



Leonardo Polo: A Brief Introduction

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Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy Press
2015

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First Edition: 2014

Third Corrected Edition: 2016

ISBN 978-0-9912568-2-2

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Introduction

The philosopher Leonardo Polo (1926-2013) is best known for the *abandonment of the mental limit*, the philosophical methodology that he discovered and developed, and for the application of this methodology to a wide range of philosophical topics. With the abandonment of the mental limit, Polo seeks to detect the limit that arises with objective thought in such a way that this limit is not only detected, but can also be abandoned in a methodical way. In his words, the abandonment of the mental limit consists of “detecting the mental limit in conditions such that it can be abandoned.” The exact meaning of this and of what it implies will be discussed later in this short introduction, but it might be mentioned here that it gives rise to four major thematic areas:

The methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit opens up four major thematic fields:

- 1) the act of being of the physical universe (metaphysics);
- 2) the quadruple con-causality (or essence) of the physical universe (philosophy of nature);
- 3) the act of being of the human person (transcendental anthropology);
- 4) the manifestation of the human person through her essence (anthropology of human essence).

In addition to this, Polo’s philosophical investigations expand to cover a wide range of fields including psychology, theory of knowledge, physics, biology, neuroscience, ethics, philosophy of language, sociology, education, philosophy of science, political economy and business ethics.

One important characteristic of Polo’s presentation of his philosophy is that develops it in continuous dialogue with important thinkers of the history of philosophy. Thus, throughout his works, Polo engages with classical and medieval thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham, as well as modern and contemporary philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and

Habermas. In dialogue with these great thinkers of the history of philosophy, Polo seeks to further the achievements of traditional philosophy as well as rectify and correct the project of modern philosophy.

Thus, for example, in his proposal for a transcendental anthropology, Leonardo Polo distinguishes the subject matter and methodology of metaphysics from that of anthropology. That is, if metaphysics concentrates its attention on the act of being of the universe, anthropology seeks to attain knowledge of the act of being of the human person, which is distinct from that of the extra-mental universe. With this distinction, Polo elevates anthropology to a first philosophy without downplaying the importance of metaphysics or watering it down. As part of this proposed transcendental anthropology, Polo expands upon Aquinas's real distinction between act of being (*esse*) and essence, and applies it to the being of the human person. The result is the expansion of the medieval metaphysical doctrine of the transcendentals to include anthropological transcendentals such as co-existence, transcendental freedom, personal intellect, and personal gift love. At the same time, he offers a correction to modern philosophy's attempts at presenting freedom as transcendental.

While Leonardo Polo's philosophical production includes forty-five published books as well as a large number of still unpublished works, knowledge of his philosophical work is basically limited to Spain and a number of Latin American countries. In non-Spanish speaking areas, his philosophy is almost totally unknown. In the few cases that he is known in non-Spanish speaking circles, it is mainly due to the presence of scholars who studied with him or of others who have had contact with his works in the original Spanish while studying in Europe.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to his being more widely known is the lack of translations of his works from Spanish into other languages. This seems to be changing slowly as translations of his works have started to appear in Italian, English, German, Portuguese, and Polish.

Another is the lack of adequate introductions that might help the reader to situate Leonardo Polo's philosophical works and proposals within a wider philosophical context and that might help to have a general overview of the whole of his philosophical thought. This is where this present brief introduction finds its place. *Leonardo Polo: A Brief Introduction* is directed to English speaking scholars who wish to become more acquainted with Polo's thought. It does this in two parts: first, a brief account of Polo's life and works; and second, an introduction to his methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit and an overview of his philosophy.

Life and Works

1926 - 1948: Early Years

Leonardo Polo was born in Madrid, Spain on February 1, 1926. He attended elementary school at the Liceo Fránces and started his secondary education in Madrid, just as the Spanish Civil War was beginning in 1936. At this time, during the Spanish Civil War, his father held the position of Vice-mayor of the city. When the Republican government urged civilians to leave the capital city of Spain, Polo's family moved to Albacete, where he spent his first two years of secondary education. During the years 1936-1937, his father, a lawyer by profession, held the position of Chief Prosecutor for the city of Albacete. At the end of the Spanish Civil War, the family returned to Madrid, except for his father, who was forced into exile, first to Nicaragua and then to Chile, where he died in 1946.

Upon the return of his family to Madrid, Leonardo Polo continued his secondary education at the Cardinal Cisneros Institute. During this period, at the age of fifteen, he read Jaime Balmes's *Fundamental Philosophy*. The main ideas that he drew from this work were of the importance of the first principles, that these could not just be one, and that philosophy must be understood from the point of view of principles (in a doctoral course about the Logos in 1995, he would say, "philosophy is the knowledge of principle by principles").

The importance placed on first principles then led him to read Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, and more specifically *Part I, Question 45*, which presents creation as an accidental relation. This led Polo to think that Thomas Aquinas could be corrected and expanded on this point, since if creation has to do with what is first, if it is *extra nihilum*, if created act of being is being insofar as being, then the relation with the Creator cannot be an accident, but rather a relation of principles. Polo would later make numerous references to Aquinas in his

works, especially with regard to the real distinction between essence and act of being, and to the need to expand this distinction and apply it to the study of the human person in what Polo would eventually call a transcendental anthropology.

During this period, Leonardo Polo also read several works by Ortega y Gasset (he especially enjoyed *El espectador*) and Zubiri (including the first edition of *Naturaleza, Historia y Dios*, published in 1942). In later years, Polo would also be able to attend lectures by Zubiri on the concept in Madrid and another by Ortega y Gasset on Toynbee.

After finishing secondary school in 1945 and obtaining an extraordinary prize in the state exam, Polo decided to study law. This decision was influenced by family events. At the end of the Spanish Civil War, his uncle, Agustín Barrena, was left in charge of three law firms in which his father and his uncle Luís had once worked. A career in law would have offered him the opportunity of joining the firm with his uncle and to continue a family tradition, in spite of his own personal inclinations toward more theoretical subjects, and more concretely toward the study of mathematics. Mathematics did not, however, seem to have much of a future in a country that had just come out of a civil war and, mainly for this reason, he studied law for four years.

1949-1962: Philosophical Studies and the Discovery of the Mental Limit

In 1949 Polo, having recently graduated, started practicing law and, as he would later recount, soon had to decide between making money by practicing law (something which bored him) or following his own inclinations to theory and research. To his uncle's great disappointment, he chose the latter, and enrolled in the doctoral program for law. Of these courses, he remembers the one given by García Valdecasas, professor of civil law, with whom he held conversations about Hegel. Upon finishing his doctoral course work, Polo was faced with the choice of doing a doctoral dissertation, but also

with the problem of how to make a living during those years dedicated to research. One possibility was to seek a teaching position; and he in fact prepared for a few professorial exams even though in the end he did not pursue them.

By this time, Polo's interests were becoming more deeply philosophical and started to involve the development of an existential interpretation of natural right. His readings also expanded to include Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Kant's *Critique of the Practical Reason*, Spinoza's *Ethics*, as well as a number of works by Aristotle and Leibniz. It was at this time that Polo began enrolling in classes of philosophy.

Leonardo Polo's initial discovery of the methodology that he would later call the abandonment of the mental limit dates back to the spring of 1950, when he was doing research in Rome. The detection of the limit was a clear insight that came to him all of a sudden. As he recalls: "... it suddenly occurred to me, period. I was thinking about thinking and being, and about what being had to do with thinking; then I realized that we cannot arrive at being if one does not abandon the supposition of the object, because the supposition makes the object limited and a limited knowledge cannot be a knowledge of being if this is taken in the transcendental sense."

