human body is said to proceed from one’s parents, but

<sup>16</sup> St. Thomas also defends this position: ref. *Q. d. De Anima*, a. 1 ad 6.

<sup>17</sup> POLO, L., *Persona y libertad*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. XIX, Pamplona, Eunsá, 2017, p. 89. In another place it is summarized as follows: “if we appeal to the assumption of the real distinction, the soul is in the order of the essence, and the person is in the order of the act of being. The soul is one of the essential constituents of that which is human, but it is not the act of being, *actus essendi*”. *La esencia del hombre*, ed. cit. 113.

<sup>18</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 236, nota 10.

<sup>19</sup> POLO, L., *Quién es el hombre. Un espíritu en el tiempo*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. X, Pamplona, Eunsá, 2016, p. 152. It could also be said, “The spirit is not dual with respect to the nature, but neither is the spirit reduced to the nature. This irreducible reality consists in the rational implantation of natural dynamism.” *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 380. The spirit is not dual with respect to the human nature, because between the spirit and human nature the human essence mediates which dualizes with respect to both of them.

not the soul, and in the Thomistic model, it says that the soul is created by God, with the Polian model, is it possible to add that “the human person does not proceed from one’s parents but is created directly by God. That is said of the soul, but with even more reason it should be said of the person<sup>20</sup>.

The Polian model links the soul –through the habits, as alluded to–to the essence of man<sup>21</sup>, while it treats as equivalents the person, spirit or the act of being<sup>22</sup>. One advantage of this new proposal to understand it from the point of view of classical thought, is that it is more in consonance with that other classical thesis according to which the first thing created is the act of being. Besides, it follows from the Thomistic line of thought that the soul is not the act of being: “the most recent thing is what is created, given that it is preceded by nothing; to create is to create *ex nihilo* and the human person is created. At times it is called the soul, but the *esse animae* is to be a person, that which is created is the *esse*, which is the person. The soul, for St. Thomas, is potency with respect to the act of being (cfr. *Q.D. De Anima*, q. un., ar. 1, ad 6)”<sup>23</sup>.

Another advantage of the Polian proposal that improves on the classical approach is that what is most deeply rooted in man is not the substance, but the ‘act of being’, which excludes human solipsism right from the outset, because it affirms implicitly that man at the very core is “radically relational”. What is already clear is that what is proper of substances is to separate oneself to subsist, while the created act of being is constitutively open to God. Such an aperture indicates a free dependence. In effect, “if the soul is understood as the substance, it is reduced to *ipseidad* and it is separated from co-existence”<sup>24</sup>, by which it constitutively

<sup>20</sup> POLO, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. X, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2016, p. 359. Cfr. Also: *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Leonardo Polo points this out in many passages. Cfr. For example: *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, I, en *Obras Completas*, vol., IV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 200.

<sup>22</sup> “When we speak of the person, we speak of the spirit.” POLO, L., *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de temas clásicos*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. XI, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2018, p. 199.

<sup>23</sup> POLO, L., *Persona y libertad*, ed. cit., p. 227.

<sup>24</sup> POLO, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, ed. cit., p. 373.

isolates man from God, or it maintains that its relationship with him is exclusively 'accidental'.

To maintain this substantial model and to continue sustaining that the soul and the body conform to a 'substantial unity' (a hy-lomorphic composition), it is possible to propose another solution. To overcome the stumbling block referred to as the accidentality of the relation of man with God, one could say that "the body is united to the soul, and the human substance to the person"<sup>25</sup>. Nevertheless, this other way of speaking does not seem precise either, because if, true enough, the human soul activates the body, in some way it is reduced to being its 'form'<sup>26</sup>. In reality, all rational thought, from its first act –the mental presence or abstraction<sup>27</sup>– until the last act, is a manifestation that the human soul is not merely the 'form' of the body; and something similar can be said about all desire in the will.

Moreover, with this new model the immortality of the soul is more easily shown than in the past. For previously this was justified by pointing to the immateriality of its faculties<sup>28</sup>, and the immateriality of these faculties by their acts and objects. But now immortality is shown by the inseparable connection with the act of being, given that in the creature, the act of being and its essence are in origin inseparable, and if the act of being is spiritual, then the essence also will be immaterial. Indeed, if Polo admits that "the soul... is an essence, really distinct from the human *esse* in as much as it is habitually perfected"<sup>29</sup>, and the essence of man is distinct with respect to the personal act of being, since it is spiritual, its essence will be immaterial, and therefore, immor-

<sup>25</sup> POLO, L., *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de temas clásicos*, ed. cit., p. 220.

<sup>26</sup> "In the case of man, the soul is not only a form, but also an essence." POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, I, ed. cit., p. 188.

<sup>27</sup> "Presence derives from the soul in as much as it is essence, and not so much as the form of the body... Moreover, the mental presence obliges the distinction between essence and form. Also, without this distinction, man would not be mortal, nor his soul immortal. The human soul is as much essence as it is the form of the body, and its formal consideration is its unity with the body." POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, en *Obras Completas*, vol., VI, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2016, pp. 368-370.

<sup>28</sup> "In this case, the principal at the substantial level, the soul, is immortal." POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, vol. IV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2004, p. 238.

