

# *Journal of* **Polian** **Studies**

ANNUAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY SPONSORED BY  
THE LEONARDO POLO INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

Printed ISSN: 2375-7329  
Online ISSN: 2379-8254  
FOUNDED IN 2014  
VOLUME V December 2022

[www.leonardopoloinstitute.org/journal-of-polian-studies.html](http://www.leonardopoloinstitute.org/journal-of-polian-studies.html)

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Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy  
1121 North Notre Dame Ave.  
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# *TRANSLATION*







# Hope for Students in an Information Age

*An introduction to Leonardo Polo's article "Hope".*

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RECEIVED: October 15, 2021

ACCEPTED: March 3, 2022

DEFINITIVE VERSION: September 15, 2022

**ABSTRACT:** In this introduction, I will situate Polo's article on hope within the context of the project to introduce Polo's thought to English-speaking educational institutions. To this end, my aim is four-fold. First, I will highlight the relevance of Polo's thought for education. Second, I will relate the article on hope to Polo's thought more generally. Third, I will provide an overview of the content of the paper. And fourth, I will discuss the significance of this paper for young people in our information age.

**KEYWORDS:** Leonardo Polo, Education, hope, information.







## INTRODUCING LEONARDO POLO TO ENGLISH SPEAKING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy was initiated with the hope of introducing an English-speaking audience to the thought of Leonardo Polo. Next to publishing the Journal of Polian Studies, it coordinates efforts to translate Polo's texts from Spanish to English.

In 2020, my contribution to this project was to translate "*lo radical y la libertad*" ("Root and Freedom") to English and write an extensive popular introduction to it. The introduction and translation were published under the title "Freedom in Quarantine" (Bernardus & Polo, 2020). This text has been used for a long time in education at the university of Navarre, and I thought that this translation would be useful to schools and universities wishing to teach philosophical anthropology to their students.

So far, this initiative has resonated most in three institutions: Amsterdam University College, where I teach; Paref Southridge School, located in the Philippines; and The Heights School, situated just outside of Washington D.C. The Heights School has even published a podcast on the book. It is my hope that more institutions can profit from this work with time.

While "*lo radical y la libertad*" contains a brilliant overview and synthesis of the tradition of western philosophical anthropology, as seen through the eyes of Leonardo Polo, the text does have its limitations. Some notions that Polo mentions, for example when talking about causes, need further elaboration. To my mind, one of the greatest drawbacks of the text is that it does not give a sense of the dynamism of human life, which is a key feature of Polo's thought. Indeed, Polo has been characterized as the "philosopher of hope". When I came across Polo's article on Hope, I thought it could supplement this deficiency in "*lo radical y la libertad*". This is why I have taken on the current project.

## THE RELEVANCE OF POLO'S WORK FOR EDUCATION

Polo's thought has a proven track record at the University of Navarre. As mentioned, "*Lo radical y la libertad*" has been used for education in philosophical anthropology at that university.



This seminal work of Polo offers an overview of western thought, highlighting key notions of what it means to be human in modern, classical Greek, and Christian thought. Beyond its merely historical significance, Polo's overview challenges students to consider which of these understandings is most fundamental for them personally.

More broadly, Polo's philosophical methodology of "going beyond mental limitation" is a methodology that provides a new epistemological access to the world around us and ourselves as human persons. Through this methodology, Polo also overcomes some of the key shortcomings that are frequent in modern thought. Especially ideologically motivated reductionisms, that are currently rampant in educational institutions, do not stand up against this methodology. The human being "is always more" than any of its conceptualizations, according to Polo, and his method illustrates that.

For public schools, there may be a question whether it is suitable to study a thinker that is so firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. Polo's appeal for these schools can lie in giving a sympathetic yet constructively critical outside perspective on modern and contemporary thought. Polo values the importance of key notions like the 'result' and 'production' in the modern view of man. Taken by themselves, however, these notions lead to many of the complexities our society is currently facing. Polo shows how these key insights can be purified by putting them in creative tension with classical and Christian thought. This can be inspiring, even for non-Christians.

For Catholic or otherwise Christian schools, there may be a question of what the added value is of another thinker on top of the rich tradition from which students can already draw. Polo himself says that in his work he is trying to serve perennial philosophy by continuing it, by liberating it from the long imprisonment in which modernity has put it (Polo, 2018). Every age has its own challenges, and philosophers are called to address the issues of the age. Polo makes a decisive attempt to think through modern (and post-modern) thought and see how it both contributes to and is corrected by classical Greek and Christian philosophy. Perhaps more importantly, the philosophical method he proposes allows others to follow in his tracks. These contributions are important for any Catholic or



otherwise Christian school aiming to be in touch with –yet not overwhelmed by– present-day society.

### THE ARTICLE ON HOPE

Although the study of philosophical anthropology is an academic endeavor, it is never a purely academic endeavor. After all, the way we view our nature philosophically has a profound impact on the way in which we view ourselves personally; and this, in turn, will influence the direction of our lives. Indeed, the interaction between life and thought is in no way simple. Polo's article on hope addresses this issue head-on.

Polo's philosophical methodology invites us to focus our attention on reality itself. Beyond merely conceptual knowledge of the world, he wants the reader to contemplate reality directly: the world around us, the world within us, and the other persons who inhabit the world and with whom we are in relation. A consequence of this methodology, as well as of the Spanish academic tradition more generally, is that Polo's expositions tend to be structured around associations as they arise experientially. While there is an underlying order to his thought, the logic is often hidden to the immediate outline of his works. With this in mind, the reader is advised to grip his texts as one would hold a bird: strong enough that it doesn't escape, but not so tightly that he kills it.

### DIMENSIONS AND PRECONDITIONS OF HOPE

In this article, Polo starts by exploring the dimensions of hope and the preconditions that allow those dimensions to be possible in the first place. It is characteristic for his philosophy to be very careful about these preconditions. In his own words, "The genius of philosophy consists in focusing on the obvious." (Polo, 2015) In the following paragraphs I will indicate the main dimensions of hope that Polo investigates in this article.

First, Polo considers the dimension of optimism, and finds that this requires several preconditions: an openness to the future; a world that can really be improved; the capacity that human beings have for unrestricted growth, inherent to our intelligence



and will; and a certain dissatisfaction with the current state that promotes that growth. He points out the incompatibility of these requirements with the philosophy of Leibniz, because in his philosophical system the world only develops and cannot really be improved: there is no room for novelty. In this way reflecting on the preconditions for optimism becomes philosophically important.

A second dimension of hope is the conviction that the future depends on human action. The opposite of this conviction is the belief that a particular future will arrive irrespective of the actions human beings take. Polo here takes issue with utopian explanations, and specifically Marxism, whose conceptions of hope he says are actually a form of alienation. This is because in their thought, the future depends on necessary laws of history, and not on human action. Therefore, utopian explanations are incompatible with this second dimension of hope.

A third dimension of hope that Polo mentions is that of the task: "the future entails a task and (...), without this task, the future will not come about". (Polo, 1998) The task, in turn, requires resources to bring to completion. Those resources are often insufficient, which means that the help of others is required to bring the task to completion. The lack of resources also introduces an element of risk and adventure. Reflecting on the task, therefore, brings out further important preconditions of hope.

Polo then takes on this last theme to describe human existence insofar as it is articulated by hope as "constitutively epic". He elaborates on this by describing the overarching structure of epics, in which one's resources are not enough, and in which the main character has a past and an impulse towards an end, defined by the task that has been entrusted to him. As Polo points out, in epics there also always appears a helping element. Polo further adds that in a Christian understanding of life, the one who assigns the task is an excellent friend who is most interested in its coming to fruition. And this in turn explains the importance of prayer, turning to the best helper and friend that one encounters inside oneself. Before embarking on the last part of the article, Polo addresses some difficulties that may arise in the face of hope; namely, the "doubter" and the "clueless", who are two human types incapable of living with hope. He concludes that



from a hopeful perspective, society is a positive-sum game, and that therefore hope-filled activity is a gamble that doesn't overwhelm. "It is a joyful gamble that is worth taking chances on because everyone wins. The final element of hope, therefore, is joy." (Polo, 1998) In this way the epic becomes an articulation of what a hope-filled existence looks like.

## THE PERSONAL DIMENSION OF HOPE

In the final section of the paper titled "hope's love", Polo explores hope as understood from "the person", which he elsewhere has called the Christian root. (Bernardus & Polo, 2020) In accordance with this notion, what most fundamentally makes us human is our personhood, which refers to both our unique individuality and how that individuality is lived in the context of close relationships. Polo characterizes the person using four "personal transcendentals", which are personal co-existence, personal knowledge, personal freedom, and personal love. (Polo, 2016)

What Polo makes clear in this section is that understanding the human being as a person involves the shift from the hope of obtaining the goal of an epic quest to the hope for the loving response of another person. To try and make clear what he means, Polo invents the term "destining", which can be understood to mean: trying to give yourself to another person. However, as the verbal tense indicates, the activity of "destining" is never complete in itself, it can only be completed by the positive response of the other. The word "destining" is also opposed to the passive "destiny": we do have an active role when "destining" ourselves, because we use our capacity for offering ourselves. So, in personal hope, our activity is important, but always only one half of the story.

In this new meaning of hope, there is also a certain dissatisfaction, which leads to not tiring of giving, which can especially take the form of sharing and helping others to grow. But whom should we help? Polo replies by referring to the biblical notion of "neighbor": neighbors need to be looked for. When living a personal hope, we can allow other persons to irrupt into our lives and change our routines.



## HOPE IN AN INFORMATION AGE

It is my hope that the philosophy of Leonardo Polo can help inspire young people to have a new and more profound look at important questions, starting from a deeper understanding of themselves as human persons. In an increasingly digitized world, perhaps Polo can challenge young men and women to reconsider how they relate to others and how these relations can provide meaning to their lives. With Polo as a guide, they may make a start in answering such questions as: To what extent do they want to be “productized” by informatics companies? Is it worthwhile to take a step back and see what epic goal their lives would want to strive for? Where would they meaningfully want to direct their attention, and how could that take shape in practice? And finally, social media can certainly foster connections, but does it foster the deep connectedness that comes from personal relationships? What neighbor could they meaningfully share with and help to grow?

Still in its incipient stages, the philosophy in the article on hope has inspired at least one foundation, called Canyons and Stars, to help students face reality and discover their personal calling. This initiative will itself have to search out its neighbors and see how it can best contribute both to the students with whom it works and with the other initiatives, which will hopefully spring from the common source of Polo’s thought.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the extensive editing work by Nathaniel Gadiano and useful suggestions by Dr. Emma Cohen de Lara and prof. Juan Fernando Sellés.

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# Hope

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RECEIVED: October 15, 2021

ACCEPTED: March 3, 2022

DEFINITIVE VERSION: September 15, 2022

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Translation of an article published in *Scripta Theologica* 30(1) 1998, 157-164, included in *Obras Completas volume XXVII. Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, Eunsá, Pamplona 2015, pp. 112-120.

**ABSTRACT:** Hope is not only a virtue, but as the backbone of the existence of human beings in time. Its components are optimism, the awareness that future depends on human action, a certain amount of adventure or risk, joy and self-destining.

**KEYWORDS:** Freedom, optimism, future, destiny, gift.







## 1. DESCRIPTION OF HOPE

I am going to give a broad outline of the components of hope. In doing so, I intend to shed light on the axis that gives meaning and mettle to a human being's life. Hope is the backbone of the existence of human beings in time.

The first dimension of hope is optimism. There is no hope without optimism, that is, if one does not realize that there is a future to be attained that is better than the present. It also holds the other way around: the only legitimate optimism is the one that dwells in hope, because being content with the brokenness of a situation is characteristic only of timid and disillusioned people. To be an optimist without hoping is the same as limiting oneself to a flat, featureless plain. In the end, it is a foolish way of consoling oneself, as made clear by a British saying according to which the optimist maintains that we are in the best of all possible worlds; the pessimist is the one who believes this to be true.

The apparent paradox of this saying manifests an optimism that is not faithful to itself, that is, one that is foreign to hope. According to Leibniz's philosophy, this world is the best of all possible worlds. The Leibnizian position is a clear example of pessimistic optimism. The hope-filled optimist rejects the idea of being in the best of all possible worlds, because in that world, there is nothing to do; that is, it is not possible to improve it.<sup>1</sup>

True optimism, then, is not just any optimism, but rather optimism that is open to the future. This entails putting oneself to the test in the adventure of seeking a new stage of life that is superior to the present one. Those who live hope affirm that we are in a world that can be improved, and for this reason they do not remain settled in the present, but rather set out upon a path that leads to a goal. The best of all possible worlds is closed to human projects; it is a place for retirees, without history, without innovation. That is why I have said that hope is the basic framework of human existence in time: in order to move forward

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Leibniz is the first author to speak of progress, that is, of the existence of the monad as an unending unfolding of its attributes. This approach, however, nullifies the novelty implied by the future, since the attributes of the monad are pre-contained in its substance.



with meaning, it is necessary to envision some advantage that is within our reach, but not yet attained. This has to do with the word existing: *sistere extra*, to go out. To go out from what? From immobility, from the attempt to limit oneself to what seems to be enough, sufficient, and also to reject the interpretation of time as a mere passing.

As an ingredient of hope, optimism implies dissatisfaction, not being satisfied with what is given. For this reason, hope corresponds to a mode of lived temporality that is growth, which is completely different from the idea of time passing. Growing is the most intense way of making the best use of time, that is, of putting it at the service of life. It should be pointed out that man is capable of unrestricted growth, one that is superior to organic growth because it belongs to the order of the spirit. Such growth is inherent to the highest powers: intelligence and will. Hope-filled optimism is based on this type of growth, which, because it is unrestricted, is possible at all stages of human life.

The second element of hope is the conviction that the future depends on human action. Without this conviction, hope can be established only by interpreting that which is hoped for as an end that will arrive, that will be real, by virtue of a dynamic external to man's intervention. This hope, made false by its being devoid of human intervention, is characteristic of what is called utopia. The utopian man speaks like this: times are bad, and there is nothing we can change; however, without my intervention, without counting on me, the evils that afflict us will disappear and an optimal final situation will come about. It is clear that in this way Leibniz's pessimistic optimism is repeated but transposed: we are not in the best possible world, but we will be. Now, this future-centered improvement will occur automatically, mechanically, and in accordance with the inexorable events of extra-human forces.

Utopian hope is false not only because a utopia will never materialize, but also because even if it were to materialize, it would not be possible to recognize this future as one's own, since it would have come about as a consequence of dynamisms external to the contribution of human beings. A utopian thinker paints a picture of a better future that is external to human beings because it is due to a deterministic process that lacks freedom.



An example of utopian thinking is Marxism. According to Marx, history has not ended because capitalism contains unresolved contradictions. The great defect of capitalism lies in the subjugation of work –the true creator of value– to the machine, which is dead work. This subjugation diminishes surplus value and, consequently, brings capitalism to a terminal crisis. Although the alienation of work is due to machines, society will nevertheless free itself from alienation not by doing away with machines (for that would be to go back to a time before capitalism), but rather when machines function by themselves. Then it will not be necessary to work; rather we will be able to dedicate ourselves to other activities.

Curiously, at its end, the automated economy frees man from work: this is the idea of the polyvalent man.<sup>2</sup> But his idea, aside from being ambiguous, is untenable, because Marx defines man as the animal capable of securing the objective conditions for his physical existence through work. This implies that activities other than production are a fantastical reflection: a superstructure devoid of real value. This is the Marxist sense of ideology. Therefore, if the objective conditions for the physical existence of human beings are secured through the automatic functioning of machines, then the multi-purpose human, having no need to work, cannot engage in activities imbued with human value, which Marx has disqualified with the notion of superstructure (Überbau).

In sum, utopia is a form of alienation, no matter how much those who hold utopian versions of hope maintain that this is the way to achieve de-alienation.

As an imperative, hope proposes an intrinsic future for man. The future is better under one condition: that the human being himself becomes better; otherwise, there is only room for utopia. Within utopia hide an anthropological reductionism: if man does nothing, he will remain unchanged in a magnificent world, like some of those guests from the Gospel parable, who were invited to the wedding feast, but were not wearing the proper attire. In the parable, the wedding feast is the optimal situation and the

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<sup>2</sup> Translator's note: A polyvalent man dominates work and is not dominated by it.



guests who want to enter without a wedding garment are those who have not changed, who have not improved. These are the guests that are cast out.

Here another dimension of hope appears: the man with hope, who is not devoted to utopia, knows that the future entails a task and that, without this task, the future will not come about. Additionally, it is necessary to determine what resources are available for carrying out this endeavor. The consideration of resources, therefore, is another dimension of hope, which constitutes an issue that needs to be carefully considered. The first step in addressing this issue is the following: at the moment, we do not have all the resources necessary to arrive at a better future. If we were to already have all the necessary resources, then what we could arrive at would not be a future at all, for it would lack novelty and would not be better. Strictly speaking, its coming about would be superfluous. There would not even be an obligation to propose it because, if everything is already in place, then what is best is the present situation. In the final analysis, resources are like cold hard cash, and if all of them are present, then the sensible thing to do is to enjoy them.

Consequently, the attainment of a future proper to hope requires a certain amount of adventure, of risk, since, as has just been stated, the possibility of a better future means that all of the necessary resources are not presently available. There is a Gospel parable that demonstrates this point as well. It is that of the man who had a great harvest and considered that it would be useless to continue working, that is, to sow again (the rationale for future sowing is what one hopes to harvest; therefore, the harvest is better than the sowing). Now, Scripture says that this man was a fool. From this parable, we can draw a twofold conclusion: hope cannot be surrendered, because the future, insofar as it depends on man, is better than the present; but the future is only possible, not certain, because the resources available now are not sufficient to guarantee success. When one sows, the harvest is not guaranteed.

The hypothesis that everything necessary for carrying out the task to be performed is available in advance is false. The resources that are at hand are always scarce with respect to hope, since to hope is to want to be more. To hope is to want to be more because right now one is little. With these observations, a first



step towards framing the question of the relationship between resources and hope has been taken.

It should be noted that the hope-filled task is impossible if one attempts to undertake it completely alone. The isolated man cannot reach a better future precisely because, by himself, he does not have all the necessary resources. Therefore, one cannot undertake an adventure of hope cannot if he does not count on the help of others. This help consists, above all, in cooperation. In other words, the hope-filled task cannot be undertaken if the future is not held in common, and this entails the common nature of the good that is sought. Working with hope, being open to new horizons, is a characteristic of human beings that develops in a social manner, that is, in accordance with hope's ability to gather people together. This value is of special interest for morality.

Human existence, insofar as it is articulated by hope, is constitutively epic. An epic is the narrative of a multiplicity of intense experiences through which human beings come to know themselves in depth. A magnificent example of a literary epic is the figure of Ulysses engaged in the task of returning to Ithaca. Another example of a more profound—and also real—epic existence is offered to us by the figure of Abraham.

These examples illustrate how epics possess an overarching structure: one's own resources are not enough. This structure defines the temporal being of the human being, whose existence can be narrated as a story because he has a past, whose meaning must be actualized, and an impulse toward an end, which calls him forth. For this reason, the counter-figure of history is narration without a future, which considers life as happening without any direction. A clear example of anti-history is Kafka's narrative, in which man is not helped by anyone and finds nothing, because he is submerged in an anguished bureaucratic process that continues to infinity.

Above all, an epic narration contains the task of a human subject. For this task to be hope-filled, it is necessary that it not follow the mere caprice of the subject. Rather, the task must have been entrusted, and the protagonist must understand it to be an assignment. This is where help, the original accompaniment, lies. One could ask the person who seeks to live in isolation: who asked you to butt in? Every task is assigned, first of all, by



belonging to history: it is the metaphor of passing on the torch. But, strictly speaking, the author of the assignment is the Creator. For this reason, the assignment must be understood as a mission that has been entrusted to someone. The ones that understand this fully are the saints.

Throughout the course of an epic's action, there appears an assisting element, that is, an accompanying aid, which is offered to the subject as she walks toward the future objective. At the same time, however, hope is always confronted by difficulties or obstacles: an adversary that puts it to the test. But this is not all. Another factor of hope lies in the fact that the beneficiary of the action cannot only be the subject who carries it out. In this sense, it can be said that the motivation of hope is always transcendent. A transcendent motivation is necessary because hope is incompatible with isolation. The better future, to which one aspires, cannot be for oneself alone; the benefit hoped for must reach others.

If any of the epic elements of hope disappear, human history becomes distorted and the ridiculous mutilation of hope into utopia takes place. In the Marxist utopia, the activity of the subject becomes trivial, because the polyvalent man is incompatible with projects that reach the social level. But the mutilation of the essential structure of hope can affect other elements. This gives rise to different modulations of nihilist individualism; the egoist curtails his hope and surrounds it with nothingness.

It is possible for a human subject to answer the following questions this way: Who entrusted you with the task of existing? No one. What help can you count on? Only my own resources. Who is your adversary? Everyone else. Who is the beneficiary? Only me. It should, however, be kept in mind that whoever puts his hope in a task that no one has entrusted to him, and with no other beneficiary or assistance than himself, is deceiving himself.

In the Christian understanding of life, the one who assigns the task is the one who is most interested in its success. He is the friend par excellence, to whom one can always go. For this reason, prayer occupies a central place in the life of the Christian. In prayer, one discovers that the helper is within himself, as the



most innovative, as the best and, ultimately, as what is least expected by superficial people.

There are two other human types incapable of living with hope: the doubters and the clueless. The doubter is the one who keeps a close eye on the resources at his disposal, forgetting that they can be increased, and gives too much weight to the difficulties. He allows himself to be deterred by pain and does not know how to seek help or cooperation. The clueless man, on the other hand, is the one who follows Foch's phrase: first jump, then look. Better yet, the clueless man is clueless with regard to everything except resentment. The hope-filled task is incompatible with resentment because resentment is the child of fear. If fear is introduced into hoping, then the latter is replaced by a sense of urgency or by excessive calculation.

Precisely because it is accompanied by risk, hope is a source of solidarity. Hope's power to call forth lies in the fact that he who hopes takes a risk and he who takes no risks does not hope. Hope calls forth two great forces of the spirit: friendship and antagonism; one positive and the other negative. But the first is more powerful. Since hope is a concern of a heart that—like the prow of a ship—opens up horizons, the one who hopes is always protected; and not because he takes cover, but rather on the contrary: because he exposes himself. The man who hopes neither conforms to the present situation nor takes refuge in a bunker. For this reason, he brings others along.

Taking risks is like gambling. If sociology develops by appealing to game theory, society must be defined as a positive-sum game. This is possible through hope as described above.

For this reason, hope-filled activity is a gamble that does not overwhelm. It is a joyful gamble that is worth taking chances on because everyone wins. The final element of hope, therefore, is joy. From this joy the universe's joy also derives. As St. Paul says, creatures are awaiting the manifestation of the glory of the children of God; meanwhile, they are subject to vanity (cf. Rm 8:19-20); or, in other words, they are bored.



## 2. HOPE'S LOVE

What does Christianity add to man's hope; that is, what is hope in the realm of personal love? This question can also be expressed as follows: what is my life's task? A task is an expansion of freedom. For the Greeks, freedom is dominion over voluntary acts insofar as they bear a relation to an end. But there must be a greater freedom in the hope-filled task embedded in loving bestowal, that is, in the expansion of intimacy. Love is not possible without personal freedom.

For the Christian, hoping does not mean waiting. Hope is not only about what is to come. Kant's question, "what am I authorized to hope for?" does not presuppose a journey to a terminus whose coming about and content has to be ascertained. If having is continued in the form of gifting, then there is a notion that is superior to that of the goal which I call *destining*.<sup>3</sup> The question concerning destining entails that man's activity springs forth in giving from the person. Destining should not be confused with destiny. To say it in some way, when taking stock of his life from his personal being, man finds that a final fulfilment of his capacity for desiring is not enough for him, but rather that he needs to seek the fulfilment of his capacity for offering.

I will try to express this difficult question in a more graphic manner. It is not primarily a question of attaining new horizons, but rather of giving. Who will accept? The capacity to give must also resonate at a personal level; otherwise, it is absurd. Who responds to the hope-filled initiative? The key issue is correspondence. Thomas Aquinas states this clearly: strictly speaking, without correspondence, love does not exist. On this point there is no room for the one-sidedness of desire. Without correspondence, the superiority of the person's giving love would make no sense. Hope aspires to loving reciprocity and aims to

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<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: Polo considers that in classical Greek philosophy "having" was the highest form of human activity, which was conceived of as going beyond material possessions; one can for example be said to "have ideas". In Christian thought, however, it is understood that giving is a higher form of human activity than having. In this paragraph and those that follow, Polo explains that this priority also entails a shift in teleology. "Obtaining a goal" is no longer the most important, but rather "destining" oneself towards a loving personal relationship.



foster it above human fancies. Hope comes from love and seeks to correspond.

Hope's love seeks acceptance and response; that is, the one who is alike. Here likeness does not mean a copy or reiteration, but rather an otherness of initiatives in reply that brings the two together and places them on the same level. For this reason, one of the central categories of Christian sociology is the notion of neighbor. This notion means that if one is capable of loving, the other must not be inferior through lack of this capacity. Equality among human beings is not only according to the species, but rather is focused on their personal dignity, and it is a requirement of the Christian life to respect and promote the dignity of others. If others are not equal to me, what does giving mean? To whom does one give? A neighbor is not a mere receiver of one's giving. For, above all, giving seeks to promote the dignity of the other. This intention regulates the content of the gift.

Hope is a doubly directed requirement, beyond adaptation or equilibrium. Hope is not homeostatic, since it seeks the dignity of all men and promotes it. From it arises an imperative that, modifying a Kantian phrase, can be expressed as follows: do not be satisfied with the means. This non-conformism brings with it dissatisfaction; it is the refusal to stop, to say "that's enough".

Dissatisfaction is equivalent to not getting tired of giving. It is not a negative attitude, although it brings with it a letting go. This letting go is described in many cases (in others, it implies a renunciation) as sharing and helping to grow. What is usually called interpersonal communication requires the correlative flexibility between what is mine and what is yours, which is proper to the virtue of friendship. For this reason, hope neither claims the authority of the bestowal nor demands its recognition. It renounces the attention of others precisely because it does not renounce giving and because dissatisfaction is equivalent to not tiring of giving.

A capacity to love subjected to a situation of solitude is a tragedy. If others are not dignifiable, then loving hope lacks meaning; it is, so to say, a burden that cannot be unloaded if one is left alone, it is a capacity nullified at its terminus. But the Christian cannot remain alone, as "one" who lacks a neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Implicit in the question that gives rise to the parable of



the Good Samaritan is a whole orientation of existence. A neighbor needs to be searched for. The neighbor must be found. For this reason, this question has repercussions for whoever formulates it. To seek out one's neighbor means being disposed to continue as a neighbor. Strictly speaking, the neighbor of the Gospel parable is the Samaritan. Seeking one's neighbor is equivalent to replacing one's own concerns, to changing life's routine because of the irruption of the person into it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The observations contained in this article are situated within a larger investigation entitled *Transcendental Anthropology*.



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## *ARTICLES*







# A Concausal Approach to the Mind-Body Problem

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RECEIVED: August 3, 2018

ACCEPTED: March 25, 2020

DEFINITIVE VERSION: September 3, 2021

**ABSTRACT:** This paper tests Leonardo Polo's *concausality* against the challenges of epiphenomenalism, overdetermination, and reductionism that the contemporary mind-body problem presents. An analysis of Jaegwon Kim's criticism of John Searle's Biological Naturalism exemplifies the aporias of the mind-body relation generated by dualism and physicalism. In contrast with these ontologies, Aristotle's notion of matter as potentiality requires a plurality of causal senses and is a viable alternative to both dualism and monism. Polo's reprisal of Aristotle's substance as *concausality* provides a revision of our senses of causation and an ontological framework that makes coherent our experience of consciousness and our understanding of physical reality.

**KEYWORDS:** Biological Naturalism, Matter, Mind-Body Problem, Reductionism.







The contemporary theories of the mind are mostly both a consequence and a response to Descartes' ontology. For Descartes, a substance has "one principal property which constitutes its nature and essence, and to which all its other properties are referred."<sup>1</sup> In the case of the material substance, extension is its essence. Moreover, the "natures of mind and body are not only different but, in some way, opposite."<sup>2</sup> Descartes' explanation reads as follows: "the concept of body includes nothing at all, which belongs to the mind, and the concept of mind includes nothing at all which belongs to the body."<sup>3</sup> Against this Cartesian backdrop, the current philosophy of mind is one of belligerent anti-dualism.

In contrast with the strict physicalist orthodoxy in the philosophy of mind, and perhaps ostracized because of it, Searle's solution is, nonetheless, a common-sense desideratum: to acknowledge the physical aspects involved in the mind while avoiding a reduction of mental states to physical states. His theory, Biological Naturalism (BN), intuitively tries to fit together how the world works –according to our current scientific theories–, and our everyday experience of consciousness. For Searle, consciousness is "a natural biological phenomenon."<sup>4</sup> Searle's proposal rejects the Cartesian categories and advances significant reformulations of the notions of causality and identity. For him, the mind-body problem does not require a solution because it is not really a problem. If anything, it requires a change of mind, so we do not turn the mind-body relation into a problem.

However, upon examination, many grow disillusioned with BN's proposal.<sup>5</sup> There is a tacit consensus about BN, both in the

<sup>1</sup> René Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, On Meditation Six, 8A. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Synopsis, 7.13.

<sup>3</sup> Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, On Meditation Six, 6.225.

<sup>4</sup> John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (MIT Press, 1992), 93.

<sup>5</sup> Jaegwon Kim's appraisal of Searle's BN (Jaegwon Kim, "Mental Causation in Searle's 'Biological Naturalism,'" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, no. 1 (1995): 189–194) as either inconsistent has been further corroborated by Kevin Corcoran (K. Corcoran, "The Trouble With Searle's Biological Naturalism," *Erkenntnis* 55, no. 3 (December 1, 2001): 307–24, and also by Martine Nida-Rümelin, "Causal Reduction, Ontological Reduction, and First-Person Ontology," in *Speech Acts, Mind, and Social Reality*, *Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2002), 205–21. Other assessments of BN either reject it



published literature and in the philosophers' hallway conversations, that almost pre-empts the need for serious consideration. For even if Searle's optimism that he has arrived at the correct solution to the mind-body controversy prevents him from abandoning his own theory in the certainty that the facts back him up, the arguments that get him there are not clear. To many, BN pulls the rabbit out of the hat with no one seeing the trick, not even when replayed in slow motion. Searle responds to these accusations stating that it is not philosophy but instead science, which will provide the details of how the brain causes the mind. However, the real question is whether BN is equipped with adequate ontological tools to replace the Cartesian worldview.

