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Analisi d’opere

Leonardo Polo is considered by many philosophers as the most important Metaphysicist in Spain in the XX century. His more than twenty books about philosophy issues give a clear account of it. Born in Madrid in 1926, after graduating from college, he spent two years in Rome (1952-1954) thanks to a doctoral scholarship. This stay in Rome turned out to be crucial for his philosophy, because during this time he elaborated a first draft of his philosophy (in a still unpublished two volume book, entitled Real Distinction between Being and Essence), and outlined a program that would lead to the publications of five nuclear books, in which he would analyze all the big problems of philosophy while at the same time developing his own philosophical point of view. In fact, it has been earlier this year (2003) when Leonardo Polo finished the last of the books drafted in the Rome manuscripts. This book is the second volume of Antropologia transcendental (Transcendental Anthropology). Whereas the first volume deals with the act of being of the human being (i.e. about the personal character of the human being), this second volume deals with the essence of the human being (the essence of the person). With these two books Leonardo Polo tries to extend the Thomistic metaphysical doctrine about the esse and essence, which has been underdeveloped in the study of human being.

In September of 1954, Polo joins the School of Philosophy at the University of Navarra (Pamplona - Spain), where he teaches until his
retirement in 1996, when at the age of 70 he is appointed professor emeritus of the Philosophy Department. During these decades of teaching in the University of Navarra, Polo teaches practically all courses of philosophy at the undergraduate and graduate levels and writes 24 books and more than one hundred papers. Among these books we should underline _El acceso al ser_ (Access to Being) (1964), where he develops a genuine method for metaphysics and anthropology in the way opened by Heidegger in _Being and Time_, i.e., the abandonment of the consideration of _being_ as presence. In 1965 Polo writes _El ser_ (Being), where he dwells on the metaphysical topics reached with his method. We can also mention the five volumes of _Curso de teoría del conocimiento_ (Course in the Theory of Knowledge) (1984-1996), where Polo elaborates a complete theory of knowledge and researches into the main related problems in the history of philosophy. _Hegel y el posthegelianismo_ (Hegel and the Posthegelianism) (1985) and _Nominalismo, Idealismo y Realismo_ (Nominalism, Idealism and Realism) (1997) are two books about history of philosophy. Finally, the two volumes of _Antropología transcendental_ (Transcendental Anthropology) (1999-2003) bring his philosophical thought full circle, by analyzing the being and the essence of the person. After this short introduction to the figure of Leonardo Polo, I intend to develop the central theme of his Metaphysics, i.e. the _esse_ (also named, using a Thomistic terminology, the _act of being_).

I think that one of the greatest contributions of Leonardo Polo to philosophical endeavor has been the recognition of differences between the act of being of the cosmos, the act of being in humans, and the divine act of being, which he has couched in a transcendental terminology. In other words, he has been able to characterize the _existence_ of physical creation, human creation and God in an altogether singular way. Polo is the first philosopher to have established the _distinct modes of the act of being_ in the history of philosophy, namely: _persistence_ – which is the universe’s act of being; _co-existence_ – the act of the human being and _Origin_ – the divine act of being –. This Polian doctrine of the _modes of the act of being_ has arisen out of a consideration of the big themes in metaphysics, and seeks to be, thus, a continuation of that legacy. In order to understand what Polo is proposing I will provide a very brief summary, by way of introduction, to how Polo has interpreted the history of metaphysics.

1. Being in Parmenides

Parmenides’s influence in the history of metaphysics has been decisive, given that he was the first to lay down the parameters of the great debate about being1. The history of metaphysics is basically, albeit often implicitly, either a rejection or adoption of Parmenides’s hypothesis that being is _absolutely uniform_2. He believed the identity of being to be so radical that not only is the question of internal distinctions within being ruled out, there really cannot even be a distinction between being and thought. He is famous for such phrases as “for the same thing can be thought and can exist”3 or “it is the same to think and the thought that [that object of thought] exists”4. But if we don’t make any sort of distinctions then metaphysics comes to a halt before it even gets started. The path that Parmenides opened up is impossible to walk down if we choose to stick with his initial thesis. If being is as homogenous as Parmenides says that it is – “it is always present in complete identity with itself”5 –, then any attempt to make progress in metaphysics will spell the rejection of this initial monism in being. The discovery of new metaphysical truths is only possible because these truths are somehow distinct from those truths that we already possessed. To cut a long story short, what this implies is that being is not the same thing as thought i.e. that there are such things as real and extrametal distinctions6. Parmenides’s thought, _in sensu strictu_, denies precisely that. Says Polo, for Parmenides “a being’s unity is so tightly knit that any form of predication about being is impossible”7; or in Parmenides’s own words: “nor is it [Being] divisible, since it is all alike”8.

If, like Parmenides, we were to stick to a “to be or not to be” philosophy, then I suppose that _uniformity_ of being would be the only way to go. And as the only way to go it would be an _absolute_ way, reducing all meta-

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2 _Cf._ Parménides, Fr. 8, vv. 1-31; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 1-31.
4 Parménides, Fr. 8, vv. 34; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 34; cited by _Parménides_, p. 86.
6 For which reason Polo says that, “monism culminates in an ontological formulation of Parmenides that does not meet with an adequate continuation in speech, for the simple reason that speech implies plurality”. _Curso de teoría_, II, p. 244.
7 _Polo, Curso de teoría_., II, p. 244.
8 _Cf._ Parménides, Fr. 8, v. 22; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 22; cited by _Parménides_, p. 85.
The way of distinction is the key to making progress in metaphysics; or what amounts of the same thing: the distinction in being is the last word in establishing a hierarchy between different metaphysical approaches. As a result, that metaphysics which has discovered the greatest number of distinctions in reality will be the most advanced at any given moment. The path to progress lies in making distinctions, whilst unification should be seen as taking a retrograde step. According to what I have said, there would be three great developments of Parmenides's metaphysical doctrine. Other metaphysical doctrines can be interpreted using the notions uncovered within these three great developments.