<sup>29</sup> POLO, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, ed. cit., p. 373.

tal<sup>30</sup>. Keeping this in mind, it can be seen that “the immortality of the soul is an account of personal co-existence”<sup>31</sup>, (person refers to personal relation), which is original and is predicated of the original connection of the human person with the divine act of being. Nevertheless, given that the said co-existence is free, it can diminish and even disappear. Therefore, even though the original relation is this way, this relation is not necessarily definitive. I will be if it is freely desired.

After referring to personal freedom, we could add that, “the spirit is inseparable from the person... This means that the spirit is not simply a nature. Freedom assuredly remains with it. The distinction between person and nature is the key to anthropology”<sup>32</sup>. Clearly the distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘freedom’ is explicit throughout modern philosophy and even so unto our days. Let’s move on, then, to explain the way Polo understands the human person.

*b) Person and human nature.* The Polian explanation of this real distinction is as follows: “man is a being that possesses what some usually call a nature. In that nature, the spiritual dimension called the soul –an immortal soul– and the body are united... Now man is not only a corporeal and animated nature or soul-body, but also a personal act of being”<sup>33</sup>. Just as the various human dimensions are linked, from the inferior ones, the existence and characteristics of the superior dimensions can be detected. And from the superior dimensions the general characteristics of the inferior dimensions can be clarified: “the personal human being has certain characteristics which can be seen from the perspective of the human nature... In its own way the peculiarities of the human nature can be understood as deriving from the personal character of man. To admit that man is a person adds to the nature of man its complete understanding as an essence. In this way

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., 147. Cfr. asimismo: *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, II, en *Obras Completas*, vol., V, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2016, p. 139; *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> POLO, L., *Presente y futuro del hombre*, ed. cit., p. 375.

<sup>32</sup> POLO, L., *El hombre en la historia*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, nº 207, Pamplona, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2008, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> POLO, L., *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de temas clásicos*, ed. cit., p. 212.

anthropology is complete... since it is not the same for anthropology to consider man as being soul-body, as it is for anthropology to highlight the radical primacy of the person. Because the person adds to the nature the effusive, giving dimension. Since man is a person, it is not subject to the laws of nature, but transcends above them and enjoys a radical freedom”<sup>34</sup>.

As can be seen, for Polo, freedom is that which distinguishes the person from the soul. Remember that in the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach freedom is equivalent to “free will”, which is not original, but acquired; it is fruit of the activation of the intellect and the will. In that tradition the description of free will is at the level of the predicaments or manifestation. Personal freedom is not reduced to free will just as the act of being is not reduced to having. As such the ‘person’ adds an Aristotelian vision to man as a ‘rational nature’ (an animal that has ‘logos’) or the Thomistic vision as ‘a composed substance of soul and body’. The response is that it adds ‘the act of being’ in addition to ‘having’, since the body as well as the soul are “held”; on the other hand, person ‘is’ itself. According to this, if freedom is distinctive of the person, it can no longer belong to the ‘categorical’ order, but must be ‘transcendental’, that is to say, at the level of the act of being.

At the same time, the person also adds to precedent human conceptions –like Polo indicates– ‘donation’, because the personal human act of being is not only freedom, given that it is not simple, but conformed by diverse active dimensions that Polo calls ‘co-existence’. It has to be recognized that donation is not natural to the will, since this potency desires that which it lacks. The person though –the act of being– is not lacking because it is not potential, but overflowing, effusive, giving, or gifting; as such, it is not in want, but it loves. Nor can the person be a “blank slate” like the intelligence, but rather it can know in act, in the same way Aristotle described the “agent intellect”. And it is clear that to love, to know, and to be free in act, are susceptible of activating and manifesting the intelligence and will. As such, when recognizing the superior faculties of the soul they are capable of carrying out an unrestricted operation, moreover, they are capable of growing perfectly with acquired habits and virtues, since it

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

is known that “infinite potentiality is compatible with the soul, as long as it does not consider itself the first act, but as proceeding from the personal co-act of being”<sup>35</sup>, because only corresponding to itself with a “growing act of being” are such potencies unrestrictedly perfectible. The personal act of being is growing because if the human person is born in relation with God, its relation cannot be static, given that with respect to the divine being one can always grow.

The soul is not *the* person, but *of* the person. That which proceeds does not indicate that the soul does not depend on God, since “the soul depends on God more than the human person – from which it is really distinct–; it depends on God just as much as all other created beings, since the person does not create its own essence. Neither is it correct to say that God creates the person first and from it the soul, because God does not create the soul from another creature, but directly”<sup>36</sup>. To create means to create a reality composed of “act of being” and “essence”. Neither is it correct to say that the soul does not refer to God. Rather, it should be affirmed that human beings have two natural openings to God, the superior one in their own personal intimacy, and an inferior one by way of immaterial nature; or in other words, there exists in man an interior way of access to God –explored by Saint Augustine–, and there exists an exterior way to access Him –summarized in the five ways of St. Thomas Aquinas–. Properly speaking the spirit or person accesses God in a personal manner, while the soul accesses Him through the world.

“Corporeal nature”, “immaterial nature or soul”, and person. These are the distinct positive hierarchical dimensions of the human composition. Correlatively one can speak of the distinct types of death according to each of the three human dimensions. For example, corporeal death supposes a corruption of the body. But also “death can be considered on the plane of the human *essence* and on the plane of the personal *act of being*. Death on the plane of the essence is the separation of soul and body<sup>37</sup>. If the soul is immortal, death for it comprises the loss of the body and,

<sup>35</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 406.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514.