In other words, to become aware of the mental limit and of the need to abandon it is to notice that "one cannot separate, I repeat, being from being, it is not possible to take hold of it objectively because in this way it is 'des-realized'; but if being is not real, it is nothing. The intentional consideration of being is a *quid pro quo*. Being agrees with itself, but, being known *intentionaliter* is, as the Scholastics would say, an extrinsic denomination. When I know the idea, I do not in any way affect what I know, because the idea of what I know is in my mind as intelligible in act and in reality as intelligible in potency. The real distinction between essence and being makes the question all the more serious, because if being and essence were the same, then knowing something of the essence would be knowing something of being." (J. Cruz,

“Filosofar hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, Vol. XXI, 1 (1992), 46-47)

This discovery would be the initial insight that Leonardo Polo would later develop into a methodology for doing philosophy, a methodology that he would later call the *abandonment of the mental limit*.

After two years of basic course work in philosophy, Polo received an opportunity to continue work on his investigations regarding the existential character of natural right with a research fellowship in Rome that he received from the Higher Council for Scientific Research (headed at that time by Alvaro D'Ors), which had just started a branch in Rome (the *Spanish Juridical Institute* in Rome).

In Rome he had contact with eminent jurists like Del Vecchio and Capograssi. During these years in Rome (from the end of 1952 to September 1954), Leonardo Polo continued to develop the insight that he had received in 1950. A first phase of this involved the topic of his doctoral dissertation, "The Existential Character of Natural Right." However, taking up the topic of the existential character of law required resolving a series of more fundamental questions, many of which were related to the intuition of 1950 and which became a long introduction that eventually became a work in itself that would lead his research away from the juridical sciences and more toward philosophy.

Polo spent these Roman years reading, thinking intensely, and, above all, writing. German philosophy, especially Kant and the German Romantics, as well as Hegel and Heidegger, whom he had already known in his younger years, were a major focus of his research during this period. A result of his work in Rome is a large volume titled *The Real Distinction*, which he did not publish as such, but would later serve as a framework for later publications.

The formulations that Leonardo Polo had made with regard to his 1950 intuition began to take form through intellectual dialogue with the Idealist philosophers and with Heidegger's existentialism. For example, Polo's reading of Heidegger and of his concern for the "existent", his critic of

idealism, and his own philosophical approach, would lead Polo to his characterization of the human persons as "being additionally" [*ser además*]. This *being additionally*, which according to Polo Heidegger did not see, expresses that the human person is not limited to her thinking, nor even to her acting, but rather *is additionally* to thinking and action. To *be additionally* is "to open oneself intimately to be always constantly overflowing" (*La libertad*, doctoral course, Pamplona, 1990, *pro manuscripto*).

In 1954, Polo returned from Rome and began working at the recently founded University of Navarre, where he first taught *Natural Law* and then later (after the beginning of the School of Arts and Letters in 1956) *Fundamentals of Philosophy* and *History of Philosophical Systems*. Meanwhile, he continued his studies of philosophy at the Central University in Madrid as an external student, since his work teaching at Navarre prevented him from attending classes. Technical issues forced Polo to transfer to the University of Barcelona, where he finished a short research work on Karl Marx's anthropology under the direction of Jorge Pérez Ballestar. After receiving his degree from Barcelona in 1959, Polo transferred back to Madrid for the doctoral program and began work on his doctoral dissertation with Antonio Millán-Puelles.

In 1961, Polo obtained a doctoral degree after presenting his dissertation on Descartes. In this work, he presents Descartes as a voluntarist, something uncommon at the time in Spanish academic circles, who considered Descartes more as a rationalist. This dissertation was prepared for publication and appeared under the title *Evidencia y realidad en Descartes* (*Evidence and Reality in Descartes*) in 1963.

1963-1967: First Philosophical Works and Teaching at the University of Granada

After finishing his doctorate, Polo prepared a series of publications based on the thick volume *The Real Distinction* (which he had written in Rome) as preparation for his application for academic positions at universities in Spain. Fruit of this work were *The Access to Being* and *Being I*, published in 1964 and 1966, respectively.

In *The Access to Being*, Leonardo Polo presents the notion of the mental limit (of objective thought) and develops it in dialogue and in contrast with Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. He then puts forward his own philosophical proposal: that the mental limit can not only be detected, but that it can also be abandoned. Thus, Polo seeks not only to *discover the limits of objective thought*, but also to *detect this limit in conditions such that it is possible to abandon this limit*. This methodology, which Polo now calls the abandonment of the mental limit, has four dimensions that lead to the study of four different, but interrelated, thematic fields: (1) the study of extra-mental existence; (2) the study of the extra-mental predicamental causes (extra-mental essence); (3) the study of human existence; and (4) the study of human essence as *availing-of* [*disponer*].

Starting with *The Access to Being*, Polo planned a series of works that would cover these thematic fields. The first of these was to be *Being I* (on extra-mental being), followed by *Being II* (on the extra-mental essence of the universe), *Being III* (on the personal act of being), and *Being IV* (on human essence). Of these, only *Being I* was published. The subject matter of *Being II* would eventually find its way into his *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* (especially Volume IV), and those of *Being III* and *IV* would later appear as *Transcendental Anthropology I* and *II*.

Being I (1966) develops the first dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit, which focuses on extra-mental existence, that is, on the being of the physical universe. Here Polo develops a metaphysics based on a knowledge of first principles: created being as the principle of non-contradiction and as the principle of causality; and both of these distinct from, yet compatible with, the principle of identity, which is God the Creator. The study of these three principles as distinct, yet compatible first principles constitutes the central axioms of Polo's metaphysics.

The somewhat abrupt nature of the presentation of the topics in his first books, as well as their novelty, baffled a public accustomed to a more scholastic style and to a more "conventional" subject matter. Few accepted his new method for approaching important philosophical questions, and misunderstandings led many to brand him as a Hegelian or as not sufficiently "orthodox". Only a few sensed something of interest in Polo's philosophy. The poor reception among philosophers at that time may be one of the reasons that explain why Leonardo Polo did not publish the other works that he had already planned (*Being II*, *Being III*, and *Being IV*) in which he was to develop his philosophy of nature and transcendental anthropology.

Polo did not, however, abandon his philosophical project, but continued his efforts to draw out the consequences and implications of his philosophical methodology. Years later, in an interview, Polo would recall, "... to detect the limit and abandon it can be done or not. If it cannot be done, it seems to me that it would be difficult to remain a realist, not in the sense of coinciding intentionally with the truth, but rather of gaining access to extra-mental being, which does not form part of what is thought. This is how I saw it, and not as a matter of originality, but rather as having found something that had to be developed, and this was a very large undertaking, and since I had thought about it in Rome, I realized that it was a work for an entire lifetime. Am I going to dedicate my life to this? If I do, I run a risk; at that time I was not capable of gauging all

the implications of what this meant.” (Polo, *Conversaciones, pro manuscripto*).

At another moment, he would comment: “one danger was that I would not succeed, or, if I were successful, that I would not be accepted by the community of philosophers, which meant I would be left unpublished; or, worse, publish and have no one understand (this second possibility has been almost entirely fulfilled). The second danger was to be mistaken, that is, to address an issue in such a way that I would have to backtrack later. Not so much that I would be left more or less shunned as an author, but that I would have to recant or gather together what already existed and burn it. This danger was especially serious when considering freedom as a transcendental, because it is clear that the idea of a transcendental linked with freedom appears in many modern thinkers. Thus, I could fall into those errors or be misinterpreted. A third danger was to be misunderstood; not that I would be mistaken, but that I would be the occasion for others being mistaken. Fortunately, this danger has not really materialized” (Polo, *La libertad, pro manuscripto*).