This paper sketches the basics of a proposal for the mind-body problem following Searle's view that consciousness is biologically grounded while drawing from a non-dualistic Aristotelian ontology.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's interest in biology led him to examine life, the different operations of living beings, and the faculties for those operations: nutrition, reproduction, perception, imagination, desire, and *nous* (intellect). To Aristotle, life was defined by the possession of *psyche*. The *psyche*, as understood by the Stagirite, is not merely a passive disposition, a tendency to behave in particular ways under certain conditions, according to the properties of the individual components. Rather, it is an active principle that guides both the development of a living thing, according to a specific organization and direction (i.e., baby elephants grow into adult elephants and not butterflies), and the type of operations in which it can engage, including cognition.

Therefore, in Aristotle, cognitive capacities like perception and understanding come together with biological functions like nutrition and reproduction.<sup>7</sup> Although Aristotle noticed essential

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altogether, or offer repairs that turn BN in a form of a physicalism or property dualism.

<sup>6</sup> Recent studies appeal tohylomorphism as a fertile ground to avoid the mind-body problem. See for example: William Jaworski, *Structure and the Metaphysics of Mind: How Hylomorphism Solves the Mind-Body Problem* (Oxford University Press UK, 2016), David S. Oderberg, "Hylemorphic Dualism," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22, no. 2 (2005): 70–99, Robert Pasnau, "Mind and Hylomorphism," in *The Oxford Handbook to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon (Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Nutrition, for example, is the "first and most common capacity of the soul, in



differences among them, he also saw their continuity as manifestations of life. Aristotle then would have endorsed the irreducibility of mental states without excluding the possibility that the mind is just another biological phenomenon in the world (and thus physical).<sup>8</sup> As Alan Code notes: "In one respect, Searle's view is like Aristotle's. Both treat the psychological as part of the physical."<sup>9</sup>

However, as illuminating as Aristotle's view may be in addressing the question of consciousness and its physical basis, the philosopher of Stagira was not our contemporary and did not have to go through the motions of Modern science. Aristotle's view on physics, so frequently deemed obsolete, casts a long shadow of suspicion on the applicability of his philosophy to contemporary issues.<sup>10</sup>

Leonardo Polo, a philosopher who has sought to rescue the best proposals of many thinkers in the history of philosophy and to show the legitimate place of often misleading claims, provides us with metaphysical insights that can repair, if not replace, not only the Cartesian dualistic apparatus and Aristotle's damaged image but also BN's desire to overcome dualism once and for all. Notwithstanding, we do not find in L. Polo a direct engagement with the philosophers who dealt with the mind-body problem. To this extent, this paper cannot present Polo's direct light on these conversations but an application of his view on concausality to the mental-physical dichotomy. The paper will explore how

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virtue of which life belongs to all living things" (*De Anima* ii 4, 415a 24-25).

<sup>8</sup> This paper is concerned with any type of consciousness or mental life that has a biological instantiation, that is from amoebas to human beings, and not specifically with intellectual consciousness or with the immortality of the soul.

<sup>9</sup> Alan D. Code, "Aristotle, Searle, and the Mind-Body Problem," in *John Searle and His Critics*, ed. Ernest Lepore and Robert Van Gulick (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 105.

<sup>10</sup> Miles Burnyeat observed that Aristotle's philosophy of mind was flawed given its incompatibility with current physical theories. Others have not hesitated to interpret Aristotle as a functionalist theory (Hilary Putnam, Martha Nussbaum), although this claim has been refuted (see Alan Code and Julius Moravcsik, "Explaining Various Forms of Living," in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford University Press, 1995).



concausality expands the senses of causality and complements recent hylomorphic proposals in the philosophy of mind.<sup>11</sup>

## 1. JAEGWON KIM'S OBJECTIONS TO BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM

Probably the best well-known attack on John Searle's Biological Naturalism (BN) is Jaegwon Kim's.<sup>12</sup> Examining Kim's objections can give us an excellent view of the aporias that a Cartesian ontology casts on the mind-body problem.

As Kim notes, BN endorses these three principles of non-reductive materialism: the irreducibility of the mental, the mind-body supervenience,<sup>13</sup> and the causal efficacy of the mental.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Searle admits the *ontological* irreducibility of the mental: "We cannot do an eliminative reduction of consciousness, showing that it is just an illusion. Nor can we reduce consciousness to its neurobiological basis because such a third-person reduction would leave out the first-person ontology."<sup>15</sup> However, at the same time, Searle suggests causal supervenience<sup>16</sup> as a way of explaining the *causal* reducibility of mental states: "Conscious states are thus *causally reducible* to neurobiological processes. They have absolutely no life of their own, independent of their

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<sup>11</sup> Polo's rendering of Aristotle's notions of matter as temporal priority and form as entailing potentiality will be set aside in this discussion. While incorporating Polo's insights would undoubtedly bring our understanding of the mind and the physical reality into sharper focus, it would unreasonably extend the reach and conclusions of this paper. However, it should be noted that Polo's reformulations of Aristotelianism are broader than what is conveyed in the present discussion.

<sup>12</sup> Kim, "Mental Causation in Searle's 'Biological Naturalism.'"

<sup>13</sup> Supervenience for consciousness means that "the microphysical nature of a thing (a brain) wholly determines its mental nature. Thus an entity cannot change in respect to mental properties without changing in respect to its microphysical properties." (Corcoran, "The Trouble With Searle's Biological Naturalism," *Erkenntnis* 55, no. 3 (December 1, 2001): 309.)

<sup>14</sup> Kim, "Mental Causation in Searle's 'Biological Naturalism,'" 33.

<sup>15</sup> John R. Searle, *Mind: A Brief Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 113–14.

<sup>16</sup> The nature of this causal supervenience amounts to the following: "The existence of consciousness can be explained by the causal interactions between elements of the brain at the micro level, but consciousness cannot itself be deduced or calculated from the sheer physical structure of the neurons without some additional account of the causal relations between them." John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (MIT Press, 1992), 112.



neurobiological basis. Causally speaking, they are not something “over and above neurobiological processes.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, according to Searle, his views do not impede the causal role of the mental: “Because conscious states are real features of the real world, they function causally.”<sup>18</sup>

To Kim, Searle seems to be playing with us by first saying that the mind is not “something ‘over and above’ neurobiological processes” and then saying that “we cannot reduce consciousness to its neurobiological basis.” In other words, Searle’s ideas about the first-person ontology of the mental “are incompatible with other things he says about the status of consciousness,”<sup>19</sup> more specifically about the causal reduction of the mental.

Furthermore, Kim questions that these non-reductionist desiderata can be compatible with the principles of causal exclusion of non-physical causes<sup>20</sup> and with causal overdetermination (an effect may not have more than one cause). To put it succinctly, Searle’s BN has too many causes producing one single effect and posits mental causes that do not abide by the causal exclusion principle. More specifically, Kim notes that Searle identifies three possible types of *explanation* in his non-reductive physicalism: left to right from macro to macro, or micro to micro, or bottom-up from micro to macro.<sup>21</sup> For example, a mental property M – Searle’s desire to go skiing – is caused by an instantiation of a particular biological property, B.



<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Searle, *Mind*, 114.

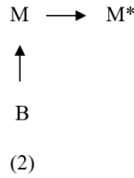
<sup>19</sup> Nida-Rümelin, “Causal Reduction, Ontological Reduction, and First-Person Ontology,” 212.

<sup>20</sup> As Kim defines it, the causal closure principle states the thesis that “every physical property-instantiation that has a cause at *t* has a complete physical cause at *t*.” Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 280.

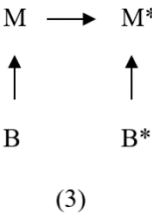
<sup>21</sup> Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, 87. See also Kim, “Mental Causation in Searle’s ‘Biological Naturalism,’” 193.



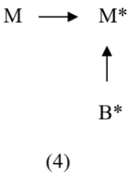
M can cause the instantiation of other mental properties (mental-mental causation). For example, his desire to go skiing (M) causes another numerically distinct desire (M\*), that is, his desire or intention to check the snow conditions in Squaw Valley.



The problem is that M\* is also caused by lower-level neurophysiological phenomena B\*

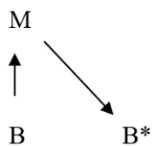


So, M\* has “two distinct sufficient causes,” one a mental phenomenon M and the other a biological phenomenon B\*. Thus M\* is causally overdetermined. From here, it follows that “all cases of mental-to-mental causation involve overdetermination of the effect.” The overdetermination follows from having two sets of sufficient and independent causes, that is, M and B\* causing M\*:



Moreover, Kim notes that M should also cause physical properties (top-down, downward, mental-to-physical causation), namely, the physical realization of the desire to check snow conditions B\* (i.e., typing in the computer). Consequently, there is a fourth type of causation, top-down, from the mental to the physical, diagonally from macro to micro. Namely,





(5)

Unfortunately, it does not seem possible to hold both. 1. The causal closure principle where all causal ancestry of a physical event remains within the physical domain,<sup>22</sup> and where micro-macro property relations follow a pattern of causation (or at least of causal supervenience according to Searle), and that nonetheless, 2. We also have downward causation. To avoid this problem, since, according to Searle, brain processes cause mental states that are also part of the physical world, BN should simplify things in the following manner:

**Brain State B (S)                      →                      Brain State B\* (S\*)**

Consequently, obtaining an ontological reduction of consciousness would reveal BN as a form of reductive physicalism. Kim states that BN has the unfortunate consequence of “killing the patient in the process of curing him: in its attempt to explain mental causation, it all but banishes the very mentality it was out to save.”<sup>23</sup> However, it is quite clear that Searle would not accept an ontological reduction of the mental. Therefore, if the reductionist option is not palatable to Searle, Kim suggests that he should make up his mind and admit property dualism. Consequently, BN will have to explain what every dualism must figure out, namely, how the mental and the physical relate to each other.

Kim only sees a way out of this conundrum by making the mental epiphenomenal: the mind does not have a causal role. Following the physicalist principle of the causal closure of the world, Kim assumes that the mind should not have causal powers if it is to have a minimal supervenient ontology with properties

<sup>22</sup> Kim, *Supervenience and Mind*, 280.

<sup>23</sup> Kim, 194.



that physical reality lacks. Although he avoids eliminating the mental due to its specific epiphenomenal properties, the mind ultimately has no relevance in the physical world as it is not causal. Kim's epiphenomenalism is nothing but an honest effort at coming to terms with Descartes' failed attempts at having the mental and the physical interact causally.

## 2. BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM AND SYSTEM CAUSATION

However, Searle seems to be aware of the constraints set both by the causal closure principle and non-reductionism, but he still defends the basic premises of BN. The reason for his position is that whereas Searle would wholeheartedly endorse graphic (1) as he states: "Conscious states are entirely caused by lower-level neurobiological processes in the brain,"<sup>24</sup> graphics two through four depicted above quickly depart from the spirit of BN. There are two significant misunderstandings of Searle's proposal in Kim's objection. One is that instead of the previous formulations, Searle would propose (2)\*:

$$S \left( \frac{M}{B} \right) \text{ causes } S^* \left( \frac{M^*}{B^*} \right) \\ (2)^*$$

The reason is that, according to Searle, the causal powers do not belong to M or the physiological basis B\*. The causation belongs to the system (S), that is, the brain, and this system can be considered under M and M\* (phenomenological level) or B and B\* (neurophysiological level). It is not just that M causes M\*, or M causes B\*, but  $S \left( \frac{M}{B} \right)$  causes  $S^* \left( \frac{M^*}{B^*} \right)$ . S and S\* are states of a system that has both a phenomenological and physiological description. Therefore, overdetermination and property dualism dissipate by presenting causation as belonging *to the system*, not just to brain states or mental states.

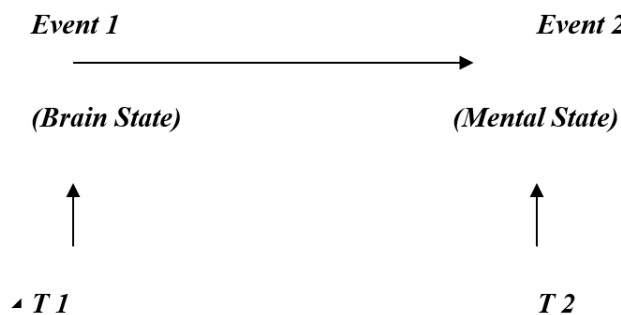
BN genuinely attempts to avoid epiphenomenalism and overdetermination by granting to mental states the *causality of the system*. Although Kim acknowledges in writing that Searle is talking about *three types of explanation*, and not *three causal relations*

<sup>24</sup> Searle, *Mind*, 114.



happening at the same time (micro-micro, macro-macro, bottom-up), Kim treats these relations as causal. Moreover, there is a second misunderstanding of Searle's position. Kim states that Searle also should endorse top-down causation from the mental to the physical *as if* the mental, devoid of a physical instantiation itself, was single-handedly causing the physical or the mental. Then again, does Searle's causal ontology of the mental require downward causation in the way depicted by these arrows? BN states that there is *only the causation of the system*, and therefore, properly speaking, and contrary to Kim's assumption, BN does not have top-down causation as the mental solely causing either the next physical state or the next mental state, but *as a system* of physical and mental states causing the next overall state. It is in this sense that top-down causation has a place in Searle's BN.

Moreover, Searle presents a further reformulation to solve the problems of mental causation. Besides Cartesian dualism, a Humean brand of causation seems to underlie the mind-body problem. According to Searle, Hume's understanding of causation is as follows:



According to Hume, cause and effect are two separate events with succession in time between the cause and the effect. As separate events, they have a separate existence. In other words, the ontology of something is delimited by what counts as an event, and this is determined by time. Applied to the mind-body problem, this will entail that regardless of whether the physical causes the mental or the mental has any causal power over the physical, since the physical and the mental happen as different events, and these events demarcate their ontology, the physical and the



mental will have separate existence and ontology (and we could add separate causations).

Searle's criticism of this Humean causation states that the relation of causation between brain states and mental states is one of simultaneity of the cause and the effect, where the effect does not happen as a successive event but simultaneously with the cause. More importantly, it seems that for Searle, this simultaneity indicates that the mental and the physical are not different events, but they are constitutive of one single event. This simultaneity of the physical and the mental in a single event supposedly eliminates the duplicity of ontologies. Hence, we overcome dualism by having one event that ensues one single ontology. The rationale is that 1. Having a single event does not lead to a multiplication of causalities based on ontologies, 2. The ontology of the mental and the physical are preserved as low- and high-level features of a system. Searle's move then is to make of the mental and the physical a single event with one single ontology that, nonetheless, has low- and high-level features.

The tension that this proposal creates is apparent. On one side, Searle objects to Hume's causation, where distinct events ensue distinct ontologies. On the other side, he tries to circumvent the difficulties of Humean causation while abiding by Hume's metaphysics. BN does not overcome Hume's causation where events demarcate ontology; he follows it by finding a loop: simultaneous causation.

The question at stake now is how explanatorily successful this simultaneous causation is. Unfortunately, Searle's criticism of Hume's causality is not subversive enough to overcome Hume's tacit dualism. Why, if we were to have cause and effect at separate times as Hume's model presents, we would have separate entities with separate causal powers and conversely, if the mental and the physical are simultaneous in a relation of causation of the mental by the physical, we obtain only one system of causality with two features, mental and physical? Why can the brain cause the mental, maintaining a relation of cause and effect, yet the causal powers belong to the whole cause-effect dyad, instead of solely to the brain as the cause? What is it about the simultaneity that allows for that? Removing the horizontal relation of event A at T1 followed by event A\* at T2, and establishing a vertical causality where B causes M simultaneously, may get rid of the



time-lapse and obtain synchrony, but it does not change at all the fact that there is a relation of cause and effect between the brain and the mind. Regardless of causation being simultaneous or successive, entailing events or properties, there is a relation of asymmetry between cause and effect: the effect has a relation of dependence from the cause. This dependence does not need to be temporal but one of ontological priority. Even if brain states cause mental states with a relation of causal simultaneity, there is nonetheless a relation of dependence of the effect, the mental, from the cause, the brain state. Then, the question will be, are mental states caused by the brain, or are they sharing in a system of causality?

### 3. ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM AND EPIPHENOMENALISM

Searle's and Kim's views stem from holding on to two different intuitions that neither seems willing to give up. For Kim, it is the certainty that science does not allow for causes that are not physical. For Searle, it is the experience of the causal efficacy of mental states (while subscribing to a scientific worldview).

It seems clear that one crucial difference between Searle's and his critics' approach is that for Searle, it is possible to have one causality (the system's) while preserving mental and physical features. For his objectors, however, if the causation of the mental and the physical are identical, then the entities are identical as well. Hence, since Searle preserves mental and physical features, we have two separate sets of causes and two distinct ontologies. Conversely, if mental states and physical states have separate ontologies (may that be substances, properties, or 'levels'), then they have a separate causality. The irony is that while Kim wields this dualist ontology of "distinct ontology ↔ distinct causality" against BN, he seems unwilling to apply the same principle to this own theory. He endorses one causality, the one of the physical, but he keeps mental features that should have their own separate causality (since, even if epiphenomenally explained by the physical, they are still mental). Depriving the mental of some form of causality should reduce its ontology to the physical. Therefore, preserving some form of ontology for the mental and no causal input seems *ad hoc*.



Kim, then, implicitly follows a dualist ontology. The divide for Kim is not *prima facie* between extended versus non-extended but between causal power versus causal irrelevance. However, upon inspection, what is causal or not causal rests on what is material or non-material. For this reason, a non-reductive physicalism that relies on a tacit understanding of matter as extension will lack a coherent account for the ontology of the mental.

This debate between Kim and Searle could go on in endless circles of objections and replies. Searle draws our attention to two critical intuitions about our mental life: 1. That is somehow biologically grounded, 2. That nonetheless, its causal role is not reducible to physical interactions. Kim reminds us of the difficulties that derive from embracing either alternative. The pendulum is none other than the circularity of the two sides of the same coin: dualism and monism. Is there any way out to this catch 22?

#### 4. THE REAL PROBLEMS OF BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM

There are at least two possible ways to play devil's advocate against BN and in support of Kim's view. First, Searle defends the idea that causation belongs to the system and not to the physical or mental properties exclusively. Consequently, he should admit epiphenomenalism because the mental properties would not have causal powers per se (the system does), or he should give up the idea that there are mental properties at all and admit reductive physicalism. Conversely, if he admits that mental and physical properties are not epiphenomenal and have causal powers, he is a property dualist. Then, he needs to explain how the physical and the mental, while having opposing attributes, get to interact. How can Searle rely on the system having one single causation while keeping physical and mental features in his solution to the mind-body problem and avoiding reductive physicalism, epiphenomenalism, and property dualism?

Second, Kim himself refines his objection to BN to acknowledge that Searle would not allow for the mental as a stand-alone, sufficient cause to produce the mental. We can rephrase Kim's point as follows. Although each system state comprises mental and physical properties, ultimately, it is caused either by the former overall system state, which includes both the mental and the physical, or by the biological basis of each



state. Therefore, we would still obtain overdetermination: the one that ensues from the system state (1) causing system state (2) and the brain basis (2) causing their mental states (2).

We can rephrase Kim's concerns without focusing on causal overdetermination as he does and take instead the premises laid out by BN *prima facie*. The questions to BN here address an ambiguity about causation that needs to be made explicit.

1. On one side, Searle talks, synchronically, about brain states causing mental states in simultaneous causation, that is, as the neuronal processes that give rise to someone's desire to go skiing.
2. He also talks about the causation of the system diachronically, from left to right, from macro to macro, and micro to micro. A desire to go skiing causes a desire to check snow conditions, where we do not have a stand-alone mental state  $M$  or brain state  $B$  causing either a stand-alone mental state  $M^*$  or a brain state  $B^*$  but a system state  $S(\frac{M}{B})$  causing  $S^*(\frac{M^*}{B^*})$ .

We can now see the ambiguity from the standpoint of the *mental state* or of the *brain state*.

1. From the mental state: If BN defends that mental states have causal powers (the causal powers of the system) and that biological processes cause mental states, the problem is not just that mental states ( $M^*$ ) are an effect of system processes (which include the mental and the physical) *and* an effect of its underlying brain processes ( $B^*$ ) (a reformulation of Kim's overdetermination concern). It seems that mental states are also an *effect* of the brain state and a *cause* of the following overall state. Consequently, the question would be: does Searle mean that mental states are simultaneously an effect and a cause? It seems that this would not be a problem if they are so with different senses. If that is the case, the disambiguation of those senses is in order. On the other hand, if mental states are effects and causes simultaneously in the same way, there will be a need to explain how something can be both a cause and an effect simultaneously in one single causal relation. In other words, is the sense of causality that Searle states for the relation between brain states producing mental states



the same as the sense of the causality that the system exerts on the following system states?

Moreover, mental states are both 1. Sharing in the causality of the system in causing diachronically ( $S(\frac{M}{B}) \rightarrow S^*(\frac{M^*}{B^*})$ ) and 2. Being caused synchronically by brain processes  $S(B \rightarrow M)$ . The question arises: what is the model of causation between the physical and the mental? One of shared causation where the mental and the physical are on equal footing ( $\frac{M}{B}$ ) or one of dependence of mental states on brain states ( $B \rightarrow M$ )?

2. From the standpoint of brain states: is the causation that relates one brain event token with its supervenient mental even token, and the causality that moves the system through time (that is, the brain as a system) the same? How do brain states cause mental states and propagate their causality to the whole system, including mental states, diachronically and synchronically,<sup>25</sup> namely, as the neuronal activity causing the mental state and as that state causing the next mental/physical state? In other words, is the physical basis of the causation of mental states also the basis for the causation of the next overall state? How does the ontological causation of mental states by brain states (that my feeling of thirst is caused and realized by brain states) intervene in the diachronic causality of the system (that the feeling of thirst and its neuronal basis causes an intention to reach for water)? It would seem that in BN, we obtain an overburden cause, B, that is busy causing and realizing the synchronic and simultaneous mental state while causing, in conjunction with its realized mental state, the next overall system state. This multitasking cause may not violate any philosophical principle but calls for an investigation of how divergent causations compenetrates. It also prompts a philosophical reflection on how physical matter is at play since a Cartesian one does not seem adequate for such a feat.

In summary, we have that  $(B \rightarrow M)$  (brain states cause mental states), but  $(B \rightarrow M)$  also causes successive mental/physical

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<sup>25</sup> The so-called top-down causation, which is not such for BN but only system causation, works diachronically whereas the bottom-up causation works synchronically.



events  $B^*/M^*$ . Similarly,  $M$ , being caused by  $B$ , is an effect of  $B$ , and at the same time, it is a cause that, like  $B$ , also causes successive mental/physical events  $B^*/M^*$ . BN should explain how the brain, by causing mental states, also grants causation to the whole system diachronically and how the mind, while being caused by the brain, receives causal powers that belong to it both as an effect and as part of a system.

In summary, Searle wants to overcome Cartesian metaphysics by proposing that the mental is not separate from the physical and that the mind can be causal. However, despite his efforts to reject the Cartesian ontology, he does not offer an alternative one.<sup>26</sup> Searle is yet to delineate further a replacement for a Cartesian ontology of the world, which Kim's epiphenomenalism and his objections to BN are still fostering. The following section proposes that Aristotle's understanding of matter as potentiality may lead us in that direction.

## 5. ARISTOTLE'S HYLOMORPHISM VERSUS DESCARTES' SUBSTANCE DUALISM

Descartes opposed the Aristotelian tradition in which he was brought up. Unsatisfied with Aristotle's philosophy of nature, especially his theory of natural movement, he wanted the science of the time to replace it. A genius metaphysical move was to present matter as a substance, with extension as its defining essence. Granting to matter the status of a substance, that is, making it "a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence,"<sup>27</sup> and as consisting in extension, matter was rendered as an appropriate study subject for mathematics and physics, expunged from any spurious metaphysical speculation.

Descartes was undermining the Scholastic metaphysics rooted in an Aristotelian ontology in which matter did not have existence by itself; it was not a substance. Moreover, matter was not

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<sup>26</sup> As Corcoran notices: "Indeed Searle's commitment to non-reductivism and causal closure not only belies his rejection of the tradition, but it also creates a problem that his biological naturalism lacks the resources to solve plausibly." Corcoran, "The Trouble with Searle's Biological Naturalism," 321.

<sup>27</sup> Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 8A.24.



defined primarily as extension –although this would be the first property of material substances–, but as pure potentiality, that is, pure capacity to be.<sup>28</sup> Aristotle understood matter as a *principle* of material things that accounted for their capacity to change.<sup>29</sup> Potentiality, then, the sheer capacity to be, was a constitutive principle of reality and primarily characterized matter.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, in Aristotelian metaphysics, matter is never understood as something standing in itself;<sup>31</sup> it does not exist by itself as a separate substance.<sup>32</sup> The reality of matter is only possible if it joins with something already actual because pure potentiality cannot have existence. It is always parasitic of something with some degree of actualization, that is, determination and existence. For Aristotle, material things do not exist without these two principles of potentiality (matter) and determination (form).<sup>33</sup> Therefore, matter and form are not two substances in need of coordination but co-principles of things, not mutually exclusive but complementary, in need of each other to have real existence.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, the experience and conceptualization

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<sup>28</sup> For an overview of how mechanism replaced the Aristotelian world view see Gordon Leff, *The Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook: An Essay on Intellectual and Spiritual Change in the Fourteenth Century* (Harper & Row, 1976).

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle responded to Parmenides by noting that change was “the act of what exists potentially insofar as it exists potentially” (*Physics* III.1.201a 10).

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle defined prime matter as “the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be, and which persists in the result, not accidentally.” *Physics* I.9.192a32-33. See also *Metaphysics* Z.1, 1046a12.

<sup>31</sup> Unpredictably for Descartes, Heisenberg turned to the Aristotelian idea of matter as potentiality in order to make room for the objectivity of the indetermination relations and its mathematical expression in probability. See W. Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, Harper, New York, 1962 (1<sup>st</sup> 1958), 160. However, energy exists under some determination which makes it a kind of secondary matter instead of pure potentiality.

<sup>32</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1041b, 25-31.

<sup>33</sup> A principle is that from which something derives in any form of dependence. The notion of cause is restricted to dependence in being. All causes were principles then, but not all principles were causes.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle’s hylomorphism has experienced a revival in the recent literature of the analytical philosophy metaphysics. See for example: Kathrin Koslicki, “Aristotle’s Mereology And The Status Of Form,” *Journal of Philosophy* 103, no. 12 (2006): 715–736, Anna Marmodoro, “Aristotle’s Hylomorphism Without Reconditioning,” *Philosophical Inquiry* 37, no. 1–2 (2013): 5–22, Robert Koons, “Staunch Vs. Faint-Hearted Hylomorphism: Toward an Aristotelian Account of



that we may have of matter are never of prime matter, but of what Aristotle called secondary matter, a matter that has its potentiality somehow restricted by some degree of actuality and, therefore, exhibits some degree of determination, organization, and configuration.<sup>35</sup>

This ontology translates to the mind-body relations because the soul, something that for Descartes is extraneous to matter to the point of constituting a separate substance with totally opposing attributes, is for Aristotle what grants actualization to matter. Aristotle then did not have to figure out how what has extension and what is non-extended relate to each other but how what was purely potential could have any existence at all and be organized as a secondary matter. In other words, Aristotle did not have to relate the physical with something mental, or the brain (or better said, the body) with the mind, because a brain is only a brain if it is the organ of a body that has prime matter actualized by a specific type of organization. The body is a secondary matter, that is, prime matter with some degree of actualization.

Therefore, for Aristotle, the relation between the mental and the physical was not a problem. It was a necessary consequence of his ontological presuppositions. Aristotle stepped out of the mind-body dichotomy by saying: “the proximate matter and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentially, and the other actually [...] the potential and the actual are somehow one” because “one element is matter and another is form, and one is potentially and the other is actually.”<sup>36</sup> Once one realizes this, he says, “the question will no longer be thought a difficulty.”<sup>37</sup> Only if the brain is already a mind, actualized by a *psyche*, it is a brain at all. The living thing (with its different motor and cognitive ca-

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Composition,” *Res Philosophica* 91, no. 2 (2014): 151–177 and Theodore Scaltsas, “Substantial Holism,” *Philosophical Inquiry* 39, no. 1 (2015): 146–163.

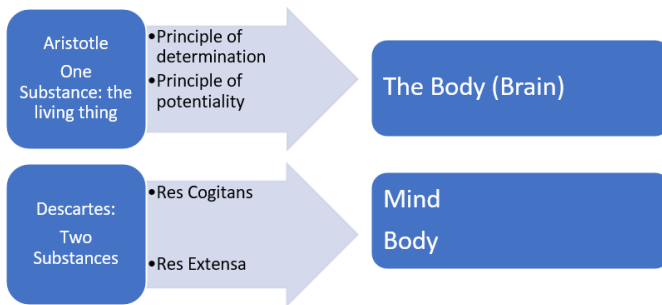
<sup>35</sup> This mutual necessitation of matter and form is formulated by Aristotle in *Physics* 11.9 and *Parts of Animals* I.1.14 when he discusses the relationship between material and final causes. As noted by Herbert Granger, this is a hypothetical necessity not equivalent to supervenience since form “determines the important features of the material world, through the very *dependence* it has upon the material world.” In Herbert Granger, “Aristotle and the Concept of Supervenience,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (1993): 166.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1045b17–21.

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1045a20–25



pacities) is extended, not its prime matter or its organizing principle.



The body then is not merely physical stuff in terms of extended matter, or even quantified matter, because it is only a body if it is organized matter in the first place. Although organization and determination admit a quantitative description, they are not in themselves quantitative but qualitative and, more importantly, causal with efficient and organizational causality. Moreover, to this *constitutive* sense of matter and *psyche*, Aristotle contemplated an *episodic* sense of the mental. Discrete mental states (operations, habits) ensue further actualizations of the faculties of the *psyche*, rooted in the constitutive sense of the causal adequacy between matter and form.