<sup>37</sup> POLO, L., *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, en *Obras Completas*, vol., XXVII, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 255.

as such, the world, that is to say, to exit history. On the other hand, “death of the spirit is this: the spirit that renounces knowing who one is”<sup>38</sup>, because its complete meaning is found in God, and since this person is separated definitively from him, it has consequently, its death as the definitive loss of personal meaning.

c) *Person and soul*. To those who conform to the explanation of man as a duality of body-soul, Polo calls attention to the “dualities that are not exclusively auto-respective, that is to say, the notion of complementarity it is not entirely convenient for them. For example, body-soul is a duality whose members are not on the same plane; the soul is superior to the body. As such, the soul is not only dual with respect to the body, but also it is open to another duality. This peculiar reappearance of dualities of one of the members not exhausting the duality with respect to the other, indicates the overflowing character of the superior member. And in this sense, it is an indication of the character of “*besides*”<sup>39</sup>, a word that Polo designates for the personal human “act of being”, which is not dual with respect to the soul, the inferior member of the duality, but is dualized with the divine being, which is the superior member.

Said in another way, “even though the soul and the body constitute a duality it is not convenient to speak of a union in such a way that the said duality is inferior to the person and depends upon it. Just to point out, the human person is usually called *hypostasis*. As the soul of man is immortal and his body is not, so the soul separated from the body depends upon the human person. Nevertheless, in a proper sense the person is *hypostasis* to the extent it assumes the body, because understood as a *hypostasis*, the person considers itself according to the *ratio totius*, and not as co-existence. This is not all improper, because the human person understood as *hypostasis* does not co-exist either with the soul or with the body, but rather it sustains them”<sup>40</sup>. Remember that the notion of “*hypostasis*” arose during the first centuries of

<sup>38</sup> POLO, L., *Introducción a la filosofía*, en *Obras Completas*, vol. XII, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 193.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

Christianity and denotes the “person”, a notion that has a meaning irreducible to that of “nature”<sup>41</sup>.

What does Polo add to this approach found in the first centuries of Christianity? This: “according to the classical approach of *hypostasis*, it distinguishes the union of soul with the body, that is substantial, and also the soul that, being immortal, is called a separated substance. In agreement with my proposal, the union of soul and body is not really distinct from the person because it is not yet the essence, that is to say, because it is insufficient to really distinguish the personal act of being... As such, I prefer to speak of the nature of man, and sustain what is common, or only perfectible in as much as it depends on each person”<sup>42</sup>. The union of soul and body is really distinct from the person when it is an essence, and it is –as has been indicated– with habits which denote –de “*habere*”– “perfective possession”. We will look into this in greater detail below, this superior way of human “having”, but first we have to allude to the personal “act of being”, in order to point out later how the “having” is really distinct in man from the “act of being”.

## 2. ACT OF BEING: THE PERSON

To explain the act of being according to Polo briefly implies summarizing many pages of profound work. Our only intent is merely to summarize that the characteristics of the personal act of being which he describes is not reducible to the essence of man, and at the same time to point out how these characteristics, even though distinct and inferior to the acts of being, are coherent with the acts of being, because the essences depend on the acts of being.

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<sup>41</sup> Indeed, both the first councils as well as the Patristic Fathers distinguished in God three *hypostasis* and one and only nature; in Christ, one *hypostasis*, and two natures; and in Adam and Eve, two *hypostasis* and one nature shared among the two. In such a way that in the three cases the idea of “person” refers to a distinct reality from the notion of nature. St. Thomas points to this distinction also regarding angels when he sustains that each angel “is” a distinct “person” and each one “exhausts its own species,” that is to say, that each one has its own distinct “nature.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.



a) *The personal act of being: free co-existence, knowing, and loving.* It has already been shown that “person” stands for “personal relation”, that is, “co-existence-with”. Also already stated, personal freedom is irreducible to free will, which resides in the connection between the intelligence and the will. To this we can add that “if one considers the intelligence (as a simple faculty) on the plane of nature (human), and the nature like the substance as the remote principal of operations (in this case the substance is the soul), it is necessary to sustain that the exercise of operations is naturally “unchained”, or to say it another way, in a way inevitable (except an accident) and equal (if conditions don’t change). But in man there is another dimension, freedom, that is not part of the nature. The notion of “free nature” is not coherent. Freedom does not originate as a property of nature but is rooted in the depths of the person”<sup>43</sup>. Personal human freedom is an activity of the spirit, that has its destination in God, since our personal freedom is unrestricted and as such, cannot be changed into anything inferior to the divine being<sup>44</sup>. Also due to this, it is constituted as capable of growth and elevation.

Freedom is not “of nature” but “personal”. It does not belong to that which is “originally common” to humanity, but “is” for each “who”: each person “is” a distinct freedom. “Freedom is not of man nor is it mental presence (which is the soul) nor is it the body”<sup>45</sup>. A person is superior to that which is common to human nature, as such it perfects nature, or on the contrary, it debases human nature. The person is more than the human nature, “because of this it continues. That continuation identifies that man is spirit”<sup>46</sup>. Now “the spirit is that reality that contemplates and loves reality”<sup>47</sup>, that is to say, that “is” knowing and loving. Such knowing is personal, not proper to reason. This indicates that “it is necessary to re-elaborate the notion of spirit; because the truth is transcendental, the intelligence also must be so. It is necessary

<sup>43</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> “The freedom of man is like a beginning.” POLO, L., *Estudios de filosofía moderna y contemporánea*, ed. cit., p. 248.