2. The Metaphysical Achievement of Aristotle

The metaphysical monism of Parmenides was abandoned by Aristotle in his famous enunciation of the different meanings of being; being no longer has a unique meaning because it can be spoken of in different ways: 16 on légéti polláchés15. With each one of the meanings of being Aristotle introduces real distinctions within reality itself16. We should not speak thus about there being an ens generalissimum in Aristotle, i.e. a being conceived of as something universal and homogeneous. Aristotle’s metaphysics is multi-dimensional—a break thus from the metaphysical uniformity introduced by Parmenides—says Aristotle: “In general, if we search for the elements of existing things without distinguishing the many senses in which things are said to exist, we cannot succeed [...] to seek the elements of all existing things or to think one has them is incorrect.”17

The distinction between ens per se and ens per accidens18 gives rise to the non-necessary being in reality; and hence we have opinion, contingency, things that Parmenides had absolutely forbidden in his version of reality19. With the introduction of the ens per accidens the lion’s share of what goes on in the universe can now be accounted for—that which only

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1 Parménides, Fr. 8, v. 1; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 1; cited by Parmenides, p. 85.
2 Polo criticizes Parmenides’s metaphysics for its completely monistic character. By saying that being is unique, no further metaphysical broadening is permitted, and certainly not the kind of extension to there being different modes of being which Polo is proposing. See Antropologia, I, pp. 33-34.
3 Cfr. Parménides, Fr. 8, v. 42-49; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 42-49.
4 Cfr. Polo, Introduzione, p. 87.
5 Says Polo: “Parmenidean being is a somewhat lonely being, it can be as beautiful as you might care for, but it is quite solitary. For as much as the ‘one’ might be a transcendent doing, it cannot be so in this way because it’s quite clear that plurality can also be thought of and spoken about.” Introduzione, p. 86.
7 Cfr. Aristotle, Metaphysica, V. 7, 1017 a 7 - 1017 b 7, and in many other parallel texts.
8 Enrico Berti has this to say about the matter: “the notion of being, when taken as simple (Aristotle would say when taken ‘simply’, haploos, or ‘per se’, kath’ en), without further qualifications, does not have just one meaning, but rather many, and these cannot be boiled down the one into the other.” Introduzione alla metafisica (Ulet, Milano 1993), p. 55.
11 Cfr. Parménides, Fr. 6, v. 4-13 and Fr. 7, v. 2-6; Diels-Kranz, 28 B 8, 4-13 and 7, 2-6.
occurs most of the time or by ‘accident’ — for as it is free it is not necessary and does not form part of the ens per se —.

In order to make sense of opinion, we need to draw a distinction between what is true and what is real20. In this way Aristotle slips away from the very roots of Parmenides’s hypothesis about the unification of thought with being21, which is the sort of hypothesis that cannot explain how there could possibly be such a thing as a false thought i.e. a false non-being. For Aristotle, neither thought nor reality is to be taken in a unique sense. Totality cannot be the criterion for reality and thought, for both allow for internal distinctions, and still less can we identify thought with reality à la Parmenides.

In order to explain the reality of movement — a problem without solution within Parmenides’s philosophy22 — Aristotle had to introduce a further two meanings with regard to a being: the distinction between substance and accidents23 — which help us distinguish between two types of change, those in which the subject of change is an accident and those in which the subject of change is the substance itself24 —, and the distinction between act and potency4 — which explains movement insofar as it is being realized by a subject25. With these two real distinctions Aristotle could then explain all of the different types of movement. In his own words, ‘there are as many types of motion or change as there are meanings of the word ‘is’. We have now before us the distinctions in the various classes of being between what is fully real and what is potential. Definition: The fulfillme nit of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion26. This is his famous definition of movement as the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency27.

According to Polo, the arrival of the Aristotelian categories — and especially of the pairing of substance with accident —, has been decisive for the rest of philosophy’s history given that, if the Thomistic distinction between the act of being and essence is left to one side, then metaphysics will not have been able to abandon the framework of the categories28. For that very reason, not a few philosophers have maintained that the substance and accidents “are the fundamental modes of being to which all created reality may be reduced29; or what is the same thing: what is not substance in reality can only be an accident.

If we were to accept the conclusion of that thesis, we would close the door on their being any further real distinctions to make at a deeper level. That is, it a priori rejects the possibility of there being anything real that is not either a substance nor an accident. The “totalizing” way in which this thesis is formed can be seen in the alignment of opposites ‘What is not a substance is an accident, what is not an accident is a substance’ and the totality of the two thereby comprehends and unites together all reality. The opposition between substance and accident is what unifies our consideration of reality into a totality. This is the unification of reality which blocks off any further advances in metaphysics.

The enunciation that Aristotle realizes in the different meanings of being can only be formulated if one also implicitly maintains the following metaphysical proposition: distinction is proper to and characteristic of reality as such. But if distinction is the first thing that we can say about reality, then it would not seem properly about reality as a lump sum. Talk about ‘reality’ presupposes a unifying consideration that is expressed in terms of all that is real.

I really don’t think that totality pertains to reality — because the different meanings of being cannot be reduced to each other —, so much as to thought,
which tends to unify the mind’s contents; and so, as Polo affirms, it is “simply confusing to sustain that being means a lump sum, or that the notion of an all has a real value, or that totality exists.”

If totality were taken as having an ontological status in reality - if the all were a characteristic proper to reality - we would not be far from affirming what Hegel had said about ‘all that is real is rational’ and that ‘all that is rational is real’. If reality formed a totality and our thought also formed another such totality, in order that both ‘totalities’ be real and truly ‘total’, we would need to make them identical, because in the contrary case - if there were something real that was not rational or vice-versa - we would only have ‘partial totalities’, i.e. not complete ‘sums’. Both Parmenides’s and Hegel’s philosophies are conditioned by their not having sufficiently distinguished thought from being, or rather, by their having allowed the unification or totalization proper to thought to have set itself up as the criterion for reality. The primacy of reason in the Parmeniean and Hegelian interpretation of extramundal reality inevitably becomes a pantheist metaphysics: the rationalization of reality as a unique totality winds up in pantheism.

Aristotle, however, did not hold totality to be the criterion for reality given that he distinguished being from thinking; in fact, if we dig deeper into the Aristotelian distinction between real being and veritative being, one is forced into accepting that the status proper to thought must in some way be different to the status proper to reality. The following thesis may then be deduced: whilst thought is about unification, reality is about distinction. Hence metaphysics is really a science of distinction, that is to say, a science that seeks to discover real distinctions - the deeper the distinction, the more metaphysics is being employed.