Although his first works were little understood, they, along with other academic work, helped him obtain a position as professor at the University of Granada in 1966. Leonardo Polo's qualifying magisterial lecture was focused on the notion of God in Meister Eckhart, who he considered as a precursor to Hegel.

In Granada, Polo continued deepening his knowledge of the history of philosophy and continued his philosophical reflections, often times using his classes as occasions to think through a variety of philosophical issues.

1968-1983: Years of Silence and Teaching at the University of Navarre

In 1968, after two years at Granada, Leonardo Polo returned to the University of Navarre, where he taught a

variety of courses including history of philosophy, ethics, fundamentals of philosophy, psychology or any other course that required filling in when no other professor was available. Polo also continued working privately on the implications of his philosophical methodology. In 1971, he published the article "The question of extra-mental essence", and in 1972 he finished a five hundred page volume titled *Transcendental Anthropology*, which he did not however publish.

From 1978 up until his retirement, Leonard Polo crossed the Atlantic during the summers to give brief courses in various Latin American universities, among which were the Pan-American University (Mexico), the University of Piura (Peru), La Sabana (Colombia), and the University of the Andes (Chile). His knowledge and love for Latin America and its circumstances is evident in his essay *Liberation Theology and the Future of the Americas*, published in 1988.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Polo gave a number of undergraduate and graduate courses on a variety of topics. Many of these courses would become integrated into his larger philosophical project and would serve as the basis for publications in later years. It is also during these years, both in Latin America and at Navarre, that students began transcribing notes based on Polo's lectures and then passed them from one to another. At times, these notes would be reviewed and corrected by Polo himself, and would become an important instrument for the development of his own thought and as eventual basis for publications in later years.

Examples of class notes preserved from this period give a further insight into Polo's philosophical activity during these years: investigations regarding the Aristotelian philosophy of nature; Aristotelian philosophical psychology; several courses on the theory of knowledge (engaging especially with Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche); the rational knowledge of God; general psychology; habitual knowledge of the first principles; social justice; natural law; political philosophy; courses on liberation theology; bioethics; philosophy of education; philosophy of science (space and time); ethics; action theory; business

sciences; sociology; organizational theory; philosophy of work and technology; philosophy of communication; philosophy of information sciences; philosophy of culture; philosophy of art; esthetics; philosophy of education; and philosophy of history. In addition to this, Polo also taught courses focused on specific currents and periods of the history of philosophy such as nominalism, idealism, contemporary philosophy, and Thomism, as well as specific philosophers including Scotus, Eckhart, Leibniz, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

1984-1996: Publication of the *Course on Theory of Knowledge*

During the 1970s and early 80s, Polo published very little, but continued developing his ideas and finding clearer ways to present them, especially through courses on the theory of knowledge. In these courses, Polo made a special effort to describe his thought in continuity with classical philosophy, especially Aristotle, and in contrast with modern theories of knowledge, especially Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. With the help of transcriptions of lecture notes taken by his students, Polo eventually put together sufficient material for the publication and a new presentation of his philosophical method. The result was the publication of his four volume *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* [Volume I (1984); Volume II (1985); Volume III (1988); Volume IV/1 (1994); and Volume IV/2 (1996)] that inaugurated a new period of publications for Polo.

In the *Course on the Theory of Knowledge*, Leonardo Polo expounds upon and redevelops his philosophical methodology (the abandonment of the mental limit) by relating and contrasting it with Aristotelian gnoseology and modern versions of the theory of knowledge, especially rationalist and idealist ones.

The work is structured in roughly the following way:

Volume I: The axioms of human knowledge and the study of sensible knowledge;

Volume II: Exposition of intellectual knowledge and its limitation;

Volume III: Study of negation (or generalization) as an operation of the intellect through the history of philosophy;

Volume IV/1 and IV/2: Examination of human rational operations (concept, judgment, and grounding) and their reach from the perspective of the mental limit.

Polo continued to teach courses during this period, and much of the material included in the *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* drew from his maturing thought, especially with regard to his study of the predicamental causes and of the philosophy of nature. In this regard, the fourth volume of the *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* constitutes, in fact, the exposition of the second dimension of the mental limit (corresponding to the subject matter originally planned for *Being II*), which is directed to the extra-mental essence (also described as the quadruple con-causality of the predicamental causes) of the physical universe.

The publication of the *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* marked a maturation of Polo's presentation of his philosophical method and of the consequences of this method. In it, Polo presents a clearer exposition of intellectual operations and their limit. He also develops a philosophy of intellectual habits that make possible higher operations and allow for the partial or complete abandonment of the mental limit. Throughout the exposition, Polo develops notions such as habits and the real distinction between act of being and essence that continue classical philosophy, but also go beyond it. At the same time, he engages modern philosophers and seeks to correct their insights.

With the *Course on Theory of Knowledge*, Leonardo Polo also set the stage for the presentation of other dimensions of the abandonment of the mental limit, especially for his transcendental anthropology, which he had already been developing.

It is during these years that other works by Polo began to be published, many of which were based on classes and courses that he had given in past years. These works include *Hegel and Post-hegelianism* (1st edition published in Peru, 1985); *Who Is Man? A Spirit in Time* (1991); *Keys to Nominalism and Idealism in Contemporary Philosophy* (1993) [from classes given in the early and mid-80s]; *Habitual Knowledge of the First Principles* (1993) [from a doctoral class given in 1983]; *Ethics* (1993); *Introduction to Philosophy* (1995) [from an undergraduate class given in 1990-1991].

During this period, Polo expanded his relations with other European universities, giving courses in Rome at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, and continuing his visits to the IESE Business School (Barcelona, Spain) and the University of Malaga (making twenty-two trips there between the years 1979 and 1998). These contacts and the growing number of his disciplines in Europe and in Latin America, as well as the interest developed by the publication of his *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* and other works, gave rise to growing interest in Polo's thought throughout the 1990s. In 1992, the University of Navarre organized a philosophical conference dedicated to his thought (*Anuario filosófico* Vol. XXI/1, 1992) with several contributions from his growing circle of disciples.

1996-2003: Publication of the *Transcendental Anthropology* and Retirement

Starting in the late 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, Polo began concentrating on developing his transcendental anthropology, and the greater part of his doctoral courses were dedicated to this theme. During this time, Polo taught several doctoral courses on transcendental anthropology as well as courses on the transcendentals, freedom, the practical reason, the will and its acts, the logos, the self, the sentiments, and the human essence.

In these courses, Polo continued with his practice of lecturing and then of taking the transcriptions of notes made by his students to further develop and clarify his thought while preparing eventual publications. One of these courses would later become the basis of “Why a Transcendental Anthropology?”, which is the last chapter of *The Present and Future of Man* (1993), a work that includes other earlier studies that focus on the anthropological consequences of his methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit.

Other works published during this period include *The Human Person and Her Growth* (1996), *On Christian Existence* (1996), *Anthropology of Business Management* (co-authored with Carlos Llano, 1997), *Nominalism, Idealism, and Realism* (1997) and two shorter works—*The Will and Its Acts* (Part I and II), published in 1998.

In 1996, on the occasion of his retirement, the University of Navarre organized an international congress dedicated to the study of Leonardo Polo's philosophy. The papers presented at this congress were published by *Anuario filosófico* (vol. XXIX, 1996) and includes more than fifty studies of various aspects of Polo's thought covering a vast range of philosophical topics.

