

Work and the Transcendental Free Coexistence

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ABSTRACT: The growth of the human person can occur as an indirect effect of actions that result in perfecting its essence and nature as instrumental causes of the principal cause that is the person. A characteristic of the transcendental Coexistence is its dialogical opening to others that results in the perfecting of man's essence and nature through interactions and dialogue. Work requires interactions with others, to cooperate actively to achieve collective goals, to open individuals to be receptive to the ideas of others that help them to learn and improve. This dialogical characteristic of work can result in perfecting the human essence and nature which as instruments of the person can contribute to its growth. Freedom is another personal transcendental: it is the activity of the spirit searching for who it is. In work, the person finds a means for this search. A theory of the characteristics of work proposes autonomy as one of its core features the degree to which it provides significant freedom, independence, and discretion to plan out and determine its procedures. An outcome is that individuals experience greater personal responsibility for their own successes and failures at work. This feature of work fosters the development of the essence and nature of human beings improving their instrumental value to the person and contributing to its growth.

KEYWORDS: personal transcendentals, instrumental cause, natural growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Polo's anthropology, the ontological structure of man is complex with an act of being (the person), an essence (the soul) and a nature (the body). There is a real distinction between body and soul as well as between the soul and the act of being, and their interactions are regulated by the doctrine of act and potency¹.

The distinction between human beings and non-human things of the Universe is transcendental, that is, based on their acts of being rather than on their respective essences. Polo proposes that a distinction between both modes of being is that the human act of being is complex comprising four Transcendentals: Coexistence, Personal Freedom, Agent Intellect and Personal Love. Polo sometimes referred about Coexistence and Freedom as two Transcendentals, and at other times as one Transcendental. In this study Coexistence and Freedom are discussed separately. The human essence encompasses psychosomatic manifestations, immaterial powers and the synderesis. The nature of man includes its corporeal structures and material powers².

In many places, Polo refers to the perfecting of the person through its actions. Work is central to human life and, as all human actions, it takes place with the mediation of man's essence and nature. Thus, the question arises whether work contributes to the growth of the person; specifically, how acts of the human essence and nature can serve to improve the person?

This study examines the relations of work, whose actions take place in the empirical order, with the Coexistence and Freedom radicals of the human act of being that are situated in the transcendental order. The Introduction reviews several basic general concepts of Polo's understanding of the ontological structure of man and is followed by a section describing how the actions of man in the world may contribute to the growth of the person. Next, the notion of Transcendental Coexistence with focus in its dialogical characteristic is revisited, and the dialogical attribute

¹ Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 165.

² Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, p. 203.

of work and how it affects Coexistence are discussed. The Transcendental Personal Freedom, and in particular its interpersonal characteristics, is outlined and accompanied by an examination of the contribution work can make to Freedom. The investigation concludes with a brief summary that brings together all its elements.

2. THE PERFECTING OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The perfecting of the person acting as principal cause can occur indirectly from actions that result in the perfecting of the essence and/or nature as instrumental causes. Both the main agent and the instrument have their own proper effects on the outcome of a combined action, for each acts according with its form and contributes to the resulting outcome³.

The action of a main agent is limited by the proper operation of the instrumental form, but under the influence of the principal agent and the outcome of their combined action, the activity of the instrumental agent could be enhanced such that a more perfect outcome could result from a new action performed together by both agents⁴. Thus, the instrument could exercise a determining causality upon the principal agent, such that perfecting the actions of the instrument could foster an improvement on the action of the principal agent. Considering that the principal agent is the main agent, a more perfect outcome reflects a more perfect action by the principal agent and from *agere sequitur esse*, it could be concluded that the principal agent is more perfect now. In summary, perfecting the contribution of the instrument fosters an improvement of the principal agent⁵.

The human person manifests itself in the world through its essence and nature. The actions of the person involve the active collaboration of its powers, they perfect the essence and nature and direct them to goals that include some beyond themselves⁶.

³ Aquinas T., *Summa Theologica III*, q. 19, a. 1.

⁴ Aquinas T., *Summa Contra Gentiles III*, ch. 103.

⁵ Mendz G.M. and Sellés J.F., *The Natural Growth of the Person in Polo, pro manuscripto*.

⁶ Corazón, R.C., *Filosofía del Trabajo*, Madrid, Rialp, 2007, p. 59.

That is, personal actions have effects on individuals that can be immanent or transcendent. Work is an action of the person that has subjective and objective dimensions and effects and can be instrumental to its improvement.

2. THE DIALOGICAL CHARACTERISTIC OF TRANSCENDENTAL COEXISTENCE

“The habit of wisdom is the act through which the intimacy of the opening (or the inward opening) is reached, that is, the personal co-act”⁷. Through the habit of wisdom, a person reaches its intimacy, realises that it does not give existence to itself and concludes that to be a person means to coexist with another capable of granting this personal existence to others.