## 6. CONCAUSALITY AND THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

As represented by Kim and Searle, the mind-body problem impasse showed us that the question at stake is whether the relation between physiological states and mental states should be considered one of causation, and if so, what kind of causation it is. Moreover, there seems to be a whole ontological conundrum that requires disentangling. What counts as separate events, separate entities, and separate causations, and what is the relation between causes and effects when it comes to the mental and the physical?

Leonardo Polo's retrieval of Aristotle's ontology provides nuances that render the Stagirite's tetracausality relevant and compatible with our current understanding of the physical world. Following Aristotle, Leonardo Polo makes a claim about causa-



tion that we very well could use to get out of the metaphysical aporia of the mind-body problem, especially when it comes to the presuppositions involving causation, substancehood, properties, and events: "Aristotle says at the end of book VII of the *Metaphysics* that ultimately the substance is causing. (...). My proposal lies in replacing the notion of 'substance' with the one of 'cause.' It is not required for a 'cause' to be a 'thing' in order to be a 'cause'; conversely, there is a concurrence of causes as the old dictum states: causes are reciprocal insofar as they are causes to each other (*ad invicem*). What matters is the plurality of causes: causes are not such in isolation, and there are various causal senses."<sup>38</sup>

Polo's retrieval of Aristotle crucially highlights Aristotle's causal plurality and makes explicit one of Aristotle's presuppositions, namely, that a substance, a thing, while it may exhibit unity in causation, is constituted by a confluence of causal principles that Polo calls *concausality*: a concurrence of causes where none of the causes by itself is a 'thing.'<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, exhibiting a causal power does not individuate that causal power as a substance. Polo effectively disconnects here the notions of substancehood and causality in at least these two important ways:

1. Substances become individuated as '*concauses*,' not as 'essences' or 'things.' Substance dualism, like Descartes endorsed, understands the physical substance as characterized by one essential property, extension, and the mental substance by its opposing essential property. However, in con-

<sup>38</sup> "Aristoteles dice al final del libro siete de la *Metafísica*, que en definitiva la sustancia es causa. Mi propuesta consiste en sustituir la noción de cosa por la de causa. No hace falta ser cosas para ser causa; en cambio, es imprescindible la concurrencia de las causas, según el antiguo dicho: las causas lo son entre sí (*ad invicem*). Lo que comporta pluralidad: las causas no lo son por separado y existen varios sentidos causales." Leonardo Polo Barrera, "Inactualidad y Potencialidad de Lo Físico," *Contrastes: Revista Interdisciplinar de Filosofía* 1 (1996): 246-47.

<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of Polo's *concausality* in living beings, see his *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*: Vol. 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Pamplona: 2004). For a study on this see Urbano Ferrer Santos "La vida desde la concausalidad", *El conocimiento de lo físico según L. Polo*, García González, J.A. (ed.), Cuadernos de Pensamiento Español, Eunsal, 2011, 47-57.



current causality, a substance is not characterized mainly by a defining and individuating feature or essence since that reveals a conflation of the logical order (how we define things) with the ontological order (how things exist). Instead, substances consist in a specific concurrence of causal principles. Certain confluences of causal powers are constitutive of substances. Substances are concurrent causes that work in tandem, as opposed to a view that identifies substances either as a collection of properties or as the substrate that bears those properties. We may attempt to grasp and refer to a specific concatenation of causes (i.e., to a *concausality*) by attributing an essential property to it, but that would be a mere substitute for an individuating source of causal power we can grasp only to a certain extent.

2. Being a cause does not entail being a whole substance. Therefore, it is possible to have a confluence of causal powers that are reciprocal to each other without having two different things (regardless of whether we understand “things” in this context as separate substances or as properties). While Hume and Kim may be right in saying that two things that have an independent existence must have different causal powers, the converse is not true: a causal power, as Polo presents, does not need to be a thing, it could be, nonetheless, a *constitutive principle* of a thing.

The application of *concausality* to the mind-body problem then is that in a *concausal* model, we have: 1) one entity, the brain (or better said a living body or living thing), with one system of efficient causation; 2) two causal principles, matter and form (and not two types of properties) that constitute a living organism and that are causal *ad invicem*. These are constitutive principles.<sup>40</sup>

As noted earlier, BN is presenting implicitly two senses of causation, synchronic and diachronic. If we translate these two co-implicated theses of *concausality* into the apparatus of BN, we could disambiguate these different senses of causation by equating the

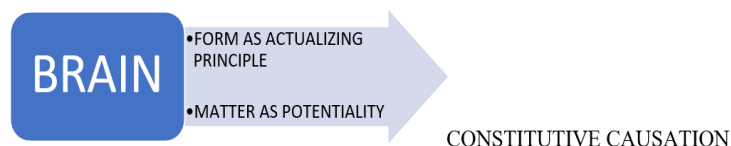
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<sup>40</sup> We should keep in mind that this discussion pertains to organic life, not to the use of the higher faculties.



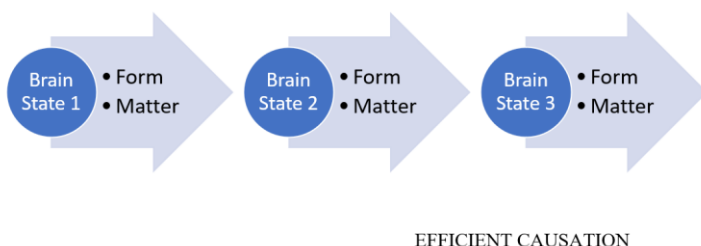
synchronic sense with constitutive causation and the diachronic sense with efficient causation through time.

1. In synchronic causation, we can distinguish a constitutive sense that replaces the ontology that underlies substance dualism and its physicalist counterpart (reductive materialism) with hylomorphism and *concausality*:



There is, however, another synchronic sense, where a proportionate capacity causes discrete mental states (operations and habits).

2. Diachronic causation. Material and formal principles do not have different causal powers in terms of efficiency, but they are constitutive principles, causes, of the embodied mind. However, in living beings, movement, change through time, entails efficient causation because the constitutive formal principle of the living thing is the source of efficient causation. The causation that the brain has as a biological reality, diachronically, is efficient causation.



Consequently, regarding the causation of the system diachronically, we have only one set of causes, and that is *efficient causation*. In a way that resembles Searle's remarks, the efficient causation belongs to the system, that is, to the living entity, and form and matter share in the efficient causality of the system, but they contribute with their causal functions that are not efficient *per se*, providing potentiality and determination. Without those, there is no efficiency. Moreover, the efficient causality of the mental state



coincides with the causality of the system as a whole since it is the causality of a living system.

## 7. CONCAUSALITY AND DUALISM

At this point, we may wonder if the Cartesian dualism of matter and mind is not being replaced here by a dualism of matter and form. The reply to this potential difficulty is, at least, at four-fold:

1. At the level of the constitution of substances, we do not obtain the mental and the physical as two separate components, but the agreement of the causality of matter and form (and efficiency, as stated above).
2. Aristotle's ontology makes it impossible to equate formal cause with the mind and the body with matter, *simpliciter*. The reason is that our physical reality is not pure potentiality, but it already has multiple levels of organization. Therefore, the physical reality that we experience is not interchangeable with matter in the Aristotelian sense: physical reality has already built formal and efficient causality into it.
3. Additionally, causal constitutive principles are not properties. Being a property entails being a 'property of,' namely, it assumes that something inheres some properties. Moreover, properties typically have an ontological dependence on the thing they are properties of. However, the hylomorphic framework names a constitution prior to any dependence on properties from the constituted thing. Constitution ontologically antecedes properties. In this way, determination and potentiality are not two properties of a previously constituted thing, but they are *the constitutive principles of a thing*; namely, their causation is *constitutive*.
4. Furthermore, as formal, the psyche has causal priority over the causality of prime matter and is constitutive of the entity, of the substance, as a whole.



Aristotle may be exempt from a Cartesian dualism at the level of constitution of substances.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, when it comes to accounting for mental states as occurrent events that we experience on an ongoing basis (states of mind that exhibit rationality, first-person perspective, intentionality, and qualia, which are a non-constitutive sense of the mental), he would seem to fit the bill for property dualism, which acknowledges a bare substrate, the substance, that exhibits two types of properties, mental and physical. Is hylomorphism of any help when we address not the causality and preconditions that make something a living body or a brain but mental states themselves?

Concausality accounts for the episodic sense of the mind that mental states are. In a context not related to the mind-body problem that can also apply to this case, Leonardo Polo used the example of Baron Münchhausen, who allegedly pulled himself and his horse out of a swamp by his own hair. Having the brain, understood in a deprived Cartesian way, as causing the mind, seems faulty of the same overconfidence. Most importantly, it constitutes a violation of the principle of sufficient reason. This principle should be taken not in its cartoonish rationalist version that stipulates that everything must have a reason or cause but in its more fine-grained formulation that states that every effect must have a proportionate cause. In a Cartesian physical world, it seems that no summation of an extension will ever give us an absence of extension. No amount of atomic interactions will give us mental life. Any mind-body theory that relies on a Cartesian conception of matter will have difficulties explaining how at the lower level, we do not have the required causal power for the phenomenon that we want to explain, namely, the mind, and that magically, the lower level elements produce the higher-level feature of the mental. Somehow the effect would not have ever been proportionate to the cause; namely, the effect would exceed the causal power of the cause. This philosophical quandary is worse than the causal overdetermination pointed by Kim.

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<sup>41</sup> H. Granger notices: "Therefore, Aristotle's dualism is non-Cartesian because his dual entities differ in type and because the soul is existentially dependent upon the body." In Herbert Granger, "Aristotle and the Functionalist Debate," *Apeiron* 23, no. 1 (1990): 40.



For this reason, certain theories defend some form of proto-consciousness present in the fabric of physical reality that could account for the full-fledged appearance of consciousness that we observe in more evolved natural realities, and particularly in human beings. While capturing the problematics of the principle of sufficient reason, the ontology behind this proto-consciousness is still dualist. It requires primitive elements that fully possess the ontology of the mental to coexist with the ocean of mindless elementary particles in order to obtain consciousness at the macro level. The divide between the mental and the physical is still acute in these views. Moreover, proto-consciousness forgets that the principle of sufficient reason does not require the real presence of the effect in the cause, but only the virtual power in the cause to produce the effect (we do not need to have a black eye to give someone else one).

Opposite to this, a notion of the physical that already contains a causal principle for mentality as its constitutive is a proportionate cause of discrete and occurrent mental events that are supervenient on different brain states. A brain, which is already an embodied mind, can cause discrete operations, namely, mental states that are 1. Proportionate to their cause, and that 2. From the constitutive point of view, they are realized in material conditions. *Concausality*, in this regard, can refute the reductive physicalist's rejection of a mental ontology while making non-reductive physicalism coherent.

The view presented confirms Searle's idea of granting to the mental an ontology that is not reducible to the physical while admitting to the causation of the mental by the physical. To avoid otherworldly explanations, we do not need to reduce the ontology of the mental to the ontology of the physical. Only a proportionate physical causal power is required. Moreover, while science may provide the details of how this happens, philosophy has the task to ascertain the seemingly futile task, however deceptively dangerous if overlooked, of identifying a proportionate causal power. In order to do that, we need an understanding of matter that is more than extension.



## 8. CONCAUSALITY AND OVERDETERMINATION

How can this proposal help avoid the problems of overdetermination? At first sight, Polo's *concausality* would also be bound to overdetermination as objected by Kim because we would have both mental and physical causes. However, *concausality* does not lead to overdetermination if we differentiate how various causes may contribute to a single result:

1. *Concausality* highlights Aristotle's ontology of matter and form by pointing that potentiality and determination do not have an independent existence as things on their own. They are not two separate entities or two different parts of a thing (*concausality* thesis 2: "being a cause does not individuate something as substance"). Instead, they are principles –not parts– that, *concurrently*, cause the existence of a physically extended entity (*concausality* thesis 1. Substances are individuated as sources of concurrent causality). Aristotle's understanding of matter (potentiality) as a causal principle not only does not obliterate other causal senses as overdetermined, but it implicates them as to how matter can be causal.<sup>42</sup> Matter can have causal efficiency in physical entities as conjoined with a formal principle.

2. *Concurrent causation* (i.e., concausal) is a constitutive and synchronic causation where both matter (in the sense of prime matter) and determination (form) are causes but with different causal inputs. Moreover, matter and form are causes *ad invicem*, in respect to each other, because matter as pure potentiality does not exist unless it possesses some determination, form (namely, matter as potentiality requires a sense of causation that is formal). Consequently, this concurrent causation is not a merging of mereological parts.<sup>43</sup> Whereas mereological parts preserve their ontology when they are not part of the whole, the concurrent causes of a substance are real only in relation to each other. The

<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Polo states: "En el fondo, la consideración de las causas como concausales es un despliegue de la noción de potencia" Leonardo Polo, *El conocimiento del universo físico*, 1ª ed. (Eunsa, 2015), p. 408.

<sup>43</sup> Although Koslicki has defended this mereological hylomorphism in Aristotle, Scaltsas has presented strong objections. Marmodoro also defends that matter and form are *not parts* of a substance," in "Aristotle's Hylomorphism Without Reconditioning," *Philosophical Inquiry* 37, no. 1–2 (2013): 15.



reason is that, as Polo notices, the “causes are reciprocal insofar as they are causes to each other (*ad invicem*).”

However, that potentiality and determination are *ad invicem* causes does not imply that potentiality causes determination or that determination causes potentiality. Potentiality (prime matter) and actuality (form) are not efficient causes. Therefore, the relation between matter and determination is not one of efficient causation but of *principiation*. Without determination, potentiality has no reality; without potentiality, a determination cannot develop through time and receive existence. Because matter and form are causes as principles (and not properties, level features, or entities),<sup>44</sup> in their primary causality, they do not have an effect that is external to their positing themselves as causes. Their effect is their very own existence as causes, contributing, in their specific way, to the causality of other concurrent causes and to the existence of the thing, making possible its efficient causality.

In summary, *concausality* does not lead to overdetermination because 1) we do not have two sets of causes, potentiality and determination (matter and form), both in terms of *efficient causation*; 2) We do not have two sets of causes as causal powers in terms of *two separate things*, entities, substances or properties. Since being a cause does not entail being a substance, we do not have two separate things. *Concausality* allows for a thing to have more than one cause, granted that these are causes in different ways (since there is more than efficient causation) and that these causes are not solely sufficient.

## 9. CONCAUSALITY AND EPIPHENOMENALISM

At this point, it would seem that even if *concausality* manages to avoid overdetermination, it will not escape the fate of epiphenomenalism. The reason is apparent: in Aristotle’s proposal, there are more causes than efficient causes. However, for contemporary physicalism, being a cause and being an efficient

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<sup>44</sup> Granger notices that the form cannot be a property because it provides the unification of the material parts, it is the agent, in this case, the form as an agent, that provides such unification. In Granger, “Aristotle and the Functionalist Debate,” 44.



cause is the same thing. Therefore, a sense of causation that is not efficient does not count as causation at all. Aristotle's tetracausality would collapse under the physicalist analysis only to leave standing a sense of efficient causation. Even a non-reductive physicalism, as BN, defends that being a cause is *making something else happen*, which pertains only to the efficient cause.

In contrast, for Aristotle, 'to make something else happen' belongs to all causation. There are, however, different ways of 'making something happen.' Explaining why this is the case would require a different paper and probably a thorough critical review of the history of philosophy. For the purposes of this discussion, and in the light of the amendment to the notion of matter as per Aristotle's ontology, we may briefly consider the following: The idea of efficient causation as 'making something else happen' is slightly ambiguous unless we determine the backdrop against which something counts as 'happening.' In a physicalist scenario, what counts as 'something happening' is assessed against the backdrop of efficient causation, which then gives us an understanding of causality that is either circular or a fiat. What counts as efficient causation is to make something happen, but only efficient causation truly happens. Of course, ultimately, the circularity must resolve in fiat because what other sense could there be for causation?

Upon closer inspection, what counts as causal, as efficient, and 'as making something happen' since all these senses are quasi-equivalent in a physicalist paradigm, is relative to an understanding of matter as extension. Behind the *fiat* or circularity of efficient causation as the only form of causation, there is the belief that for causation, we need some form of contact. Although physical causation requires contact, how contact is understood will depend on what view of matter we have at hand. If matter is simply extension, then efficient causation will be reduced to an interaction between quantitative dimensions, and consequently, we are implicitly committing to a dualist ontology that separates substances as extended and non-extended. The mental, characterized in a dualist way as being non-extended, will be excluded from "making something else happen" (the epiphenomenalist solution) or, if granted causal power, will be forever incomprehensible (Descartes' interaction problem). Therein the physicalist quandary about mental causation. On the other hand, if we



hope for a non-reductive physicalism, and grant dimensions to the mental, then the mind becomes another physical object, and we obtain a monism once again.

An alternative to this view on causation cannot consist in opening the door to all things crazy to be taken as candidates for causal input: from ghosts to *élan vital*, all while overriding the laws of thermodynamics. Nor it should require, in a more reasonable scenario where a particular interpretation of quantum mechanics factors in, a commitment to a view on causation where the action at a distance of entangled particles does not involve any hidden variables, making the spooky action at a distance a real feature of the world. The ontological proposal in this paper does not make any pledges to any particular interpretation of quantum mechanics, nor does it defend causation without contact. On the contrary, admitting more senses of causation than the efficient does not amount to introducing otherworldly forces encountering the physical unless we want to perpetuate dualism. In other words, this is not a defense that material causation does not require contact or that the mind should be extended into something material and produce contact if it is to have causality. The point is not to object to a view of efficient causation defined by contact but to a type of efficient causation that folds into a Cartesian matter. Similar to how matter has extension as its main attribute, but it is not defined as extension, physical causation requires contact, but it is not defined by it. There are more elements at stake in the production of physical interactions than an alteration of quantitative proportions of some kind (unless we are relying on a mathematized Cartesian view of matter). The proposal is to adjust our conception of physical reality to acknowledge that efficient causation cannot be equated with the measurement of movement or change simpliciter, which is always quantitative.

We can agree that the most natural way of observing whether “something makes something happen” in the physical world is a quantitative analysis of energy transfer. However, energy cannot be replaced with a quantitative description of it precisely because a description must leave behind the real causality of the world. In other words, a quantitative description cannot replace efficient causation as the source of change because a description is a pale representation of the causal power that exists in the real



world independent from our modeling of reality. Swapping the description of the reality for the causal nature of reality itself seems as misleading as the proverbial drunk looking for his car keys under the lamppost where there is light. We can record the changes that come with efficient causation by tracking quantitative aspects of reality, but this does not mean that the changes originate there.

Consequently, framing the mind-body troubles in the language of a mathematized physics that thrives in a fossilized Cartesian ontology may not be faithful to contemporary physics. Although characterizing matter as extension may be an idea extraneous to a contemporary view of the physical world, and Descartes's mechanistic physics is far from our current understanding of matter as energy, a reduction of physical reality to quantitative terms seems equally inadequate. Physics may sometimes fail to claim its ground against the mathematical tools it uses, but a philosophy mindful of the imports of physical science should be wary of this difficulty. If matter is not primarily extension, any other more sophisticated version of it, i.e., a quantitative description of energy, also fails to capture the real causal input that matter as energy has, and so does an understanding of efficient causation that folds into material causation. The collapse of tetra-causality into the measurement of an extension eliminates the ontology of what is not easily quantifiable, of what does not have quantity as its primary attribute, as it happens in the case of real causes or with the mental.

In contrast to this view, we have that:

1. Aristotle understands efficient causation as the source, origin of 'what happens.' For Aristotle, the materiality of a thing by itself does not amount to causal efficiency; it only names potentiality. Therefore, a different instance, causal efficiency, is the source (origin) of change in causation, the source of the happening. We have then more than the two initial senses of causation, material and formal. What makes something else happen (efficiency) does not necessarily coincide with the condition of possibility for something to happen (namely, lacking precisely the determination that the change brings about). Moreover, as already noticed, for Aristotle, the materiality of a thing is non-existent without some current degree of actuality (formal causality) and further actualizations (final cause). Consequently, for a



thing to change, it needs capacity for change (potentiality of material causation), a way in which it changes (determination of formal causation), a new way of existing (final cause), and something, internal or external, that makes that happen (efficient causation).

2. Efficient causation as a source for change does not expunge the mental from being causally efficient, precisely because efficient causation does not collapse into material causation, which allows for more sources other than matter to be the origin of change.<sup>45</sup> Given that efficient causation amounts to being a source of movement instead of a variable on the dimensive quantities of matter, the mind can be an origin of movement (when the mind requires material instantiation, as it happens in physical entities) and operation.<sup>46</sup> As a matter of fact, in biological realities, formal, final, and efficient causality coincide.

3. Consequently, although something mental could be the source of movement, the mental as an efficient cause does not demand a lack of physical realization. Efficient causality requires both formal and material causality in physical things. Therefore, causal efficiency does not belong exclusively to matter or form but to the whole biological entity.<sup>47</sup> In other words, the mind is causal in an efficient manner because it is embodied, or more

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<sup>45</sup> Granger states about Aristotle that "(h)is psychology bears witness to the efficient causality of form, when it portrays the soul, which Aristotle identifies with the form of the organism, as what unites in its nature formal, final, and efficient causality" in Granger, "Aristotle and the Concept of Supervenience," 167. See Aristotle's *DA* 415138-28 and *PA* 641a27-28.

<sup>46</sup> Although this consideration is outside the scope of this paper, the mind would be a source of activity regardless of the mental being completely immaterial or containing elements of materiality. While efficiency requires materiality in physical substances, the Stagirite would not have had any problem in assigning efficient causation to something immaterial because all that efficient causation names is the source of movement (and that is what we see Aristotle does in the case of the Agent Intellect).

<sup>47</sup> It is precisely this *concausal* sense of matter and form that distinguishes hylomorphism from functionalism and supervenience, as the first fails to notice the causal role of matter, and the second, the priority causal ontology of form over matter.



properly speaking, it is an enmattered mind.<sup>48</sup> Because biological realities require the concurrent causality of matter, form, and efficiency, now it should be clear why this proposal is *concausal* and not just hylomorphic, and why it appeals not only to Aristotle but to Polo's understanding of Aristotle's tetracausality.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, explaining the mind-problem according to a hylomorphic model is not sufficient because, in the case of beings that have consciousness, and more generally in all living beings, matter and form are just part of the story. Many other substances in the Aristotelian universe are hylomorphic with no consideration of life or consciousness. However, for living entities, the source of movement as living (the efficient cause), is intrinsic to them. It comes from within, as rooted in and patterned by their formal principle and made possible and efficient by the potentiality of matter.

In conclusion and closing the open question about whether *concausality* can avoid epiphenomenalism that took us on this excursus on types of causes, the fact that form and matter do not have efficient causal powers does not set the stage for epiphenomenalism because they are built-in conditions for the efficient causation of the living thing/brain to take place. They have a causal role that is not efficient but that participates in the efficiency of the whole substance.

However, an objection to how this *concausality* circumvents epiphenomenalism through broadening our understanding of causality arises. If BN pulls the rabbit out of the hat without showing us the trick, *concausality*, as applied to the mind-body problem, shows us the trick by creating a further illusion: the illusion of a multiplicity of causes. This positing of other causes constitutes a gross violation of Ockham's razor. Sticking to efficient causation may be preferable by many who appreciate simplicity, thereby exhibiting good philosophical taste. Moreover, we can always claim that our contemporary understanding of efficient causation already includes all those other causal senses,

<sup>48</sup> While the mental has formal causality but not efficient or material causality in Polo, it must be noted that insofar as the formal principle is that of an embodied entity, formal causality becomes entangled with other formal senses.

<sup>49</sup> In this regard, Polo states that the hylomorphic compound is not individual because it cannot exist without all the four causes (see Leonardo Polo, *La Esencia Del Hombre* (Eunsa, 2011, 117.)



thus building potentiality and determination (material and formal causes) into efficient causation. In other words, an objector could allege that ultimately, the brain is the total cause and that differentiating a formal and material component is just a formal distinction, not real (that is epistemological, not ontological). This objection would make the *concausal* proposal a naïve and almost pointless reformulation of BN.

The response to this difficulty is that the so-called and misattributed Ockham's principle does not tell us, just by itself, when the razor is shaving too much or too little. Admitting only efficient causation may seem like a good choice to many, but then the aporias of epiphenomenalism, dualism, or eliminativism shall follow. One philosopher's favorite alternative could be another philosopher's delusion, and we may have to pick our poison or admit to a causal differentiation.

The problem with solely singling out efficient causality as "what makes something else happen" is that "happening" by itself will never tell us what, how, concerning what, something is happening. We may claim these elements just mentioned are just ways of describing a situation instead of real causal factors in the world. However, when we build the plurality of causes into the efficient cause as a mere epistemological distinction, we do so because we rely on a Cartesian understanding of physical reality as constituted by extension. If matter has its own act as extended, it is already actualized. It does not require a differentiation between potential versus actual (matter and form) because everything, as extended and dimensive, is actual. In other words, physical reality as extension only requires a model of causation that accounts for quantitative differentiation. All we need then is an external cause, the efficient cause, to bring about variation within quantity. However, the real illusion consists in identifying physical reality with some form of quantitative description because quantity has quality built into it that, although quantitatively instantiated, cannot be reduced to it. Any instantiation of quantity is possible if it has built-in differentiation, which by itself is not something quantitative, although, of course, given the intertwined nature of matter and form, it can admit a quantitative description.

Conversely, if matter is just potentiality, this very deprived, destitute, dispossessed sense of the physical will need the nur-



turing and fostering of other causes to make it forward. If we were to acknowledge only efficient causation, we would be pointing only at the source or origin that makes something happen, but we will not be saying anything about the intrinsic conditions that make that change possible and in what form it happens. The material cause offers the concreteness of quantity, space and time, and potentiality. The formal cause determines how and what; the final cause, the outcome; and the efficient cause, the origin. Our notion of physical reality and efficient causation appears imbued with formal, final, and material causality, without which efficient causation is itself inefficient or just plainly trivial. For Aristotle, all these causal senses make something else happen, and, in this respect, they do not rest in an epistemological but ontological distinction.

#### 10. AN ONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM

After examining how *concausality* can circumvent the difficulties of substance and property dualism, reductionism, overtermination, and epiphenomenalism, there is one more point that we need to explore. This paper reviewed Searle's BN for the following reasons: 1. BN's ambiguities condense well all the possible bifurcations that the mind-body problem may follow, 2. BN tries to save our most cherished common-sense intuitions and scientific research, 3. It is a biologically rooted account, well in tune with Aristotle's bypassing of the mind-body dichotomy by focusing on living organisms. The question now is if the *concausal* proposal can lead Searle's BN towards a truly non-reductionist naturalism. Could it help Searle avoid the problems of how mental and physical properties relate to each other, epiphenomenally, causally, or in some other way? Is *concausality* compatible with Searle's belief that the physical causes ontologically the mental and that such causation also grants causal powers to the mental?

At first sight, Polo's proposal of *concausality* applied to the mind-brain conundrum seems to diverge from BN's premises widely enough to offer Searle any ontological help:

1. BN only acknowledges one sense of causation, efficient causation, which Searle loosely understands as 'what makes some-



thing else happen.' On the other hand, Polo's *concausality*, following Aristotle, reckons more causes than the efficient.

2. Moreover, according to Searle, the causal powers of consciousness are the same as those of the neuronal substrate while not being identical things. Causation belongs to one single system, and that system is not monist. It has different features physical and mental, which are causal and required for the system to function causally. In *concausality*, different senses of material and formal causation (that do not correlate univocally with the physical and the mental) are not features but principles, namely, ontological realities more primordial than substances and properties.

3. Furthermore, for BN, consciousness is an effect caused by the brain. Nevertheless, in being caused by the brain, it shares in the causal powers of brain processes. In a *concausal* model, answering if the brain causes the mind does not have a straightforward answer unless we define what we understand by "brain" and "mind" and disambiguate whether we are talking in the synchronic (constitutive and episodic) sense or diachronic.

In a *concausal* model, the brain does not cause the mind at the constitutive level. The reason is that we do not have a brain/mind dichotomy at that level of constitution. In fact, what is at stake is the constitution of a brain as a brain. Therefore, the question at the constitutive level is, "what makes a brain be a brain in the first place?" The picture, as presented by Aristotle and already mentioned, is that the brain is only such if it is already a 'mind'; it is matter that happens to have the organization and capacities it has because such an organization is its formal principle, and this biological organization allows for mental brain activity. Because this causality of matter and form is not efficient causality, the brain does not cause the mind (taken here as 'form,' a principle of organization and causality), nor does the mind causes the brain (although this question is not at stake here): 1. First, the brain is already a 'mind' in the constitutive sense, and the 'mind' exists actualizing a potential substrate (its materiality); 2. Secondly, the causality of the form and matter is not efficient towards each other (matter and form are not an effect of each other). In this regard, the causal powers of constitutive principles do not have effects that are ontologically distinct from them, they do not produce a different entity, but the fruits of their causal powers can be called formal effects.



Moreover, the brain does not cause the mind in a Cartesian/Physicalist model either. The reasons have been offered already: a deprived sense of matter cannot account for the emergence of mentality. Consequently, when Searle affirms that brain states cause mental states as the physical causing the mental, he must be implying that whatever causes mentality must have the causal power to do so. Then the question is what kind of matter may exhibit such a causal power because a Cartesian one surely does not. Consequently, without replacing its understanding of matter, BN, like Kim, inadvertently will fall back into the dualist categories that it is trying to overcome, where matter as extension repels anything else that may attempt to relate to it as non-extended.