After his retirement in 1996, Polo continued working on his philosophical anthropology and finally published *Transcendental Anthropology I* in 1999 and *Transcendental Anthropology II* in 2003. These two works cover the subject matter that Polo had originally intended for *Being III* and *Being IV* in the 1960s, and thus bring Polo's philosophical project to completion. In the preface of the first volume, Polo refers to his work on transcendental anthropology as the culmination of his philosophical work in which all his other works can finally be seen from their proper perspective: “This book is certainly the culmination of my philosophical inquiry. What I mean by this is that the method that has led up to it no longer gives more of itself. But, since this method makes possible access to abundant thematic fruits, this book is added to the harvest that is contained, but not exhausted, in other writings. Because of

its double value (methodological and thematic), the summit reopens the various thematic areas: it reiterates them” (*Transcendental Anthropology I*, Preface).

Transcendental Anthropology I contains the first part of the transcendental anthropology that Polo proposes as fruit of the third dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit. In it Polo justifies the need for an anthropology that is transcendental by distinguishing between the act of being of the physical universe (studied in metaphysics) and the act of being of the human person (the subject matter of transcendental anthropology). With this, Polo seeks to study the being of the human person on the level of act of being, but at the same time to distinguish this transcendental anthropology from metaphysics. A consequence of this is his proposal to expand the medieval theory of transcendentals to include transcendentals that are anthropological in character. From this perspective, the being of the human person is studied on a transcendental level as *co-existence*, *transcendental freedom*, *personal intellection*, and *personal gift-love*. These personal transcendentals form the nucleus of Leonardo Polo's proposal for a transcendental anthropology.

Transcendental Anthropology II contains the second part of the transcendental anthropology that Polo proposes as fruit of the fourth and final dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit. From this perspective, Polo studies the manifestation of the person, which is human essence or, rather, the *I*: her body and her higher faculties (the intelligence and the will) as well as their acts and acquired habits. With the publication of this second volume of *Transcendental Anthropology*, it can be said that the major elements of Polo's philosophy had finally been made available to the public.

Meanwhile, interest in Polo's philosophy continued to grow and mature. In 1998, one manifestation of this growing interest was the start of *Studia Poliana*, a philosophical journal dedicated to maintaining the ever growing community of scholars interested in Polo and in new developments and publications from him. Another was the founding of the *Instituto de estudios filosóficos Leonardo Polo* (IEFLP) in 2004 in

Malaga, Spain and the publication of their journal, *Miscelánea Poliana*.

2004-2013: Last Years and Death

After the publication of *Transcendental Anthropology*, Polo continued correcting transcripts of past courses, conferences, and articles for publication.

One fruit of this work was the publication of *Nietzsche as Thinker of Dualities* in 2005. This work was based on three courses given by Polo: one on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Peru in 1988; another on *Ecce homo* given in Mexico in 1994; the third a doctoral course on Nietzsche given in Pamplona in 1995. In the introduction to this work, Polo makes clear that his interest in Nietzsche involves studying Nietzsche's anthropology from the perspective of his own proposal of a transcendental anthropology. This work therefore continues Polo's own investigations, but now in dialogue with one of contemporary philosophy's most influential thinkers.

Other works published in these years include *The Rational Knowledge of Reality* (2004), *The I* (2004), *The Predicamental Order* (2005), *The Kantian Critique of Knowledge* (2005), *Transcendental Freedom* (2005), *The Radical and Freedom* (2005), *The Human Essence* (2006), *Helping to Grow. Philosophical Questions Regarding Education* (2007), *The Predicamental Logos* (2006), *Primary Organizations and Businesses* (2007), *Person and Freedom* (2007), *Knowledge of the Physical Universe* (2008), *Man in History* (2008), *Lectures on Classical Psychology* (2009), *Course on General Psychology* (2009), *Introduction to Hegel* (2010), *The Essence of Man* (2011), *Philosophy and Economy* (2012), *Studies in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy* (2012), and *Lectures on Ethics* (2013).

The increased pace of publications was paralleled by ever increasing and widespread interest in Polo's thought, giving rise to more than three hundred studies, thirty doctoral

dissertations and dozens of books on his thought already during his lifetime.

Leonardo Polo's health deteriorated during the last years of his life. Still, his friends and disciples visited him frequently, sharing candy and a game of chess with him, and even engaging in brief philosophical conversations. During these last years he slowly continued making corrections to his last book, *Epistemology, Creation and Divinity* (published posthumously in 2014), which includes a chapter on Christology which he had drafted in 2005, but which he corrected and finished shortly before his death.

In 2008, when receiving the Cross of Carlos III prize, Polo wrote,

With my work, I do not intend to say the final word regarding the great questions, but rather to open up a way so that those who come afterwards may find an effective and fruitful path for reaching the highest truths, convinced—as always—that the truth always guides our inquiries, and at the same time reinforces them when they are accepted and, being accepted, elevates them. With this, I must now say my last word: thank you!"

Leonardo Polo passed away early in the morning of February 9, 2013 at the age of 87.

Introduction to Leonardo Polo's Philosophy

Leonardo Polo's Theory of Knowledge

Introduction

Polo's philosophical work revolves around his *methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit* and draws from the thematic areas that are opened up by this method. Thus, in order to understand his philosophical work, it is necessary to say a few words about the abandonment of the mental limit. This, in turn, requires understanding Polo's approach to the theory of knowledge, especially his characterization of thinking as act and of his understanding of intellectual operative (or objectual) knowing.

The abandonment of the mental limit is the centerpiece of Polo's theory of knowledge. After a first attempt at formulating his methodology in *The Access to Being* (1964) that was largely misunderstood, Polo re-elaborated and reformulated his approach with a more explicit attempt to show continuity with Aristotelian philosophy. The result of his efforts are found in the four volume work *Course on the Theory of Knowledge*, published from 1984 to 1996.

In *Course on the Theory of Knowledge*, Polo clearly makes an effort to show how his proposal of the abandonment of the mental limit is a continuation of key notions from classical and medieval philosophy, while at the same time attentive to concerns and developments of modern and contemporary philosophy. At the same time, Polo strives to establish a series of necessary and evident characteristics of thought that he calls *axioms*. These axioms are not simply postulates or mere linguistic declarations; instead, they are characteristics of thought that are evident and which structure the study of the different dimensions of knowledge that have to be dealt with.

The basic points of Polo's theory of knowledge include,

- that human knowing is act (as an act, it is an operation that possesses its object);
- that the operation and the object are commensurate and, consequently, that there is no operation without object and no object without operation;
- that the operation knows the object;
- that the object is intentional;
- consequently that the operation does not know itself; it is not self-reflective;
- that operations are known, not by the operation itself or by other operations (which always know objects, but not operations), but rather by higher cognitive acts that he calls *habits*.

Immanent operation as perfect act (energeia)

For Polo, as it was for Aristotle, *knowing is an act* and *one knows always in act*. For Polo, this is a necessary characteristic of all human knowing, something that is evident and which we have direct knowledge of when we think.

From this it follows that *knowing is in no way passive*. In this regard, Polo disagrees with those who describe knowledge as an intuition in front of which the subject is passive and with those who attribute activity to what is known, but not to the knowing. Polo insists that if something is known, there is an act of knowing that knows it; there is no object that is intelligible in itself without an act of knowing.

Polo identifies a number of human cognitive acts, but the first level of human intellectual cognition is that of *abstraction*, which is an *immanent operation*. Polo thus begins his discussion of human knowing with a study of immanent operations. In this regard, Polo's characterization of immanent operations follows Aristotle's description of human operative knowing as an act or *energeia*. *Energeia* is a perfect act, that is, an act that possesses its end (*telos*) immediately. This is in contrast with physical changes or *kinesis*, which is a movement toward an end that it does not yet possess, and which ceases once that end is possessed. In physical movement, for example, the end

is the result of change. Thus, when one is building a house, the act of building does not possess the end of its activity (the house) while it is still building. It only possesses its end at the end of the change, at which point the change terminates. On the other hand, a perfect act (*energeia*) is an act that immediately possesses its end. Thus, when I think, it is not that first I think and then after some time I arrive at a thought and then cease thinking. Rather, when I think, I think a thought *immediately*; when I think, the thought is *already* present.