<sup>45</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 362.

<sup>46</sup> POLO, L., *Quién es el hombre. Un espíritu en el tiempo*, ed. cit., p. 146.

<sup>47</sup> POLO, L., *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de temas clásicos*, ed. cit., p. 279, nota 32.

to see the act of being as intelligent and with intelligence”<sup>48</sup>. At the same time, if good is considered a transcendental, then its human correspondence with it should be as well. That which corresponds with it in the classical approach is the will, but Polo states that the will depends on the person. Therefore, if it is asked if the will is transcendental, the response is negative, because this power always depends upon the person. That which is transcendental is personal love that reinforces the willing of the will. As such, “the will should not be confused with the person. The person is the co-act of being, and the will is a power of the essence of the soul. Neither should freedom be confused with the will because freedom only arrives to the will by way of the habits”<sup>49</sup> acquired by the habits of the will, that is, the virtues. It has already been said that freedom is personal<sup>50</sup>. Also, “knowing by way of reason” cannot be confused with “personal knowledge”, nor in the same way can “personal knowledge” be confused with that which permits us to reach personal knowing. We will briefly cover this.

*b) Knowing of the spirit or personal act of being.* From Kierkegaard onwards the same critique continues to be made that the subject cannot be known by means of “objective knowledge”, that is to say, by means of reason. A complaint that many thinkers had made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But neither the thinker of Copenhagen nor his followers of the past century have been able to define well what they call “subjective knowledge”, simply because they have not discovered the Danish thinker: “the being of man is *more* (than an object). At times the question is asked in this manner: “Can the soul be known in its essence? The response is: no, the soul is known by its acts, there is no direct knowledge of the soul. I consider it opportune to add that to think about the issue in terms of the *quid* is not relevant. One thing is whether we

<sup>48</sup> POLO, L., *Estudios de filosofía moderna y contemporánea*, ed. cit., p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 420.

<sup>50</sup> “It is possible to understand freedom as a feature that characterizes the entire human act of being. In this sense, freedom is a transcendental. And with this approach we broaden and can encompass the question of relationships between freedom and truth, and truth and love, necessary for a sufficiently ambitious study of ideas, rooted unequivocally in Christian thought, of the person or spirit.” POLO, L., *Filosofía y economía*, en *Obras Completas*, vol., XXV, Pamplona, Eunsa, 2015, p. 91.

know, or not, *that which* is the soul, but the issue is more serious: that which is not known as an object is the act of being of the soul. In this respect, identity (objective knowledge) is an unquestionable limit, and its positive interpretation is a grave error. Besides, in agreement with the real distinction between the act of being and the essence, the act of being cannot be known *directly* (in recto), objectively. The act of being only could be known if that which is known were not left outside. Now even if *that which is* were known, it is left *outside of the act of being*. The pure intentional act of being, as lucid or true as it could be, is not the exercise of the *act of being*; the act of being is known as act if the act of knowing it is greater than the operation, or better still, if it is known *directly* (as act)<sup>51</sup>.

For Polo the character of the personal act of being can be known: "Knowledge of the superior reality of principles which, the way I see it, is knowledge of the reality of the spirit (that is not the only knowledge of essences)... because... intellectual realities are not the only principles<sup>52</sup>. Polo discovers and characterizes well the various levels of supra-rational "natural" knowing. One example of this is that proper to *innate habits* and another example is *knowing at the level of the act of being*, that is, of personal knowledge. Indeed, we can know personal knowledge through the *habit of wisdom*<sup>53</sup>, an innate habit intrinsic to one's own personal act of being and co-created with it<sup>54</sup>, but inferior to it because a habit is "to have", and not the act of being. As such if by this habit we know that we exist and in a certain way who we are, we always barely know ourselves<sup>55</sup>. There is a duality be-

<sup>51</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 267.

<sup>52</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, IV, ed. cit., p. 434. To which he adds: "Knowledge of the human essence (or, as I propose, the spirit) is distinguished from rational and intentional or aspectual knowledge: spirit, physical principals, and objects possessed by an immanent operation are not the same." *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> "The human act of being is reached by the habit of wisdom." POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 167. Cfr. also: *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 221, 255.

<sup>54</sup> "The idea that the habit of wisdom may be generated by the personal human intellect or that the personal human intellect precedes the habit of wisdom has to be disregarded completely." *Ibid.*, 227. "In the created person the light that penetrates the light is not generated but created." *Ibid.*, p. 226, nota 11.