3. St. Thomas Aquinas’s Contribution to Metaphysics

Metaphysics did not end with Aristotle. He found the way, rather, in which progress can be made in this science. The proof of the truth in Aristotle’s metaphysical pudding lies in the fruitfulness with which his discoveries can be deepened in. Were some metaphysical theory intrinsically complete, rather than being a perfection it would be a thought-stopper, which is actually a sign of imperfection.

In other words, no metaphysics can supposes that the study of reality have come to an end - the way that Parmenides and Hegel did - reality always has something more in store for us, we can always know better, and the reason lies precisely in the lack of perfect identity between thought and being - this distinction is the reason why there is always something more about reality which we have yet to know about.

Given all of the above perhaps we should stop now to consider what was in reality that Aristotle had yet to discover? What real distinction did he not establish? The distinction between God’s act of being and that of creatures. According to Leonardo Polo, creationism led to the introduction of a metaphysical distinction that was greater than that which was given between being and nothing, namely: the distinction between created being which is proper to the finite being and uncreated being which is proper to the divine being; hence Polo argues that “the creature-Creator distinction is greater than the distinction between being and nothing”.

Polo’s thought on creation can be summed up in the following paragraph of his Transcendental Anthropology: “God is radically transcendent, which means that the expression ‘God and the creature’ is meaningless because there is no such thing as a totality in which God and the creature are different subsets. The copulative character of the ‘and’ between God and the creature is not a real one; the creature does not add anything to God, nor does nothingness add anything to God either: ‘God and nothingness’ add anything to God either: ‘God and nothingness’

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35 Leonardo Polo says that intentional knowledge is aspectual, with our thought we only know certain aspects of reality, but not reality as such: “human knowledge does not exhaust the whole of reality; intentionality is aspectual. An act of knowledge that illuminates all that is real, or better still, the entirety of reality (all is an equivocal expression) is not an act that is commensurate with the object. St. Anselm spoke about the greatest thing that can be thought of: id quod maximus cogitari requirit. But there is no such thing: it’s always possible to know more”. Curso de teoría del conocimiento. Tomo I (Eunsa, Pamplona 1987), p. 155.


The abundant literature on this topic often thinks of the distinction between being and nothingness as more important than the distinction between being created and being uncreated - given that in some way both are. This interpretation is founded in a unification of the notion of being, where uncreated and created being are considered as merely concrete cases within being itself. For more about this distinction between being and nothingness and creationism see J.A. Aertsen, Nature and creature: Thomas Aquinas’s Way of Thought (Brill, Leiden 1988), and the lengthy bibliography given there.
ness' is pure nonsense. The expression 'God and nothingness' – the same as 'God and the creature' – should be meaningless does not mean that the creature is nothing at all, what it means is that the creature is extra nihilo; and in this we see the dependence of the creature with respect to God". Armed only with the meanings of being discovered by Aristotle, we cannot distinguish that characteristic that marks God out from his creation because the enunciation of a creation ex nihilo cannot be reached using the categories.

So far as I can make out, this creation ex nihilo is the chief metaphysical problem with which St. Thomas Aquinas chose to wrestle with – something which Aristotle was ignorant of – in order to explain the radical distinction between God's being and that of creatures, Thomas needed to establish a real distinction – a meaning of being – that is not to be found in the Aristotelian list, and which Leonardo Polo considers to be the main contribution that Thomistic metaphysics has made, i.e. the real distinction between the act of being (actus essendi) and the essence (essentia).

Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical approach does not begin with the real distinction between being and the essence, rather said distinction is the solution to the metaphysical problems which he poses; what St. Thomas Aquinas has to explain in his metaphysics is a datum of Christian Revelation: that God has created creatures out of nothing. Given that Aristotle never looked for an explanation of creation ex nihilo – and so as a consequence, distinguish God from creatures in the most radical way – we need to go beyond the Aristotelian meanings of being because none of them can explain a creation as being ex nihilo.

According to the real distinction of being with the essence a radical distinction between God and creatures can be established: in God his being (esse) and his essence (essentia) are really identical, whereas in all creatures their being is really distinguishable from their respective essences. God is Pure Act (Ipsum Esse) and so Simple Act, whilst creatures are always a composition of act and potency (of actus essendi and potentia essendi). As a result, the radical distinction between God and creatures corresponds to St. Thomas Aquinas's distinction between simple being and the composed being.

In keeping with this distinction, in order to explicate creation ex nihilo St. Thomas elaborated his theory of participation, which, at heart, is a metaphysical doctrine that looks to explain how the composed being – any being whose act of being is really distinct from its essence – depends entirely upon the only simple being i.e. on God – since there can only be one simple being. The composed being is caused as much in its being (esse) as in its essence – and so this type of transcendental causality is known as creation ex nihilo – while the simple being is uncaused – its being identifies with its essence.

\[41\] With the meanings of Aristotelian being generation cannot be taken in an absolute sense because, as Aristotle says himself, "for qualified coming-to-be is a process out of qualified non-being". De Generatione et Corruptione, I, 3, 317 b 4; cited by The Works of Aristotle, but "nothing can be said without qualification to come from what is not". Physic, I, 8, 191 b 12-13; cited by The Works of Aristotle.

\[42\] "Solus Deus est sumus esse, in omnibus autem alius differt essentia rei et esse eius." Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 61, a. 1, co.

\[43\] "Hoc quod est esse, in nullius creaturae ratione includitur; cuiuslibet enim creaturae esse est aliquid ab eius quidditate: unde res non potest dici de aliqua creatura quod eam esse sit per se notam etiam secundum se. Sed in Deo esse ipsius includitur in suo quoddam ratione, quia in eo est idem quod est et esse, ut Beorius dicit, ut idem est et idem, ut dicit Avicenna." Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate, q. 10, a. 12, c.


\[46\] On the Thomist arguments that show the impossibility of there being more than one Ipsum Esse see: F. W. Vetter, The Metaphysical Thought of Tomas Aquinas. From Finite Being to Uncreated Being (Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2000), pp. 150-157.

\[47\] "Quod est per essentiam et eadem proprias causas est quod per participationen tam: sicut igitur est causa omnium ignorantum, Deus autem solus est ens per essentiam summum, omnia autem alia sum sunt per participationem: nam in solo Deo esse sunt suae essentiae..."
see that every composed being is caused: *omnia compositum, causam habet.* And from there we deduce that every composed being always depends or participates on the simple being; or, what amounts to the same thing, we demonstrate the existence of God by way of his transcendental causality: God is the being that is the cause of the being (and essence) of all beings.