The distinction between acts that move toward an end (*kinesis*) and perfect acts that already possess their end (*energeia*) is described by Aristotle in the following passage: “at the same time one sees and has seen, understands and has understood, thinks and has thought; while it is not true that at the same time one learns and has learnt or is being cured and has been cured.” (*Metaphysics* 1048b23-35). Here, seeing, understanding, and thinking are examples of *energeia*, while learning and being cured are examples of *kinesis*.

Commensuration of operations and objects and the intentionality of the object

Because operative knowing is a perfect act that possesses its end (or object), the operation is *simultaneous* with the object that it possesses and is thus *commensurate* with it. This means that the operation does not begin without an end (or object) to which it then tries arrive; rather, the operation *already* possesses its end from the very start. Thus there is never any operation without object, and there is never any object without operation.

This is linked with another aspect of Polo’s theory of knowledge which is that, strictly speaking, operations know objects and *objects are intentional with respect to reality*. By intentional, Polo means that the object is simply a reference to reality. He illustrates this with the example of a picture: when one looks at a picture, one cannot but see what is being pictured in the picture. Thus, the picture points to something

beyond itself, it is *intentional* toward that reality. Although the example is imperfect, the object of thought would be like a picture, but without a separate physical reality that acts as the support of the picture; the reality of the object is pure reference or *intentionality* to the real.

Non-reflexivity of the operation

Since every cognitive operation knows an object and since this object is always intentional with respect to reality, what is operatively known is always some reality outside of thought. A consequence of this is that operations do not know themselves; they are not self-referential or self-reflective. The operation knows objects and through objects it knows aspects of reality; it does not, however, know itself as an operation nor any other operation. For this a higher level of knowing is needed, which Polo calls *habitual knowledge*.

The manifestation of intellectual operations by intellectual habits

Since operations only know their object, and since objects are intentional and not self-referential, operations do not know themselves. In order for operation to be made known, they have to be made manifest by a higher act of the intelligence, but one that is not an operation (since operations know only objects, and not other operations or acts). Polo calls this higher cognitive act *habit*. Thus, in Polo's thought, human intellectual operations are not known by the operation itself, but rather by non-operative acts of knowing called *intellectual habits*.

It should be noted that Polo's use of the notion of habit is inspired by and taken from medieval philosophy, but at the same time with a number of differences. Thus, while Polo makes use of the medieval notion of habit, he proposes a correction and expansion of the classical theory of intellectual habit. For him, habits must be considered not just as perfections of the intellectual potency, but above all as *intellectual cognitive acts* that are *distinct from and superior to*

intellectual operations. Habits *illuminate* previously exercised operations and *make them manifest*. Habits thus make operations known and also make other higher operations possible.

Once made manifest by habits, the operation can no longer be considered as the only or the highest mode of knowing. Thus, at the same time as one *detects* that the operative knowing is *limited*, this *limit can be abandoned* by cognitive habits. Polo thus calls his methodology the *abandonment of the mental limit*.

In his theory of knowledge, Polo identifies a number of distinct intellectual habits. More concretely the *acquired habits of reason* and the innate habits: the *habit of the first principles*, *synderesis*, and *wisdom*. These distinct habits make it possible to abandon the mental limit along four distinct lines which open up four distinct themes of investigation.

The Four Dimensions of the Abandonment of the Mental Limit

Introduction

If an immanent operation is detected, then one is already exercising a cognitive act that is superior to it, given that no operation (or any cognitive act for that matter) is self-reflective. As Polo sees it, the immanent operation of knowing *presents* the object of thought, but does not present itself; rather it conceals itself (in a way similar to how light illuminates colors but does not illuminate itself). The immanent operation is detected while it is being exercised, but it is detected by a knowing that is simultaneous and superior to it. Thus, knowledge of an act of knowing is not obtained by the act itself, but rather by an act of knowing that is superior to it. In the case of cognitive operations, this knowing is obtained by an intellectual habit that illuminates or manifests the operation.

Trans-objective and trans-immanent knowledge

Once the operation is known as limited, it can freely be abandoned in a number of ways: the mental presence can be abandoned either by way of abandoning the object (trans-objectively) or inwardly from the operation (trans-operatively or trans-immanently).

Abandoning the mental limit by way of the object (trans-objectively) opens human knowing up to two areas of extra-mental reality that are beyond the object: 1) the *extra-mental acts of being*: the act of being of the universe and its Origin or the divine Act of being; 2) the *essence of the universe*, or rather, the four physical causes.

Polo maintains that neither the real extra-mental acts of being (which are plural), nor the essence of the cosmos as the physical tetra-causality (causes which are also plural) can be known as a mental object; rather, they are realities beyond the object of thought and require that the object be abandoned.

These two dimensions of the abandonment of the mental limit make it possible to know well defined areas of reality, and its study was begun by classical Greco-Latin philosophy and their commentators. Polo expands on this tradition and more clearly identifies the methodology, or intellectual habits, that have each of these realities as their theme. For Polo, the *extra-mental acts of being* are known by the *habit of the first principles* and this theme belongs to *metaphysics*. On the other hand, the *con-causal essence of the universe* is known by *acquired habits of the reason* and are theme of *philosophy of nature*.

A second direction of abandoning the mental limit is trans-operatively or *trans-immanently* (knowing that is superior to immanent operation). This opens up two human themes that are not beyond the object, but rather, so to speak, more intimate or more interior than immanent operations. These themes are, 1) the *personal act of being* (which Polo calls the human *person*) and 2) *human essence as availing-of*. Both of these themes cannot be known by abstraction, not because they are realities that are outside of thought in extra-mental reality, but

rather because they are aspects that are discovered interiorly. Here too Polo identifies the methodology, or intellectual habits, that make it possible to know these realities: the *personal act of being* is known by the habit of *wisdom* and the *human essence* is known by the habit of *synderesis*.

The four dimensions of the abandonment of the mental limit

Polo's methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit can thus be said to have four dimensions, which follow upon the four different ways that the mental limit can be abandoned.

Through the *habit of the first principles* we abandon the mental limit and *advert* the extra-mental acts of being (the being of the universe, the divine being, and the dependency of the former on the latter). This gives rise to *metaphysics*.

Through the *acquired habits* of reason we go beyond the first level of operative knowledge (abstractive knowledge) and *explicitate* the physical con-causality that is the *essence of extra-mental reality*. This gives rise to the *philosophy of nature*.

Through the *habit of wisdom*, we attain the *personal act of being* and the personal transcendentals (co-existence, transcendental freedom, personal intellection, and personal gift-love). This gives rise to *transcendental anthropology*.

Through *synderesis*, we *linger* in the mental limit and come to know the acquired habits of the intellect and the virtues of the will and the nature that they perfect; that is, we know the *human essence*. This gives rise to the *anthropology of the human essence*.

The First Dimension of the Abandonment of the Mental Limit and Metaphysics

The first dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit is equivalent to the exercise of the *habit of the first principles*.

It consists in completely transcending the cognitive act of abstraction. If the immanent operation of abstraction *supposits* for extra-mental reality which is active, then abandoning it completely opens us to this extra-mental reality, that is, to the real *acts of being*. With this the extra-mental acts of being are *adverted*. These real (non-mental) first principles are, in turn, the themes (axioms) of *metaphysics*.