<sup>55</sup> "The habit of wisdom is described as insistent activity in the transparency of the personal intellect in such a way that that insistence does not have anything to do with culmination." *Ibid.*, p. 148. Cfr. also *Ibid.*, p. 221, nota 4.

tween the habit of wisdom, the inferior member, and the personal intellect, the superior member<sup>56</sup>, which mediates between the innate transparent light and a more intense transparent light<sup>57</sup>. Now when recognizing the act of being of the person, this habit points out in us that which is not the person, that is, the essence of man: “the habit of wisdom manifests that the essence of man is not the replica of the human person, such as the absence of identity that is acting”<sup>58</sup>.

c) *The knowledge of the soul or essence of man.* Thomas Aquinas maintained that of the soul we do not know its “quiddity”, but only that it exists and that it is a principle. For Polo, on the other hand, yes, it is possible to know the *quid* of the soul, and not only as a principle of faculties. It also is possible to know it, because for him, the soul is conformed by an active root, which is the innate habit of synderesis<sup>59</sup>, and by its two immaterial, originally passive faculties: the intellect and the will. Synderesis, the inferior habit of wisdom<sup>60</sup>, is known by the reflux of wisdom over synderesis<sup>61</sup>. In other words, synderesis is the open door from the person to that which the person has and is not the person. The habit of wisdom upon realizing the person, recognizes that which it opens into, which is inferior to it, and is not the person. Similarly, synderesis opens cognoscitively to the inferior, to human nature, and reinforces the intelligence<sup>62</sup> and the will<sup>63</sup>, a thesis that also is found in Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>56</sup> “The habit of wisdom is in duality with the personal intellect.” *Ibid.*, p. 203. Cfr. also: *Ibid.*, pp. 207, nota 22; 223, nota 8; 242, nota 3; 207; 221; 242.

<sup>57</sup> “The habit of wisdom is interior to its theme.” *Ibid.*, p. 209, nota 25. Cfr. also: *Ibid.*, pp. 206; 221.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>59</sup> “The reality of the soul is habitual. This habit is synderesis.” *Ibid.*, p. 581. Cfr. See also: *Ibid.*, p. 565, nota 39.

<sup>60</sup> “Synderesis is an inferior innate habit to the habit of wisdom.” *Ibid.*, p. 184, nota 4.

<sup>61</sup> “The duality of the apex of the essence is due to its duality with advertence. What follows, the duality of the apex of the essence brings about a dual repercussion; *seeing-advertance* has repercussion in the *desiring-I*. *Desiring-I* is the inferior member of the duality with advertence. This is on account of the repercussion of the habit of wisdom in the habit of first principles which brings about the double repercussion alluded to before.” *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>62</sup> “The person is the act of being as co-act; the apex of the essence, synderesis, also is dual: that is, *seeing-I* and *desiring-I*. The seeing-I raises up the intellectual

Polo highlights the components of the human essence in this way: “since it depends upon the person, synderesis is a habit... dual... that is equal to the ego. The duality of the ego is, to begin with, the two immaterial potencies: ego means to see (*seeing-I*) and to desire (*desiring-I*). Seeing derives from the *intellectus ut co-actus* (personal knowledge), and desiring derives from the giving love of the personal transcendentals. However, neither *seeing-I* nor the *willing-I* are transcendentals. As it happens in all human dualities, one of its members is superior to the other. In synderesis, the superior member is the *desiring-I*... As for the aperture of the essence of man, synderesis has potential character (in any other case, the real distinction cannot be founded). That potential character is clearer in the *seeing-I* than in the *desiring-I*”<sup>64</sup>. All in all, synderesis is potential with respect to the person, as an innate habit is with respect to the personal act of being. Still, considered in itself, it is originally active, but it cannot be really distinguished from the person, nor can it activate the immaterial potencies, which are originally passive.

### 3. HAVING: THE CORPOREAL NATURE AND THE HUMAN SOUL

In man there exist two areas of “availability”. One inferior, composed of a corporeal nature, its faculties, and functions with an organic support; a having that we cannot elevate to the “essence”. Another superior, composed of the soul and its own potencies –intellect and will–, which we can elevate to the “essence”. Further on we will refer to both human operative dimensions as Polo understands them. Nevertheless, we will not emphasize the study of human corporeality, not because we consider it irrelevant, but because what interests us here is the “essence” of man, in order to distinguish it from the personal human “act of being”. The human body does not form part of the “essence” of man, but of the human nature. Still, we will briefly mention it.

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potency, that is, visibility.” *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>63</sup> “Synderesis illuminates that which is not possible to know operatively, that is, the immaterial potency called the will.” *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

a) *The inferior realm of having: the body, its functions, and its faculties.* If you consider the soul as merely a “form” of the body, we are only looking at the vegetative dimension of man: “such a formal and actual unity suggests that which classical biologists denominate *soul*, at least in its most elemental form (vegetative soul)<sup>65</sup>. That which is vegetative of the human body is composed by three functions: nutrition, cellular reproduction, and development or specialization of cells. With what has been said so far, it is sufficient to explain vegetative life, but not the *sensitive*, because “given a living body gifted with a nervous system, the actual-formal unity is insufficient to call it a vegetative soul, given that it has no reproduction and growth, which are superior to vegetative life<sup>66</sup>. In effect, the nervous system, at least the brain is the organic support of the internal senses, a support that inhibits cellular reproduction and differential growth, to give way for another kind of growth: thought proper to those senses. Besides, in the life of sensation, tendencies and movements follow. But, more strictly, this question does not interest us because what we are looking for is not organic, be it vegetative, sensitive, appetitive, or kinetic, since everything that is already present in this study of man can be perfected only to a certain point, but not unrestrictedly; as such, that which is organic is not capable of being elevated to the “essence” of man and, besides, it is clear that we lose it entirely when we die.