The *composition* that is found in creatures is a definitive proof of its character as a *creation.* The *real distinction* between the act of being and the essence in the creature leads to the dependence of the creature on God being taken up in transcendental terms – transcendental causality or *creation ex nihilo* –, overcoming, thus, the merely categorial dependence that had been established by Aristotle with respect to the Prime Mover – as an efficient cause in his *Physics* and as a final cause in his *Metaphysics.*

By presenting creation as a *processus ex nihilo,* St. Thomas goes beyond the Aristotelian model of change, which had always assumed that there was a permanent substrate of matter (creation is only truly a creation if it is *ex nihilo*; there cannot be anything in the creature that does not depend upon God – else there would be something not creaturely in the creature and hence it would not be a creature as such –). God’s creation cannot depend upon there being any other previous act or potency – and so matter cannot be eternal. – The creative act of God has as its end the

*Esa igitur custodiet existentis est proprius effectus eius, intra quod omne quod producit aliquod in esse, hoc factum inquantum sit in virtute Dei*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 66 n. 7.

45. "Quod per essentiam dicatur, est causa omnium quae per participationem dicuntur". Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. 2 cap. 15 n. 5.

46. Thus says Thomas Aquinas: "Solus Deus est ens per saum essentiam, omnis vero alia sunt entia per participationem; omne autem quod est per participationem causatur ab eo quod est per essentiam". *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 61, a. 1, co.: "secondum rei veritatem causa prima est supra ens inquantum est ipsum esse infinitum, ens autem dicatur si quod finitum participat esse, et hoc est proportionalem intellectum nostri causae obiectum est 'quod quid est' (ut dicatur in III De Animali), unde illud sit est possibile ab intellecto nostro quod habet quidditatem participatur esse; sed Dei quidditas est ipsum esse, unde est supra intellectum". In Librum de Causis, lect. 6, n. 175.

Aristotle does not go any further in his considerations of God as the final cause of movement; it is in this sense that he holds that "all are ordered together into one end". *Metaphysica*, XII, 10, 1075 a 18-19; cited by The Works of Aristotle.

Nevertheless, *omnia compositum, causam habet* is a causa universalis, qua est Deus, et hanc quidem emanationem designatum nomine creatio". [...] Unde, si consideraret emanATIO totius existentis a primo principio, impossibile est quod aliquod ens praestippositur haec emanatione. Ideo autem est nihil quod nullo ens. [...] creatio, qua est emanatio totius esse, est ex nihilo quod est nihil*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 45 n. 1 co.

47. Turning the argument around we could say that if we don’t discover the nature of creation as *ex nihilo,* time and movement would need to be eternal in order for the cosmos to be adequately explained. And so Aristotle needed to affirm that “if there is always time, motion must also be eternal”. *Physica*, VIII, 1, 251 b 13-14; cited by The Works of Aristotle; given that “it is impossible that movement should either have come into being or cease to be (for it must always have existed), or that time should. For there could not be a before and an after if time did not exist. Movement also is continuous, then, in the sense in which time is” *Metafisica*, XII, 6, 1071 b 7-9; cited by The Works of Aristotle.

35. "... creatio proprio respectu esse rei: unde dicitur in Lib. de causis (prop. 8), quod esse est per creatio: alia vero per informationem". Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.* d. 11, q. 1, a. 2 co.

48. The metaphysical explication given by Thomas Aquinas is better than Aristotle’s because it also explains the created character of purely spiritual beings – something believed in by Thomas Aquinas due to his Christian Faith –, there can be no composition of matter and form in an angel but there could certainly be a real distinction between its being and its essence.

36. "Thomas discovers an act with respect to which the natures that determine each of predicaments or categories are only potency. This act is known as *actus essendi* (act of being) or simply as esse (being)". T. MELENDO, *Metafisica de lo concreto. Sobre las relaciones entre filosofia y vida* (Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, Barcelona 1997), p. 150.

4. The Absence of Metaphysical Development in Modern Philosophy

If metaphysics is the science of distinction, its progress lies with discovery of ever deeper real distinctions. With the notable exception of Leonardo Polo, I don’t think that we will find any other philosopher who has come
the subject-object relationship because all he did was change the importance of the elements in this pairing. He does not eliminate the notion of subject, nor of object, nor does he introduce any elements of more radical metaphysical standing. 38

The symmetrical way of doing philosophy was already present in Descartes, who even if he did usher modernity in, did not dig any deeper than Aristotle and Aquinas. The Cartesian cogito cannot even be formulated without the Aristotelian notion of substance: the parallelism between the notions of substance and subject is obvious. In fact, the Cartesian notion of the thinking substance (res cogitans) arose out of the inversion in order between the Aristotelian notions of substance and accidents; that is, by raising the accident of thought to the order of substance. I’ll explain. In the Aristotelian approach the being of a human is defined by the substance (ouúrò); which is the substrate (or subject) in whom the accidents reside — and so the substance is defined as the subsistent. Thought can only ever be an accidental dimension to a human being because thought resides, as it were, along with the other human accidents. It’s not even a subsistent dimension to a human being. But Descartes defined “man” as a res cogitans, meaning that thought is what makes a human being subsistent. The human being is now defined by his or her action — in this case, thought — and thus Descartes would affirm: “je ne suis pas donc qu’une chose qui pense” 39. This appears to be a very different way of looking at things in comparison to Aristotle but it’s really nothing more than a turning upside down of the Aristotelian categories. What was accidental for Aristotle is now substantial for Descartes. With this reshuffling of notions we haven’t gone outside the “framework” of substance and accidents, all we have done is raise an accident to the order of substance.

In my judgement, this symmetrisation of concepts explains the greater part of our modern day philosophies. Following on Descartes’ failure to actually elevate the accident of thought to the order of substance, modernity has followed along that same path by trying to raise up the other acci-

36 Arguments about the real distinction between being and the essence have been present in one way or another after the death of Thomas Aquinas — in such authors as Cajetan, John of Saint Thomas, Suarez or Domingo Bañez, among others — but up until the 20th century the integrity of St. Thomas’ doctrine had not been recovered. Among those authors who have helped salvage this distinction should be mentioned Cornelio Fabro, Etienne Gilson, Joseph de Finance, Leo Elders, John P. Wippel, etc.