One of the first principles is the *act of being of the universe*. Polo calls this the *principle of non-contradiction*. According to him, it is non-contradictory because when the being of the universe is adverted, there is no place for the non-existence of this being. Or rather, non-being or nothingness cannot be real. Polo calls this act of being *persistence*, and he describes it as the *beginning that neither ceases nor is followed*, that is, as a persistent beginning that, precisely because it is, cannot cease, since if it did cease nothing would come about; and if it were followed, the same would happen, because being can only be followed by nothingness.

Another real first principle is the *divine act of being*, which Polo calls the *principle of identity*. Here the essence and act of being are indistinguishable; or rather, its essence is its act. Polo calls this the *Origin* because the originary being is outside of beginning; it does not need to begin because it is eternal. This eternity is God.

For its part, the act of being of the universe depends on the divine act of being. This is the theme of creation (*donatio essendi*). According to Polo, this dependence is the first *principle of causality*. This first principle (which is *first* insofar as it is *transcendental*, and not merely *predicamental*) marks the distinction between the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction and at the same time links them together.

The Second Dimension of the Abandonment of the Mental Limit and the Philosophy of Nature

If the immanent operation is known, its character as act is known. If this act is contrasted with physical reality, then one knows that this act knows physical causes that are principles in reality, but which are not actual. Polo, following Aristotle, calls these physical acts or *predicamental causes* (the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, the final cause), which form the subject matter for the *philosophy of nature*.

According to Polo, in extra-mental reality, these cannot be causes separate from each other (a separation that only happens with the introduction of the mental limit). The causal value of one is inseparable from that of the others: the physical causes are always causes *ad invicem*, and can only be known as causes in their mutual reference to each other.

These causes come to be known as they are *explicitated* by the intellection in various phases, which make possible knowing them as they are outside of the mind, that is, by returning them to the reality from which they have been abstracted. This devolving leads us to know the physical causes of the essence of the universe.

In order to contrast the actuality of the immanent operations with the physical causes, the operation must be known and this is done by means of the *acquired virtues*. The first immanent operation is *abstraction* and the habit that makes possible knowing it is the *abstractive habit*. The contrast with the physical causes takes place with higher rational operations that are made possible by this first manifestation of the operation of abstraction by the abstractive habit. Once the operation of abstraction is known, other operations of the reason follow. First, *conceptualizing*, which by contrasting the immanent operation with physical priorities permits knowing three causes of physical reality: the *material cause*, the *formal cause*, and

the *extrinsic efficient cause* (the movement of inert beings). The operation of conceptualizing can then be made manifest and known by the *conceptual habit*, which in turn makes possible the next operation of reason, which Polo calls the *act of judgment*. The act of judgment makes it possible to know the *intrinsic efficient cause* (proper of living beings) as well as the *final cause* (the cosmic order), which makes all the physical movements compatible with each other. The act of judgment is followed by the *habit of science*, which manifests the act of judgment and makes possible the last operation of reason: the *act of grounding*. In the act of judgment the principles of physical reality that constitute the essence of the universe are made explicit, but not the ground. *What* reality is known, but not its *being*. It is this ground that the third operation of reason (the act of grounding) seeks. The operation of grounding is in turn known by another acquired habit, which Polo calls the *habit of the logical axioms*. With this last habit, the type of human knowledge that begins with abstraction is exhausted. To continue knowing what is not physical, it is necessary to go beyond the operations and habits of reason to knowledge of the acts of being of reality. This is done by abandoning the mental limit through the habit of the first principles, as described in the first dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit.

The Third Dimension of the Abandonment of the Mental Limit and Transcendental Anthropology

The third dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit consists in leaving aside the immanent operation of reason so as to attain what is more intimate, previous, and superior to it, that is, the personal act of being. This involves detaching oneself from the abstractive immanent operation so as to note that our intimacy is superior to this immanency. Thus, with what Polo calls the innate habit of *wisdom*, one

attains knowledge of the human person, of the *personal act of being*, the study of which Polo calls *transcendental anthropology*.

Polo describes the personal act of being that is compatible with, yet distinct from the act of being of the universe as *co-existence*. Thus, the person is not limited to being: she is *co-being*, co-existing, being-with. One dimension of this co-existing is co-existence with the act of being of the physical universe. The person co-exists with being as ground, but cannot be reduced to it. It is thus clear that the theme of transcendental anthropology is distinct from that of metaphysics, yet compatible with it.

Human personal being can also be described as being *additionally*. Insofar as the personal act of being or co-existing is known as irreducible intimacy, it co-is *additionally*. The personal act of being is, in the first place, *additionally* to the object of thought and to operative knowing. Thus, the person can never be adequately captured by objective thought, nor is the personal act of being to be confused with the operation of knowing. It is, so to say, always *additionally* to thought: it is inexhaustible and overflowing light, the pure non-exhausting itself when operatively knowing.

A consequence of this is that knowledge of the human person is attained only insofar as *additionally*. That is, the correct knowledge of the personal act of being is attained only as knowledge of an act that is *being* (or better, *co-being*) *additionally*, never as something finished or as a result. This means that the personal act of being can only be known by a methodology that accompanies its being *additionally*.

The adverb *additionally* (*además* in Spanish) also clearly distinguishes the personal act of being from the act of being of the universe. Polo characterizes the extra-mental act of being of the universe as *beginning that neither ceases nor is followed* and as *persistence*. Personal act of being on the other hand is characterized as *being additionally*. *Additionally* thus makes reference to the distinction between the extra-mental act of being of the universe and the co-existing act of being of the human person on a transcendental level, as what marks the

distinction of one from another *qua* act of being. The transcendental character of the anthropology that Polo proposes is thus clear.

Attaining the personal act of being brings with it knowledge that it is not a simple reality, but rather that it is configured by a number of intrinsic dualities that are hierarchically arranged. This plurality indicates that within human intimacy, not everything is the same nor is everything on the same level, since it consists in a hierarchy of dualities. What is proper of these dualities is that the lower member *serves* the higher and the higher *favors* the lower. These dualities are not external, but rather intra-transcendental. In this regard, Polo discovers four personal transcendentals: *co-existence*, *transcendental freedom*, *personal intellection*, and *personal loving*.

Co-existence is the open character of the person. In contrast to the act of being of the universe (which Polo characterizes as the beginning that does not cease nor is followed and as persistence, and which does not need another universe to exist), the personal act of being co-exists with the act of being of the universe. Personal act of being is *being-with* or *co-being*. A human person is co-existent, and it is therefore impossible that only one person exists. Co-existence is the openness to one's own intimacy. It is also personally open and demands a personal "replica", that is, a distinct person to which it can give itself and which it can accept.

The human personal co-act of being is also *transcendental freedom*. Transcendental freedom should not be confused with predicamental freedom, which refers more to the acts of the will. Transcendental freedom is of the person, who is freedom as act of being. It is the openness to the transcendent, toward the outside, to other persons. As freedom, personal being is neither grounded nor ground, since the notions of a grounded and grounding freedom are contradictory. For this reason, in contrast with substantialist interpretations of the person, Polo argues that the person as transcendental freedom is neither substance nor subject.

The personal act of being is also knowing as *personal intellection*. This personal intellection is not the knowing of

reason nor the knowing of any innate habit, but rather the transparent cognitive light or the personal meaning of the act of being that each person is. Polo identifies this personal intellection with what has traditionally been called the agent intellect, the active agent of all other human knowing. This personal intellection must not therefore be confused with what has traditionally be called the possible, or patient, intellect. For Polo, personal intellection is act, while the possible intellect is potency.

Finally, the personal act of being is *personal loving* or *gift-love*. The human person as personal love must be distinguished from the wanting of the will. For Polo, personal gift-love is a personal transcendental. Personal love cannot be reduced to the will since this potency is *in search of* that which it lacks, precisely because it is a potency in the order of its actualization. Personal love, on the other hand, entails *gifting*, since the personal act of being is not lacking, but rather overflowing. According to Polo, personal loving has three hierarchically distinct dimensions, which are *accepting*, *giving*, and *gift*.