Can the brain, however, in an episodic sense, cause the mind? By 'mind,' here we refer to the occurrent mental events caused by the efficiency of the brain (constituted by matter and form). Occurrent mental states, causally sourced from the concurrent efficiency of the *concausality* of matter and form, stem from an already existing substance. They are also effects, distinct from their cause, but also proportionate to it. In this sense, mental events are *caused by* and organically *realized in* the brain. They can be *causally* reduced if the brain is more than a chunk of matter whose main attribute is extension. In other words, a *causal*, but not *ontological*, reduction of mental states to the brain is possible because that which the mind is being reduced to already contains in the first place the causal conditions that cause the mental (but not the full-blown ontology of mental states). Whereas a dualistic/physicalist ontology does not provide those, a *concausal* account does. In this regard, we could read Searle's proposal as admitting this thesis since the causation belongs to the system, not to brain states or mental states solely. Then, properly speaking, there is a causation of mental states by brain states because the brain already has an organizational and efficient principle that allows for mentality in the first disambiguated sense taken here. The brain then does not cause the mind in a constitutive sense. However, it has the causal power to produce consciousness in an episodic sense. Although caused by the brain, mental states are not reducible to it because the ontology of an operation is not reducible to the ontology of constitution.



Therefore, from the relation between neurophysiological states and mental states, there is no top-down causation from mental states to brain states or bottom-up causation from the neurobiology to mental states. The reason being that at any given point, a brain state that exhibits qualia, intentionality, content, or consciousness has as its cause the *concausality* of material, formal and efficient principles, which work inside-out,<sup>50</sup> not just top-down or bottom-up. We could say then that the causation of episodic mental states is, at any given point, inside-out, sourced from the reciprocal causality of matter and form and placed in motion by efficiency. Moreover, if we still wonder where this ontology comes from, given that, at the physiological level, we do not see the features that comprise the ontology of the mental, we should remind ourselves that we do not need to have a black eye to have one. The requirement, though, is to have the ontological capacity to do so, and that is what a Cartesian view on matter cannot offer.

Ultimately, the unbridgeable differences between BN and *concausality* that we laid out initially could reconcile through some repairs to the theory and some salvable theses.

1. Property dualism. What Searle calls lower and higher features of the system may be understood not in terms of levels of description, different entities, events, or parts (although the system may admit different types of descriptions), but as causes *ad invicem*. The constitutive sense can save Searle from property dualism because these causes *ad invicem* are not features but constitutive principles that share in the causal efficiency of the brain as a system. In this sense, we do not have two sets of properties, mental and physical, that derive from a bare substance but matter and form as causal principles constituting a substance. Furthermore, the distinction between constitution and operation explains how mental states are caused by and realized in brain states. The hylomorphic compound causes mental states as operations. Mental states further actualize the potentiality of the hylomorphic compound as 1.

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<sup>50</sup> I borrow Michael Dodds expression from his paper Michael J. Dodds, "Top down, Bottom up or inside out? Retrieving Aristotelian Causality in Contemporary Science," in *Science, Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 7 (South Bend, 1997).



The potentiality of matter; 2. The potentiality of the faculties belonging to the formal principle.

2. Overdetermination. Not all concausal senses are efficient. The causal relations between the embodied mind, its operations, and its progression through time are not overdetermined in an efficient sense. In this regard, the brain does not cause the mind, nor the mind needs to interact with the physical in a constitutive sense. However, does the overdetermination happen in occurrent mental events where the ontology of the first-person perspective differs from the ontology of extension? As we analyzed above, only if we rely on a deprived sense of matter like a Cartesian one.

Kim's enhanced objection consisted of having one system state cause the next system state while the supervenient basis is also doing the causing. The overdetermination would result from having two different efficient causations, left to right and bottom-up. In a *concausal* account, this is explained by having at work different causes causing different things. In the synchronic and constitutive sense, matter is not efficient per se, but the whole system is. At the level of synchronic episodic mental states, the efficient causal power of the hylomorphic compound determines the whole organism into a specific system state, but not as its next stage. The diachronic progression is the efficient causation of the whole system with the following system state as its final cause, whereas the synchronic causation provides the physical realization of the mental state as a state of the system.

3. Epiphenomenalism. In physical organisms, the mind is causal with a formal causality both in the constitutive sense of the actual principle of living entities and in the episodic sense of mental states caused by the hylomorphic compound. However, this formal causation is not futile. Constitutively, as an embodied mind, the formal principle of a living thing is also its efficient cause that informs efficiency in the whole composite. Matter and form allow for a causal constitution that roots all efficient causation.

Consequently, discrete mental states *share* in the efficient causality of the living organism because, as episodic events, they are an extended function of the constitutive sense. From a diachronic



viewpoint, as part of state systems, mental states share in the causal the efficiency of the living organism that moves the system forward towards future system states. Therefore, mental states have causal powers –the ones of the system–, since matter and form must share in the causality of the system in terms of efficient causality.

In summary, BN affirmed that mental states share in the causality of the system, and since they are part of the physical world, they act causally. At the same time, they are caused by brain processes. The question was how they could be simultaneously in a “sharing” relation with the system ( $\frac{M}{B}$ ), and a “causal” relation where brain processes cause mental states ( $B \rightarrow M$ ). The “sharing” relation is a constitutive *concausal* relation of matter and form, of the mind as embodied. It makes possible episodic mental states afforded by the system’s constitutive causality and the causal efficiency diachronically. Therefore,



The constitutive sense ( $\frac{F}{M}$ ) explains ontologically, not scientifically, how the brain can cause  $M$  instead of saying that it just does. It also makes possible ( $B \rightarrow M$ ), that is, mental states that have formal causality (by being a high-level feature) that nonetheless shares in the efficient causality of the system. The ‘causal’ relation between brain processes and mental states is the causation of occurrent, synchronic mental states that require the concausality of matter and form as a proportionate causal power.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Because the synchronic sense refers to the layers of concausality present in a biological entity, it must not be confused with the sense of simultaneity with which Polo characterizes the mental operation. There is undoubtedly simultaneity in concausality, but it is not the simultaneity proper of cognitive acts.



## 11. CONCLUSION

The mind-body problem hinges on what conception of physical reality and causation we have at hand. One of the many difficulties in defining matter is making physical reality consistent with our current scientific paradigms, which are open to further development. However, having a science-friendly but philosophical understanding of what is physical could ground a non-reductive physicalism that needs to be biological to avoid reductionism.

Therefore, one first suggestion to approach consciousness is an understanding of physical reality that is biological. A naturalism that does not take mathematized physics as the paragon for reality can make room for the specificity of biological realities. Aristotle saw this already when he observed biological entities and realized that Plato's forms, interestingly also subjected to mathematical proportions, could not account for physical movement and even less for the movement of living beings.

An attempt at a biological consideration has been precisely John Searle's Biological Naturalism, where mental states are a biological reality, yet they cannot be ontologically reduced to neurophysiological states, only realized in them. BN runs into trouble because, in its efforts to discard Cartesian categories, it has overlooked the Cartesian conception of matter. However, Searle's BN is worth saving because the heart of his theory is in the right place. Now, what kind of ontology can adequately support BN's theses?

This paper proposed an understanding of material reality that led the way out of the Cartesian categories, as BN attempts, opening different senses of causation. We can say that in a Cartesian scenario where matter is essentially extension and the mental is diametrically opposed to it, paradoxically, and ultimately, there will be no room for the mind. Eliminative materialism concludes this after all, and perhaps that is the path to follow if we were to remain in a Cartesian view of physical reality. However, the brain is not just another chunk of matter, even less a Cartesian chunk of matter. It is just an application of the Cartesian categories that makes it look either as if the mind should be reduced to something physical in terms of pure extension or as if the mental magically arise out of the machinery of mindless neuronal activity.



If we realize that a non-reductive physicalism for the mind, like BN's, is implicitly proposing more than one single sense of causation and a different understanding of matter, we can inquire how more senses of causation other than efficient are possible. The proposal of *concausality*, taken from L. Polo's philosophy and contained in Aristotle's tetra-causality, highlights how each sense of causality contributes to disentangling the mind-body problem. Material causality because, with an understanding of matter as pure potentiality instead of primarily extension, we can reverse the poles of the mind-body from repulsion to attraction: the mental and the physical do not repel each other; they require each other. Formal causality, because without understanding that causal senses other than efficient are possible, we do not get rid of overdetermination. Efficient causation because, as a *source* of causality, points at the whole living being as its origin, not just at its matter or its form, and makes possible the efficiency of the mind in a physical world.

Lastly, it should be clear now that stating that the brain causes the mind *simpliciter*, without disambiguating senses, can be misleading because it perpetuates the Cartesian scenario. The mind-body relation gets into trouble when it does not distinguish between the synchronic ontology of constitution and the synchronic ontology of operations or between the first act and the second act. Moreover, when we mistakenly apply the diachronic sense to the constitutive sense (first constitutive act), we build efficient causation, proper of the whole organism, into the formal and material constitutive causalities, which do not have an efficient causality, making the whole mind-body problem utterly intractable.

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# Character Education without Indoctrination or Relativism

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RECEIVED: December 15, 2021

ACCEPTED: March 3, 2022

DEFINITIVE VERSION: July 26, 2022

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**ABSTRACT:** We are interested in a philosophical view of character education that avoids both indoctrination and relativism and we find that Leonardo Polo's proposal meets both conditions. We argue that the problem of reducing virtue to either conceptualized (or idealized) expression or to behavior makes indoctrination possible. The reduction of virtue to its conceptual expression confuses virtues with values, and the reduction of virtue to its behavioral expression confuses virtues with routines. To understand the first reduction, we turn to Scheler and for the second to James. On the contrary, the Aristotelian proposal of virtue prevents reducing virtue to routine and Polo's understanding of habit prevents the confusion of virtue and value. In addition, Leonardo Polo's way of understanding the person and specifically the transcendentals of co-existence and personal love avoids the opposite danger of relativism. The educational implications of these views are elaborated upon.

**KEYWORDS:** virtue, value, idealism, behavior, indoctrination, relativism.







## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education in virtues is one of the standard goals of character education. In this conception, character education is defined as the promotion of positive character traits, dispositions, or virtues<sup>1</sup>. When these “positive character traits” or “virtues” are defined, the problematic possibility of manipulation or indoctrination appears. Also, when we speak of socialization, the problem of manipulation or indoctrination appears when the new member of society is expected to adapt and adjust to the needs and expectations of adult society. Similarly, the problem appears when speaking of “internalization” since it could be that someone previously defines what should be internalized.

In all these cases the definition of “what” must be assumed, acquired, or internalized is fixed and obligatory. This “what” can be identified either as “values”, “virtues”, “ideals” or even “routines”. It is especially the fixed and obligatory character that does not allow for personalization that we find problematic.

The flip side of indoctrination or manipulation is relativism, which occurs when everything is possible and there is no reference.

The issue of indoctrination has been (and is) very present in ethical and character education. This debate is associated with the issues of values and socialization. While some thought that pre-defining values to aspire to was indoctrination, others thought it was not.<sup>2</sup>

One of the great authorities on moral development, Kohlberg<sup>3</sup> also discussed the problem of the two opposites: relativism and indoctrination. He thought that the solution that avoids falling

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<sup>1</sup> H.A. ALEXANDER, “Assessing virtue: measurement in moral education at home and abroad” *Ethics and Education* 11/3 (2016): 310-325. And WALKER, D. I., THOMA, S. J., C. JONES, and K. KRISTJANSSON, “Adolescent moral judgement: A study of UK secondary school pupils”. *British Educational Research Journal*. (2017)

<sup>2</sup> P.A. WAGNER, “Simon, Indoctrination and Ethical Relativism”. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue de la Pensée Éducative* 15/3(1981):187-194.

<sup>3</sup> L. KOHLBERG, “Indoctrination versus Relativity in Value Education,” *Zygonu* (1971): 285-310



into either of the two extremes was to enter into the subject of moral development.

Turning to a more current debate,<sup>4</sup> we find that the question of indoctrination is still open. However, the debate is widening because this issue is not only related to moral issues, but to all educational issues. For example, it is difficult to teach history without a vision of history. This leads to the debate on the subject of meaning.

Even in the current review of existing proposals,<sup>5</sup> one discovers that the debate between indoctrination and relativism remains unresolved. One discovers that behind the issue of indoctrination and relativism lies the question of to what extent and in what way the person is the author of his or her decisions in the relationship and encounter with others. We fall into indoctrination when we exclusively copy the environment and into relativism when we build without any point of reference

It is, therefore, necessary to find a proposal that avoids both indoctrination and relativism. For in case of indoctrination one is not living one's own life. In case of relativism, social construction and a common project are not possible.

We are going to try to solve the problem of indoctrination and then, fundamentally relying on Leonardo Polo, we will look for a proposal that avoids both indoctrination and relativism.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF INDOCTRINATION<sup>6</sup>

We would like to argue that the problem of indoctrination or manipulation entails a deformation of the term virtue; instead of

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<sup>4</sup> D. COPP. "Moral Education versus Indoctrination". *Theory and Research in Education* 14 (2016): 149-167.

<sup>5</sup> E. HATAMI, A. GHAFARI, K. BAGHERI, B. SHABANI. "Explaining & Internal Critique of the integrative model of Narvaez's moral education", *Foundations of Education*, 10/1(2020):76-95 and I. ZRUDLO, "Moving beyond rationalistic responses to the concern about indoctrination in moral education". *Theory and Research in Education*, 19/2(2021):185-203.

<sup>6</sup> Sections 2, 3 and 5 basically follow the speech already published in the article J.V. ORÓN. "Virtue as ideal behavior or internal dynamics". *Polianos Philosophical Studies* 3 (2016) 22-28. that has been changed and adapted for the present context.



considering virtue in its entirety, indoctrination and manipulation reduce virtue to some of its aspects. These reduced visions allow virtue to be idealized and converted into stable, recognizable, attainable, and shared ideas that can be acquired by all, so that everyone can adjust to them. This is how the problem of indoctrination or manipulation arises.

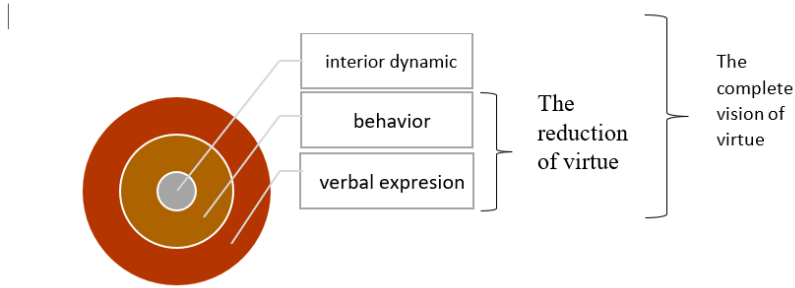
At the same time, we propose that the way in which Polo understands habits as oriented towards growth, helps to make a good characterization of Aristotelian virtue which precludes indoctrination. This is because it prevents virtue from being understood as a value, which leads to idealizing virtue. Aristotle's description of virtue makes abundantly clear that virtue is a way of being.<sup>7</sup> Because according to Polo's anthropology the human being is a person with interiority or intimacy, the way of being should take in account the interior of the person. Obviously, the person who is the way she is, will manifest herself in logical correspondence to this way of being. In this sense we cannot establish a healthy dichotomy between being inwardly in one way and expressing that outwardly in another way through behavior and speech. So while it is possible to distinguish dimensions in virtue, these can never be independent. We can, for example, distinguish the inner dimension, the behavioral dimension, and the conceptualization or rational explanation of the person. There are more dimensions, like for instance the emotional dimension. The other dimensions of virtue will not be treated here, but we will focus on the interior, behavioral and conceptual dimensions. These relationships are important to the understanding of virtue education.

Schematically expressed, the situation would be as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética a Nicómaco*, Gredos, Madrid, 2014, 1144b.25-30.





Despite the fact that the different dimensions of virtue cannot be made independent, it is not uncommon to discover that, in certain environments, virtue is idealized and behavioralized to such extremes that the inner dimension is forgotten. Virtue is idealized when it is treated as a value, which some even see as synonymous terms. For example: people talk about the value of solidarity in conceptual or idealized terms. Virtue is behavioralized when it is reduced to routine behavior. There can also be reduction to the two aspects of value and routine, disconnected from the other dimensions of virtue and in particular from the inner dimension. In that case, solidarity is assessed by solidary behavior and because the person expresses herself orally in terms of solidarity, ignoring personal processes and the inner experience. Also, through behaviourizing and idealizing the inner dimension of virtue is forgotten and indoctrination takes place. In this case the personal processes that the person goes through are not given attention, because virtue has been evaluated through behavior and through theoretical discourse, but not through internal growth dynamics.

Therefore, when behavior is independent from interiority because it is clearly defined, virtue is reduced to routine; when verbal expression is independent from interiority, virtue is reduced to value.

In the anthropology of Leonardo Polo, the center of the Being and acting of the person is constituted by the person, which can also be called the personal character, intimacy, or 'each one' in their singularity. These expressions can be taken as approximately



synonymous<sup>8</sup>. If we have learnt to live interior freedom, human action is born from within. Therefore, if virtue is taken as "way of being", it has to be a dynamic that arises from within. In fact the virtue "inclines" us,<sup>9</sup> an inclination to which we will give way, because the actions they incline towards are worthwhile and desirable.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, wanting to make these three elements independent is artificial and goes against the very concept of virtue. Sadly, this exactly what happens when, as has been said, virtue is understood as behavior and verbal expression, ignoring internal dynamics.

At the pedagogical level such reduction is transformed into harmful practices. For it is frequently thought that someone is educated in virtues when that person acquires specific behavior and when that behavior is expressed orally, but the internal process is forgotten. This is seen when education focuses on behavioral practice and theoretical discourse rather than on fostering experiences of inner growth. That is, it is instructed through more or less uplifting theoretical speeches and the student is asked to display a specific behavior. This instructive and directive mentality has nothing to do with true education but rather with a technical or competence-based vision or of education that has been denounced for a long time already<sup>11</sup> and again recently<sup>12</sup>. The two approaches are very different. In the first, the student is told how to think and how to live. In the second personal experiences that enable a process of personal growth are fostered. These experiences will lead the student to express themselves and speak in a concrete way in coherence with their inner dynamics. In the second case, the person is being offered help to grow, along the lines that Polo pointed out.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental*. Tomo I, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2008

<sup>9</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op. cit.*, 1106a.5-10

<sup>10</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op. cit.*, 1119a.20-25

<sup>11</sup> R. STANLEY PETERS, *Ethics and education*, George allen & unwin ltd, sixth edition, London, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> J.V. ORON and M. BLASCO. "Revealing the Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education". *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. 37/ 5 (2018): 481-498 and J.V. ORON, "Educación centrada en el crecimiento de la relación interpersonal". *Studia Poliana*: (2018) 241-62.

<sup>13</sup> L. POLO, *Ayudar a crecer. Cuestiones de filosofía de la educación*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2006.



The consequences of an education focused on behavioral routines and idealized values leads to a situation in which the person feels ignored, which in turn impedes ethical action. When the inner dimension is ignored and therefore virtue is idealized and behavioralized the person becomes broken on the inside, because the person cannot "be herself". Deep down, the person doesn't feel recognized and even feels despised, because no one has cared for her intimacy, nor for the reality of her life. The student discovers that no one cares about what is happening on the inside, nor is anything that arises properly from inside really expected. Instead, the student discovers that the only thing that is asked is to behave and express themselves in a certain way. The student has to limit himself to meet the expectations that have already been marked out. Growing is something technical because it aims to reach a specific outcome. This also leads a view of the virtues as mutually independent, since on the one hand one can acquire the idealized behavior of solidarity and on the other hand one either can or cannot acquire the perseverance. Instead, Aristotle, when speaking of the virtues of moral character already showed that these form a system, and that all support each other. This is logical because all arise from the interior of the same person.

Moreover, we said that one may even prevent the ethical act itself, because without choice there is no ethical act. If a person is told to think and how to behave, that person is not choosing anything, and the teacher incurs in the great absurdity of wanting to teach virtues by impeding the ethical act at its root. Without an elective act there is no ethical act <sup>14</sup>. We could ask ourselves how it is possible to reach such pathological dissociation. Following the denunciation shown by Francisco Altarejos in his book "the ethical dimension of education" <sup>15</sup> which is a compilation of various published articles, it can be said that such a dissociative pathological situation is reached because virtue is confused with values. The confusion between virtue and value is due to the idealization of the disconnected virtue with the inner dynamic that assumes to be concretely as Aristotle said. In truth, educating in virtues and educating in values can become two antagonistic

<sup>14</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op. cit.*, 1105a. 25-35.

<sup>15</sup> F. ALTAREJOS, *Dimensión ética de la educación*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 1999.



processes if not enough attention is given to interiority<sup>16</sup>. The key to deforming or not deforming virtue will lie, as I hope to show, in the conception of habit one has.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM BEHIND INDOCTRINATION

To understand idealization through which virtue is understood as value we will turn to Max Scheler; to understand behaviorization through which virtue is understood as routine we will turn to Williams James. Our key affirmations are: reducing virtue to mere conceptualization leads to understanding virtue as value, and reducing virtue to mere behavior leads to understanding virtue as routine.

#### *Idealized Virtue in Scheler*

Scheler is a key reference to understand what values are and a fundamental work in this regard is his "Ethics"<sup>17</sup>. For Scheler values are objective goods. In that sense they are no one's invention, but in fact, value is known thanks to the emotions of the spirit, which are subjective. Therefore, Scheler's values are objective-subjective. The emotional reality at the spiritual level is what perceives the values. In Scheler emotions know. How is it possible that Scheler reaches the conclusion that emotions know? In Leonardo Polo, clearly, a feeling knows nothing, because a feeling is an effect: "A feeling is information about the suitability of the object to the faculty"<sup>18</sup>.

Let us explore why Scheler reaches his conclusion. In Aristotle, we have seen that the habit is a perfection of the operation, but not an act detached from the operation. In this case habit and feeling are not very far apart, because both are located "at the end". In Aristotle feeling is something that happens "at the end", and habit is something that happens "at the end". Let us explore more precisely what "at the end" means.

<sup>16</sup> See especially chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the cited book by Francisco Altarejos.

<sup>17</sup> M. SCHELER, *Ética*, Rev de Occidente, Madrid, 1042-43 and re-edited by Caparrós Editores 2001.

<sup>18</sup> L. POLO, *Teoría del conocimiento* I cit, p. 276



Aristotle said: "Every faculty of sensation exercises its activity towards an object and that such a faculty, when well arranged... it follows... (that) this activity will be the most perfect and the most pleasant"<sup>19</sup> so that emotion (in this case pleasure) arises (is followed) at the end of an activity in concrete circumstances. This is what we mean when we say the emotion is "at the end". Virtues will appear as the fruit of an activity<sup>20</sup>, therefore they too are "at the end". They are temporally close, but conceptually very far away in Aristotle. Habit and emotion in Aristotle are not confused, although they share the temporal moment. Aristotle will not fall into the error of saying that feelings know, not only because he has conceptualized well what emotion is, but also because Aristotle knows that there are more ways of knowing than the rational way. Aristotle, on the one hand, understands the limitations of logos<sup>21</sup> and, on the other hand, he recognizes the superiority of nous over logos<sup>22</sup>.

Through his philosophical investigation, Scheler discovers that there is knowledge that is not rational. He attributes this non-rational way of knowing to feelings, specifically spiritual feelings. Value is known in a non-rational way, and habit, if we follow Aristotle, is a perfection of the operation. Then if reason does not know values, neither can it know habits, which are nothing more than improved operations. So, what remains? It remains that something other than reason also knows and, in Scheler's proposal, this can only be feeling. If reason does not know certain things, concretely values, and there are no other ways to know, only feelings remain as an alternate cognitive route, concretely spiritual feelings. We would be talking about an intuitive type of knowledge. It knows 'just because', simply, because it is evident. This is the process that Scheler associates with feeling.

In conclusion, Scheler reaches the stance that emotions know, because he discovers non-rational knowledge and attributes it to

<sup>19</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op. cit.*, 1174b.15-20

<sup>20</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op. cit.*, 1103a.15-35

<sup>21</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Ética Op cit*, book VI points 1 to 7, nous is one of the intellectual virtues, superior to the episteme and only inferior to sophia.

<sup>22</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Metafísica*, Gredos, Madrid, 2014, book IX point 10 and book XII point 6 and following.



feeling. We would like to suggest that if Scheler had known that there are more ways to know than only reason, he would not have needed to turn to feeling and say that it knows. Maybe the problem we are raising is not Scheler's, but rather of those who want to combine Aristotelian virtue with values, which leads them to idealize virtue and treat things we value emotionally as knowledge. Contrary to this stance, we find in Altarejos a clear point of reference for rejecting the path of value and resorting to virtue in all its senses and without reductionisms in order to make growth possible<sup>23</sup>.

### *Virtue as Routine in James*

The other devirtualization of virtue is to reduce it to routine. To understand this, we turn to James. James wrote a book chapter in 1980 called "habit"<sup>24</sup> which is a key reference to understand his vision of habit. In the first sentence of the book, it says that "living creatures... are bundles of habits" which raises the question from the outset whether a habit boosts growth or rather stops it. It states that there are two types of habits. Innate habits are instincts. Some of them can be educated and become called acts of reason. So rather than two types of habits there is only one type of habit, but some can be educated and then the second category of habits appears. Habit education is enabled by the brain's plastic capacity which allows the organic support to be modified while maintaining its integrity. Plasticity is the possibility of change without losing consistency. Throughout its changes, the situations of equilibrium would be the habits. The habit at cerebral level decreases resistance by looking for a better functional state. James says that the brain cannot be accessed in a material way, but we can have some influence on what happens there through the blood or through nerve endings. Therefore, He concludes we can influence the brain by our behavior. The repetition of a certain movement will result in affecting the brain from the outside until the brain structure is modified. Thus, I insist, nature is affected little by little. Therefore, it can be argued that the function shapes the organ. Once the habit has been achieved, conscious attention is no longer needed. For this reason, James says,

<sup>23</sup> F. ALTAREJOS, *Dimensión Op. cit.*, p.164

<sup>24</sup> W. JAMES, *Habit*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1914



"habit diminishes conscious attention"<sup>25</sup>. He also offers the example of the large number of routine things we do during the morning's personal hygiene without knowing what or how we have done it. James comments that in the acquired habit only the initial stimulus is needed so that all the associated behaviors develop in a chain. He refers to the will repeatedly as the one that directs the whole process of acquiring habits. In James, habit is a matter of will. Will is the key: "To achieve the acquisition of a new habit, or to abandon an old one, we must launch ourselves with as strong and determined an initiative as possible." This makes him fall into a materialistic reductionism<sup>26</sup>. James' position has been studied and rejected in the neuroscience-philosophy dialogue of Leonardo Polo<sup>27</sup>. The mechanical repetition of a behavior does not lead to the generation of a habit-routine. Let's not forget that James reduces habit to routine, and he does not see it as an act that perfects the operation, but as the result of a repeated behavior that remains as embedded or marked in the brain. Even very simple experiences show the impossibility of reducing habit to mere behavior: a group of volunteers were asked to move their finger mechanically while doing something else and another group was asked to notice the movement and think about what they were doing. Only those who paid attention improved: their motor efficiency, power, sensorimotor learning, and ability in motor production increased<sup>28</sup> (Boutin, Blandin, Massen, Heuer, & Badets, 2014).

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<sup>25</sup> W. JAMES, *Habit Op. cit.*, p.31

<sup>26</sup> L. F. BARRETT, "The Future of Psychology: Connecting Mind to Brain." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4/4 (2009): 326–39

<sup>27</sup> J. BERNACER and J.M. GIMÉNEZ-AMAYA, "On Habit Learning in Neuroscience and Free Will." In *Is Science Compatible with Free Will?*, eds. A. SUAREZ and P. ADAMS. New York,: Springer, (2013). And also in J. BERNACER y J.I MURILLO, "The Aristotelian Conception of Habit and Its Contribution to Human Neuroscience." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8/ 883 (2014).

<sup>28</sup> BOUTIN A, BLANDIN Y, MASSEN C, HEUER H, BADETS A. "Conscious awareness of action potentiates sensorimotor learning". *Cognition*. 133/1(2014):1-9.



#### 4. INDOCTRINATION RESULTS IN RELATIVISM

"Indoctrination results in relativism" may sound strange, but we think that both the idealization of value and the fixation of behaviors end up being caught in the same trap that we wanted to avoid: relativism.

To discover that both idealized value and standard behavior end up in relativism we only need to look at the problem of "moral disengagement"<sup>29</sup>. Such disengagement occurs when the person argues in an idealized way justifying their behavior. For example, one steals a bicycle in a park where there are thousands of bicycles and justifies it by arguing "well, it would be worse to rob a bank" or "I just needed it". The underlying problem is that ideals are created by the human mind and once created they can be manipulated by imagination and discursive strategy without problems. Faced with one ideal one can always oppose another ideal specially devised for that purpose.

Some will argue that the hierarchy of ideals could solve that, but in reality it cannot. It is enough to see the current problem that exists in society where the principle of autonomy is assumed as the main reference in bioethical issues<sup>30</sup>. Or even in the face of principles such as "do to others what you would like them to do to you" it can always be argued that this is what one would like to be done knowing that such a situation will not occur, or the principle can also be accepted and at the same time not to be followed because in the present situation it does not apply. That no principle is sufficient for determining behavior was already shown by Aristotelian ethics.

If nous is reduced to an inductive knowledge of the principles and logos to the discursive knowledge of the concrete with a logical character, then both principles, logos and nous could operate independently and therefore, we could freely determine what to do with the principles. But following Lee and Long such inde-

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<sup>29</sup> A. BANDURA et al. "Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency". *Journal of personality and social psychology* 71/2 (1996): 364-74.

<sup>30</sup> J.C. ABELLAN, *Bioética, autonomía y libertad*. Fundación Universitaria Española, Madrid, 2007



pendence is not possible<sup>31</sup>. The key in Lee and Long's reading of the Aristotelian understanding of *logos* and *nous* is in the internal relationship between individuality and the universal. The two terms (*logos* and *nous*) are required, since without knowledge of the universal, no recognition of the individual exists and without knowledge of the individual the universal cannot be arrived at. There is more to the individual than reproducing the universal, because in the individual we also recognize the singularity of a particular event, that which is unique and unrepeatable. This means that although *logos* and *nous* are not the same, they are neither independent nor sequential and neither of the two can separately account for individuality.

It should also be realized that such idealized values or behaviors simply do not exist, are not so shared or so recognizable. Ideal values resemble Webber's "ideal types"<sup>32</sup>. He proposed the resource of "ideal types" for social analysis. Although these ideal types do not exist in reality 100%, they are useful for analysis. For example, talking about selfishness or generosity are idealizations that, although it is not likely to find someone 100% selfish or generous, they are conceptualizations that help in the analysis.