37 According to Polo, “modern philosophy focuses on the deficient attention paid to the human subject in traditional philosophy, but in its investigations it does not make use of sufficiently distinct notions, getting caught in the mire of ‘ground’, and so falls into a symmetric interpretation of the same or simply shuffles said notion from one place to another”. Anthropologia, I, p. 102.

38 Leonardo Polo explains: “modern philosophy is symmetrical with respect to Greek philosophy. It provides us with a symmetrical notion of foundation. The ground in presence is the reality of the cosmos in Greek philosophy; the a priori in presence (which is the starting point for the transcendental deduction) is Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, in symmetry with Aristotle’s Physics. The cosmos with a founding consciousness; a priori consciousness of what physics deduces. Modern philosophy is symmetrical insofar as the presence of the foundation is attributed to the human subject; subject or cosmos”. Curso de teoria, II, p. 215.

dents to the level of substance. This turn in the Aristotelian scheme of things implies that the human being can no longer be defined to the exclusion of her activity – be it cognitive, voluntary, free, sentimental, etc. –. Hence human action can no longer be relegated to the accidental plane – at least as ancient and medieval philosophy used to –. The substantiality of the subject is made to coincide with its activity. This active interpretation of the human substance is the hermeneutical key to such notions as that of the cogito in Descartes, the transcendental self in Kant, the self-poising ego in Fichte, the self-conscious subject as a self-manifestation of the Absolute in Schelling, the dialectical process in the self-constituting Absolute in Hegel, amongst in Kierkegaard, the will to power in Nietzsche, self-preservation in Marx, the Da-sein in Heidegger, the being-for-itself in Sartre, etc. In all of these characterizations, the human subject is defined according to the action that he carries out. Human action becomes thus the ontological foundation of the human being. The metaphysical principle of the human being is no longer the Aristotelian substance but rather the activity that a man or woman does. Goethe even went so far as to say that: the beginning is action.

To sum up, even if modernity encompasses philosophies of very different flavors, none of them has been able to radically outstrip the Aristotelian – let alone the Thomist – approach, because none of them have discovered real distinctions of greater profundity. They all lie within the scope of the distinction between substance and accidents – and, as it happens, inside the real distinction between the act of being with the essence –. What Leonardo Polo proposes goes well beyond the Aristotelian-Thomistic position.

5. The Metaphysical “Extension” of Leonardo Polo

If we want to fully appreciate Leonardo Polo’s extension of metaphysics, then I think it worthwhile at this point to take another look at what Thomas Aquinas had proposed. St. Thomas had effectively established a distinction between God and his creatures when he showed how creatures are composed beings whereas God is absolutely simple i.e. each creature’s act of being is really different to its essence but God’s is not. What this means in effect, is that, in order for us to be able to distinguish between two different acts of being, we must take into account their respective essences. Thus it follows that in order to be able to distinguish between the divine act of

being (esse) and the created act of being (esse), we should examine their corresponding essences in order to see whether they really identify with their own acts of being or not. And this only occurs with God. If, however, we are more worried about making some sort of hierarchical distinction between the created acts of being themselves – for example, distinguishing the esse of a human being from the esse of a swan – then we should focus on their respective essences. Why? Because for St. Thomas, the essence is what limits the act of being, given that esse of its own accord is perfect.

We can mark out different perfections (different acts of being) by looking at the limitations imposed by those being’s imperfections (essences). These varying imperfections can be sorted in a hierarchical way between themselves because the essence determines the grade of being of the esse. Of course, if we didn’t take the essence of a human being and the essence of a swan into account – that which limits their respective acts of being – then we wouldn’t be able to draw any real distinctions between the human act of being and that of other created acts of being such as that of a swan. In short, in order to establish a hierarchy between the different esses, we need to have recourse to the hierarchy that exists between the different essences; and this goes for created acts of being just as it does for created acts of being and the divine act of being.

For St. Thomas the esse is considered almost exclusively as an act of the essence (actus essentiae), and so without the essence we would not be able to introduce distinctions between the different acts of being. The grade of being that pertains to beings that participate in being – created beings – is established according to the limitation that their corresponding essences impose. Thus, the divine stands out among creation because its essence is infinite – and so it doesn’t limit the divine esse in any way –, while creatures have finite essences i.e. their esse participates in the divine Esses as various esse that are limited by their essence.

61 “Ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium. Comparatur enim ad omnia quae actu, nihil enim habet actualitatem nisi inquantum est”. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 4, a. 1 ad 3.
62 The following affirmations of Thomas Aquinas brings this to light: “nihil enim habet actualitatem, nisi inquantum est, igitur ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum, et etiam ipsum formamur”. Summa Theologiae, I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3; “hoc quod habet esse, efficitur actus existent. Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectior”. De Potentia, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.
63 “...aliquis dicturn determinatur dupliciter: primo ratione limitationis, ali modo ratione distinctionis. Essentia autem divina non est quid determinatum primo modo, sed secundo modo, quia forma non limitatur nisi ex hoc quod in ali recipit, cui materia commensuratur. In essentia autem divina non est aliquid in ali receptum, quod igitur esse est...”
Does this mean that Thomas Aquinas has uttered the last word on the matter? Leonardo Polo says that if we were to distinguish God from creatures by only looking at their identity or composition in their act of being and essence, then we wouldn’t really be able to establish transcendental distinctions between creatures themselves – between the different modes in the created act of being –, for all we would have said is that being really distinguishes itself from the essence in all creatures. A sole focus on the being-essence composition leads to unification in the ambit of creation due to the language of sameness and totality that we would be employing: all created being is composed of what participates in. Composition would be the reason, therefore, for the created nature of the being: every composed being is created. It’s clear that in Thomistic metaphysics composition means created and vice-versa: they act as synonyms for each other.

Polo is not altogether satisfied with this position because it doesn’t make the human esse stand out from the rest of creation. By identifying the created character of creatures with their composition as being and essence, we really don’t see what’s so special about the human esse when faced with the rest of the physical cosmos. Within the Thomist system the only way of distinguishing between two participated acts of being is by turning to their essences. Whilst fair enough in itself, it doesn’t go far enough for Polo’s liking because Polo wants to distinguish between the human creature and the cosmos according to their corresponding acts of being.