“The act being of man is more than to exist and to be; it is to be-with, to co-exist, amongst others with the act of being of the Universe”⁸. Moreover, the human act of being is not exhausted by its activities: at the same time, it performs and transcends them. “That is to say, coexistence indicates the being of man as a being that is not reduced merely to exist”⁹.

“The person transcends the Universe. This does not mean that it is the foundation of the Universe; certainly, it is not. It means, that it transcends the Universe adding the ‘with’, adding the coexistence to the existence”¹⁰. This statement refers to the personal act being coexisting with the act of being of the Universe. In addition, “It is clear that the coexistence of persons amongst themselves is not a relationship of providing mutual foundation, or of the persons providing foundation to the Universe. Hence, all human beings are equal”¹¹. Human personal acts being coexist with other acts of being none of which is the foundation of the others.

⁷ Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, p. 180.

⁸ Polo L., *Presente y futuro*, Madrid, Rialp, 1993, p. 157.

⁹ Polo L., *Presente y futuro*, Madrid, Rialp, 1993, p. 158.

¹⁰ Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Trascendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 361.

¹¹ Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Trascendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 359.

Interactions with other human beings serve to understand that similar conclusions would apply to the others as persons who coexist. “Man coexists also with other human beings, precisely because all the other human beings are persons”¹². Thus, “as co-existing, the person is open, and therefore, is neither alone nor singular”¹³. A consequence of this is that “Coexisting with other persons manifests a dialogical opening to the others”¹⁴. This makes man to be fundamentally social. Society can nurture moral growth to a degree that individuals would not be able to attain by themselves alone, that is, the perfecting of the will that an isolated human barely could achieve. “The result of this way of coexisting is precisely the perfecting of man’s human nature through interaction and dialogue, from which stem acquired habits”¹⁵. Without interacting with others, it would be very difficult to acquire virtues. “In summary, although the human essence is as varied as persons, its nature is common and morally perfected through interactions”¹⁶. This is different from knowing the person of the others, for which access to their intimacy is necessary.

3. THE DIALOGICAL CHARACTERISTIC OF WORK

Work is more than a product; it includes an aim and a destinatarry. Thus, it requires interacting with others to cooperate actively to achieve collective goals, to open ourselves and be receptive to the ideas of others, such that they help us to learn and to improve. This view is supported by strong evidence. For example, a study conducted to understand how communications between members of a team affect its performance compared the ability and speed to solve logical problems for three groups with different degrees of interactions between their members: acted inde-

¹² Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 207.

¹³ Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 180.

¹⁴ Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 180, footnote.

¹⁵ Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 207.

¹⁶ Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 207.

pendently, interacted continuously, and interacted intermittently. The best outcomes were of the last group¹⁷.

Teamwork provides interactions between individuals and ensures that everybody is working towards a common goal. The dialogical characteristic of work contributes to the improvement of the essence and nature of human beings making them better instruments of the person. "In perfecting the Universe, man also perfects himself, albeit in a different way: by acquiring habits"¹⁸.

4. WORK AND COEXISTENCE

Work is connected to personal intimacy because, amongst other things, it helps to overcome a self-centredness that could lead to attempts to accommodate everything to our personal interests or perspective of things. Repeatedly, analyses of factors that improve all aspects of work coincide that collaboration at work is a very good thing. Similarly, work generating ideas becomes optimal by allowing individuals space to be creative together and collaborating with others.

In addition, sets a context for cooperation between individuals that facilitates closer interactions between persons. For example, the results of surveys to ascertain what are the principal skills required in managerial jobs consistently point out to the ability to work in a team with a wide variety of individuals, and to build, sustain and expand a network of people¹⁹.

These beneficial outcomes of work that require interactions and cooperation with other persons foster the intensity of the personal coexistence and consequently the growth of the person.

5. TRANSCENDENTAL FREEDOM

Recognition that the intimate self-knowledge achieved through the habit of wisdom is limited, directs the person to search for a

¹⁷ Bernstein, E., Shore, J., and Lazer, D. How intermittent breaks in interaction improve collective intelligence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, USA*, 2018, 115 (35), 8734-8739.

¹⁸ Polo, L. *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 173, footnote.

¹⁹ Bartleby, When teamwork works. *The Economist*, September 8, 2018, p. 52.

fuller understanding. This search is motivated also by the realisation that as a person, it has not reached all what is called to be, has not found its replica. The search at this level for who it could be leads “to discover that the intimacy is not that of two persons nor of a person who is unique and results in the realisation that the human person is active”²⁰; simply, the intimacy of a person who is the only person would not exist and wouldn’t be active. “The active value of coexistence does not mean that it is the subject of a later or derived action, but of the activity of the intimacy as inner opening, not as inward opening”²¹. This is turn, manifests the free character of coexisting: “the discovery of the intimacy as an inner opening cannot be separated from the active, free value of coexisting”²². Without this search the created person closes itself and negates its growth that comes to an end.