Also, on the content of such ideal values there is no such agreement. They are terms that as long as they are not defined, everyone agrees on the content and their importance, but as soon as an extended definition is sought, discrepancies begin because where one sees generosity another may be seeing a breach of trust.

And the fixing of behaviors has the problem that they have the authority of the person who fixes them. As soon as that authority changes, any other behavior is fixed as long as one fixes it. This is the problem of many current proposals made in the field of psychology<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> R.A. LEE, and C.P. LONG. "Noûs and λόγος in Aristotle." *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 54, 3 (2007): 348–67.

<sup>32</sup> M. WEBER. Objectivity in the theory of the social sciences and of social policy, in Weber, M. 1929. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr. (2019)

<sup>33</sup> J. V. ORÓN. "Modelo antropológico subyacente a la propuesta dominante de la regulación emocional". *Quien*, 9 (2019): 9-38.



In conclusion, idealized value and standard value lead to moral disengagement. Any value can always be opposed by another value, which is a problem that cannot be solved by a hierarchy of values, as Aristotle already realized. Idealized values are not as shared as they appear to be, when particular contents are assigned to them. And fixed behaviors depend on the authority of the person fixing them. In all these cases the interiority of the person is disengaged from moral decision making.

## 5. SOLUTION

To reject virtue reduction as a routine we can turn to Aristotle himself, but to avoid the idealization of virtue reduced to value it is worth turning to Leonardo Polo and his vision of habit.

In Aristotle, and so it shall be taken up by St. Thomas, habit is a perfection of operation. On the other hand, Leonardo Polo adopts the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and also takes a step forward. He says that habit is also an act, a non-operational act <sup>34</sup>. This step taken by Polo radically avoids the idealization of virtue. Let us look into it. On the one hand, it must be said that, for Polo, sentiment does not know, but is known, and on the other hand, it must be said that values are conceptual and idealized creations that are the result of lived experience.

Let us ask ourselves: what resources does the human being have to know feelings? The answer is: habits. To know a feeling is to know the state of a faculty. It is not to know the faculty, but the actualization of the faculty. This, according to Polo's proposal, is what habits do. Specifically, the synderesis takes care of the actualization of the powers inferior to it and the habit of wisdom for the actualization of the superior personal act of being <sup>35</sup>. This means that synderesis deals with the actualization of the nature of the human being, while the habit of wisdom deals with the personal character of the human being. In a summarized way, we

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<sup>34</sup> L. POLO, *Teoría del conocimiento I*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 1988, Lección II. This conception of the habit opens a new understanding of habit in other fields as neuroscience J.V. ORÓN. "Toward a new conception of habit and self-control in adolescent maturation". *Frontiers in human neuroscience* 8/525 (2014): 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> J. F. SELLES, *Los Filósofos y los sentimientos*. p. 77



could say that nature arises when we ask ourselves *what* the human being *has*, while the personal character is discovered when we ask ourselves *who* the human being *is*. But since feelings have to do with an actualization rather than an act, theory of knowledge, which deals with acts, is not enough to be able to know all the dynamics of feelings. Rather physiology and psychology are needed as well<sup>36</sup>.

For Polo, the path that has led to focusing Ethics on values is a reaction to Kantian formalism and has led to an affective focus in ethics by making the good into an emotional appreciation of value. This train of thought ends up naturally in Nietzsche's proposal.

It is characteristic of the modern age to reduce the notion of virtue to the decision to abide by rational norms and nothing else. Goods are detached from norms and become what are usually called vital values. (Modern man does not renounce goods, but his action is trapped by his interpretation of rationality; on the other hand, his appreciation of the good is rather emotional. The notion of value appears).<sup>37</sup>

Value in Polo is not so much known, but rather created. Value is a subjective formulation and therefore it is the fruit of a high personal process, the result of personal experience. In Polo access to reality has its first step in abstraction and then continues through generalization and rationality. The path of generalization forms general ideas, denying the diversity between particular ideas, and the rational path carries out a process that leads it to formulate concepts, judgments and principles <sup>38</sup>. Value is the fruit of a high-level process in which personal experience is elaborated personally and results in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This does not mean that values are inventions, but that they are subjective formulations of lived experiences. This means that the path of value and the path of virtue are two paths that do not meet:

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<sup>36</sup> J.F. SELLES, *Los Filósofos y los sentimientos*. p. 110 y siguientes.

<sup>37</sup> L. POLO, *Ética. Hacia una versión moderna de los clásicos*. 2.<sup>a</sup> edición. AEDOS: Madrid. 1997. Capítulo IV.

<sup>38</sup> J.I. MURILLO, "Distinguir lo mental de lo real. El «Curso de teoría del conocimiento» de Leonardo Polo". *Studia Poliana*, 1(1) (1998): 59-82.



The ethics of goods is a reductionist ethics that distrusts norms; there is no other option than to accept norms, not because they have an ethical value, but simply because they have a useful value. Virtues have no place here because virtues serve to structure life; but if what is important are immediate goods, structuring life is superfluous: immediate enjoyment dispenses with the organization of the time of one's life. While virtues are stable dispositions with which to face the future, pleasures are ephemeral.<sup>39</sup>

For Polo the habit, being an act in itself in addition to a perfection of the operation, can know. It is not that I know values, because, as we have said, values are subjective formulations of personal experience. For the knowledge of reality, Polo proposes the path of abandonment of mental limitation<sup>40</sup> and knows, with the help of innate habits, what is good for a person<sup>41</sup>. When this experience is idealized value emerges. Additionally, since habit is an act that knows the operation, it also knows what happens to the operation and therefore the habit knows feelings. Feelings in Polo, contrary to Scheler, are known and do not know.

Polo discerns multiple ways of knowing. Certainly, one knows through operations, each operation has its object, and the operation is perfected through habit, but in Polo the habit is a non-operational act of knowledge. Therefore, the habit can know the operation and its actualization and with that it knows the feelings. But there are also innate habits that know. Knowing is a multifaceted reality<sup>42</sup>. In consequence, thanks to Polo's discovery of a new meaning of habit, virtue is protected from being idealized and behavioralized, independent of the inner process that is involved in a particular way of being. Thanks to Polo it is no longer necessary to say that feelings know; therefore, values are not at the beginning of the act of knowing. Values are not known; they are created because they are formulations of personal experience.

<sup>39</sup> L. POLO, *Ética* cit, capítulo IV

<sup>40</sup> L. POLO, *Teoría del conocimiento III*, EUNSA, Pamplona, (1988) and L. POLO, *Teoría del conocimiento IV*, EUNSA, Pamplona, (1994)

<sup>41</sup> L. POLO, *Antropología Op. cit.*,

<sup>42</sup> J.I. MURILLO, "Conocimiento personal y conocimiento racional en la antropología trascendental de Leonardo Polo", *Studia Poliana*, 13(2011): 69-84 and also J.F. SELLES, "El hábito de sabiduría según Leonardo Polo". *Studia Poliana*, 3/1 (2001): 73-102.



rience and therefore virtue cannot be a mere ideal. This is why it can be interesting to discuss values in order to know what the other person thinks about what they have lived, but this cannot be the foundation of any ethics. It is not necessary to agree on values, but rather on life and on what makes people grow.

The starting point of virtue is none other than that taught by Aristotle: an inner dynamic, a way of being. Such a way of being can obviously not be confined to a merely internal experience. For example, it also starts from the realization all human beings have things in common, such as their rational nature. Developing this rationality so that we for example become prudent is good for everyone. Still, such a process needs to have its origin inside the person, and the person needs to express herself from her intimacy.

## 6. A PROPOSAL THAT PREVENTS INDOCTRINATION AND RELATIVISM AT THE SAME TIME

If human action starts from interiority and interiority is actualized and expressed in our behavior and in our way of speaking, there is no room for indoctrination. This ethical growth is a global personal act<sup>43</sup>. But it opens the question of relativism because: Who justified the act? If one justifies the act oneself, every act is possible. Leonardo Polo's anthropology solves that question. He speaks about four transcendentals when referring to the person.

We think that the personal transcendentals co-existence and personal love prevent relativism because they can be used for evaluating human growth without referring to a value, norm, ideal or behavior.

*Co-existing* is not simply existing with the other, but rather it is an expanded way of being that shows the open character in intimacy and outwards of the person. It implies that a person alone is an absurdity. The idealistic subject is usually thought of as isolated, but Polo shows that an isolated person is not possible, since the person is by necessity a being in a co-existing relation-

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<sup>43</sup> J.V. ORÓN. "El acto global-personal". *Colloquia*. (2017)



ship with others<sup>44</sup> and with the world. Polo judges that "nothing human is real without personal co-existence."<sup>45</sup> The dynamics of co-existence implies that the perfection of the human being occurs thanks to personal relationships. There is no growth outside of relationships. Co-existence, by belonging to the act of being personal, prevents the relationship from being understood as something secondary, but rather it is constitutive of the person. It is not a static reality because "coexistence needs always to be achieved"<sup>46</sup>.

*Personal* love shows what the path of improvement of the human being is that happens by living the dynamics of giving and welcoming. But Polo points out that there is order to this love, since nothing can happen if one does not welcome oneself first. Welcoming or accepting is more than giving because in order to accept it is necessary to give. One needs to give the willingness to let yourself be configured by what you receive. Any person finds her existence as given to herself, but she can accept it or not. Welcoming ourselves is equivalent to the human recognition that we are creatures and not creators, that is to say, by receiving we recognize ourselves and accept our reality of being children. If the gift of being a person was not accepted, we cannot give ourselves as persons, because we cannot give what we haven't received.

In consequence, the criterion for to evaluating personal growth becomes the care one takes to foster interpersonal relationships. The intrinsic and constitutively relational character of the human being leads us to the fact that the criterium for all evaluation of personal growth is the care taken of interpersonal relationship. There is no relativism in this evaluation because there is always a "you" in front of any person, and with whom that person is connected. This means that all growth can only be growth of the relationship, only in this way the growth of each individual person appears. Some might say that this is already an idealized principle, but Polo would reply that this is not idealization but rather

<sup>44</sup> Others are other person. It means human person and divine person. In any case person.

<sup>45</sup> L. POLO. *Antropología transcendental. Tomo I. La persona humana*. Pamplona: EUNSA (1998): 178

<sup>46</sup> L. POLO. *Antropología transcendental. Tomo I. Op. Cit.*, p. 90



an axiomatic proposition. Polo assumes an axiomatic understanding of the human being and his proposal is to be intensely what one already is. That is why he rethinks the classic "do good and avoid evil."

It is sometimes said that the principle known by *synderesis* is "do good and avoid evil." I prefer to formulate that principle simply like this: "do good, act"; act all you can and improve your performance.<sup>47</sup>

Expressions such as "act as much as you can and improve your performance" recall other positions from very different philosophical proposals such as that of Whitehead who proposes that every organism should seek the maximization of experience and experience is the fact of being relationally constituted<sup>48</sup>.

The axiomatic character would be that his proposal is to be deeply what one already is. It is not about aspiring to anything external to oneself. We could say that in Polo, axiology is understood from ontology (it is good to be what one is) and ontology, in this case, is understood as anthropology (we are persons).

The axiom does not enter into the discourse of argumentation, but rather it allows for argumentation. No system of reasoning justifies itself, but always assumes extra-systemic assumptions of an axiomatic nature<sup>49</sup>. We could postulate that Polo's transcendental anthropology is the extra-systemic presupposition that allows anthropological and ethical reasoning.

## 7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical conclusion is evident, it is essential to promote the inner process of personal growth, which will obviously have its clear implication both in the way people behave and in the way they express themselves. When we speak about one reality that is made up out of parts it is usually not relevant from where to start

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<sup>47</sup> L. POLO. *Ética*, *Op. Cit.*. p.160

<sup>48</sup> A.N. WHITEHEAD. *Process and reality. An essay of cosmology*. New York: The free press. (1978)

<sup>49</sup> J.V. ORÓN and SANCHEZ-CAÑIZARES J. "¿Es posible la reducción epistemológica? Todo sistema necesita presupuestos extra-sistémicos". *Anuario filosófico* 50(3) (2017): 601-17.



working on it. For instance: a room can be painted starting from one wall or from another wall, it does not matter as long as all the walls are painted in the end. But a human being is not made up out of parts and therefore it is very relevant what the starting point of human action and human education is. Only when the starting point lies on the inside, when we start from interiority, will all that being human implies be actualized. Only in this way can theoretical talks or behavioral suggestions be fully integrated in a process of personal growth. If this is done well, the human being fully develops one's authorship. This philosophy of character education is present in current educational programs like UpToYou.<sup>50</sup>

In such programs it is proposed that personal growth begins by recognizing the student's lived reality with all its emotional load. The emotional reality then becomes a starting point for discovering the relational complexity of the person's life. In this way, the program directs attention to the interior of the person, and from that starting point the possibility of acting from within is opened, while avoiding indoctrination. There is always something good to be found in every situation because in every situation "traces of humanity" can be discovered. These traces of humanity are what these programs propose to develop by remembering the words of Polo that "Ethics does not repress tendencies but maximizes them."<sup>51</sup> Relativism is avoided because this growth is made concrete through being intensely what one is. Through personal co-existence and personal love, it is discovered that this growth cannot be more than the intensification of personal relationships. And it will be students themselves who being the person they are, take charge of reality and making decisions that affect their own personal identity. They will decide how to improve their relationships.

<sup>50</sup> [www.uptoyoueducacion.com](http://www.uptoyoueducacion.com) and J.V. ORON, "Nueva propuesta de educación emocional en clave de integración y al servicio del crecimiento". *Metafísica y Persona. Filosofía, conocimiento y vida* 16 (2017): 91-152

<sup>51</sup> L. POLO, *¿Quién es el hombre? Un espíritu en el tiempo*. Madrid: RIALP. 6<sup>a</sup> ed. (2007) cap. VI



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

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RECEIVED: January 13, 2022  
ACCEPTED: June 22, 2022  
DEFINITIVE VERSION: August 31, 2022

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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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2017.

<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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# Work and the Transcendental Free Coexistence

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RECEIVED: September 12, 2021

ACCEPTED: May 24, 2022

DEFINITIVE VERSION: August 1, 2022

**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 potency<sup>1</sup>.

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 powers<sup>2</sup>.

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

<sup>1</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental 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 outcome<sup>3</sup>.

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 agents<sup>4</sup>. 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 agent<sup>5</sup>.

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 themselves<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas T., *Summa Theologica III*, q. 19, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas T., *Summa Contra Gentiles III*, ch. 103.

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

<sup>6</sup> 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"<sup>7</sup>. 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"<sup>8</sup>. 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"<sup>9</sup>.

"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"<sup>10</sup>. 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"<sup>11</sup>. Human personal acts being coexist with other acts of being none of which is the foundation of the others.

<sup>7</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> Polo L., *Presente y futuro*, Madrid, Rialp, 1993, p. 157.

<sup>9</sup> Polo L., *Presente y futuro*, Madrid, Rialp, 1993, p. 158.

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

<sup>11</sup> 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"<sup>12</sup>. Thus, "as co-existing, the person is open, and therefore, is neither alone nor singular"<sup>13</sup>. A consequence of this is that "Coexisting with other persons manifests a dialogical opening to the others"<sup>14</sup>. 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"<sup>15</sup>. 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"<sup>16</sup>. 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-

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

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

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

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

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



pendently, interacted continuously, and interacted intermittently. The best outcomes where of the last group<sup>17</sup>.

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"<sup>18</sup>.

#### 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 people<sup>19</sup>.

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

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<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> Polo, L. *Antropología Transcendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 173, footnote.

<sup>19</sup> 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”<sup>20</sup>; 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”<sup>21</sup>. 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”<sup>22</sup>. 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”<sup>23</sup>. 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”<sup>24</sup>. 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”<sup>25</sup>.

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

<sup>20</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, pp. 203-204);

<sup>21</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 203, footnote.

<sup>22</sup> Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, p. 204.

<sup>23</sup> Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Trascendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 358.

<sup>24</sup> Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Trascendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 358.

<sup>25</sup> Polo, L., Por qué una Antropología Trascendental, *Obras Completas X*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2016, p. 361.

<sup>26</sup> 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"<sup>27</sup>.

## 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*"<sup>28</sup>.

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 persons<sup>29</sup>.

A deeper understanding of work can be found in contemporary ideas such as the Job Characteristics Theory<sup>30</sup>. 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.

<sup>27</sup> Polo, L., *Quién es el Hombre*, Madrid, Rialp, 1991, p. 97.

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

<sup>29</sup> Corazón, R., *Filosofía del Trabajo*, Madrid, Rialp, 2007, p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> 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"<sup>31</sup>. 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"<sup>32</sup>. 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

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

<sup>32</sup> 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*'<sup>33</sup>; 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"<sup>34</sup>. 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"<sup>35</sup>. 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"<sup>36</sup>. This underlines the fundamental need to consider the subjective value of work to be considered together with its objective value.

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

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

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

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## *TRANSLATED ARTICLES*







# Love as Donation and Transcendence

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RECEIVED: September 16, 2016

ACCEPTED: January 3, 2021

DEFINITIVE VERSION: July 24, 2022

Translation of “Amor donal y trascendencia” *Miscelánea Poliana*, 57 (2017) 29-53.

<http://www.leonardopolo.net/revista/mp57.htm>.

**ABSTRACT:** Philosophy poses the question about the relationship between being and love, trying to progress in finding a rational explanation of that experience. In this paper we offer an approach to the issue through two contemporary authors, Karol Wojtyła and Leonardo Polo, whose thoughts complement one another. It has been indicated that Wojtyła’s novel proposals demand an ontology of its own for anthropology. Well, it seems that Polo develops one –that he calls *transcendental anthropology*– on which Wojtyła’s thought can be grounded, united with the Polian philosophical tradition. That is why a joint development of both thoughts could prove very fruitful.

**KEYWORDS:** Love, Give, reciprocity, spousal meaning, triadic reality, ontology of love, image of God







What is love? How does a person conceptualize it? What is its ontological stature? Who has not fallen in love? Who is not aware that it is not only possible, but sublime, to promise and to commit oneself and – who even does not dare– to get engaged to someone, defying time itself? Who does not recognize the fidelity between loved ones as one of the noblest things that gives meaning to existence?

And who would not wish to be loved in that way? Isn't it true, besides–deep down– that we know, when we love, we are close to God and resemble Him?

## 1. LOVE AS DONATION AND ITS STRUCTURE

Karol Wojtyła stated on several occasions his belief that "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it".<sup>1</sup> His reflection starts from experience and from his phenomenological description, in search of the foundation of his being, and if we were we to look for a synthetic description of what he understands by love, it would be this: 'an unselfish gift.'<sup>2</sup>

Not everybody explains love as "gift of self" though this explanation has classical roots. Furthermore, a broad reflection on gift has been carried out by French authors throughout the twentieth century. Starting from cultural anthropology, Marcel Mauss presents "giving as the most ancient social way of exchange, based on the triad giving-receiving-returning, a triple demand that refers not only to economic goods but also to ceremonials and rituals."<sup>3</sup> Later, other thinkers extend the priority

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Redemptor Hominis*, 1979, n. 10.

<sup>2</sup> JOHN PAUL II, "El don desinteresado" (The Unselfish Gift) in LEONARDI, Mauro, *Come Gesù*, Ed. Ares, Milano 2014. Spanish trans.: *Como Jesús*, ed. Palabra 2015, pp. 263-277. Posthumous article recently published in Polish in AAS, 98, t. III (2006, 628-638), with no mention of the date and circumstances in which it was written.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. MAUSS, *Ensayo sobre el don. Forma y función del intercambio en las sociedades arcaicas*, ed. Kartz, Buenos Aires, 2009. Cf. also M. GODELIER, *El enigma del don*, ed. Paidós, Barcelona 1998.



of gift to all societies, described as "any provision of goods and services, with no guarantee of a return or compensation, aimed to establish, foster or re-establish the social bond between persons."<sup>4</sup> Based on many observations, authors like M. Henry and J.L. Marion developed a phenomenology of giving: in C. Bruaire and J. Maritain we can find an outline of the ontology of giving and in E. Levinas and P. Ricoeur, an ethical design with or without reciprocity. All these are disparate approaches, sometimes within a complicated discussion, riddled with aporias, in Derrida's words<sup>5</sup>.

Now, remaining in the same cultural context but without depending on those authors, "gift" appears as the right framework to discuss love, and the philosophers we are talking about today approach the issue precisely from the point of view of gift. A framework that, as we said, has antecedents in the great classical authors. Thus, Aquinas states: "a gift is properly an unreturnable giving, as Aristotle says -i.e., a thing which is not given with the intention of a return- and it thus contains the idea of a gratuitous donation. Now, the reason for donation being gratuitous is love; since therefore do we give something to anyone gratuitously forasmuch as we wish him well. So, what we first give him is the love whereby we wish him well. Hence it is manifest that love has the nature of a first gift, through which all free gifts are given."<sup>6</sup>

This approach allows us to draw at least two conclusions: first, gift and love are two issues intrinsically connected,<sup>7</sup> and second, loving donation places itself on another plane; it is something more than a *do ut des*. Upon continuation, we will present this issue from four different points of view.

<sup>4</sup> J.T. GODBOUT, A CAILLÉ, *L'esprit du don*, ed. La découverte, Paris 2000, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. DERRIDA, "Justicia y perdón", in *¡Palabra! Instantáneas filosóficas*, ed. Trotta, Madrid 2001, p. 96. To see a group of aporias, cf. U. FERRER, *Acción, deber, donación. Dos dimensiones éticas inseparables de la acción*, ed. Dykinson, Madrid 2015, pp. 139-209.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 38, a. 2, c.

<sup>7</sup> This becomes all the more obvious when one finds that Love and Gift are the two names that Aquinas uses to describe the Third Person of the Trinity -the Love person. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, qq. 37-38.



### 1.1. *Love, triadic reality*

First, the structure of giving is triadic. Even though traces of triadic relations can be found both in the Cosmos and in the human being,<sup>8</sup> they are not frequent. Usually human complexity, – Polo affirms– "is organized considering the criterion of duality: Body and soul, will and intelligence, inner being and outside world, subject and object, individual and society.... These are some human dimensions where duality can be found. Duplicity (hypocrisy, dissimulation, pretense), on the other hand, is based on this duality. Certainly, duplicity presupposes duality and only with duality is it possible".<sup>9</sup> Love can be approached from the perspective of duality, as has been frequent among theoreticians of love. It should be enough to remember the difference between eros and agape, that, in Anders Nygren's pen<sup>10</sup> are presented in a dualistic and incompatible way.

However, considered from the point of view of gift, love shows a triadic structure, as we said. With simple brilliance St. Augustine already pointed out that in love, one should consider the lover, the beloved and love, a reflection of the divine triad, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> According to Polo's terminology, the structure of giving is: giving-accepting-gift.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.2. *Love and reciprocity*

Turning now to the structure of the gift, let us focus on the giving and accepting. Considered from the point of view of action they seem to be hierarchically related, as apparently can be gathered from Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This theory is strengthened if we consider that only he who possesses, gives, whereas he who receives, lacks something. From this viewpoint, one can easily understand how hard it is to give a

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<sup>8</sup> The same happens with family, which is a triadic reality: father, mother, and child.

<sup>9</sup> L. POLO, "La coexistencia del hombre", en *Escritos menores* (1991-2000), *Obras Completas*, vol. XVI, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> A. NYGREN, *Eros och agape*, original edition in Swedish, Stockholm, 1930. Trans. in Spanish: *Eros y ágape. La noción cristiana del amor y sus transformaciones*, ed. Sagitario, 1969.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, 8, 10, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I. La persona humana*, ed. Eunsa, Pamplona, 1999, pp. 217-228.



present to someone who has an abundance of things or almost everything. Or, looking at another example from the field of education: there is no teacher if there are no students, and students not only receive but also, in a certain way, give to the teacher, with their attention, and allowing him or her to deepen in the issues and to give his or her best. Still, there exists a certain hierarchy between the teacher and the student. He who knows gives more than the ignorant. But if the gift is related to love, giving and accepting are in the same category –as we will see later– and bring about the same kind of happiness, as it happens with loving and being loved: two sides of the same coin.

The importance of this issue is better understood from the point of view of correspondence, which is at the center of the discussion on giving. Is it necessary to repay when you receive a gift? or is it not? Even though the gift is gratuitous, even though it does not strictly require giving back, it seems there should be at least some sort of gratitude. In short, a gift must have some kind of response from the side of the beneficiary. This issue arises again when we think of debt, at least of the awareness of being indebted, and, seen exclusively from the level of the action or from the level of having, it can give rise to several aporias.<sup>13</sup> But, at the heart of this discussion lies something deeper than the relationship between giver and receiver; since, if it is not accepted, the very gift is thwarted, losing its meaning and even its very being as a gift.

This is a perennial issue that arises in the great authors, even if in a basic manner, namely, that correspondence is essential for love to exist: “Indeed, this is the principal thing in the lover’s intention –states Aquinas–: to be loved in return by the object of his love. To this, then, the lover’s main effort inclines to attract his beloved to the love of himself; unless this occurs, his love must come to naught (dissolves)<sup>14</sup>.”

<sup>13</sup> Most of them have been put forward by Derrida, and are included in Cf. U. FERRER, *Acción, deber, donación* pp. 160-167.

<sup>14</sup> AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. III, chap. 151. «Hoc enim est praecipuum in intentione diligentis, ut a dilecto reametur: ad hoc enim praecipue studium diligentis tendit, ut ad sui amorem dilectum attrahat; et nisi accadat, oportet dilectionem dissolvi». (Translator’s note: English translation by Vernon J. Bourke translates *dissolvi* as “come to naught,” here I use the more literal



This unexceptionable assertion poses several questions. Is reciprocity essential for love to exist? Is unrequited love true love? Does this mean that, if love is unrequited, it should literally be 'dissolved'? Lévinas, for example, suggests the possibility of an ethical gift without reciprocity, without compensation. We will not focus on this approach, I simply just wanted to point it out, as well as some poems of Spanish anthology, that also make a case for an unrequited love: For example, a Spanish tune goes:

*"Love and expect nothing  
that's the best of affections;  
I love you without hope of love in return:  
so tender is my love for you."*

And the male lead of the Spanish light opera *La alegría de la huerta* sings:

*"My dear highlander,  
so tender is my love for you,  
that even if you marry other man  
I will never forget you."*

These verses speak of many things: of unselfishness, of loving the other for his or her own sake... On the other hand, an unrequited love can be alive as long as there is hope, and, while there is life, a love can wait. Now can we speak of true love, when it is not accepted?

The issue becomes clearer if we consider the gratuitous nature of love. This gratuitous nature is not well understood if we think that the gift expects something in return. That 'something' is the mistake. "Love is with love repaid" is a great truth, and excludes the idea of an exchange for something or of something being owed. There is no 'something' that can repay love and its gratuitous character. However, strictly speaking, "love is 'repaid' with love" indicates, in turn, a requited love, since lover-gift is such for the sake of the beloved-received, and it is in this intertwining that love really starts. Love is not a single

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"dissolve" in order to follow the rapporteur's line of thinking).



phenomenon, where the lover is self-sufficient, but a triadic or tridimensional one. Requitat is not a 'payment,' but the very structure and dynamics of love.<sup>15</sup>

Let us go, then, to the heart of the question. Why is it that, speaking of absolutes, love does not exist without requitat, as Polo asserted several times? <sup>16</sup> This is a result of the same structure of love, which is not a unilateral reality. There is no love without a lover and a loved one.<sup>17</sup> And there is no lover without beloved, nor gift if it is not accepted. Therefore, the fulfillment of love only starts with reciprocity, when I am of the other and the other is mine. These possessive pronouns, yours and mine, are intrinsic components of love. Viladrich puts it in these exact words: "The lover-being constitutes itself by the beloved (...). The lover's gift of himself is a movement whose perfection –to really become a gift, that is, that all I have is yours– is achieved when it is welcomed by the beloved, who accepts as his own the 'all I have' that the lover was offering to him. Likewise, were there no lover's gift, the beloved could not achieve acceptance. Reciprocity is in its radical structure a reciprocal intertwining, where lover and beloved manage to fulfill themselves, one through the other, precisely as gift and as acceptance."<sup>18</sup> So, we say, with Aquinas and Polo: love does not exist without requitat.

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<sup>15</sup> Love debts are a *plus ultra* (still further) coming from the entire and authentic character of the gift and acceptance. These, by virtue of freewill, become biographical identities, that is, a part of our own being and, inasmuch as they are united lovers, they are co-identities.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., Among other places: L. POLO, "Tener, dar, esperar", in *Filosofía y economía*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2012, p. 246. (There exists an English version, *Having, Giving, Hoping*).

<sup>17</sup> Thus, Edith Stein asserts that: "The gift of self leads to the union; it does not reach fullness but through the acceptance by the beloved one. So love demands, in order to reach fullness, the mutual donation of persons. This is the only way for love to be a full assertion, since a person does not open to the other but in the giving of himself. Only in the union is a proper knowledge between persons possible. Love (...) is both receiving and a free act (...) But love, in its highest fullness, is not fulfilled except in God: in the mutual love of the divine persons, in the divine Being giving Himself to Himself." E. STEIN, *Ser finito y Ser eterno* (*Finite Being and Eternal Being*) in *Obras Completas*, III, Ed. Monte Carmelo, Burgos 2007, pp. 1041-1042. Own translation.

<sup>18</sup> P.J. VILADRICH, *Por qué y para qué "uno con una para toda la vida"*. La cuestión de la unidad de vida en el amante, en la correspondencia con el amado y en la unión conyugal (Why and What for Marriage Should be "a Man With a



### 1.3. *Giving and Acceptance*

We have pointed out that, depending on the point of view, both moments could be hierarchically related, and giving could be more than acceptance. This is the dynamic if considered from the sphere of having, where it can be fairly stated that "no one gives what he doesn't have." But this is not the only possible point of view. Giving can be also considered from the point of view of being, from who someone *is* instead of what he or she has.<sup>19</sup>

Considered from the point of view of personal being, giving and acceptance are not hierarchically related, but have the same status. Polo states clearly that "acceptance is not less than giving." This introduces us to the giving character of the person, "a subject typical of transcendental anthropology."<sup>20</sup> Polo distinguishes clearly between the sphere of having and the sphere of giving, both corresponding to the difference between nature and person, and explains that the distinctive trait of human nature with regard to that of lower or higher beings is its ability to possess. But the distinctive trait of the person is his ability to give and to give himself.<sup>21</sup> This is why the gift, the same as love, is strictly speaking something characteristic of the person, both in giving and acceptance.<sup>22</sup>

For his part, Karol Wojtyła coincides with Polo's initial approach and develops new aspects of it. Thus, they coincide in asserting

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Woman Forever." The Issue of the Unity of Life in the Lover, in the Reciprocity with the Beloved and in the Conjugal Union), in «Ius Canonicum» 55 (2015) p. 550.