The metaphysical problem that Polo is confronting does not have to do with movement – as was the case with Aristotle, nor with creation ex nihilo – the issue that St. Thomas was worried about –, but rather concerns the way of being human – as a person – from the way of being in the physical universe – which is not at all personal –, that is, distinguishing between the human creatures and the created cosmos in terms of the act of being. Polo’s position is quite clear: persons are not things. This affirmation, which is

ipa divina nascit ga strutis: quod in nulla est aliqua continent: sam quaedam est aliqua habet esse receptum, et sic limitatum, et unde est quod essentia divina ab omnibus distinguatur per hoc quod est in alio non receptum. Thomas Aquinas, Quodlibet VII, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1

Cfr. Polo, Antropologia, I, p. 121.

In this sense J.F. Wippel says that: “he [Thomas Aquinas] reasons from the fact that God’s act of being is uncaused to the conclusion that in him essence and act of being are identical, and from this to the contrast with all other things. In all of them essence and act of being differ and are therefore composed. Presumably this is because, unlike God, they receive their esse from something else and therefore enter into composition with it”. The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, p. 588.


commonly accepted, has a metaphysical depth in Leonardo Polo that cannot be found anywhere else in the history of philosophy because it is a transcendent (not in the Kantian sense of the term but rather as proper to the act of being) distinction which he makes between people and things. The real distinction in the human creature cannot be compared with the real distinction that exists in material creation. The human creature’s way of being is different from material creation’s way of being (at the level of their respective acts of being). In fact, not even the human essence is potential in the way that the physical universe’s essence is. What this implies, in short, is a real distinction that goes much further than any that Thomas Aquinas had developed, namely: the distinction between two modes in the created act of being and between two modes of created essence.

If Thomas Aquinas had argued that being can be divided in two: as Uncreated and as created, Leonardo Polo expands this distinction on the creature’s side: the created act of being can be divided still further (at least into two): as persistence – the cosmos’s act of being – and as co-existence – which is the human act of being –; these are two modes in the created act of being. Why a distinction at the level of being? Because in them being and creation coincide; creatures are different according to their different ways of being created, “to be created doesn’t always mean the same thing”. If the act of persistence is the same as the cosmic esse and the act of co-existence is the personal esse of a human, then we will have to say more than that God’s esse identifies with his essence, because it simply doesn’t


Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 44, a. 1, co. Suffice that we invoke composition in order to distinguish between created beings and Uncreated Being. Hence: “it would be enough for him [for Thomas Aquinas] to show that in one being at most can there be identity of essence and act of being and, therefore, that in everything else the two are distinct and composed with one another”; “if something is not God himself, it is not identical with his act of being, which is an almost perfect illustration of God-to-creatures argumentation for nonidentity of essence and act of being in such entities [...] only in God are act of being and quiddity identical”. Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, pp. 583 and 586.


As specialists know, Leonardo Polo dedicates El ser. I: La existencia extra-mental (Bambers, Pamplona 1965) to the explication of the act of being of the cosmos or of persistence, whereas the human act of being or co-existence is studied in his Antropologia transcendent, I: La persona humana.

Cfr. Polo, El ser, p. 23.

identify the unique existential character of divine activity. There must be a mode of being that sets God apart from creatures: we can't just say that a creature's being is different to God's⁷³, because even though it rules out pantheism, it doesn't succeed in stating that God's uncreated way of being is any different to the created ways of being.

For Leonardo Polo, the divine act of being is different to any created act of being because it is Original: the divine act of being (esse) signifies an original activity. God is the original Origin. This means that God is the Real Identity in absolute terms, because an act of being can only be identical with itself in an absolute way if it is the Original act of being—that which has always been—. The existential activity—or act of being—of each creature is to be distinguished from the divine one precisely because it has not always been but rather has begun to be. A created esse is not identical with itself in absolute terms—since always—because it has a beginning. As I have said elsewhere, "The Identity is the Origin, it doesn't begin because it is an uncreated act of being. This is the radical distinction between God's act of being and the creature's act of being: God doesn't begin, but the creature does."⁷⁴

Origin and beginning are two different ways of being: the first is uncreated and the second one is created. In this way we need not invoke the principle of composition or identity between being and the essence in order to distinguish creatures from God. The distinction that we have established between the modes of the act of being is actually the justifying ground for the composition of an act of being with its essence and why in God there should be a real identity. If the divine Esse is Original, ever identical with itself, then the divine essence will also need to be Original, forever identical with the divine act of being—it would not make a lot of sense to say that an Original act of being should have an essence that at some stage began—. There cannot be a composition of being and essence in God because his being and his essence are Original; the opposite is that being and the essence can only be Original if they really are identical. The creature, however, begins to be—it is completely ex nihilo—; neither its act of being nor its essence are original—they have not always existed--; and so the created act of being does not originally identify with the created essence, which entails that the act of being is really distinguishable from the created essence. Non-original existential activity (esse) is really different from its essence, "the distinction between the act of being with its essence demands that the act of being not be identical with itself nor original"⁷⁵. The reason for this distinction lies in whether the act of being (esse) is original or not. If it is original, its essence will be identical with its being. If not—it begins to be—, the essence will not identify with its act of being.

I insist: the real distinction between being and its essence can be explained by its character as a non-original act of being: "the created act distinguishes itself from the un-created one precisely in that it is created; and hence the created act should be distinguished from the essence, and not the other way around"⁷⁶. The original character of the divine act of being, is explicated by the fact that in God being and essence identify with each other in an original way. Says Leonardo Polo: "the act of being of the creature is different to the act of being of God not because its essence should happen to be really distinct from its act of being, but rather because its act of being has been created. If this is not adverted to, then one falls into the trap of dealing with being as though it were something entirely uniform and uni-dimensional. Thus I argue that the distinction between God and the creature should be established along the lines of the act of being, which carries with it the distinction between creaturely being and creaturely essence"⁷⁷. I think that we have now seen enough to satisfy ourselves that with this metaphysical distinction drawn between the different modes of the act of being, that Leonardo Polo has thereby broadened the scope of Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics.

The metaphysical enlargement of Polo not only carries with it a greater depth in the way that the Being (Esse) of God is to be distinguished from the being (esse) of creatures, it also leads to the introduction of these being distinctions drawn between the different modes in the created act of being. And thus, creature—or non-original act of being—does not always mean exactly the same thing. In fact, within Polo's approach, we cannot study the created act of being in general—there is no ens commune or ens universale—for one must specify the esse (and the essentia) that is under investigation. Although the act of being of every creature is a dependent act of being—a non-original act of being—⁷⁸, not every creature depends upon its Creator in the same way. And so if being for the creature means

⁷⁷ Polo, Antropología, I, p. 121.
dependence⁷⁷, with different creatures we will have different types of dependency.