As such we should center our attention on the human ‘soul’, because if the organic faculties are very human, the soul is immortal, even if it is not the complete human being. Taking everything into consideration, the highest faculty is the intelligence (and the will). The soul is not the entire man, but the soul is that which is immortal, and the rest is mortal<sup>67</sup>. Why does the human body die? Because the soul is not sufficiently linked to it, concretely, by way of its inferior potency, the intelligence. That disunion appears clearly with abstraction, because in order to abstract we don’t know or illuminate the body which is not included while knowing abstractly. Polo calls the act of abstraction “mental presence” labelling it the “mental limit,” since he affirms

<sup>65</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, II, ed. cit., 23.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, I, ed. cit., p. 233.

of it that “death (the separation of soul) is due to the limit”<sup>68</sup> because if the mental presence did not illuminate the body, death would no longer take place<sup>69</sup>, because the mental presence is outside of time.

Why doesn't the mental presence penetrate the body? Because it is separated from it. What is the cause of this separation? Polo responds that it is due to original sin<sup>70</sup>, that we inherited from our parents. Because of this, if the mental presence is separated from the body, it prevents “the full ‘essentialization’ of the human body: (as such) mental presence signals the distinction between the soul as the essence and as the form of the body”<sup>71</sup>. Death, therefore, means two things: that the body will lose the life that the soul gives to it, and that the soul will lose the body.

*b) The superior level of having: the soul and its immaterial potencies.* If the soul were exclusively the ‘substantial form’ of the body, there would be no place in it for the intelligence and will, because these are originally “pure potencies”, and therefore it is clear that in that state they could not activate anything corporeal; besides, when they are activated, even if they correspond with the body, and different from this, they can grow unrestrictedly – notions of “habits” and “virtues” – which is incompatible with having organic support. Let us look at the first of these potencies and afterwards, the soul.

“First off, the intelligence is... a faculty of the human soul. Not the human soul in as much as it is united to the body, since a faculty that is based on a hylomorphic composition cannot be inorganic. The soul in as much as it is united to the human body is a substantial form, and in this sense, intelligence is impossible. If intelligence is a faculty, the human soul does not limit itself to informing the body<sup>72</sup>. If intelligence is a faculty of the soul to the extent that it informs the body, the human soul is not exhausted

<sup>68</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 369.

<sup>69</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed. cit., p. 369.

<sup>70</sup> “Original sin has brought about death.” POLO, L., *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, ed. cit., p. 255. “Evil is varied and with regard to what follows original sin, some evils cannot be avoided, for example, death.” *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 481.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>72</sup> POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, II, ed. cit., p. 132.

when it informs the body. If the intellect “is a faculty of the soul, and only of it... The human soul is not only the substantial form of the body. This means that, in my judgement, that it is not only the form, or that it is the form in as much as it is united to the body, and what is in surplus with respect to information is not merely formal. But neither is the intelligence a formal surplus of an organ”<sup>73</sup> given that it is lacking it.

If the intelligence is a potency of the soul and is not only the substantial form of the body, then the intelligence is not a substance. Could it be an accident? It would be if the soul were a substance. But is it? That which assimilates the substance is the composition of the soul and the body, but the soul is not a substance. Therefore, if the soul distinguishes itself from the intelligence and this distinction is not between substance and accident, another type of distinction must be found. For Polo, “the distinction of soul and intelligence prevents the identity of the soul and the act of being, that is, the real distinction –and not on a categorical level–*essentia-esse*. The *esse* is primary with respect to the *essentia*. Understood as *essentia* the soul is not defined as substance nor as nature. The notion of substance is categorical; the notion of nature is foundational (since it founds the operations). But the act of being is primary, period, just like the essence of the soul is founded. For similar reasons, it is possible to sustain that intelligence also is founded by the act of being, and to be precise, not in the same way that the soul is. The thesis could be this: to be founded by the act of being does not prevent the soul from being understood as nature and substance; but those last two notions obey an order of less radical considerations. To be founded by the act of being does not prevent the intelligence from being understood as a faculty, but it elevates the intelligence in addition to its exclusive dependence with respect to the soul. This is the way to distinguish an immaterial faculty from an organic faculty. The consideration of the inorganic faculty in the order of the act of being elevates it above the notion of nature”<sup>74</sup>. If the soul distinguishes itself from the act of being as an essence, the distinction between intelligence and soul cannot be between accident and substance. Is it a distinction between accident and

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.



essence? No, it is not, because if the soul as an essence is not a fixed principle, then neither is it the intelligence. Besides if the soul as an essence and the intelligence as a potency depend on the act of being, neither can be a fixed principle, nor an accident, since to be such they could not grow in an unrestricted way.

That which has been said thus far, indicates that the soul is incorporeal and that “to be a substantial form, an incorporeal substance has to count on a certain complement. This corresponds to the distinction between essence and act of being. In as much as the essence, the human soul is founded; in as much as it is substantial form, it is accompanied by intellectual potency, also founded by the act of being. As such, it is said that the human soul does not inform the body apart from the intelligence, which is not the faculty of the composition, precisely because of this reasoning<sup>75</sup>. Consequently, the acts of the intelligence do not inform the body<sup>76</sup>. The first of those, of those already spoken about, is abstraction or “mental presence”, and from this it affirms that the “the presence derives from the soul in as much as the essence and not so much from the form of the body... The mental presence obliges us to distinguish essence and form. And, without this distinction, man would not be mortal, nor his soul immortal<sup>77</sup>.