<sup>19</sup> This implies a difference between person and nature, a difference started in a certain way by Aquinas, who distinguished an essential and a nominal or personal sense both in gift and in love, so as to assert that 'love' is also a person's name. Cf. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, qq. 37 and 38.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I. La persona humana*, p. 220.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. L. POLO, "Tener y dar" in *Sobre la existencia cristiana*, Eunsá, 1996, p. 103-135. L. POLO, "Tener, dar, esperar", in *Filosofía y economía*, Eunsá, Pamplona 2012, p. 207-268. (There exists an English version: *Having, Giving, Hoping.*)

<sup>22</sup> Cf. L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I. La persona humana*, p. 220. Polo's remarks on giving and accepting develop that God is the one who gives –and later accepts– to the man, and the man is the one who accepts God's gift and, later on, he or she delivers it to God. Appropriate as this may be, Polian anthropology appears to be lacking a deeper discussion on dual transcendentality at an anthropological level, that is, in the relationships between human persons.



that giving and acceptance have both the same category: "The giving and the accepting of the gift interpenetrate, so that the giving itself becomes acceptance, and acceptance is transformed into giving."<sup>23</sup> Their approaches also agree in that the person is a gift of God's creation, since "every creature bears within it the sign of the original and fundamental gift –Wojtyla points out–. The concept of 'giving' (...) indicates the one who gives and the one who accepts the gift, and also the relationship that is established between them. (...) In the narrative of the creation of the visible world, giving has a meaning only with regard to man (...) *who, as "image of God," is capable of understanding the meaning of gift.*"<sup>24</sup>

Now, from these common premises, we discover in Wojtyla an extension of the meaning of a gift accepted. Certainly, the first gift is the same person, who, in his turn, is able to accept gifts: "Man appears in creation as the one who accepted the world as a gift."<sup>25</sup> But there is even more, man appears "as the one who, in the midst of the 'world,' accepted the other man as a gift"<sup>26</sup>: God gives him another person.

John Paul II emphasizes that, in order to understand the meaning itself of the gift, we must consider that a human being, constitutively speaking, is something more than loneliness, since in him, human personal relationships are also constitutive (considered as a call to the communion of persons). "The communion of persons means existing in a mutual 'for,' in a relationship of mutual gift."<sup>27</sup> In this sense his development –not found in Polo, although it is implicit in the meaning that the latter gives to co-existence– that God creates a man 'from the beginning,' and makes him dual, male and female (Gn 1:27), helps

<sup>23</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*. From the Weekly Audiences of His Holiness September 5, 1979 – November 28, 1984, p. 45. © Copyright 2005 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana - © Copyright 1979- 1984 - L'Osservatore Romano. Cf. *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of Body*, Pauline Books & Media, Boston 2006.

<sup>24</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Redemption of the Body and Sacramentality of Marriage*. (From now on cited as *Theology of the Body*), audience on 2.I.1980, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 9.I.1980, p. 36.



to clarify the issue<sup>28</sup>: “‘He created’ means, in this case, even more –he comments–, since it means that He gave mutually one to the other. He gave to the man the femininity of that human being similar to him, He made her his help and, at the same time, gave the man to the woman. Therefore, from the very beginning the man is given by God to another. (...) Woman is given to man so that he can understand himself, and *vice versa*, man is given to woman with the same aim. They must confirm their humanity to each other, being amazed at their double richness.”<sup>29</sup>

Woman ‘is given’ to man by the Creator, and received, that is to say, accepted, by him as a gift. Acceptance of the woman by the man, and the same way of accepting her –as the Creator wished, i.e., ‘by herself’– turn out to be a first donation, so that the woman, in giving herself, ‘discovers’ herself. When the whole dignity of the gift is ensured in this acceptance through the offer of what she is in the whole truth of her humanity, she reaches the inner depth of her person and full possession of herself.<sup>30</sup> But at the same time, woman is given to someone who had already been entrusted to her (cf. Gn 2:18), since “God entrusts the human being to her in a special way.”<sup>31</sup>

If at the beginning of Creation, God creates humanity as male and female, we could intuitively state that, when creating in the image of Himself, God, who is one in nature and Triune in persons, created a nature –the human nature–, dual in persons. This intuition is contained, moreover, in the well-known ‘unity of the two’ that John Paul II talked about, in the image of the ‘unity of the three.’<sup>32</sup> Polo describes human person as dual, and John Paul II adds that he is uni-dual, relational, ontological and

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<sup>28</sup> As already known, there are two accounts of Creation in Genesis, and in the second one Adam appears to come into existence before Eve. However, current exegesis, proposed by John Paul II, reads Genesis 2 in the light of Genesis 1:26-27, where both male and female come into existence together. So Genesis 2 is a symbolic text that should be read without contradicting the previous passage. Cf. my work: B. CASTILLA DE CORTÁZAR, *¿Fue creado el varón antes que la mujer? Reflexiones en torno a la Antropología de la Creación*, Rialp, Madrid 2005. Also in “*Annales Theologici*,” Edizioni Ares, Roma, vol. 6 (1992/2) 319-366.

<sup>29</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Unselfish Gift*.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 6.II.1980, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988, n. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, nn. 6-7.



complementary,<sup>33</sup> an original and irreducible difference with the characteristic of forming a peculiar unity: the *unity of the two*.<sup>34</sup>

#### 1.4. *The third moment of love*

In Theology, which considers three different persons in the divinity, who has revealed himself as love (Cf. 1 Jn, 4:8), it is easy, say, to recognize the three different elements of the structure of love in the three divine persons. However, it is not so easy for anthropology, since the human being is, from the beginning, only two different ways of being equal -male and female. How is the third element of love to be expressed when we only have two persons, one who gives and one who accepts?

Polo presents the difficulty: “giving and accepting imply the gift. This means, in the end, that the structure of giving is triune and not dual. However, since human person is dual or co-existent, but in no way triune, man needs his essence to complete the gifting structure. Man can only give gifts through his essence.”<sup>35</sup> For Polo it is clear that “in transcendental Anthropology we attain the giving and accepting duality, a giving and an accepting characteristic of the human personal co-existing. However, if gift is to be understood as transcendental, we must admit a third element, so that duality is transcended. Thus, the fact that gift is personal transcends the human accepting and giving. The aperture into the person is the duality already alluded to. However, the created person is not capable of communicating his own personal character as a gift. Therefore, in man the gift must be understood as an operative expression or manifestation (...), that is, on the level of the essence.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, this assertion that a human person is not capable of communicating his own gift a personal character is consistent with the explanation that

<sup>33</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Families*, 1995, nn. 7-8.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988, n. 7. This teaching overcomes, as Scola explains, well-known bans of the past, (he refers, for example, to SAINT AUGUSTIN, *De Trinitate*, 12, 5, 5; and to AQUINAS, *Summa Theológica*, I, q. 93, a. 6), while demanding, in addition, an expansion of the Judeo-Christian teaching on the image of God. Cf. SCOLA, A., *La experiencia humana elemental*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I. La persona humana*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 223.



parents can only transmit their nature to the child, whereas the gift that renders the child a person is given by God.

However, in the human sphere love does exist, and it does not cease to be a triadic reality, so we must find out how the triad manifests itself. In this sense, the progress made by John Paul II regarding the *imago Dei* as 'unity of the two,' which we mentioned above, further clarifies the issue. For Karol Wojtyła the fullness of the image, that he always regards as a trinitarian one, does not appear in an isolated person, but when two persons live a communion of persons between them. "*Man -states Wojtyła-becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.* Right 'from the beginning,' he is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons."<sup>37</sup>

The Unity of the two permits the discovery of a 'three' in the human sphere, that is not embodied in another person, but that implies a different reality of each of the lovers taken separately. That is, when each of them lives for the other, since mutual reciprocity generates the union, this union between them would be the third element of love. In the human sphere, therefore, the triadic structure would be the lover, the beloved and the union between them. So, in the structure of human love, the very union constitutes the first 'three.'<sup>38</sup> It is a real three, because the union between the you and the I could very well not exist, though it is not a different person but a 'single we.' That union-being constitutes an *esse* of a higher order than the personal *esse*. The union-being turns then into a particular *additionally*, different to the *additionally/in addition* that Polo often uses to describe every human person.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 14.XI.1979, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> This idea is developed in the works of P.J. Viladrich on the structure and dynamics of love. Cf. P.J. VILADRICH, *Por qué y para qué "uno con una para toda la vida"*, art. cit. pp. 550 ff.

<sup>39</sup> To describe the person, Polo often uses the adverb "additionally" or "in addition" (además), in addition to the operation, in addition to his natural endowment, in addition to his essential perfection. This is consistent with the distinction *essentia-esse*, which places the person in the sphere of being, 'the one beyond the essence' (essence as different from the act of being). Cf. L. POLO,



## 2. LOVE, UNSELFISH GIFT IN KAROL WOJTYŁA.

Once we have analyzed the triadic structure of the gifting love let us discuss how John Paul II formulates love as an unselfish gift. Its anthropological foundation can be seen in that famous sentence of *Gaudium et Spes*, perhaps introduced by himself, that he would repeat time and again in many documents of his Pontificate: "Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."<sup>40</sup>

This short text describes the two internal dimensions of the human person: his subsisting nature, that medieval thinkers used to call 'incommunicable,' and his relational openness, that both endows him with maximum communication, and allows him to reach his fullness. The first personal feature, also known as uniqueness, refers to a someone that has something absolute, which makes him or her to be always an end and not a means, as Kant brilliantly explained.<sup>41</sup> That is why a person must be loved for his or her own sake, in the same way as he or she is loved by God. As it is known, this Kantian assertion is the starting point and the grounds for the theory on love that John Paul II developed in his important study *Love and Responsibility*,<sup>42</sup> a subject on which he would reflect throughout his intellectual life,<sup>43</sup> searching for its anthropological foundation in his work *The Acting Person*<sup>44</sup>, and for the theological one in his great work on the *Theology of the Body*.<sup>45</sup>

The second dimension that we will refer to is the relational openness of the human person, described as a sincere gift of himself. This theory could complete Kant's categorical

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Why a Transcendental Anthropology?, Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy Press, South Bend, Indiana (USA), 2014, p. 43. Cf. also J.A. GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, Y además. Escritos sobre la antropología transcendental de Polo, Delta ed., San Sebastian-Donostia 2008, p.123.

<sup>40</sup> II VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24.

<sup>41</sup> I. KANT, *Fundamentación de la metafísica de las costumbres*, (Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals) Ariel, 1999, § 429,10, p. 189.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Love and Responsibility*.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *El don del amor* (The Gift of Love). Palabra, Madrid 1999, group of articles on the subject, written throughout many years.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Love and Responsibility*.

<sup>45</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Theology of body*.



imperative, since although every person is an end in himself, is not an end for himself: the end of a person is always another person.

### 2.1. *When the gift is another person*

For Karol Wojtyła "the awareness of the gift and of the donation is clearly imprinted in the biblical image of creation,"<sup>46</sup> above all because, when God called man to life ('male and female created he them' (Gn 1, 26:7)), at that moment, to create meant even more, it means that the received gift, received by he and by she, is another person. In John Paul II's words, "God gave to the man the femininity of that human being similar to him, He made her his help and, at the same time, gave the man to the woman. Therefore, from the very beginning the man is given by God to another (...) Woman is given to man so that he can understand himself, and *vice versa*, man is given to woman with the same aim. They must confirm their humanity to each other."<sup>47</sup>

At the beginning of Creation, therefore, we find something unique: the gift bestowed is another person. This is an important issue to delve into the mystery of love. "Human beings do not only live side by side –John Paul II asserts–, but in different references: they live one for the other: they are brother or sister for each other, husband and wife, friend, teacher, or pupil. It could seem there is nothing extraordinary in that (...). That image *thickens* in certain moments and it is precisely then, in those 'thickenings,' when the said gift of one man to another is made."<sup>48</sup> It is then that one can realize, with regard to another person, that "God has given you to me."

One of those 'thickenings' occurs in parents when they have a child. Eve expressed it in astonishment, when she had her first descendant: "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (Gn 4:1), which is to say: "God has given you to me." Indeed, "motherhood is the first way man is entrusted to man. 'God wants to give you another man,' that is to say, God wants to entrust you that man, and to entrust means that God trusts you, He trusts that you know how to accept that gift, that you know how to embrace

<sup>46</sup> JOHN PAUL II, "*El don desinteresado*," p. 265 (The Unselfish Gift).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 263.



him in your heart, which entails repaying this gift with the gift of yourself."<sup>49</sup>

John Paul II continues: "God really gives us other persons: brothers, sisters in humanity apart from our parents. Then, with the passing of time, as we grow, he always places in our lives new persons. And, each one of them represents a gift for us, in such a way that we can say to each one of them: "God has given you to me." This realization becomes a source of inner richness for each one of us."<sup>50</sup>

"God –he acknowledges– has given me plenty of persons, young and old, boys and girls, fathers and mothers, widows, healthy and sick. Whenever He would give them to me, he would also entrust them to me, and today I see that I could write a monograph on each of them (...) There were among them simple people, workmen in the factory; students and professors were there too, physicians and lawyers; there were, finally, priests and consecrated people. There were, obviously, men and women."<sup>51</sup>

## 2.2. *Free from the freedom of gift*

As it is known, in the first part of the Theology of the Body, John Paul II considers the human being as it came from God's hands, delving deeply into experience, before original sin. One result was that they both were free with the freedom of the gift.<sup>52</sup> As can be noticed, in this expression the word freedom appears twice. The first time freedom is used, the meaning refers to "self-control" with which, in the state of original innocence, each person fully possessed himself and was free, unrestrained to turn himself into a gift for the other.<sup>53</sup> That meaning is obvious. What demands further explanation is the second term, 'freedom of the gift,' since

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 266.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 274.

<sup>52</sup> "Created by Love, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, they are both 'naked' because they are free with the freedom of gift": JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.I.1980, p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> "We mean here freedom especially as mastery of oneself (self-control). From this aspect, this freedom is indispensable so that man may be able to "give himself," so that he may become a gift, so that he may be able to "fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself " (referring to the words of the Council). *Ibidem*



it is necessary to previously unravel the meaning of the body. John Paul II calls it spousal (nuptial), and by that he understands the participation of the body in the unselfish gift to the other.<sup>54</sup>

The spousal meaning of the body is double: on the one hand, human body expresses to the other that its owner is a person. Thus, Adam discovers through the body that Eve is someone like him –even though she is different–, when he says: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23). And to be a person is above all to have been loved for one's own sake by God. The body is the way to recognize or affirm that we have before us a person, with his (her) well-known dignity. Second, the body is capable of expressing love. Now, the external expression corresponds to an inner love, where each one must have been reciprocally accepted by the other as a gift.<sup>55</sup>

Once we have explained these premises we are in a better situation to understand the meaning of the "freedom of the gift" within the framework of interpersonal love, as mutual acceptance<sup>56</sup> that can be expressed in a variety of forms: the

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<sup>54</sup> "Awareness of the spousal meaning of the body, connected with man's masculinity-femininity, (...) indicates a particular capacity of expressing love, in which man becomes a gift. On the other hand, the capacity and deep availability for the 'affirmation of the person' corresponds to it. This is, literally, the capacity of living the fact that the other –the woman for the man and the man for the woman– is, by means of the body, someone willed by the Creator for his or her own sake. The person is unique and unrepeatable, someone chosen by eternal Love.". Translator's note: I have changed "nuptial" for "spousal", according to the rapporteur's instructions, who later in the text explains the reason for this. JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.I.1980, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> "The affirmation of the person is nothing but acceptance of the gift, which, by means of reciprocity, creates the communion of persons. This communion is constructed from within. It comprises also the whole 'exteriority' of man, that is, everything that constitutes the pure and simple nakedness of the body in its masculinity and femininity." Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> "Genesis 2:25 says even more, however. (...) Free with the freedom of the gift, man and woman could enjoy the whole truth, the whole self-evidence of man, just as God-Yahweh had revealed these things to them in the mystery of creation. (...) the interior freedom of the gift - the disinterested gift of oneself (...) enables them both, man and woman, to find one another, since the Creator willed each of them 'for his (her) own sake' (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 24). Thus man, in the first beatifying meeting, finds the woman, and she finds him. In this way he accepts her interiorly. He accepts her as she is willed "for her own sake" by the Creator, as she is constituted in the mystery of the image of God through her femininity.



physical union of bodies, therefore, characteristic of marriage, is but one expression among others of the union between them, i.e., it is a free gift, but not the only one or the most important, precisely because the spousal meaning of the body in its sexual dimension overcomes one of its physical manifestations.<sup>57</sup> This proves that love is virginal at its root, that is, an unselfish gift, that gives itself to the other, transcending the physical dimension of love, and helps to understand that the call to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom is above all a spousal vocation, that is, prompted by love, which expresses even in a more vivid way the unselfishness inherent to any true love.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. LOVE AND THE SPOUSAL MEANING

In contrast to other nonsexual formulations of love, John Paul II discovers –as we are seeing–, starting from Creation, the importance of love between man and woman, otherwise seen as the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love fade in comparison to it.<sup>59</sup> In this sense he explains unambiguously that

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Reciprocally, she accepts him in the same way, as he is willed "for his own sake" by the Creator, and constituted by him by means of his masculinity." JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.I.1980, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> The human body, oriented interiorly by the sincere gift of the person, reveals not only its masculinity or femininity on the physical plane, but reveals also such a value and such a beauty as to go beyond the purely physical dimension of 'sexuality.'" Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> "Christ revealed to man and woman, over and above the vocation to marriage, another vocation namely, that of renouncing marriage, in view of the kingdom of heaven. With this vocation, he highlighted the same truth about the human person. If a man or a woman is capable of making a gift of himself for the kingdom of heaven, this proves in its turn (and perhaps even more) that there is the freedom of the gift in the human body. It means that this body possesses a full spousal meaning." JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.I.1980, p. 41.

<sup>59</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Enc. Deus caritas est* (2005), n. 2: "Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word 'love': we speak of love of country, love of one's profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbour and love of God. Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison."



the man-woman duality is designed by God, not just for marriage and procreation, but for the communion between persons, regardless of their marital status and of the circumstances of each person. Once he has explained that the gift, even the specific gift in marriage (the *una caro*) is a free expression of love, he has a deep freedom to recognize the beauty and the image of God in human love in all its circumstances, where the man-woman difference and relationship play a vital role in the communion of persons, since the complementarity of both is needed not only in marriage, but in all facets of life. Indeed, based on the principle of the mutual be 'for' the other in the interpersonal 'communion,' finds that throughout history there has been an integration, willed by God, in humanity of what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine.'<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, he understands spousal to mean all that is intrinsically related with the person and love. With his words: "Awareness of the spousal meaning of the body, connected with man's masculinity-femininity, (...) indicates a particular capacity of expressing love, in which man becomes a gift. On the other hand, the capacity and deep availability for the 'affirmation of the person' corresponds to it. This is, literally, the capacity of living the fact that the other –the woman for the man and the man for the woman– is, by means of the body, someone willed by the Creator for his or her own sake. The person is unique and unrepeatable, someone chosen by eternal Love."<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, spousal is not synonymous with conjugal, not even with nuptial, since it is a previous human structure, that makes the other two possible: to get engaged and to be married. It is the primordial anthropological relationship between man with regard to woman, or the latter with regard to the former, whatever their family ties or friendship bonds. Perhaps the

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<sup>60</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988, n. 7. "To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion. The text of Genesis 2:18-25 shows that marriage is the first and, in a sense, the fundamental dimension of this call. But it is not the only one. The whole of human history unfolds within the context of this call. In this history, on the basis of the principle of mutually being 'for' the other, in interpersonal 'communion,' there develops in humanity itself, in accordance with God's will, the integration of what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine'".

<sup>61</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.1.1980, p. 40.



relationship between brothers and sisters can be considered as a very expressive form of this spousal character. In this sense he presents the difference between man and woman: two complementary ways of loving, the bride's and the groom's way, and finds that *the truth of woman as bride is discovered facing the bridegroom*. He describes initially the bridegroom as the one who loves and the bride as the beloved. The woman is "*the one who receives love in order to love in return*,"<sup>62</sup> likewise *the man is the one who loves and is loved*.

This description captures the fact of two manners of love placed face to face, where giving and accepting are two ways of being active that are correlated, rather than an 'active-passive'-type relationship. In this sense giving and accepting are two activities of the same status,<sup>63</sup> simply because one enables the other: the gift is meaningless if it is not accepted, so accepting is another way of giving. Man and woman both love and are loved, but in a peculiar order –he loves to be loved, she is loved to love–, which does not entail temporariness or superiority, so that neither of them is prior to or superior to the other. They both explain and give meaning to each other, are placed face to face and have the ability to form a unity, a co-being of a higher order than that of their own individualities taken one by one.

For this reason, even though each one of them has value in himself or herself, as person, since the person is ontologically relational, the force of the sexual difference lies in that it enables the 'unity of the two,' acknowledging that the difference man-woman is crucial as a backbone of the communion of persons. "The difference in the way of being human –states Viladrich– is necessary so that man and woman can be, each and between them, lover, beloved and union. But, in *what* do they love each other?, i.e., What is the content of their gift and of their

<sup>62</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988, n. 29.

<sup>63</sup> "The giving and the accepting of the gift interpenetrate, so that the giving itself becomes accepting, and the acceptance is transformed into giving." John Paul II, Audience on 6.II.1980, in *Theology of the Body*, audience on 16.I.1980, p. 45. Polo too explains clearly that giving and accepting have the same category: "accepting is not less than giving" and "giving and accepting imply the gift." L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I. La persona humana*, ed. Eunsas, Pamplona, 1999, pp. 220-221.



acceptance? In what can they be united? All that is contained in being human and what makes up the human being in the masculine or feminine way is the very 'material' of the gift and its acceptance. In this sense, the difference is an anthropological radical, indispensable if lover and beloved, when loving and by love, want to share in being, not just in acting."<sup>64</sup>

## 4. TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGY OF LOVE

We all have somehow sensed in some way that realities such as love or freedom have to do in a certain way with being, or, in other words, that the radical foundation of these issues has to do with the depths of the personal reality. In order to illustrate what I mean I will refer to an experience told by Gabriel Marcel. Thinking about love and the loyalty inherent to it, he realized very clearly "Being as the place of Loyalty (*D'Être comme lieu de la Fidélité*). How is it –he admits–, that this formula arising in my mind, at a given moment of time, has for me the inexhaustible inspiration of a musical theme?"<sup>65</sup> Time and again he would wonder in astonishment why those words had such a bright value to him, which, however, he did not manage to explain: the fact that freedom, love and loyalty are located in being and have to do directly with it.

However, one can easily realize how hard is it to access anthropological issues from classic metaphysics, where, for example, freedom is enclosed in the sphere of nature and regarded as a 'surname' of the will. As we said, for a long time anthropology has been demanding a specific ontology for itself. Well then, one of Leonardo Polo's achievements has been an expansion of ontology, where anthropology becomes a first philosophy, but on an ontological level other than that of metaphysics.<sup>66</sup> Polo starts from the recently rediscovered Thomist distinction between *essentia-esse* and applies it to

<sup>64</sup> P.J. VILADRICH, Por qué y para qué "uno con una para toda la vida"..., p. 548.

<sup>65</sup> G. MARCEL, *Être et Avoir*, p. 55-56, taken from Being and Having, translation by Katherine Farrer, p. 41.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. AAVV, Entrevista con Leonardo Polo. La distinción entre la antropología y la metafísica, in «*Studia poliana*» 13 (2011) 105-153. Cf. also L. POLO, Why a Transcendental Anthropology?, o.c.



anthropology. The person is unrepeatable, because every man has his own, not transferable act of being. In other words, the human *esse*, as distinct from essence, is the person, the other co-principle that actualizes each man's individuated nature (transmitted by his parents). Since the person is act of being, and therefore transcendental –actualizing all formal perfections of every man–, it can be said that the soul is personal and that the body is personal, or that the whole man is personal, but not in the sense that the person is (only) the ‘whole,’ or in the sense that, if one of his constituent parts is missing –for example, the body after dying–, then we could no longer speak of a person.<sup>67</sup>

Polo continues noticing that man distinguishes himself from the Cosmos both in his act of being, which is free, and in his essence, which is capable of habits. Further, it is worth mentioning the inclusion of relation in the very act of being when he describes the personal being as co-existence,<sup>68</sup> after stating that a person cannot be by himself for he would be a ‘complete absurdity’<sup>69</sup>; not just a contradiction, but something impossible. “A sole person would be an absolute disgrace,”<sup>70</sup> because he would have nobody to communicate with, to whom he could give himself,<sup>71</sup> to whom he was destined. Also, if we are to identify a specific transcendental level for what is human, the same as classic philosophy distinguished a series of transcendental properties of being –unity, truth, goodness, beauty–, the personal act of being must have its own transcendental properties, which Polo designates as anthropological transcendentals.<sup>72</sup> For example, freedom or intelligence would be transcendental dimensions, inasmuch as they cannot be reduced to be faculties of the nature,

<sup>67</sup> This has been one of the burdens that has weighed down on philosophical tradition after the well-known Boethian definition of person. Cf. B. CASTILLA DE CORTÁZAR, *The Notion of Person and a Transcendental Anthropology*, from Boethius to Polo. Whether the separated soul is a person, and whether the person is the whole or the *esse* of man, in *Journal of Polian Studies* 4 (2017) 81-117 (ISSN: 2375-7329).

<sup>68</sup> L. POLO, *Antropología trascendental I: La persona humana*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1999; 20032.

<sup>69</sup> L. POLO, *La coexistencia del hombre*, 1991 p. 33.

<sup>70</sup> L. POLO, *Presente y futuro del hombre*, p. 161.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. L. POLO, *Libertas transcendentalis*, in “*Anuario Filosófico*” 26 (1993/3) p. 714.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. L. POLO, *Libertas transcendentalis*, pp. 703-716.



rather they are, in a more radical sense, properties of the same personal being. And among them is love. That is why, if we were to ask ourselves again what the ontological statute of love is, we could answer that it is an anthropological transcendental.

Love, in turn, makes evident the need to expand the transcendental of unity so that it takes in plurality, in order to be able to explain love, which requires several persons, two at least. Polo admits that the ontological expansion he proposes affects above all the transcendental of unity, an issue not yet solved by any philosophy. In his view unity cannot be monolithic –what anthropologically leads to loneliness or individualism–, or the whole –which leads to pantheism or collectivism. On the contrary, it must take into consideration the difference, which makes it possible to explain interpersonal love and the union (co-being) that love enables.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, Polo's anthropology could serve as a basis to explain the 'unity of the two' that Karol Wojtyła talked about, which in itself is more than any of them separately, even though it is not a different person, as in God.

## 5. OPENNESS TO THE TRANSCENDENCE

Love opens us up to God's transcendence, this is a common conclusion of our two authors, to which they arrive reflecting on Creation, but with different nuances.

Polo reaches this conclusion through filiation, that he refers *in recto* (*directly*) to divine filiation, and this based upon a philosophical conviction, since if the person is a unique and unrepeatable act of being, that donation comes directly from God. With his words: "Human fatherhood is not the primary one, but God's creative fatherhood. According to that fatherhood, the first man is fundamentally son, as can be seen in Jesus' genealogy according to Luke, which finishes in Adam, who springs from God (Luke 3:34). Man's fatherhood, in its highest sense, is attributable to God. This obviously implies that man is not entirely son of his parents, or not in all his dimensions. The spiritual character itself

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. L. POLO, Planteamiento de la antropología trascendental in Escritos menores (2001-2014), Obras Completas, vol. XXVI, pp. 51-59.



of every man does not come from his human parents but from God."<sup>74</sup>

When Polo observes that the person, the act of being that makes the nature subsist transmitted by parents, is a gift from God, he indicates that, whenever a new man is conceived, the mystery of Creation is renewed. Creation is regarded as love from God towards the new being that comes into existence. He reached that conclusion when mentally examining the mathematical and physical improbability of the conception of each one of us. After considering how unlikely the occurrence was of the day and hour when the parents of anyone transmitted to him the nature, he concluded: "if I am it is because God has loved me." In a nutshell, filiation with regards to the Creator, as a manifestation of God's love to any new creature, is a form of openness to transcendence, frequently explored by Polo.

For Wojtyła, the highlight that evidences God's presence in the human being is his fulfillment of the *imago Dei* as the 'unity of the two.' Let us recall his words: "*Man -states Wojtyła- becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of loneliness as in the moment of communion.* Right 'from the beginning,' he is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons."<sup>75</sup> Thus the 'unity of the two' becomes an image of the unity in the divine triad.<sup>76</sup>

That image –not just in one, but in two who live 'for' each other, where both have become a gift and a welcome of the other–, that fullness of the image in man, represents the greatest openness of a human being to transcendence.

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<sup>75</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Theology of the Body, audience on 14.XI.1979, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988, n. 7.



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# The Agent Intellect and Human Cognitive Abilities in the Lower Paleolithic

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RECEIVED: March 27, 2021

ACCEPTED: April 30, 2021

DEFINITIVE VERSION: July 27, 2022

Translation of an article published in *Colloquia Revista de Pensamiento y Cultura* Vol. 5 (2018), págs. 79 - 86. ISSN: 1390-8731.

**ABSTRACT:** Two different processes are found in human evolution: the process of hominization and the process of humanization. The first refers to the morphological changes that culminate in *H sapiens* and the second refers to cultural achievements. Until the end of the last century, it was thought that cultural achievements of hominid types such as *Australopithecines*, *H habilis* and *H erectus* obeyed to sensorial knowledge, specifically the cognitive operation of the imagination which does not require abstraction to think in a sensorial way. Intellectual thought was only recognized in *H sapiens* including archaic *H sapiens* because of the symbolic meaning associated with works and behaviors such as rock art and burials. Sensorial knowledge refers to the imaginative association and the use of the most rudimentary conditional reasoning: if A then B. However, discoveries in experimental archaeology in the last two decades claim abstract knowledge for the manufacture of the oldest stone tools known which date to 3.3 million years ago. What philosophical validity have these archaeological advances? How are such recent advances integrated into Polo's transcendental anthropology? This article is a brief answer to these questions.