The created act of being is distinguished from the uncreated act of being because it has a beginning. Its dependency lies in its being an esse as beginning and so it cannot be first or primary in an absolute sense – ex nihilo nihil fit –, it cannot be original. In order to distinguish between the modes of the created act of being it would pay to look at how a creature begins to be. Different beginnings spell a difference in the creature, something that clearly applies to human beginnings as opposed to non-personal creation. The cosmos begins to be as persistence, but the human person begins to be as a co-existence. The human person is a mode of esse distinct from the esse of a physical creature because the human dependence on God is that of a personal act of being. The dependence of a created person with respect to an uncreated person cannot be compared to the dependence of a non-personal being – the physical universe – with respect to its Creator. The first kind of dependence is interpersonal (between two persons), but the second is not⁷⁸.

Esse as a created person means having an existence that is open to others (co-existence): the human person is open to the physical universe and to other persons, God included. This is what co-existence means: to exist turned towards others. Thus to co-exist also means to exist-with, to be-with⁷⁹. The human person’s mode of esse is co-existence because the human being exists-with other acts of being, namely: with those that persist, with other co-existences, and with the Origin. On the other hand, the physical universe’s act of being is not an open act of being, for the simple reason that it is not personal: it does not co-exist with other acts of being⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ A detailed study of persistence – the act of being of the cosmos – and of its quite singular mode of dependence on the Originating Act of being – the transcendental causality – can be found in my book: Los primeros principios en Leonardo Polo. Un estudio introductorio de sus características existenciales y su vigencia (Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona 1997; Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico. Serie de Filosofía Española, nº 2), 108 pages.

⁸⁰ This intimate openness to which Polo refers is to be distinguished from the human being’s openness to the outside as is remarked by Jan A. Aertsen: “the anima is the being that can accord with every being. Man is marked, we might say, by a transcendental openness”. Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals, The Case of Thomas Aquinas (Brill, Leiden 1996), p. 105. Thomas Aquinas makes an allusion – when citing Aristotle – to the openness of the soul towards all things – from the cognitive and volitive point of view – when he says: “sicut bonum habet rationem appetibilitis, ita et verum habet ordinem ad cognitionem. Unumquodque antem inquantum habet de esse, intendit et cognoscibile. Et proximam habet in III De Anima quod ‘anima est quodammodo omnia secundum sen- suum et intellectum’. Et ideo sicut bonum convertitur cum ente, ita et verum. Sed tuncem, sicut bonum addit rationem appetibilitis super esse, ita et verum comprehensionem ad intellectum”. Summa Theologiae, I, q. 16, a. 3, co.

⁸¹ Polo, Antropología, I, p. 32.

⁸² L. Polo, La coexistencia del hombre, in El hombre: inmanencia y trascendencia (Pamplona 1991; Actas de las XXV Reuniones Filosóficas. Facultad de Filosofia y Letras, Universidad de Navarra, nº 1), p. 45.

⁸³ Cfr. Polo, Antropología, I, pp. 94, 229-245.
This transcendental openness of the human esse is also a cognitive and loving openness, because intellect and love are modes which are proper to personal openness. The openness between personal acts of being – interpersonal openness – is always a cognitive and loving openness. Intelligence and will are not just dimensions to the human essence (as spiritual potencies) but rather are cognitive and loving openness should be situated in the order of the act of being. And so, according to Leonardo Polo, the personal intellect and personal love are also anthropological transcendentials.

No doubt these Polian comparisons and conversions within the human esse (co-existence) of personal freedom, the personal intellect and personal love will sound novel and surprising. But let’s see what this has to do with St. Thomas’s metaphysics. You will recall that Thomas’s doctrine on the act of being (esse) states that the esse (or actus essendi) is the source of all the perfections of the essence (or potestia essendi), for as St. Thomas says: omnia perfectiones pertinent ad perfectionem essendi. As a consequence, the elevation of freedom, intellect and love to the personal or transcendental level of the act of being can be grounded in the Thomistic doctrine on the perfection of being. If you accept the Thomistic version of the human esse, then Polo’s enlargement on this theme according to the anthropological transcendentials discovered by Polo is no longer as strange as it first sounds. Leonardo Polo studies personal freedom, personal intelligence and personal love as purely human perfections contained within the personal esse.

To see how Polo’s approach is actually an extension of Thomas Aquinas’s work, we need to look at how intimacy is a quite singular mode within the pure perfections of freedom, intelligence and of love, which are already contained within the personal act of being i.e. within the co-existence, as anthropological transcendentials, and not just as dimensions to the human essence. Intimacy is the co-action of being personal, of being as openness; and so: “the anthropological transcendentials are reached in intimacy. The study of the personal transcendentials and their conversion is the same thing as a study of intimacy. These transcendentials are intimate and so secondary to intimacy.”

We can now distinguish the human esse from the divine esse and from the esse proper to the physical universe without laying hold of the composition of the created act of being with its essence, and so without needing to consider the corresponding limitation of each essence. The human esse is now distinguished from the divine esse because it is not the Original Essentia, but rather esse as a beginning; on the other hand, the human esse is different from the esse of the cosmos because co-existence, freedom, intelligence and love are convertible transcendentials with the human person’s act of being, but not with the act of being of the cosmos, which is not personal. In other words, co-existence is a mode of created esse distinct to persistence.

In conclusion, the metaphysical extension achieved by Leonardo Polo has shown that there are different modes of the act of being between persistence, co-existence and the Origin – which are superior to the metaphysical distinction expounded by Thomas Aquinas between the act of being and the essence; and this precisely because the above mentioned distinction refers exclusively to the transcendental order, without needing to draw upon the categories. If Thomas concluded that the difference between the creature and God is greater than the creature and nothingness, Polo has shown that the difference between the modes of the act of being is greater than the distinction between esse and the essentia. Even so, we can still ask: ‘Is this distinction between the modes of the act of being the greatest metaphysical distinction that can be established’? or rather, ‘Can we go one step further than Polo’?