The Fourth Dimension of the Abandonment of the Mental Limit and Essence of the Human Person

Polo distinguishes knowledge of the personal act of being (of the *who that I am*) from knowledge of the *I* (which Polo calls the *human essence* or *manifestation of the person*). For Polo, each person knows the *I*, but no person completely knows *who* one is as person (as mentioned earlier, the human person is co-existing and co-exists *additionally*). Instead, what each person knows of himself comes through their manifestations (rational, volitive, social, etc.) and forms part of their essence.

But, how is the human essence known? First of all, human essence cannot be known through sensible knowledge or by abstraction. Yet it is clear that we know that we *avail-of*

intelligence and will. At the same time, knowing that we have the faculties of reason and will, and that we can avail-of them is not due to rational knowledge, but rather to an illumination of these potentialities, an illumination or knowing that is higher than reason. This higher cognitive instance is equivalent to the innate habit of *synderesis*, which Polo also calls the *I*. It is therefore the innate habit of *synderesis* thus enables us to abandon the mental limit so as to be able to study *human essence* as distinct from the personal act of being and gives rise to the *anthropology of the human essence*.

Polo uses the term *human nature* to designate the biological inheritance that is received from one's parents. This includes the body and its vegetative functions and movements, the sensible cognitive faculties (external senses and internal senses), the sensible appetites, and the sensible passions. In this regard, Polo largely follows Aristotle and Aquinas, although with contributions of his own to the understanding of vital movements (linked with his understanding of the con-causality of the predicamental causes and physical movements). Polo also places special emphasis on the internal senses (the common sense, the imagination, the memory, and the cogitative power) and develops them further than the classical Aristotelian tradition does (which is also relevant to his philosophy of education). With regard to the human body, Polo focuses on the plasticity of some of its parts such as the hands, the face, and the brain (with the implications that this has for biology, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and for theories of the evolution of hominids and the process of humanization). Polo calls this human nature *received life*. This received life is vivified by the human essence and the human act of being from the very first moment of its life.

In contrast to human nature or received life, Polo calls human essence *added life*. *Human essence* consists of the *intelligence* (immaterial faculty that is perfected by *acquired habits*), the *will* (another immaterial faculty that develops through *virtues*), and *synderesis* or *I* (the act that is prior to and superior to these potencies and which makes it possible to activate them).

The *I* or *synderesis* is always active and is an *innate habit* (in contrast to the acquired habits of reason). The spiritual potencies of the human being (the intelligence and will) are, on the other hand, initially passive. Activating them requires a higher and previous act (which in Polo's anthropology is the aforementioned innate habit of *synderesis*). Thus, the *intelligence* and *will* are initially passive potencies, which the person progressively activates (with habits and virtues respectively). The habits and virtues are the reward that each person bestows on these immaterial faculties. Thus, added life is the perfection that each human person bestows on their intelligence, will and *I*.

The intelligence is progressively perfected through the *acquired habits*, which are, as discussed above, multiple and achieved through the various operations of this potency.

The will (whose end is the ultimate good) grows, or is progressively activated, thanks to the *moral virtues*. The moral virtues are different levels of this potency's activation ordered toward better adapting itself to the ultimate good.

Now, as mentioned, in order to active the intellect and the will, a previous act, which Polo calls the *I* or *synderesis* is needed. The *I*, which is active, is dual with these potencies. This innate habit activates the two potencies in different ways. For this reason Polo distinguishes two dimensions of the *I*: the *seeing-I* and the *wanting-I*.

The *seeing-I*, which is the inferior member of the two, illuminates the intelligence and assists in all of its activities, thus habitually perfecting it and making it free.

The *wanting-I*, which is the superior member of the two, accompanies the will in all of its operativity and virtuous development, and also bestows freedom upon this potency.

Human Essential Manifestations

The activation of the intellect and will entails their perfecting or *essentialization*. Once perfected, man is capable of governing everything that is inferior to him and external reality through his potencies. This activation of the potencies gives rise to *language, society, work*, and other *essential manifestations of the person*. Thanks to their development, man transforms the world and, at the same time, perfects himself. In this sense, Polo points out that man is a *perfectible perfecter*.

In his various works, Polo studies a large number of different essential manifestations of the human person. This portion of Polo's philosophy is too extensive to adequately cover in a few pages, but some its major areas are presented below. A more extensive overview of these themes may be found in two of Polo's works: *Ethics* and *Who Is Man?*

First among the essential manifestations of the human person is the *family*, which is based on *marriage* and *children*, and then *education*.

For its part, *ethics* is the first human manifestation within the social sphere and is superior to the others, which depend on it. Ethics is based on *goods, norms, and virtues* that are intertwined in *human action*.

Ethics in turn is the only possible connective for social cohesion. Thus, there can be no *society* without the family and ethics. All other social connectives (goods, intermediate social institutions, political parties, laws, money, etc.) can be used for good or for evil. But the only knowledge that objectively distinguishes good from evil is ethics. For this reason, Polo considers that the worst thing that could happen to society is ethical relativism.

Society is interconnected through *language*. For Polo, language is the first human praxis and is condition of possibility for all the others.

Without language, *work* is not possible. Work is an adding. Human work consists in adding perfection to physical reality. Man adds perfection to the world because he is not satisfied with what it has to offer him naturally. At the same time that he perfects the world, man perfects himself through work, because his actions have repercussions in his own human essence by way of habits and virtues. In this sense, as already mentioned, man is a *perfectible perfecter*.

Culture comes about through work. Culture is everything that human work produces. Intrinsic characteristics of culture include the inexhaustible multiplicity of made products and their non-definitive character.

Technology forms part of culture. Technology is a specific productive procedure that consists in producing a series of instruments using other instruments for this purpose.

History is the situation in which human freedom finds itself according to which it opens up certain cultural possibilities and leaves others unexplored. For this reason history is not determined. Also, history does not culminate in itself, it has no internal end. For Polo, both the meaning, as well as history's end, are external to it. The first because history depends on Divine providence; the second because it cannot end through an eruption of divine action within it.

Without culture, technology, and history, there can be no *economics*. The key to economics lies not in the laws of economics, nor in production, but in businesses. A business is a gathering of men who seek a common end. For this reason, the businessman is someone who knows how to offer what is worth offering, that is, that which humanizes society.

As can be seen, the different manifestations of human essence fall into place in a *hierarchical* order. They are all interconnected, that is, they form a *systematic* whole.

Knowledge of God and Supernatural Faith

The scope of the philosophical themes opened up by Leonardo Polo's methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit is not limited to the extra-mental universe and to the human person and her essential manifestations, but is capable of going beyond them and of discovering God. Throughout the distinct dimensions of the abandonment of the mental limit, God appears as a consequence of the methodology itself. God, for example, is seen as *principle of identity* or *Origin* of the extra-mental universe (known through the habit of the first principles) and as the *final end of the will* (known through synderesis). In addition to this, the innate habit of wisdom attains the act of being of the human person and recognizes the personal transcendentals (co-existence, transcendental freedom, personal intellection, personal gift-loving), each of which are open to God in their own way. Thus, *transcendental freedom* opens itself up to the divinity as the "atopic inclusion in the sphere of the maximum amplitude", which is God. It is said to be "atopic" because the divine intimacy is not, strictly speaking, a place; and it is said to be "maximum amplitude" in the sense that God lacks limitation. *Personal intellection* opens itself to God as a seeking of one's personal meaning. The theme of the human personal intellection is God, and only in him does it find its own meaning, since it is known only by God. Human *personal gift-loving* is related to God insofar as the person hopes for the complete and definitive acceptance of her personal being by God.