**KEYWORDS:** Agent Intellect, Cognition, Homo Sapiens, Lower Paleolithic.







## INTRODUCTION

In my thesis, *Human Cognitive Abilities in the Lower Paleolithic, the Role of Material Culture in Human Evolution* (Byrne, 2018), I did a study of the last developments in three areas: Experimental and Cognitive Archaeology, the Cognition of Primates and Cognitive Psychology in recent decades. Applying these developments to the fossil and archaeological record allowed me to determine and understand in more detail how the hominin mind functioned from the beginning of human evolution. Experimental and Cognitive Archaeology provided an in-depth understanding of stone tool manufacturing processes, the only type of material capable of surviving the passage of time, as well as the cognitive processes necessary for their manufacture. More extensive research on the behaviour of great primates, both in the wild and in captivity, provided a better and more detailed understanding of the cognitive processes involved in primate cognition. While all approaches acknowledged the existence of qualitative and quantitative limits on the cognitive abilities of great apes relative to humans, there is a lack of agreement on which of those abilities actually make us human and when they appear. This is partly due to a lack of understanding about the nature of cognition.

The philosophy of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, in my case interpreted by Leonardo Polo, explains what cognition is, or in other words, it explains the nature of cognition as well as it establishes the differences between human and animal cognition. It also connects cognition with the behavior of animals and humans and finally it explains the differences between the two types of behavior. In our case, the philosophy of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas explained the cognitive skills required for the use and manufacture of tools in animals and humans. In animals, the use and making of tools require the abilities of sensorial knowledge and comparison. In humans, the use and manufacture of tools also requires a different set of cognitive skills known as abstract thinking and practical reason. Abstract thinking allows the knowledge of universals, those features of the stimulus that do not have a sensorial basis such as the feature of water that extinguishes fire. Practical reason allows directing the knowledge of universals to the achievement of a practical objective, both of a technical or ethical nature.



These abilities can be detected in stone tool making because Cognitive Archaeology has uncovered the cognitive processes involved in tool making. These processes involved which are extracted from Cognitive Psychology, are two: knowledge of generalities and operational chains. The explanatory counterparts are the philosophical concepts of abstract thought and practical reason. The cognitive processes of knowledge of generalities and the operative chains in Cognitive Archaeology are complemented by the explanations about abstract thought and practical reason which are offered by philosophy. While abstract thinking in philosophical anthropology gives us explanations about the nature of abstract thinking and knowledge of generalities according, Cognitive Archaeology explains the processes involved in knowing the abstract characteristics of the stimulus, such as the cut and fracture of the stone which are detached of their sensorial aspects. Both processes and their philosophical explanations refer to the same reality, although from different points of view. The former describes the actions involved and the latter explains the type of cognitive nature required for their manufacture. Cognitive processes and their nature are the two points of union between Philosophical Anthropology and Cognitive Archaeology. The visions of Cognitive Archaeology and philosophical anthropology refer to the same reality, the first understands it from the point of view of the processes involved in cognition and the second studies cognition from the point of view of its ultimate causes: it explains the nature of cognition. Following this reasoning, abstract thinking can be deduced from the processes involved in the knowledge of generalities required in the manufacture of tools.

In my thesis I apply the findings of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, interpreted by Leonardo Polo, on human and animal cognition, to the latest findings on the cognitive processes of primates in the manufacture and use of tools. As well as I apply these findings to the cognitive processes required in hominids for the manufacture and use of tools, including the oldest stone tools of the Lower Palaeolithic that date from 3.3 million years (Harman et al, 2015, p. 310). In this way I can determine the type of cognitive processes, and their nature, required for their manufacture. I conclude the necessary use of abstract thought, as well as of



practical reason or the faculty of means for the use and manufacturing of stone tools. As well as I determine the difference between the use of the *collatio sensibilis* or the sensorial comparison of Thomas Aquinas and the sensorial knowledge of great apes for the rudimentary use and the manufacture of tools.

## 1. HUMAN COGNITION AND THE AGENT INTELLECT

The human capacity to abstract owes its existence to the Agent Intellect. This is an Aristotelian concept defined as a capacity which is always active in charge of activating the human intellect, a human capacity endowed with various intellectual operations among which the most inferior is the operation of abstraction. Abstraction is what allows us to detect aspects of known objects which lacks a sensorial base and can be found repeatedly in different situations. The knowledge of particular features of the physical stimulus is called sensorial knowledge which is shared by humans and animals. This knowledge is made possible by the cognitive faculties of the external and internal senses which allow to appropriate, in a different way per each sense, the sensorial information directly related to each sense, such as electromagnetic waves in the ear. This information is appropriated by the excess of form of the ear and at that moment the act of hearing occurs producing the known object which is the sound (Polo, 2009, pp. 117-123). Intellectual knowledge occurs when the image that the inner sense of imagination drawn from the common sensorium, or the meeting of the known acts of the outer and inner sense organs, is illuminated by the light of the Agent Intellect which dematerialise all sensorial traits and becomes the imprinted species of the human intellect. At this point the human intellect, similarly to what occurs in the faculty of knowing in each sensorial organ, knows of that imprinted species a non-sensorial feature of the stimulus to which it refers. What is known as a result is called the object known, such as the ability of water to put out the fire (Polo, 2009, p. 218). Then the different objects known in an abstract way can be put in relation to each other thanks to other intellectual operations such as the concept and the reasoning in order to know more from the stimulus (Polo, 2009, pp. 229-230). This is the way of knowing of the intellectual soul which requires the existence of an Agent



Intellect in its two versions: active and the human intellect (Polo, 2009, pp. 217-218). A way of knowing that develops over time thanks to what is known intellectually in the course of a life. The more intellectual knowledge is used, the more it develops in itself and in the artistic, technical, and social creations of the human being. Without intellectual knowledge we would limit ourselves to the use of certain tools, such as the stone hammers that chimpanzees use to open peanuts. We would also limit ourselves to the rudimentary manufacture of tools like cleaning branches from leaves which chimpanzees use to extract ants from their nests to eat them. The importance of the Agent Intellect is therefore primary and constitutive.

From what has been said so far a conclusion can be drawn. Traces of the Agent Intellect appear for the first time with the earliest stone tools known to date, which date back 3.3 million years and are located in Lomekwi, Lake Turkana, Kenya (Harman et al, 2015, p. 310). From here, and thanks to the ability of human beings to make tools using intellectual thought, a progressive and more effective management of the environment is observed in human evolution to satisfy their needs. That is, man ceases to adapt to the environment and begins to adapt the environment to himself (Jordana, 1988, p. 98) (Polo, 2016, p. 12) at least 3.3 million years ago (Hartman et al, 2015, p. 312). A radical change if it is considered that organisms, or living entities, had been adapting to the environment since the appearance of life on planet Earth some four billion years ago (Marshall, 2009). Which leads me to conclude that the nature Agent Intellect has to be radical and innovative enough to cause such a change. In other words, if the Agent Intellect is not a capacity that is set in motion when it is activated as is the case with the patient intellect but on the contrary is active all the time then what is its nature?

## 2. WHAT IS THE AGENT INTELLECT?

The fact that there is an agent intellect that illuminates the images of the imagination so that abstract ones can be known (Polo, 2009, p. 218) indicates to us, as Aristotle explains in *De*



Ánima<sup>1</sup>, that it is an active knowledge or knowing in act, similar to light, coming from without, without mixing, in essence, separate, immortal and eternal act that never ceases to know (Sellés, 2011, p. 556) and that activates the patient intellect or the faculty of intelligence, when it knows according to its way of knowing or knowledge of universals.

If the agent intellect is separate, without mixing, from this universe then it can only come from the Creator directly who infuses it directly into each man. Therefore, the agent intellect has for its origin and end God, or the Creator of all things, including humans. The agent intellect cannot be reduced to the potency of the patient intellect and is therefore different from the human soul which has intelligence and will as spiritual potencies. The agent intellect has to be more, it is the human person, to be a who that is more than the being of the universe. The agent intellect is the human person in his aspect of personal knowledge (Sellés, 2011, p. 557). If the agent intellect is natively active and the source of all human knowledge, it cannot be an instrument of patient understanding, it must be open to knowing more. The rectification of the Aristotelian discovery of the agent intellect as personal knowing does not detract from the discovery, on the contrary, it exalts its role (Sellés, 2011, pp. 559-560). This interpretation of the nature of the agent intellect as personal knowing is a contemporary development of this concept (Polo, 1999, p. 12) as will be explained in the following section.

The nature of the agent intellect has to be, therefore, that of knowing the person, person or spirit, and it has a double role: first to start the intelligence and to supply its own objects: images, fantasies, sensitive memories, concrete projects of the internal senses (imagination, memory, and cogitative) illuminated with their light to the patient intellect so that it can perform the first intellectual operation: abstraction (Sellés, 2011, p. 558). His second role is to know personally, at the level of being act, be it God or other people. '... An openness to personal privacy, a familiar interior space... It is self-knowledge as a person different from the others and from the rest. A knowing oneself

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<sup>1</sup> De Anima, I, III, ch. 5 (BK 430s 10-25)



before the totality of reality, including the act of being of the universe and the act of being divine (Sellés, 2011, p. 578).

### 3. INTERPRETATIONS OF THE AGENT INTELLECT

The previous interpretation of the nature of the agent understanding as the passage from the sensible to the intelligible in human knowledge is not the only one, there are others. In classical antiquity and the Middle Ages<sup>2</sup> they also focused on the consideration of the agent intellect as extrinsic or intrinsic to man. If the agent intellect is understood as extrinsic to man, Plotinus, Avicenna, and Averroes among others, then it is understood as an external reality to man who in some cases identifies with God or an angel. In either case, his personal character is lost and the human being is reduced to being a mirror that reflects divine light. It is a depersonalization of man because it is not the man that he knows.

The agent intellect can be understood as intrinsic to man, as do authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas. Some assimilated it to a human power or faculty, in which case it would cease to be an act to become an accident. Although neither can the agent intellect be reduced to the soul, or substance, as others do, because the human soul also has a will and organic intellectual powers. If the agent intellect cannot be power, substance, or accident, then it must be an act of the intelligence of the essence of the soul. It is the thomistic distinction between act of being and essence that also gives it a divine origin (Sellés, 2011, pp. 564 and 566).

In modern and contemporary philosophy, this concept of agent intellect is lost except for the thomistic commentators, although with different interpretations. The study of human cognition focuses on the rational and voluntary capacities of man, "the

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<sup>2</sup> The historical trajectory of agent understanding has been extensively studied by Professor Sellés. I refer to your bibliography from which I highlight the three volumes *The Agent Intellect and the Philosophers*, *Adventures and Misfortunes of Aristotle's Supreme Philosophical Finding on Man*, 2012, 2017, EUNSA, Pamplona.

The brief lines that follow are extracted from his book *Anthropology for nonconforming*, Rialp, 2011, Institute of Family Sciences, University of Navarra.



prominence of reason or the capital of the will" (Sellés, 2011, p. 567), ignoring their origin and nature. This is the intellectual landscape on which cognitive psychology has developed the processual knowledge of human cognition, on which cognitive archeology in turn bases its study of cognitive abilities. Such knowledge, as already mentioned in the abstract, does not make clear the boundaries between human and animal knowledge.

There are several scholars of Aristotelian philosophy in the nineteenth century such as Brentano, and connoisseurs of Thomism in the twentieth century such as Reyna and Kuksewicz, among others, who have recovered the notion of agent intellect although only its abstractive function (Sellés, 2011, p. 569). There are authors like Polo who recover the character of being personal of the agent intellect as seen above (Sellés, 2011, p. 570). And this is the trait of knowledge that really gives me the key to determining whether the first stone tools made by hominids 3.3 million years ago are human or if they stay at the level of primate cognition.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

What does the archaeological record tell us about Polian anthropology?

The archaeological record mentioned above indicates to me the necessary existence of a cognitive instance capable of making abstract knowledge possible. The agent intellect is in charge of activating rational knowledge by illuminating the known object of the imagination, turning it into the printed species of passive understanding which at that moment knows the relevant abstract feature. From which it follows that human cognition is not limited exclusively to its ability to rationally know, there must necessarily be a cognitive instance, or agent intellect, that activates that rational knowing.

Polo identifies, for the reasons mentioned above, the agent intellect with personal knowing. This is one of the transcendentals in Polian anthropology. In turn, the existence of the agent intellect requires in the human person an essence or soul with human faculties, or capacities, such as rational cognition. Two instances in human cognition at different levels.



At the level of being there is the agent intellect or personal knowing, and at the level of the essence or human soul there is rational knowing. Knowing personally is not reduced to making rational knowledge possible, knowing personal being an act of being is knowing. At the level of essence, it indicates that human creations and the very development of that rational capacity are possible thanks to the existence of that rational thought. Which belongs to the soul or essence, in its aspects of abstract thought and practical reason. Art, technique, and the whole range of cultural creations are possible thanks to the activity of rational thought. As such creations they are part of the development of the human essence.

Since intellectual knowledge is possible thanks to the existence of sensory knowledge that takes place in the external and internal sensory organs of the organic being, it indicates the necessary existence of a bodily endowment or nature in the human being. A being that is not only organic with sensory knowledge, nor only spiritual without body or soul, nor only rational with soul and body. One could then speak of three cognitions: natural, essential, and person that are actually one because there is only one person. Of the three, only the last two need Polo identifies, for the reasons mentioned above, the agent intellect with personal knowing. This is one of the transcendentals in Polian anthropology. In turn, the existence of the agent intellect requires in the human person an essence or soul with human faculties, or capacities, such as rational cognition. Two instances in human cognition at different levels. At the level of being there is the agent intellect or personal knowing, and at the level of the essence or human soul there is rational knowing. Knowing personally is not reduced to making rational knowledge possible, knowing personal being an act of being is knowing. At the level of essence, it indicates that human creations and the very development of that rational capacity are possible thanks to the existence of that rational thought which belong to the soul or essence, in its aspects of abstract thought and practical reason. Art, technique, and the whole range of cultural creations are possible thanks to the activity of rational thought. As such creations they are part of the development of the human essence.

the existence of an entity within the human person that cannot belong to the being of the universe but to the divine being: the



divine, the spirit, the person. A radically different type of being of a spiritual nature that is detected by its abstract and symbolic creations.

Finally, I would like to add that there are also other transcendentals in the human person such as freedom, co-existence, and personal love, which both describe and are the personal being (Sellés, 2011, p. 493). However, the study of the human person as an act of being, or human intimacy, escapes the end of this short article whose objective was to find out the type of knowledge required to make the first rudimentary stone tools. And it has come across the discovery of the person by the necessary existence of the agent intellect in human cognition, at least 3.3 million years ago.

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## *CONFERENCES & NOTES*







# The Educational Philosophy of the Spanish Philosopher Leonardo Polo: Implications for Teachers' Self-Reflection and Classroom Management

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RECEIVED: March 26, 2022

ACCEPTED: May 24, 2022

DEFINITIVE VERSION: July 22, 2022







From an anthropological and ethical perspective, the Spanish philosopher Leonardo Polo always defended the thesis that the task of the teacher is the activity that is most directly involved with the human being. In this vision, the classroom is perceived as an exceptional space in which one can grow into a better human person and, hence, the educational task requires that teachers fall in love with their mission, and that they be firmly convinced of the transcendence of their role.

Thus, what is required of the teacher is not only expertise in his/her respective subject matter, but above all, that he/she be formed in such a way as to discover and value the potentialities and capabilities in each student in order to enable their personal growth. In this view, the student is thus taught to project such potentials into the future so that he/she is enabled to discern the transcendence of every action and conduct.

Therefore, this educational philosophy views the educational task as a simultaneous learning—on the part of both teacher and student—to grow into better human beings, with special emphasis on interior growth. And since there is no limit to interior growth, the good use of time by the teacher is of utmost importance for human life. Ethics, then, comes to the aid of the educator in the task of ensuring that everybody—teacher and learner alike—grows.

On the basis of the ramifications of this educational philosophy of Leonardo Polo, this paper draws implications for teachers' self-reflection. It likewise draws up recommendations for classroom management as well as for the guidance that teachers are to give to pupils for their integral human development.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the educational task has taken on a critical importance: almost all governments devote substantial resources to improving their educational systems: personnel, funding, institutional resources, etc. that promote and monitor the operations of our educational centers. Political programs are filled with proposals related to education: many countries hope that education will enable them to lift up the quality of life to a higher level and can bring happiness to a wider sector of society. But the question



remains: is this happening? Is our current way of teaching and learning really making us *better* people? Specifically, are the efforts that societies are exerting bearing the desired fruits in what relates to the formation of boys and girls, of our youth and adolescents? As Víctor García Hoz pointed out many years ago: “never have nations invested so much resources and money in education as now, yet never have we experienced so much dissatisfaction in the quality of education as now”. We are far from the humanizing ideal with which education ought to be imbued. Without neglecting the advances in the pedagogical arena, given the globalization of education that has taken place, we still observe substantial *lacunae* in the field of education (Izaguirre & Moros, 2007).

The educational task requires that teachers fall in love with their mission, and that they be firmly convinced of the transcendence of their role. Thus, what is required of the teacher is not only expertise in his/her respective subject matter, but above all, that he/she be formed in such a way as to discover and value the potentialities and capabilities in each student in order to enable their personal growth.

## 2. THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF LEONARDO POLO

From an anthropological and ethical perspective, the Spanish philosopher Leonardo Polo always defended the thesis that the task of the teacher is the activity that is most directly involved with the human being. In this vision, the classroom is perceived as an exceptional space in which one can grow into a better human person. Quite fundamental to the educational philosophy of Leonardo Polo is the radical place and role of the *family* in the education of the children. The faithful love between the father and the mother of the child is crucial: once this is broken, the *affective education* of the child gets broken. Normalcy in the *affectivity* of the daughter or son is of primary importance. If it is lacking, then there shall be an absence of the foundation upon which to build the education of the intellect and the education of the will, the two faculties of the human soul.

In any case, whether or not this affective education in the family has been solidified, the teacher takes over the education of the child in school. The posterior task of the teacher is the formation



in *good habits* or *virtues*. Education ought to help the learner develop himself and develop all of his potential with a view, ultimately, to giving of himself in love and service.

This educational philosophy views the educational task as a simultaneous learning—on the part of both teacher and student—to grow into better human beings, with special emphasis on interior growth. Polo views education primarily as *learning*, departing from his notion of the child (in the family) as *child first of all*. This learning makes the child acquire self-awareness over time. This view—that the child is primarily a child—enables him to be cordial, understanding, and capable of keeping in mind the interests of others. Polo identifies the source of this ability in classic *humanitas*, followed immediately by *christianitas*. The Latin word *humanitas* corresponded to the Greek concepts of *philanthrôpía* (loving what makes us human) and *paideia* (education) which were amalgamated with a series of qualities that made up the traditional unwritten Roman code of conduct (*mos maiorum*). Both *humanitas* and *christianitas* will have to be the object of the education of our times. According to Polo, it “would be good to introduce them little by little to rational elements, so that the kids learn to exercise their will and not simply be led by egocentric impulses.”

Ethics, then, comes to the aid of the educator in the task of ensuring that everybody—teacher and learner alike—grows. Ethics, in the philosophy of Polo, substitutes neither the economy nor medicine nor any other thing, but without ethics, it is impossible to aspire to make all this consistent. Man is an ethical being because he is free. Ethics is the manner by which to reinforce the maximality of human tendencies. To be ethical is to *be more*, understood as *more human*, i.e., *greater human flourishing*. From here, one deduces many implications for the teacher.

There is no limit to interior growth; thus, the good use of time by the teacher is of utmost importance for human life. In one of his chief works on Education, *Ayudar a crecer* [‘Helping the other to Grow’], Polo insists on the need for educating the *imagination*, but above all education of the imagination for the *education of the intelligence*. Polo asserts that “the education of the imagination is one of the most basic keys to intellectual learning. If not for his imagination, man cannot create; he would not be able to produce, since everything artificial requires imagination. The



education of the imagination begins with the *eidetic* imagination [*eidetic* = relating to or denoting mental images having unusual vividness and detail, as if actually visible.], which is a type of imagination that is disorganized, quite close to *perception*, but since it is not exactly perception, it is quite capricious. Its images are not organized in a fixed or stable manner. Almost all persons are able to develop the imagination to the level of *proportion*, which is an ability that includes *association*. The proportional imagination can identify the whole on the basis only of a part. The associative imagination permits comparing objects. Beyond proportional imagination, there is the *representative* imagination, where one is able to objectify *isochronic time* and *isomorphic space*. Space and time are imagined equal and infinite. Polo has always insisted on this development of the imagination because, if it is unable to reach its maximum, then the intelligence is unable to function well. Note that the intelligence depends on what the imagination provides it for the sake of *abstraction*. The intellect begins to abstract on the basis of images. When the child is unable to transcend disorganized imaginings (as, for example, because of too much television), then the intelligence gets malformed.

An important task for the teacher is the formation of pupils (and themselves) in good habits or *virtues*. Since nowadays education for kids begins at a very early age, teachers have had to introduce **games** into the school curriculum. Three- or four-year-olds are taught, for example, to set/build up pieces (puzzles, castles, etc.), to resolve geometric problems, as if these were play. These, however, clearly represent formation of the intelligence, of their constructive imagination, but not of their affectivity; that is, what is being trained is their irascible appetite, the passion for winning, which means to say education in fortitude. Winning, keeping in mind that one cannot play outside of the rules, already implies an initiation into **ethics**. The same happens in losing: a kid who loses and is not used to it does not learn how to **play**. The same thing happens to two adults when they have never learned to play as they ought: when they lose, they are unable to accept it; in short, they don't learn to win or to lose. Kids' games ought to be such that they can win or lose: they can't be too difficult that they're unable to win (Polo, 2006).



The convergence of reading and game playing in the schooling of youngsters, enabled especially by new digital formats has raised concerns and misperceptions among adults. For parents belonging to an older generation, print books provide an educational experience, while iPads and similar devices are viewed as being strictly for entertainment. 'Screen time' has been something parents and caregivers have been warned against, given its adverse impacts as shown in some studies. However, despite the risks, multiple research studies show that children's interaction with enhanced digital books supports early literacy development and diverse learning styles (Martens, 2014). In any case, the primary function of games is to educate the irascible appetite: teaching kids to win and teaching them to lose. He who wins and loses is able to take risks and failures: that child is a strong person. A strong man is he who has had his affectivity and emotions well trained. Learning the sentiments of hope and of fear is at a higher level (Polo, 2006).

### 3. TEACHERS' SELF-REFLECTION AND FUTURE CONSCIOUSNESS

In Polo's educational philosophy, the subject of education is a *person*, not just merely an *individual*: as such, education cannot be limited to mere transmission of knowledge, but rather to the development and growth of the person as *person* (Ahedo, 2012). In this view, the student is thus taught to project such growth potential into the future so that he is enabled to discern the transcendence of every action and conduct. For this, research into "future consciousness" is called for. Future consciousness is multi-dimensional and involves all the major capacities of the human mind. A set of different forms of future consciousness has evolved over time, encompassing practical and social intelligence, mythic narrative, rationality and emotionality, science fiction, and future studies. Psychologically, future consciousness involves human emotion and motivation, learning and memory, all major forms of cognition, and self-identity. Psychological processes that contribute to expansive, optimistic, and creative future consciousness can be effectively taught. The development of virtues necessary for enhanced future consciousness can be facilitated through future-focused self-narrative activities (Lombardo & Cornish, 2010).



In the typical classroom, the teacher transmits both theoretical and practical knowledge. Specifically, practical knowledge is said to be action-imbued as well as oriented toward action. But this, in turn, requires *reflection*: thus, the educator's reflection on his experience ought to be constant and permanent. In effect, he who lives or practices a given science has all the right to reflect on it, as Rafael Alvira would say (Izaguirre & Moros, 2007).

*Technologies of the Self* include systematic techniques of self reflection and regulation of emotions and behavior. *Technologies of the Self* can be seen as strategies and techniques that allow a person to establish a dialogue with him or herself, in German: **Zwiesgespräch**, which includes a critical discussion of one's own relevant cognitive representations. The core argument about the use of Technology of the Self in the teaching profession can be found in research on **stress and strain**. In particular, burnout, depression, and psychosomatic diseases are the main causes of premature retirement in the teaching profession. The urgency for teachers to become familiar with techniques that allow them to identify and reduce stressors has repeatedly been emphasized. Another supporting argument for a systematic implementation of Technologies of the Self in the teaching profession involves the methods of interacting with adolescents. A caring and friendly but simultaneously demanding method of interacting with adolescents is considered to represent a mature teaching and parenting style. To practice the so-called "mature style of education", an above-average ability to reflect on one's own emotions and beliefs is required. Technologies of the Self explore the processes that allow individuals to perceive reality adequately, to act appropriately, and to recognize and manage their own negative emotions (Steins, Haep, & Wittrock, 2015).

#### 4. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become *good*. Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning and practice. It is developed through character education.



The intentional teaching of good character is particularly important in today's society since our youth face many opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations. They are bombarded with many more negative influences through the media and other external sources prevalent in today's culture. At the same time, there are many more day-to-day pressures impinging on the time that parents and children have together.

We said above that the subject of education is a *person*, not just merely an *individual*: thus, the educational task is to contribute to the growth of the person as *person*. This implies, above all, the acquisition of the virtues by the pupil.

Further, this objective of growth refers to his growth in the anthropological transcendentals, viz.: (1) Personal Co-existence, (2) Personal Freedom, (3) Personal Intellection, and (4) Transcendental Love (Gift of Self). In Leonardo Polo's anthropological philosophy, personal freedom is not the freedom, which is manifested, say, in the will, when it chooses, e.g., between one thing and another, but rather the transcendental and unrestricted openness of the human person (Sellés, 2013; Racelis, 2017).

The implication is that, since the subject of education is a human *person*, and not merely an individual, true education should aim at perfecting the student as a human person, that is to say, should aim at integral personal growth (Ahedo, 2012).

Tom Lickona (1989), world-renowned character educator, said: A comprehensive model of classroom character education is described in terms of nine components: the teacher as caregiver, model, and mentor; creating a caring classroom environment; moral discipline; creating a democratic classroom environment; teaching values through the curriculum; cooperative learning; the conscience of the craft; ethical reflection; and teaching conflict resolution.

Teachers have a wide array of Character Education books/materials to choose from and to incorporate into the young pupils' curriculum. For example, Young, Hadaway & Ward (2013) analyzed scores of ***International Children's Trade Books*** that make for perfect building blocks for Character Education.

Likewise, there are a good number of online resources for this purpose: for example, the *Knightly Virtues programme*, run by the



Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham, which offers a new teaching resource to schools. It is an inspirational teaching programme that is easy for teachers to integrate into the curriculum and it is having a significant impact on the young people who experience it. It has also been immensely popular with primary schools across Britain with hundreds signing up over the last few years to deliver the programme.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When one goes through the educational philosophy of Leonardo Polo, one cannot but be challenged by the ideas of: 1) life-long learning, especially in growth in character and the virtues; 2) self-reflection; 3) strategic design of games for pupils; 4) future consciousness; and 5) character/moral education.

In summary, on the basis of the current state of research, it can be argued that *Technologies of the Self* are important for preventing early exit from the profession and the occurrence of mental disorders. They also support a useful context that can benefit both teachers and students.

The mastery of a systematic *Technology of the Self* can, thus, be of great benefit. In addition, since the subject of education is a human *person* and not merely an individual, the proper place of human education is in the human essence, which is capable of acquiring virtues, thanks to which the human being grows. And since the human being is one unitary whole—although composite body and soul, that is, matter and spirit—, authentic education is achieved when it helps the student achieve fullness and the four anthropological transcendentals as proposed by Polo (Izaguirre & Moros, 2007).

The personal optimization of the pupil is rooted in his *self-gift* in growth. Education in freedom ought not to be merely teaching in order to make the students learn to use his freedom to choose; rather, true education in the sense of transcendent freedom implies that the pupil comprehends the meaning of his life and his destiny, and his self-propulsion towards it (Ahedo, 2012).



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# Ecce homo sicut et Deus: Anthropologia et Theologia

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RECEIVED: March 26, 2022  
ACCEPTED: May 24, 2022  
DEFINITIVE VERSION: July 1, 2022







**T**heological anthropology. What is it? How many people can answer this question nowadays? Is it grave that few people know this science? To respond these questions, we shall dedicate ourselves today. This branch of human knowledge, that bounders between philosophy and faith, is an obscure branch and is scarcely known today, but, overall, it is scarcely understood. We will synthesis what this subject is about and to achieve this we will analyse the object of study of this science, given that this is what primarily distinguishes a science from another. It may be objected that the method is what distinguishes a science from another but, in fact, the method is an accidental element of it; the method ordains itself to the object studied given that reality cannot be studied with a same single method, but a reality can be studied through all the existing methods.

The theological anthropology therefore seeks to answer three questions of reality and within them the object of study is manifested: Who am I? Who is God? And, is man capable of God? Thus, we can appreciate that God, man and the relationship that these two entities keep between themselves, if such relationship exists, is studied under this science. Therefore, we will proceed to respond sequentially these three questions.

## WHO AM I?

*Problema problematum quid est?* This question will allow us to unveil, *a posteriori* of its answer, who is man. Of course, first we need to delimit the subject because there are problems everywhere. We need to underline that this is not any problem of any aspect of life of man. This is the problem of problems. What does this mean? It means that it is the problem from which all of the rest of man's problems arise. At first glance we may be accused of being pretentious trying to reduce all of the conflicts, fights, discords, tragedies, sadness, etcetera, to a single problem; and maybe not even of being pretentious but of being naïve or too innocent. Even more, what I am about to say, may cause a scandal and I may even be more criticized for being absurd. The problem of problems of man is that he is not a man.