Transcendental Freedom is the activity of the spirit searching for who it is. “Therefore, we point out a new meaning of Freedom located in the order of the human esse, the personal being, not in the order of man’s human nature where there is also freedom, or better, to where freedom is extended”²³. If freedom “is a transcendental that belongs in the order of esse, it is the person and not a foundation. Then it is not susceptible of metaphysical considerations. That is why it is equivalent to coexistence and different from being a foundation”²⁴. It is a radical that belongs to the very being of man and coexists with the other transcendentals. “Freedom is a coexistential not an existential transcendental”²⁵.

“Freedom is incompatible with there being only one person”²⁶. Thus, the interpersonal characteristic of freedom is found in the

²⁰ Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, pp. 203-204);

²¹ Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 203, footnote.

²² Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 204.

²³ Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Transcendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 358.

²⁴ Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Transcendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 358.

²⁵ Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Transcendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 361.

²⁶ Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 106.

existence of a plurality of persons. "If there are other persons and I am able to interact with them, I can interact with them and be radically and personally free"²⁷.

6. THE FREE QUALITY OF WORK

Free actions manifest the intimacy of the person through specific acts that involve its essence and nature, but they also carry the intentionality of the will that traverses their outcomes: "to traverse the outcome means to unravel the meaning of an action such that it extends beyond the outcome as its inspiration by way of the *intentio finis*"²⁸.

Human work is one of the most emblematic activities of our time, it is an action that could have the *intentio finis* to better the world for the improvement of persons. Acting freely through his nature and essence, man works bringing freedom to the universe that in consequence acquires a more perfect meaning, thus manifesting his person and contributing to its development and that of other persons²⁹.

A deeper understanding of work can be found in contemporary ideas such as the Job Characteristics Theory³⁰. This theoretical construct provides principles as a framework to increase worker's motivation, satisfaction, and performance. It focuses on the responsibility of organizations to structure jobs such that they enrich the work environment. It comprises five core job characteristics that should prompt three critical psychological states, which would lead to many favorable personal and work outcomes. To note are three of the characteristics which focus on the development of individuals:

- *Skill variety*: that encourages workers to develop a variety of abilities and talents.

²⁷ Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 97.

²⁸ Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental II*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 169.

²⁹ Corazón, R., *Filosofía del Trabajo*, Madrid, Rialp, 2007, p. 63.

³⁰ Hackman, J.R. and Oldham, G.R. *Work Redesign*, Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1980.

- *Task significance*: that requires jobs that improve psychological and physical wellbeing of other people's lives.
- *Autonomy*: that provides workers with significant freedom, independence, and discretion to plan out the work and determine the procedures in the job. It leads them to experience greater personal responsibility in their work.

The outcome of work conducted freely derives from the Freedom of the worker. Work thus performed contributes both to improve the product and to enhance the essential freedom of the individual that is an extension of Personal Freedom. In other words, perfecting the essence of the person improves it as an instrument that assists Transcendental Freedom acting as principal agent, thus contributing to the development of the person. Work expands the essential freedom that acting as an instrument of the person will serve to man's free actions, specifically by fostering the growth of the Freedom of the worker.

7. CONCLUSIONS

"Man coexists with the other human beings because all human beings are persons. The fruit of this coexistence is precisely the perfecting of human nature through interaction and dialogue, from which stem acquired habits"³¹. Work provides a context where interaction and dialogue essential to man take place. Investigation of the close relationship between work and Free Coexistence has clarified its connection with the perfecting the human essence and nature and the growth of the person.

"The spiritual being is a personal being. It possesses a nature that in dignity is below the person, for this reason the person makes possible and demands the improvement of the nature of human beings"³². The dignity of the person demands an expansion of its natural capacities, and work contributes fundamentally to this improvement which, in turn, supports the growth of Free Coexistence, and thus enhancing human dignity. "The root of

³¹ Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 207.

³² Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre?*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 78.

culture is human dignity. It is necessary to extend culturally human nature because the human person is *'dignior in natura'*³³; advancing human culture through work contributes to the dignity of man and serves to elevate the person. In contrast, "a very efficient organisation of work that yields objective cultural results but is against human dignity is ethically reprehensible"³⁴. A conclusion is that the fundamental worth of work cannot be reduced to its productive value (poiesis) but needs to be evaluated also for its effect (praxis) on the entire human being.

"Man is essentially social. This means that to begin with society allows and fosters moral growth, that is, a perfecting of the will that man in isolation would not achieve. Without interacting it will be very difficult for him to acquire virtues"³⁵. This study highlighted how the work of a person has consequences for other persons at the transcendental level. "Here there is a basic alternative: either man takes up the idea that he is individually and socially perfectible and strives for perfection, or society does not function well"³⁶. This underlines the fundamental need to consider the subjective value of work to be considered together with its objective value.

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³³ Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre?*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 77.

³⁴ Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre?*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 79.

³⁵ Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, p. 207.

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