Another characteristic of Polo's philosophy is that it is open to supernatural revelation. In this regard, Polo admits a higher human opening to God, which makes *supernatural faith* possible. Although there are allusions to this in some of his works published during his lifetime, the study of faith as a cognitive method and of the themes that are attainable by it

are dealt with more extensively in a posthumous work entitled, *Epistemology, Creation and Divinity*.

Conclusion

This brief overview of Polo's philosophy makes it clear that he insists on themes from classical and medieval philosophy and concentrates his philosophical attention on them until he is capable of continuing them further. At the same time, Polo is able to critically engage modern philosophy and thus correct it and rethink it in accordance with his philosophical methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit. The result is a philosophical work that takes classical philosophy and continues it while correcting and incorporating important insights of modern philosophy.

Polo's philosophy thus proposes a philosophy that responds to the needs of today's situation. In this regard, his attempt at a reinvigorated metaphysics and his proposal of a transcendental anthropology offer an alternative to prevailing postmodern views of philosophy. If postmodernism has as its cognitive method the lack of intellectual light (*pensiero debole*, or weak thought) and, consequently leads to nihilism, Polo, on the other hand, offers a methodology that consists in the highest unrestricted openness of the human person, which is personal intellection or knowing on the level of act of being. But this openness is, in turn, a methodology with respect to an unrestricted theme: the divine being or God.

Books by Leonardo Polo

1. *Evidencia y realidad en Descartes*. (Madrid: Rialp, 1963; Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996 (2nd ed.); 2007 (3rd ed.))
2. *El acceso al ser*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1964; Pamplona: Eunsa 2004 (2nd ed.))
3. *El ser I: la existencia extramental*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1966; Pamplona: Eunsa 1997 (2nd ed.))
4. *Curso de teoría del conocimiento, v. I*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1984; 1987 (2nd ed.); 2006 (3rd ed.))
5. *Curso de teoría del conocimiento, v. II*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1985; 1988 (2nd ed.); 1998 (3rd ed.); 2006 (4th ed.))
6. *Hegel y el posthegelianismo*. (Piura (Peru): Universidad de Piura, 1985; Spanish reprints: Pamplona: Eunsa 1999 (2nd ed.); 2006 (3rd ed.))
7. *Curso de teoría del conocimiento, v. III*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1988; 1999 (2nd ed.); 2006 (3rd ed.))
8. *¿Quién es el hombre? Un espíritu en el tiempo*. (Madrid: Rialp, 1991; 1993 (2nd ed.); 1998 (3rd ed.); 2001 (4th ed.); 2003 (5th ed.); 2007 (6th ed.); South American Edition: Piura (Peru): Universidad de Piura, 1993)
 –Italian translation: *Chi é l'uomo: uno spirito nel tempo*. Trans. Patrizia Bonagura. Milan (Italy): Vita e pensiero, 1992
10. *El conocimiento habitual de los primeros principios*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1993; Included in *Nominalismo, idealismo y realismo* (1997), parte III)
11. *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de los temas clásicos*. (Mexico City (Mexico): Universidad Panamericana/Publicaciones Cruz O., 1993; Spanish reprints: Madrid: Unión editorial (AEDOS), 1996; 1997 (2nd ed.))
 –English translation: *Ethics. A modern version of its classic themes*. Paul Arvisu Dumol. (Manila (Philippines): Sinag-Tala Publishers 2008)
 –Partial Portuguese translation online: *A ética e a teoria da evolução*.
12. *Presente y futuro del hombre*. (Madrid: Rialp, 1993; 2012 (2nd ed.))

13. *Curso de teoría del conocimiento, v. IV/1st Part.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1994)
–2nd edition together with 2nd Part: Pamplona: Eunsa 2004
14. *Introducción a la filosofía.* (Eunsa, 1995; 1999 (2nd ed.); 2002 (3rd ed.))
15. *Curso de teoría del conocimiento, v. IV/2nd Part.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996)
–2nd edition together with 1st Part: Pamplona: Eunsa 2004
16. *La persona humana y su crecimiento.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996; 1999 (2nd ed.))
17. *Sobre la existencia cristiana.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996)
–2nd edition titled *La originalidad de la concepción cristiana de la existencia.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010 (2nd ed.))
18. *Antropología de la acción directiva.* (with C. Llano) (Madrid: Unión editorial (AEDOS), 1997)
19. *Nominalismo, idealismo y realismo.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1997; 2001 (2nd ed.))
20. *La voluntad y sus actos (I).* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1998)
21. *La voluntad y sus actos (II).* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1998)
22. *Antropología trascendental I: la persona humana.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1999; 2003 (2nd ed.); 2010 (3rd ed.))
23. *Antropología trascendental II: la esencia de la persona humana.* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2003; 2010 (2nd ed.))
24. *El conocimiento racional de la realidad.* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra 2004)
25. *El yo.* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2004)
26. *El orden predicamental.* (Universidad de Navarra, 2005)
27. *La crítica kantiana del conocimiento.* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2005)
–Portuguese translation (Medeiros-Do Amaral; IBFC Raimundo Lulio): *A critica kantiana do conhecimento.* Colección Grandes obras do pensamento universal, nº 85. Sao Paulo (Brasil): Escala, 2007

28. *La libertad trascendental*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2005)
29. *Lo radical y la libertad*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2005)
30. *Nietzsche como pensador de dualidades*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2005)
31. *La esencia humana*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2006)
32. *Ayudar a crecer. Cuestiones filosóficas de la educación*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006; 1st reprinting, 2007)
33. *El logos predicamental*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2006)
34. *Las organizaciones primarias y las empresas*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2007)
35. *Persona y libertad*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2007)
36. *El conocimiento del universo físico*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2008)
37. *El hombre en la historia*. (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2008)
38. *Lecciones de psicología clásica*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009)
39. *Curso de psicología general*. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009, 2010 (2nd ed.))

The renowned Spanish philosopher **Leonardo Polo** (1926-2013) is best known for his philosophical method called the *abandonment of the mental limit* and for the profound philosophical implications and consequences of the application of this method, especially his proposal of a transcendental anthropology.

Polo's methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit consists of *detecting the mental limit in conditions such that it can be abandoned* and can be pursued along different lines, opening up four major thematic areas of investigation: (1) the act of being of the physical universe (*metaphysics*); (2) the quadruple con-causality (or essence) of the physical universe (*philosophy of nature*); (3) the act of being of the human person (*transcendental anthropology*); (4) the manifestation of the human person through her essence (*anthropology of human essence*).

In addition to these areas, Polo's works cover a wide range of fields including psychology, theory of knowledge, physics, biology, neuroscience, ethics, philosophy of language, sociology, education, philosophy of science, political economy and business ethics.

Throughout his works, Polo critically engages classical and medieval thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham, as well as modern and contemporary philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Habermas. In dialogue with the great thinkers of the history of philosophy, Polo seeks to further the achievements of traditional philosophy as well as rectify and correct the project of modern philosophy.

Leonardo Polo's philosophical production includes forty-five published books as well as a large number of still unpublished works. Already during his lifetime, interest in his philosophy had given rise to numerous conferences and study workshops, including three international congresses; the publication of more than twenty books and three hundred scholarly articles; dozens of doctoral dissertations; and two philosophical journals dedicated specifically to his thought. Translation of his works from Spanish has begun in various languages including Italian, English, German, Portuguese, and Polish.

Leonardo Polo: A Brief Introduction is directed to English speaking scholars who wish to become more acquainted with Polo's thought. It presents a brief account of Polo's life and works, and offers an introduction to his methodology of the abandonment of the mental limit and an overview of his philosophy.

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