Let me explain. Man is not man because he has lost that which makes him be a man. It is true that ontologically we are born as a man; it is not the case that one is born being a goose and in the



end of one's life he is a human, it is that we do not act accordingly. This is possible *sine que non* because we bear liberty<sup>1</sup> and such implies that, therefore, before the range of actions that we have the possibility of choosing, we are presented with the question of opting for good or bad.

But the problem of problems of man is not his ethics because even ethics is a problem. Notwithstanding, I would highlight that the actions of man have consequences because we have liberty. On a practical level, if we act according to what we are, that is, as a man thus we shall be more of a man and in as much as we act distinctively from what we are, we shall be less of a man.

Therefore, the following question to be answered is presented to us: What is man? In order to answer this question humanity has been submerged millennia in thought trying to decipher this great enigma. However, for the purposes of this essay I am satisfied with the answer that he is a person, *rationalis naturae individua substantia*, quoting Boecio, of corporal nature or an incarnated spirit, in the words of Adame Goddard. This implicitly carries the existence of other persons, otherwise it would be absurd to specify that he is a *corporal* person. The other persons are spiritual and divine, the angels and the fallen angels, and God respectively. We shall see why the other persons are relevant in order to answer our initial question.

We have already defined man as an incarnated spirit, however, to de-fine, to place limits, to man's existence is not sufficient in order to answer our question. It is useless to define to a toddler a car as an automotive vehicle of four wheels with a capacity of no more than seven seats. In order for him to understand what a car is, we should rather tell him what it is used for, since a true definition indicates an object's purpose; therefore, we must unravel

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, liberty is the positive factor that marks out man's primacy before the other corporeal beings, as well as the risks of his existence. A positive meaning is characteristic of these risks because, by emphasizing man's responsibility for being author of his acts, they indicate that these are not merely contingent. [...] From his clearly intellectualist position, Thomas of Aquinas sustains that "*totius libertatis radix in ratione est constituta*". Within the classic approach, this maxim assures liberty from being confused with a whim without falling in Socrates' purely rationalist interpretation.

POLO, L. (2014), *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, Eunsa, Pamplona, p. 37.



what is the sense of man's existence, in other words: for what purpose was he created? In order to do this, it is necessary to study man's creation. However, why should we complicate ourselves if we have Someone to turn to that we can ask? And, even more, He has already told it to us without us even asking him. This Someone is God. Man was created by God, and he has made us for us to be with Him; this is man; *ecce homo*.

However, because of what I have stated is why I will certainly be most criticized, and it is what I would most like to defend. I reply that that is the problem of problems. In order to better illustrate my point, I would like to briefly remember the story that the Swedish existentialist philosopher, Kierkegaard, used to describe what any person that talks about God nowadays has to go through. It tells about a circus that catches on fire and so they send a clown to the village to notify the people of the danger they are in. However, for the only reason of being a clown, the village did not believe him and accused him of making publicity of such bad taste of his circus. Eventually the flames reached the village, and everything turned into ashes. And the clown, although had the best of intentions and was telling the truth, was only frustrated because they criticized and did not take him seriously<sup>2</sup>. The people today tend to have a predetermined and even prejudiced aversion from God and religion.

Considering this I would like to resolve this problem parting from the solutions that this modern phenomenon has, rather than to reflect upon the reason of being of it, since, following such method, we will also discern its reason of being. It is necessary, therefore, to analyse reason and faith of man, which are distinct modes of wisdom. We shall start studying reason.

For my part, I have occupied myself up to this moment in making manifest the limited character of the human's mental presence due to having as a requirement the comprehension according to objectifications. The limited character of the intellectual objectification is noticed in that, in an intrinsic manner of objectification

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Ratzinger, J. (2013), *Introducción al cristianismo*, Sígueme, Salamanca, p. 33-34.



(sic), it does not enrich what she allows to find out about its subject, or in that it is constant and the same<sup>3</sup>.

Reason is what characterizes man from the rest of animals and what makes him alike God and the angels, as well as the will, both of which conform the spirit. However, despite of the great faculty that the reason is and the immense possibility of things that we can get to know thanks to it, reason is not sufficient to possess in our intellect everything that exists in this world, or all aspects of reality. As we have seen, it is limited in as much as which the object under its light can offer us. That is, reason, unlike will, is an abstraction, a movement from the object toward the subject and thus the main element is the object *ergo* we are limited to what is presented before us. And it is even more noticeable after modern rationalism which idealized reason and completely lost appreciation of reality in as much as it is lived.

To take up again this last mention modality of wisdom, John Henry Newman proposes an interesting solution that appears to coincide with the proposal of Leonardo Polo, however, I shall use the English Cardinal's nomination: The Illative Sense. In a few words, what it describes about thought is that man seldomly thinks in absolutes, in logic syllogisms. The majority of his thoughts and knowledge is formed by affirmations, even more certain than syllogisms, that are acquired by real and direct experience. Similar, from my point of view, to Polo's Usual Knowing<sup>4</sup>. Through these affirmations man gets to know truths of faith since these are lived through life, not their apprehension is not made to be learned through absolutes and syllogisms.

Another argument that breaks the apparent division between faith and reason, harmonizing both, is given by the Pope Emeritus in the year 2006 at Saint Peter's Square. A young man, named Giovanni, objected that reason, science and mathematics are absolutely contrary to faith. That what religion postulates about reality has been overcome and refuted by the scientific advances and that, if within the discoveries that mathematics has made God is not found among them, it is because God actually does not exist, and the world is based upon casualty and chaos. Benedict

<sup>3</sup> *Op. Cit.*. Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Cfr. Op. Cit.*. Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 41-43.



XVI answered that if it is true that mathematics and faith are different it is because both are different languages by means of which we get to know reality. Through reason we can discover a logical structure within the world and thanks to our objective mathematical structure, which coincides with reality, we can know and manipulate reality to our favour through technique, we become creators of our world; which only leads to reinforce the existence of a logical structure, a *logos*, as the base of the existence, that is to say, God. "Thus, we see that there is a subjective rationality and an objective rationality in matter, that coincide"<sup>5</sup>. If reality was founded upon chaos and casualty we would never be able to understand reality and would less be able to manipulate it through technique in our favour.

In this way, the barrier between the philosophic God (the Aristotelian First Motor) and the God of faith (the Christian Father) can be broken down since it is not that faith and reason contrast between themselves, but rather harmonize each other. Through the Illative Sense those affirmations we acquire through life are based upon trust, and faith is just that, to trust in what is revealed by God. This distinction, it should be mentioned, helps to understand the problem of the non-believers with faith. They qualify it as irrational, illogical, absurd, childish without understanding that faith is not a faculty or an act of reason. They are two different modalities of wisdom but do not contradict themselves and they are even less mutually exclusive. Moreover, it cannot even be stated that it is a feat of man, even though it does require his participation. It is a gift of God:

In this regard it should be noted that Christianity is distinguished from the rest of religions because in it the human initiative is preceded by that of God [...]. Besides, Christianity proposes itself primarily as a revelation and only under a derivative manner as a religion.<sup>6</sup>

I was referring to this at the beginning of this essay in saying that we have Someone that does not only know which our nature is, as well as Someone to whom we can turn to in order to resolve

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.conocereisdeverdad.org/website/index.php?id=3913>, consulted April 6th, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. Cit.* Polo, L. (2014), *Epistemologia...*, p. 39.



our doubts, but that He has even gone ahead and has already manifested it to us. God has revealed his plan to us, he has presented his Son to us as the model of man. He is the *Ecce Homo* that the evangelists present to us. To such we should aspire to be and act accordingly.

Once man's nature has been studied, we may proceed to study the Absolute Being, God.

## WHO IS GOD?

Now we shall dedicate ourselves in studying God; to be able to discern, although minimally, the essence of God. Because of the great complexity that this feat implies, the only manner of carrying it out is by starting to recognize that no matter how deep, clear and true this effort may be, because we are talking about the absolute Being that gives meaning and existence to reality, it will always leave us profoundly disappointed in trying to achieve this great attempt. It is an extremely pretentious goal to strive to present God through an essay and it is even more to do it in an essay of these dimensions; however, we shall do our best intellectual and faithful effort in order to leave a decent representation of God here.

Before beginning with this matter, I would like to pick up the thread of my discourse that I left considered when answering the question "*problema problematum quid est?*". We sought the root problem of all the problems that threaten man and we concluded that it was the denial of accepting our nature of divine creation and, consequently, being created to be alike our Creator. Now, logically, the next question we must answer is knowing who this Creator Being is; if we were made by Him and for Him, who is He?

Another source of religious knowledge is the confrontation of man with the world, with its potentials and its mysteries. The cosmos with its beauty and its plenitude, with its dissatisfactions, horrors and tragedies, is also able to lead man to the experience



of the power that exceeds everything, the power that threatens him and that, at the same time, sustains him<sup>7</sup>.

To begin with, I would like to analyse this previous portion of the book by Cardinal Ratzinger, the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Introduction to Christianity*. It affirms that man tends to God. Anthropological-architectonical studies have discovered that man, since its origins, has always been a religious being. This allows us to state with certainty that it's by man's own nature to tend towards that absolute power. This is perfectly understood being man created by a lover, since the latter's greatest desire shall be that we respond to Him in that love; this is how our natural inclination towards him is explained; because the one who loves is not only attracted to the loved one, but, at the same time, attracts the loved one to the lover. We shall analyse the affirmation that states that this absolute power loves further on. In the meanwhile, the certainty that such inclination is natural to us is enough.

That which differs from a religion and another, is the manifestation of our search for the supreme power. Even atheist and agnostic people answer to this inclination; they simply absolutize matter, uncertainty and chaos. But every man necessarily answers to this calling because based upon on it we comprehend our entire existence. It is a fundamental decision in our lives and not because it is natural to man but rather because, literally, they are the pillars upon which we postulate ourselves before reality. In this sense, Ratzinger states that faith is not a "know-make" relationship but rather a "stand-understand" one. By this decision we stand with a specific cosmovision of reality and through it we understand reality. It is impossible to subtract ourselves from this postulation before reality; the only thing upon which our liberty has influence is the stance we take<sup>8</sup>.

Before Christianity, giving plenitude to the Jewish religion, presented its stance before reality there already was another ancient culture that presented a cosmovision extremely well-aimed, the Greeks. The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, each in their own way, had discerned an absolute Being that governed reality.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. Cit.* Ratzinger, J. (2013), *Introducción...*, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Cfr. Ibidem*, p. 40-44 & 58-63.



It is not a novelty, because of what we have explained regarding the relationship between faith and reason, that such *paideia* can explain the phenomenon of God presented by the Christians from a point of view, not from faith, but, of course, from reason without causing the former to be avoiding. Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas of Aquinas, among various other Christian intellectuals, achieved harmonizing both stances in such a way that they proved that the Christian faith and the Greek reason are not contradictory but rather complementary.

However, at this point a great problem has arisen. Are they actually compatible? Are we extrapolating both Gods, the one of faith and the one of philosophy, to spheres completely unrecognizable to each other? His personality and his proximity to man is what characterizes the Christian God, but is God capable of such? Or maybe we should not ask ourselves if he is capable, but rather if he would be interested in being like that?

In some radically distant times, in which the Earth is insignificant in the whole universe, in which man, a tiny grain of sand, is a minute point in the immensity of the cosmos, the idea that that superior being is occupied with humans appears absurd to us<sup>9</sup>.

This kind of thought is very attractive and even more in a society that takes as a reference of truth the exact mathematical sciences. Einstein even despised the idea of a god that is a person because he thought that it would reduce his splendour as a God. Therefore, the true conception ought to be a *pantokrator* God, cosmic, governor of the universe whose main traits are his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence in a pure and absolute manner without any kind of nuance. With this kind of mentality, it is not far-fetched to think that if God is interested in man, it would be an “anthropomorphic” and selfish vision of ours. Being God so great, so wise, so powerful and the universe so extensive and infinite, it would not be difficult for us to doubt if God occupies Himself with us and, even if he did, we would feel as if he would be losing his time, given our fugacity and insignificance in this universe. God is not capable of man; his greatness does not allow him to coexist with such insignificant beings.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122.



To refute this school of thought, I'd like to quote the end of the answer that Cardinal Ratzinger gave to the young man Giovanni at Saint Peter's Square (*vid supra*):

But it appears to me that the true modern problem against faith is the evil in the world: we ask ourselves how is evil compatible with this rationality of the Creator. And here we really need the God that was incarnated and that shows us that He is not only a mathematic reason but that this original reason is also Love. If we analyse the great options, the Christian option is also today the most rational and the most humane. Because of that, we can elaborate with confidence a philosophy, a vision of the world based on this priority of reason, on this confidence that the creative Reason is Love, and that this love is God<sup>10</sup>.

What is contrary to God is evil and sin, because his is not only and essentially *pantokrator* but also *pater*, as the Apostolic Symbol recites. He is a father, he loves. He loves his creatures as if they were more than a creation, He loves them as his own children. It hurts him to see those creatures in loneliness and sorrow in which they are engulfed because of original sin, originated by their pride. Because of this love we understand his joy caused the return of a lost sheep, of a prodigal son, of a repentant sinner. He craves, desires, dies for us to be back with Him.

#### *ECCE DEUS, A PARADOX:*

*Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est;* "It is divine not being enclosed in the maximum and however be contained in the minimum"<sup>11</sup>.

#### IS MAN CAPABLE OF GOD?

We have studied who we are, who is God and if God is capable of man, and we have answered affirmatively to this last question. However, this should not seem strange to us. If he could not do that, he thus would not be omnipotent, it is to say, his omnipo-

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.conocereisdeverdad.org/website/index.php?id=3913>, consultado el día 6 de abril de 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Ratzinger, *Introducción...*, p. 122-123



tence would be limited by his own omnipotence. He must be able to renounce to it in order to be actually omnipotent.

“The meaning of ‘omnipotence’ and ‘sovereignty’ is only visible in the manger and on the cross. [...] He assumes the radical impotence of the commitment to his diminutive creatures”<sup>12</sup>.

The same occurs to man with the Creator God, as with the God related with existence; man tends naturally to him. We can see this in various aspects of man’s life. In first place, it is manifested by the splendour of life since, when one encounters himself with it, he has nothing left but to discover his life as a gift without one’s own merit. In another manner, we discover this God in our inclination to the eternal, to the infinite, which is frustrated in our limited and finite reality that hinders us from resting within it and, ultimately, we discover Him by our loneliness. We would not be lonely if we were not called to a you, but not limited to a human you, it rather calls to a you that penetrates to the most deep of the I. By this tendency we discover that we naturally experiment the saviour God, as we experiment the creator God, the absolute Being<sup>13</sup>.

But, who is this saviour God? Is he different from the creator God? Is he the same God but manifested in a specific manner? To answer all these questions, let us seek the answer in the thought of the philosopher and theologian previously quoted, Leonardo Polo, starting from the fact that God is a person, divine, but a person (*vid supra*).

Now, as *transcendens* to the coexistence, God ought to be Originally Person. If what characterizes the human person is the absence of reply, in the Original Person that lack cannot take place. Of course, the notion of reply of the Origin constitutes a mystery: it cannot be “another origin” since it is incompatible with the identity. But neither can it be another person because it would be equivalent to understanding identity in a short sense -as own-selfness-, which is incompatible with his Original nature<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. *Op. Cit.* Ratzinger, *Introducción...*, p. 89-90.

<sup>14</sup> Polo, L. (1999) “El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre”, *Studia Poliana*, Pamplona, n. 1, p. 14-15.



It is necessary to explain what is understood as reply. The person is co-existence, open intimacy. It means that a solitary person is a tragedy because he lacks sense, he would be inconsistent with his way of being<sup>15</sup>. He is necessarily called to another and his reciprocity with that another is his reply. Man is alone, without meaning in this world by not replying. To this Polo refers to, although, in my humble opinion, with an unequivocal and pessimist affirmation, when he states that “what characterizes the human person is the absence of reply” but, I do agree with that nowadays there is a general absence of personal reply from man.

In this sense, it is understandable that the Spanish philosopher would state that the Divine Person lacks this reply. However, He is the perfect person, and he thus replies. But, being the Origin, He cannot reply to another Origin, so we enter a great problem: how can this Person reply without losing His Originality? The answer must be, under this approach, logically one and only one; He replies to other Persons with whom he shares the Originality. This is the mystery of the Holy Trinity: three Divine Persons in one only God. They are not different manifestations, neither are they distinct gods; they are distinct Divine Persons.

This way we can answer the question: who is this saviour God? He is a Divine Person called Christ.

Now, the question to resolve would be: how does this Divine Person save us? But, in turn, we also need to clarify from what does he save us from. We can find the answer in the birth of the world<sup>16</sup>. Men and women at the beginning of time were made by God to be with Him, and therefore they lived with Him. They were capable of God because God wanted to create them like that, in another case in which they had not been capable of God, their existence would have been absurd. And yet we ask ourselves today if we are capable of God. What happened to us to doubt it? We became incapable of God by falling in original sin, by desiring to be like God, an act of extreme pride. By this act we auto-incapacitated ourselves of God. We offended him, and the state of sin separated us from His side. The original sin's effect was the impossibility of man to reply to God, an effect that

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<sup>15</sup> Cfr. *Ibidem*, p. 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Gn. 2.



changed our original nature to a fallen nature, and it is from this that Christ saves us.

To achieve this, it would be necessary to redeem our nature. The seriousness of the offense is proportionate to the subject offended. That is, original sin has such graveness because it does not have but the same dimension of seriousness that God has of greatness because the offended by original sin is God. Therefore, only God is capable of redeeming a nature so much affected because the only being with such magnitude as God is God Himself. And it is as this that, for our good luck, God is not one but triune. A Divine Person can redeem us, and this is what Christ did. He redeemed human nature by becoming Jesus, that is, in his Incarnation and his Passion. This is how an offense to God could be repaired; by means of God's expiation.

And all of it only and exclusively because of the love that God has for man (*vid supra*). We have seen that God has no necessity of us, He is enough for Himself, but His love is such that it overflows, and seeks to share his love with another and so he creates man and, when He sees that man gets separated from Him, He gives to man the means to reconcile himself and to return to his side since only He has the capacity of repairing such offense. This is what is called God's Mercy; it is such overwhelming of love that he forgives any offense against Him, not only the original offense, in order for man to be able to return to his presence<sup>17</sup>.

The redemption of Jesus did not limit itself to restore our original nature but also dignified and divinized it by becoming a man. That is, we aren't only not fallen but we are arisen. He godified human nature. This is why the words that are pronounced by the Priest in the Liturgical Celebration "*Through Him, and with Him, and in Him*", are not a metaphor nor a representation. When we are baptised, we are an intrinsic part of Jesus and, therefore, of the Holy Trinity, becoming not only capable of Christ but a member of Him. Jesus Christ permits us to achieve what by nature we

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. S.S. Francisco (2015) *Misericordiae vultus*, Ediciones Paulinas, México, 8-9, p. 13-16.

It should be mentioned that this is the purpose of the Jubilee of Mercy convoked by the Saint Father through the quoted apostolic letter, *Misericordiae vultus*. It seeks to remember, emphasize the purpose of the coming of Christ: the forgiveness of sins by means of the mercy of the Father.



tend to, He gives us access to the eternal, the infinite. It would be absurd to have such a tendency and not being able to satisfy it. This means that we are open to the total openness; as persons we coexist with the greatest coexistent being that transcends us: man is capable of God.

In this manner, is Theological Anthropology understood. Jesus Christ, being the answer to the third question, gives meaning and completion to the first two analysed. The three questions of Theological Anthropology, under the light of the salvific mission of Jesus Christ, are answered: man is a loved creation of God; God is one and triune, being Creator and Saviour of man; and man is not only capable of God, but he also has the same dignity as God.

Remembering the story of Kierkegaard, despite that this appears to come from a clown we should not forget the flames.







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## *REVIEWS & NEWS*







BYRNE BEATRIZ,  
Cognition, Stone Tools and Aristotle

Sindéresis, Madrid 2020

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(Translation of the review published in *Studia Poliana* 23 (2021), 217-220).

*Cognition, Stone Tools and Aristotle* is a book that offers a new perspective in the search for what makes us human. This perspective is based on the manufacturing techniques to make stone tools which dating as far as 3.3 million years ago of years. It is an interdisciplinary study that includes four areas: Cognitive Archaeology, Cognitive Psychology, Primate Cognition, and the Philosophy of Aristotle.

Applying the perspective of Aristotle's philosophy to the study of human evolution is not new. Teilhard de Chardin already did it in the framework of palaeontology. And in the field of biology, which includes the study of evolution, so did Hans Jonas and Max Scheler. What makes the present study ground-breaking is the philosophical interpretation of the criteria drawn from Cognitive Archaeology to determine whether the manufacturing of stone tools requires the existence of human cognition or it can be explained by animal cognition.

The author chooses Leonardo Polo as the interpreter of Aristotle because Polo, unlike other modern authors, gives an account of the origin of cognition. For Pierce's practical philosophy, the appearance of symbolic thought is linked to language and, as a consequence, only the manifestations found in the archaeological record linked to symbolic thought, such as cave painting or the use of personal ornaments among others, are sufficient to determine the appearance of human thought. This criterion has been and continues to be fashionable in certain archaeological and paleontological academic circles, preventing until a few years ago the possibility of other criteria beyond symbolism. Studies



with great primates conducted since the late twentieth century highlight the ability of primates to also make and use tools. These conclusions require further explanations to determine when human thought was born. Authors such as Michael Tomasello suggest social manifestation of intelligence as the area for the first appearance of human thought. Specifically, Tomasello points out to share intentionality as the starting point for this but finds no difference between human and primate capacity to make and use stone tools. Shared intentionality is understood as the ability between humans to share goals that require for their achievement not only to act together but also taking into account the welfare of the other party for the survival of both. This requires a certain degree of trust in the other and a capacity to know the other as trustworthy. The latter does not occur in large primates, but it does in humans.

Cognitive Archaeology borrows terms from Cognitive Psychology which are used to define the qualities necessary in the manufacturing of stone tools in humans. In particular they refer to the following terms: general concepts and sophisticated chain operations which help to determine the difference between human and primate ways of manufacturing tools. One of the challenges encountered in Cognitive Archaeology is to determine the validity of criteria drawn from other disciplines. In order to solve the problem, this book reviews and critiques the way these criteria are understood by Cognitive Archaeology and by Cognitive Psychology. The author concludes that both sciences study the same processes from different perspectives. Cognitive Psychology does it in the realm of the human mind through language, and Cognitive Archaeology does it in the realm of stone tools which are a product of the mind of an organic being living in an environment. Putting the results in dialogue is necessary in any interdisciplinary study and it requires specialists from each discipline or at least someone who knows them. It should not be forgotten that the author has academic qualifications in Psychology as well as in Archaeology. However, this view does not completely solve the problem of the validity of these concepts to determine whether general concepts and sophisticated chain operations are valid to establish when abstract thinking and practical reason appear in the archaeological record.



The fact that great primates are capable of using stone hammers to open certain tree seeds and learning to make stone tools in captivity, makes it necessary to ask how human cognition differs from that of animal since both are capable of producing them. Again, the author focuses on the processes of making and using stones this time in great primates. She concludes that the study of these processes does not help to determine what enables humans to make sophisticated stone tools. The study of the processes does not explain the differences, it only highlights them.

The answer to this question comes from the Aristotelian philosophy interpreted by Leonardo Polo which reverts to the classical interpretations that link cognition with life. In addition, it also refers to the advances of Thomas Aquinas regarding his discovery of practical reason. Polo's philosophy studies human and animal cognition and link them to the phenomenon of life but in a different way for each. While animal cognition is a development of organic life in its adaptation to the environment in which it lives, human cognition requires the presence of a factor which does not belong to organic life although it uses it to manifest itself: intellectual life whose origin transcends the being of the universe. Polo in his *Transcendental Anthropology* explains how rational intelligence is one of the manifestations of that powerful light that is the spirit or person. In other words, it is the mechanism of divine origin described by Aristotle: the Agent Intellect. Stone tools and any product of human making in evolution require the capacities of abstraction and practical reason and therefore they are manifestations of what Polo describes as the human essence. Biological changes that take place in the long human march until the appearance of *H sapiens sapiens*, or anatomically modern man, would be the manifestations of the spirit/person in human nature adapting the environment to his/her needs. This way of understanding the human person allows a better insight in what is observed in the archaeological and paleontological records.

There are two very important consequences of this interpretation in the realm of human evolution. The first is that human cognition appears very early in the archaeological record at least 3.3 million years ago. And the second is that all the so-called human evolutionary species are not such but only one single human



species, evolving in time, because all hominids are endowed with the same type of intelligence. This theory, as the author mentions, has already been advanced by Rafael Jordana since 1988.

It is an innovative and provocative book to which, like all pioneering works, there will be no lack of misunderstandings from each of the areas to which it refers. Following Luis Romera, it can be said that the book is inserted in a sapiential thought because it develops a comprehensive understanding that takes into account the scientific areas of study collected: Cognitive Archaeology, Cognitive Psychology, and Primate Cognition detached from the paradigms that consider science as the last instance of knowledge by including Philosophy. It is an investigation that connects with a deeper, philosophical vision of man. Only from a comprehensive and deep understanding of the person can it be determined, through the study of the manufacture of stone tools, who among our hominid ancestors were humans and the main role of material culture in the development of our intelligence.

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# INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

1. The papers submitted for publication in the *Journal of Polian Studies* should take some aspect of the Leonardo Polo's thought as a reference point to present, to compare with other authors or philosophical doctrines, to criticize, to expand their thinking with, etc.

2. The journal is directed to a specialized audience in philosophy.

3. All works submitted for publication, both articles and reviews, must be entirely unpublished, and must be original works of the submitting author. Submissions should be accompanied with a letter to ensure this.

4. While they are being evaluated for publication or undergoing editing, they must not be submitted to any other publication. Once an article has been published, authors retain the right to use it freely, provided that they cite its original publication in *Journal of Polian Studies*.

## **Norms for articles**

5. Articles must be submitted through the OJS platform of the Journal: <https://journal.leonardopoloinstitute.org/index.php/j-pols>, following the instructions. Please be aware that any reference, direct or indirect, to the author should be omitted. The articles must be sent in a standard and easily editable format, such as Word but not OpenOffice, not PDF.

6. Articles will be submitted to a double anonymous revision by peer reviewers external to the Scientific Advisory Board. They will be evaluated according to the following general criteria: the interest of the topic; the knowledge displayed of the state of the question; dialogue with the most relevant and current bibliography; the unity, clarity, coherence, equity and rigor of the argumentation; the appropriateness of the title, abstract and keywords, as well as the correctness of the English version of each of these; the proportionate extension of the text and footnotes; and the formal and literary elegance of the writing.

The Editorial Board will communicate its acceptance or rejection of the submission within a period of three months. The article



will be returned to the author together with the evaluations of the reviewers. Authors whose articles have been accepted for publication will receive a set of typeset proofs, which will require immediate correction.

7. Articles should not be longer than 15,000 words including footnotes (97,000 characters including spaces). The number of words or characters in a document can easily be calculated using the word count function of one's word processor.

8. On the first page of submitted articles must be included, in addition to the name of the author, the academic institution at which he or she is employed and his or her email address. The whole article must be presented in English. Only the quotes of Polo in footnotes can be presented in their original language. The author must submit an abstract of up to 100 words and up to four keywords (also in English).

9. The section titles within the article should be formatted in SMALL CAPS— available from the font format dialog box—and be numbered sequentially with Arabic numerals: 1. 2. 3., etc. Sub-section titles should be in italics, and should be numbered alphabetically: a) b) c), etc.

For example:

4. THE LAST COMMENTARIES OF THOMAS AQUINAS ON ARISTOTLE

a) The commentary on the «De caelo»

Bold text should never be used in these subtitles.

10. Footnotes should be brief. Citations within the main text should be placed between double quotation marks ("like this"); they should also be brief. Square brackets can be used to clarify a given term within a quotation, e.g. "the link between this [special situation] and the agent's end".

11. Bibliographical references must always be placed in footnotes, and never within the body of the text nor in a final bibliography. They must use the following format:

a) Books: R. SPAEMANN, *Ética: cuestiones fundamentales*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1987, 113-115.



b) For collaborations in collective works: A. FUERTES, El argumento cosmológico, in Á. L. GONZÁLEZ (ed.), Las pruebas del absoluto según Leibniz (Eunsa, Pamplona, 1996) 47-158.

c) For articles: R. YEPES, "Los sentidos del acto en Aristóteles", in Anuario Filosófico, 1992 (25), 493-512.

d) For monographic issues of journals: A. M. GONZÁLEZ, R. LÁZARO (eds.), Razón práctica en la Ilustración escocesa, Monographic issue: "Anuario Filosófico", 2009 (42/1) 1-257.

12. Abbreviated references may be used in the following cases:

a) When only a single work by a given author is cited, the title may be abbreviated as follows: R. SPAEMANN, op. cit., p. 108.

b) If more than one work by a given author is cited, the title must be repeated in abbreviated form: R. SPAEMANN, Lo natural cit., 15; L. POLO, Curso, cit., vol. 4/1, p. 95.

c) The term "Ibidem" may be used when a single reference is repeated in consecutive footnotes.

13. In order to guarantee the correct transcription of text in Greek, all such text must be formatted using the font Gentium, which is freely available for Windows, Mac and Linux (Debian/Ubuntu) from the following URL:

[http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site\\_id=nrsi&item\\_id=Gentium\\_download](http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=nrsi&item_id=Gentium_download)

In the case that it is necessary to use characters of other languages that are not included in this font, it will be obligatory to use a Unicode font.

### **Norms for book reviews**

14. Book reviews must be between 600 and no more than 1200 words and must be completely original and unpublished elsewhere.

15. Except in exceptional cases, we will not accept reviews of books first published more than three years previously. The works reviewed must be first editions, or else posterior editions which have been substantially modified.

16. If it is necessary to include citations from works other than the one being reviewed, the citation must be placed in the body



of the text, in parentheses, following the formatting indicated in items 11 and 12, above. If the citation is from the book being reviewed, it is sufficient to include the page number, as shown: (p. 63), or (pp. 63-64). At the end of book reviews, authors must include their name, their university or institutional affiliation (without including the postal address), and an email address that will remain valid for the foreseeable future.

17. Book reviews must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief, Alberto I. Vargas ([avargas@leonardopoloinstitute.org](mailto:avargas@leonardopoloinstitute.org)).