6. My Proposal for Bettering Polo

I argue that the distinctions between the different modes of the act of being – between persistence, co-existence and the Origin – are not the greatest metaphysical distinctions which are to be found in reality. Further, and
indeed more profound, distinctions can be made from within the personal act of being. These are distinctions that are intimate to the personal esse. The transcendental distinctions — those which are established within the different modes of the act of being — are actually inferior to the intra-transcendental distinctions — those which occur within the personal transcendentals.

When Leonardo Polo studied the human esse, he made especial reference to the conversion of co-existence, freedom, intellect and personal love: four personal transcendentals that are integrated within the human esse. If we accept that position, the metaphysical problem that is now put to us is the following: are the anthropological transcendentals really distinguishable from each other? On the supposition that the answer were affirmative, we would then ask: and according to what criteria would we distinguish these personal transcendentals? Polo does not provide us an explicit answer to these questions within his writings. He was more concerned with underlining the continuation of his philosophy with Thomas Aquinas. But metaphysics cannot stop with Leonardo Polo. Polo’s work deserves to be carried on.

I think that it would be in the line of Polo’s thought that there are real and internal distinctions within the personal esse. The anthropological transcendentals are not really the same dimension. I only logically distinguishable for the following reasons:

1) If the four personal transcendentals amounted to being the same dimension to human esse — if esse and freedom were the same thing, and freedom the same thing as intelligence and intelligence, love — then there would be no point in saying more than just esse. Were that the case, there really wouldn’t be any point in distinguishing the human esse from that of the cosmos: with the consequent loss of the distinction between persistence and personal co-existence established by Leonardo Polo. In other words, the distinction between the modes of the created esse implies that the personal esse — co-existence — is a multi-dimensional esse — each of the personal transcendentals is a distinct dimension to the personal esse — and so it calls for a multi-faceted investigation. On the other hand, the esse of

the cosmos — persistence —, as it is not personal being, means that it is a mono-dimensional esse; and so a further metaphysical study of the being of the cosmos need only be one-sided. Co-existence is a complex esse — it houses a plurality of transcendental dimensions that go into the make-up of personal intimacy —, whereas persistence is just plain being — without intimacy. As a consequence, to try and reduce these four personal transcendentals to the first one — to esse —, is the same thing as trying to reduce personal esse to what is not personal. In short, if we don’t maintain the intra-transcendental distinctions of the personal esse, we end up losing the transcendental distinction between the different modes of the created act of being.

2) In keeping with the Polian approach, neither can we sustain that the four personal transcendentals really identify with each other. As I have already set out, identity only properly applies to the Origin; which is the quite singular mode of the divine esse. God is the Originating Origin — and has been always, since the beginning, originally —; for that reason God is the only esse to whom we may attribute a real identity as a unique mode of existence. Given that the human esse has not always been, but rather that it began to be, there cannot be a real identity within it. Were the intimate transcendentals of the human esse actually identical to each other, we would be talking about a real identity which is quite contrary to what Polo affirms. The human esse does not possess a real identity because it is not completely simple; a property that pertains exclusively to divine act of being. Simplicity involves a real identity in these personal dimensions within the act of being as opposed to the being of the cosmos that is just plain being and so thoroughly lacking in interior dimensions at the level of the person. The divine esse is simple, the human esse is complex and the esse of the cosmos is just plain being. This is another way of distinguishing between the modes in the act of being.

In order to maintain complexity within the human act of being, it would pay to explicitly distinguish between the personal transcendentals. Having come this far we now need to ask ourselves according to what criteria this is to be done. My suggestion is that it be done according to a hierarchy (something that is very easy for a Thomist or Polian to digest).

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93 Polo studies the conversion of the personal transcendentals with the human esse in the Third Part of Tome I of his Antropología transcendental.

94 If having criticized Parménides, we say that thought and being is not the same thing, then we should not introduce sameness into the study of the anthropological transcendentals, because said inclusion would end up leading us to monism. When dealing with anthropology, sameness loses the real the different personal transcendentals. On this note you might look to my postscript: "La imposibilidad de alcanzar la co-existencia desde la mis-madad", in my book El hombre como ser dual, pp. 129-135.
The distinctions between the personal transcendentals are to be found within the intimacy of the human esse, within, that is, the intimacy of the human spirit or personhood. It is precisely because the human esse admits of internal distinctions that it is a personal esse; an esse that is not susceptible to internal distinctions — as is the case of persistence — cannot have any intimacy and so it cannot be personal.

This means that the anthropological transcendentals are not to be distinguished from each other in the way that the different modes in the act of being are to be distinguished; whilst persistence, co-existence and the Origin are different acts of being — and this sense enjoy a certain independence from each other —, the anthropological transcendentals are only different from each other within the human esse. It would not make sense, thus, to affirm that personal freedom is a different person to personal intelligence. They are, rather, different dimensions within the same human person, and they can only be distinguished from each other within the intimacy of the person. For the same motives, personal freedom cannot be distinguished from persistence and the Origin without an explicit consideration of the other personal transcendentals alongside that freedom. What is to be distinguished from persistence and the Origin is co-existence. Personal freedom can only be distinguished from persistence and the Origin in so far as it is an integral dimension to the human esse. To sum up: the different personal transcendentals are not to be distinguished from among themselves in the same way that we distinguish the acts of being amongst themselves. This is a task that can only be carried out within the intimacy of personal esse. It is a deeper and more intimate distinction. These intra-transcendental distinctions are intimate to esse, and not merely transcendental distinctions.

Let me now make a brief sketch of what we have seen in this present work. Following on Parmenides’s monism, which was unable to explicate the phenomenon of movement and the distinction between being and thought, Aristotle resolved these enigmas by distinguishing different meanings within being. Centuries later, in order to explain creation ex nihilo, St. Thomas Aquinas introduced a real distinction between the act of being in a creature and its essence. In the 20th century, Leonardo Polo proposed a metaphysical broadening within the Thomist approach by characterizing the different modes in the act of being, namely: persistence, co-existence and the Origin. I argue that the Polian approach can be improved upon, showing forth its true reach in the process, through a study of the transcendentals that lie within the intimacy of the human person. These intra-transcendental distinctions are even greater than the different modes in the act of being in the sense that they are deeper, more intimate, to the personal esse.

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[66] A detailed study of the distinction between the personal transcendentals and their internal hierarchy can be found in the Second Part of my book: El hombre como ser dual, pp. 181–435.