To summarize, “just as the soul corresponds like the essence to the act of being, so the soul corresponds like the form to the body that results in the human nature. Essence, form, substance and nature are closely related, but should not be confused”<sup>78</sup>. Strictly speaking, the soul with respect to the body is not a “substance”, but a “nature”, because the “substance” indicates an inert hylomorphic composition, while “nature” is equivalent to a living principle of operations. The soul is, besides, essence, with respect to the act of being, not only because originally they are distin-

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>76</sup> “The mental presence is a formal modality that does not inform the body and, as such, only made possible by the essential character of the soul.” POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, III, ed, cit., p. 358.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368. We could add to this: “The mental presence is with respect to the soul in agreement with the distinction essence-form, and it is made manifest: such a distinction is cited in the presence by which death is the end of the presence or the cessation of the distinction essence-form. In this sense death is due to the mental limit.” *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

guished from it –thanks to the innate habit of synderesis– as a superior act of another –because a habit is more act than an immanent operation–, but also because it can elevate to the essence the “natural” operations of an immaterial potency like the intelligence and the will.

c) *The essential characteristic of the soul and its potencies.* “What is traditionally called spiritual soul –immortal– is understood here to be the manifestation of the human essence, that extends from synderesis to the immaterial potencies and the psychosomatic expression”<sup>79</sup>. The root of the soul, its act, is for Polo the innate habit of synderesis; on the other hand, that which is potentially original to it are the two immaterial potencies: the intellect and the will. Just as synderesis is an innate habit, and “habit” means “to have,” then in the theory of knowledge it is equivalent to a “perfection”, such a habit that guarantees the real original distinction of the soul with the human person. For the human person, the “essence” really is distinct from the act of the personal act of being. Nevertheless, just as its potencies are natively passive and, as such, imperfect, originally, they are not “essence”. Nevertheless, as they are immaterial and depend on synderesis that is active, they can become to be so.

At the same time, as the will and the intelligence are originally passive, they cannot activate human corporeality. As a result, such a connection between the human body to the human person is due to synderesis itself: “the reception of the body is an innate habit, in such a way that the reference of the soul to the body is not the first act, and less so it’s formal cause”<sup>80</sup>, because an innate cognitive habit is more perfect than “natural human life” and for sure, more than the “substantial form”. Synderesis therefore has three activation functions: the body, the intellect and the will. Synderesis, to the extent it is attributed these three functions, also will be called the “ego”. As such, there exist a reference of the “ego” to the body, the “ego” to the intellect, and another, the “ego” to the will.

<sup>79</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 285. Due to this vital reinforcement, Polo calls the human soul “added life” to the “life received” from our parents, the body; “the human soul is “added life” that extends from synderesis to the spiritual potencies.” *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

From the start Polo indicates that “the ego rides between the spirit and the body. It is evident that it makes sense to speak about the corporeal ego. The corporeal ego is that human unity which rests upon and makes possible the human corporeal order. An animal does not have an “ego”, because it does not have a body ordered in the peculiar manner that the human body is ordered. The corporeal ego is a psychic ego, we might say a mental ego, and this means to say that it is capable of ordering”<sup>81</sup>. From the second to the third functions of synderesis, Polo affirms that there are two hierarchically distinct members of synderesis, which he names, respectively, “seeing-I” and “willing-I”: “the human soul is the essential manifestation whose apex is the duality *seeing-I* and *willing-I*. Therefore, the human soul is constituted by two potencies: the intellect and will”<sup>82</sup>, because the inferior of these two members, the *seeing-I*, activates the inferior potency, the *intellect*; and the superior, the *willing-I*, the superior potency, the *will*. At the same time, when these two potencies are activated, they order the body<sup>83</sup>.

What has been said so far describes that the human soul, synderesis, always manifests itself through the body, while the intellect and the will only manifest themselves when they are activated, that is, exercise immanent operations: “considered apart from its duality with the body, the human soul manifests itself with the acts of two potencies, that is, the intellect and the will. In union with this duality, the opening of the soul is synderesis, that is, the *seeing-I* and the *willing-I*”<sup>84</sup>. In the body –as has already been said– that manifestation does not achieve the elevation to the essence of man. But on the other hand, the intellect and will are capable of being “essentialized” when they are activated, even

<sup>81</sup> POLO, L., *La esencia del hombre*, ed. cit., 241.

<sup>82</sup> POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 342.

<sup>83</sup> “The dual opening of the soul is the spirit–proceeding, spirating–and therefore immaterial, that is to say, immune from matter. Nevertheless, the potencies of the soul are inserted into the life received that is not immune from matter. On one hand, the intelligence takes advantage of the synchronization of the brain and increases it; on the other hand, the will places at the service of personal commitment the motor functions, which without synchronization would not be possible. But in its own way, the synchronization must be placed at the service of voluntary commitment.” *Ibid.*, p. 517.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

though not always. In effect, the intellect does not “essentialize” if only activated with “immanent operations”, and not also with “acquired habits”<sup>85</sup>, perfections that define the intellect not only based upon on the “*seeing-I*” but also the agent intellect or personal knowledge<sup>86</sup>. At the same time, the will does not originate from the essence of man when it is activated with immanent operations, but only when it acquires “virtues”, which indicate that the will depends not only on the “*willing-I*”, but also upon personal love<sup>87</sup>. Just as personal knowledge and giving-love are dimensions of the act of the personal act of being, it is possible to sustain that the act of being depends, ultimately, on the “essentialization” of such potencies. With habitual or virtuous activation, it can be said that the intellect and the will are not “natural potencies”, but “essential potencies.”<sup>88</sup>

The human person is composed of the personal transcendentals hierarchically distinct: personal free co-existence,

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<sup>85</sup> “A habit is not only a formal act, but more than formal. I will call it an essential act with respect to the intelligence that is a faculty of the human soul, which is form and essence. This means that the habit perfects the intelligence in such a way that it does not correspond to the operation, that is to say, exactly like a potency. The habit does not de-potentialize, the intelligence but reinforces its character as a potency. The habitual intelligence does not stop being a potency, but just the contrary, it is more of a potency with the habit than without it. This means that in its turn perfected by the habit, it is not a formal potency, but an essential potency. This is strictly the first insufficiency of the intellectual operation and strictly speaking, of any intellectual operation: none of which is a habit and none of which is of the order of the essence.” POLO, L., *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, II, ed. cit., p. 248.

<sup>86</sup> “The habit is also a retraction, that is, of the faculty as principle to the principle of the faculty. That principle is not the soul as the substantial form of the body, but the *esse hominis* which is also the principle of the soul as essence. The agent intellect is not the soul.” *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> “The first consideration of the will permits us to distinguish it from the intelligence, the other potency of the soul that forms part of the human essence. Pondering this distinction, I sustain that the intelligence depends upon, according to synderesis, the personal intellect; for its part the will as a spiritual power depends upon the giving structure of the person, and in as much as it pertains to the human essence, it is derived directly from synderesis.” POLO, L., *Antropología trascendental*, ed. cit., p. 394.

<sup>88</sup> “The intelligence and the will are essential potencies of the soul, and they are distinguished from the natural potencies because they are passive; the natural potencies are not passive. In order to broaden the notion of potency beyond the physical, I appeal to the notion of the passive essential potency.” *Ibid.*, p. 351, nota 100.

knowledge, and love. But how they are joined conforms a unique person. *Mutatis mutandis*, “the duality of the opening of the essence does not comprise two souls, but proceeds from co-existence... (in other words, from the act of the personal act of being). The topic can be focused as richness or fecundity of the essence”<sup>89</sup>. If we know our will, this indicates that it is illuminated by a knowledge superior to it, but this knowledge is peculiar, since it is not limited to knowing it –like what happens with that which the intellect knows–, without reinforcing its desire. This explains the expression “want to want to”, since one thing is to want in the will, and another is to reinforce that desire to the point that if it does not “desire to want to” it does not “desire”. If with this, the different levels of human having and its main characteristic according to Polo remain synthetically explained, it is the moment to conclude.

## CONCLUSIONS

Three conclusions follow:

1. *According to the way of speaking and the reality signified*, for L. Polo we can speak of the “substance” of man, of the “nature” of man, of the “essence” of man and of “the act of being” of man, but in no way are these expressions equivalent for him (like they have been for classical, modern, and contemporary philosophy), since they signify hierarchically distinct human dimensions. In effect, the expression *first* describes that man is a hylomorphic composition of matter and form, but even here it is radically distinct from inert beings. The *second* expression adds that man is a living being but does not distinguish itself radically from vegetative and animal natures. The *third* refers to superior human “having”, which is on two levels of order: original (habit of synderesis) and acquired habits and virtues (of the intellect and will, respectively), “having” that is superior to the “essence” of the cosmos and irreducible to it. The *fourth* alludes to that which is most deeply rooted in man, that which is distinct and superior to that which is most deeply rooted in the physical universe, because it is personal, that is, free, knowing, and loving.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

2. *Man is a trichotomy, an act of being composed by a “corporeal nature”, an “immaterial essence”, and a “personal act of the act of being”.* To understand this, it necessary to really distinguish between the “soul” and “spirit,” between “life-giving immaterial life” and “living spirit”; between “immaterial having” and “spiritual being”. Once this real distinction is clarified, one is alerted to the fact that “the substantial unity of soul-body belongs to the order of the nature and is capable of being elevated to the level of the essence”<sup>90</sup>, thanks to the innate habit of synderesis and the acquired virtues of the intellect and the virtues of the will, which depend on the act of the personal act of being.

3. *Despite such an elevation, the present human condition cannot be definitive, because in the definitive, the “corporeal nature” of man would require the elevation of the “essence”, because the body also does not enter into the human essence, that is to say, does not have to do with the non-essential character of the soul and with the formal character of the soul, which is a consequence of original sin*<sup>91</sup>. As such, “What can we say about the theory of the risen body? It would be a body in which the human spirit might be so active that what is now flesh and bones, that is my body, would penetrate the fullness of the spirit”<sup>92</sup>, that is to say, by the personal “act of being” through the essence of man.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>91</sup> *Conversations with L. Polo in Torreblanca*, (Colombia), August, 1997, pro manuscripto, p. 23.

<sup>92</sup> POLO, L., *Quién es el hombre. Un espíritu en el mundo*, ed. cit., p. 183; “The risen body is that which is not made of flesh, but that has been ascended to the level of the soul. As such, it is already integrated into the human essence, something that the body of flesh is not.” *Conversations with Polo in Torreblanca*, cit., p. 78.

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