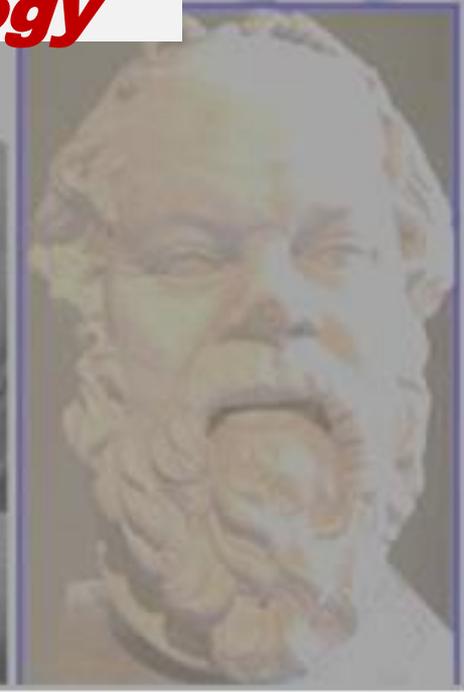
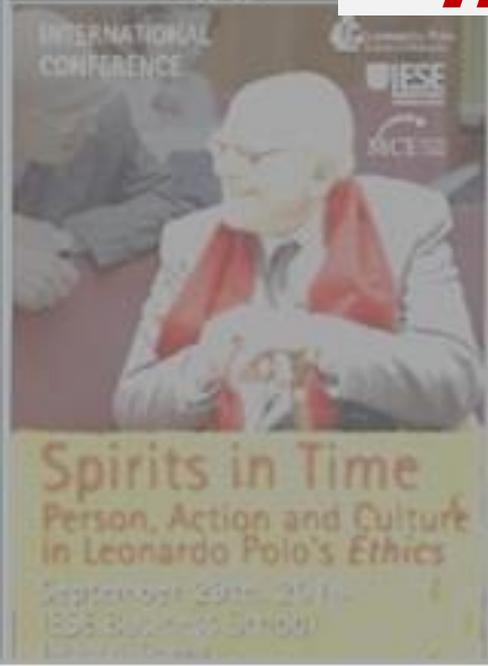


Leonardo Polo's ***Transcendental Anthropology***





- The Spanish philosopher **Leonardo Polo** (February 1, 1926 - February 9, 2013) engaged with both Classical and Medieval thinkers such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham, as well as Modern and Contemporary philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Nietzsche. In dialogue with the great thinkers of the history of philosophy, Polo sought to further the achievements of traditional philosophy as well as rectify and correct the project of *Modern philosophy*.





Already during his lifetime, interest in his philosophy has given rise to numerous conferences and study workshops, the most recent of which is the international conference **“Spirits in Time: Person, Action, and Culture in Leonardo Polo's Ethics”** held at the Madrid campus of IESE last 29 September 2014. Likewise, it has caused the publication of scores of books and hundreds of scholarly articles; dozens of doctoral dissertations; and two philosophical Journals dedicated specially to his thought.

The [Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy](http://www.leonardopoloinstitute.org) (<http://www.leonardopoloinstitute.org>) has been established to promote Leonardo Polo's works and thought in English speaking areas around the world.

To this end, the *Institute* focuses on a number of goals including,

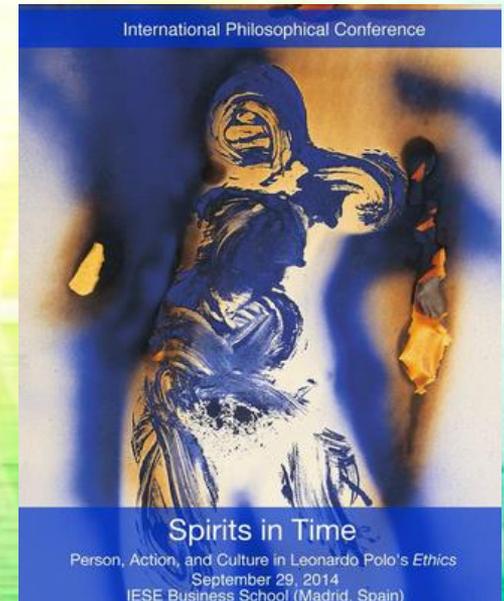
- translation of Leonardo Polo's works into English
- publication of introductory works and other studies on Polo in English
- organization of study days, symposia, and conferences on topics related to Leonardo Polo's philosophy
- serve as a forum for English speaking Leonardo Polo scholars throughout the world
- assistance for visiting scholars
- collaboration with other academic institutions

Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy

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Polo scholars have come to call his philosophical proposal “**transcendental anthropology**”, given that —using the method of *abandonment of the mental limit*— he made available 4 great themes in relation to man: on the one hand, the *act of being* and *essence* that lie *outside the mind*, and on the other hand, the *act of being* and *essence* of the *human being*. As can be seen, the *abandonment of the mental limit* leads us to go deep into the real distinction between *being* and *essence* vis-à-vis that proposed by Thomas Aquinas for created beings. Effectively, Polian literature does not study *act of being* in a manner parallel to the *act of being* of the universe, because the latter belongs to **metaphysics**, whereas Polo’s interest is strictly with **anthropology**.

(His thought is, nevertheless, not limited to philosophical anthropology, as his works cover a wide range of fields including psychology, neuroscience, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, social ethics, political economy, and economic theory, among others. In any case, we can say that Polo's methodological proposal for philosophy is *meta-theoretic*.)



Having distinguished between *act of being* in metaphysics and *act of being* in anthropology, Polo's works then proposes 4 "anthropological transcendentals", namely:

- 1) Personal Co-existence**
- 2) Personal Freedom**
- 3) Personal Intellect/Knowing**
- 4) Transcendental Love (Self-Gift)**



Juan Fernando Sellés

These 4 are explained in the next slides, based on Juan Fernando Sellés' enumeration in his work *"Los tres agentes del cambio en la sociedad civil: familia, universidad y empresa"*

[Three change agents in civil society: family, university, and the business organization]...

Los tres agentes del cambio
en la sociedad civil
Familia, universidad y empresa



Juan Fernando Sellés

CRAMBA

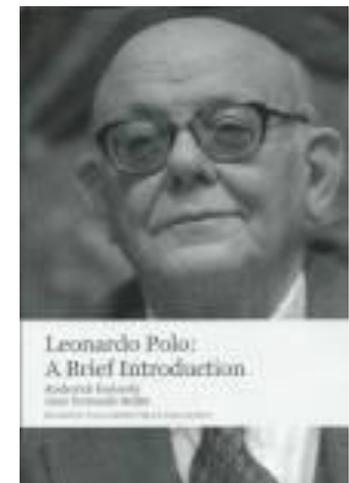
1) **Personal co-existence**: not a mere *living with*, *dwelling in* or *coinciding with* (these belong to *manifestations*), but rather it refers to the personal being's being personally open in his intimacy, and in this, he does not find any other person (each one of us is a person, not 2 or more) to whom to manifest in his interior his own personal meaning that he seeks. This implies that there necessarily has to exist at least one other distinct person to whom to open himself up (otherwise, the person has no meaning at all), which means to say, it is NOT possible for only one person to exist – which in turn implies that *solitude* would be the negation of personal being.

2) **Personal freedom**: not the freedom which is manifested, say, in the will, when it chooses, e.g., between one thing and another, but rather the transcendental and unrestricted openness of the human person.

It is that activity of the human spirit that pushes it to seek its own personal meaning or truth, a dynamism that moves him to seek that distinct person capable of entirely accepting the unrestricted personal freedom that each one is. In sum, personal freedom is so immense that it cannot be exhaustively invested in any human enterprise; it can only be given up *completely* to God, because only He is able to accept completely.

3) **Personal knowing/intellect:**

refers to the personal cognitive light that each one is, that is to say, the personal meaning or truth of each one. Since such meaning is never completed in one's earthly life, personal knowledge is thus the search for that significance in another distinct human person which can manifest in its entirety the personal meaning that each one is.



4) **Personal love/loving**: Personal human love does not refer to the loving that resides in the will —since this potency requires that which it does not have— but rather it is a love that does not lack anything, a love that is superabundant, effusive, and thus, it gives of itself [*cont'd*]



Self-gift (radical love):

Human personal love refers to the superabundant and effusive love which lacks nothing, and hence, gives of itself. This personal loving takes on three dimensions, that are hierarchically distinct among them in every man, which are (in the order of superiority):

- (1) acceptance,**
- (2) giving, and**
- (3) gift.**

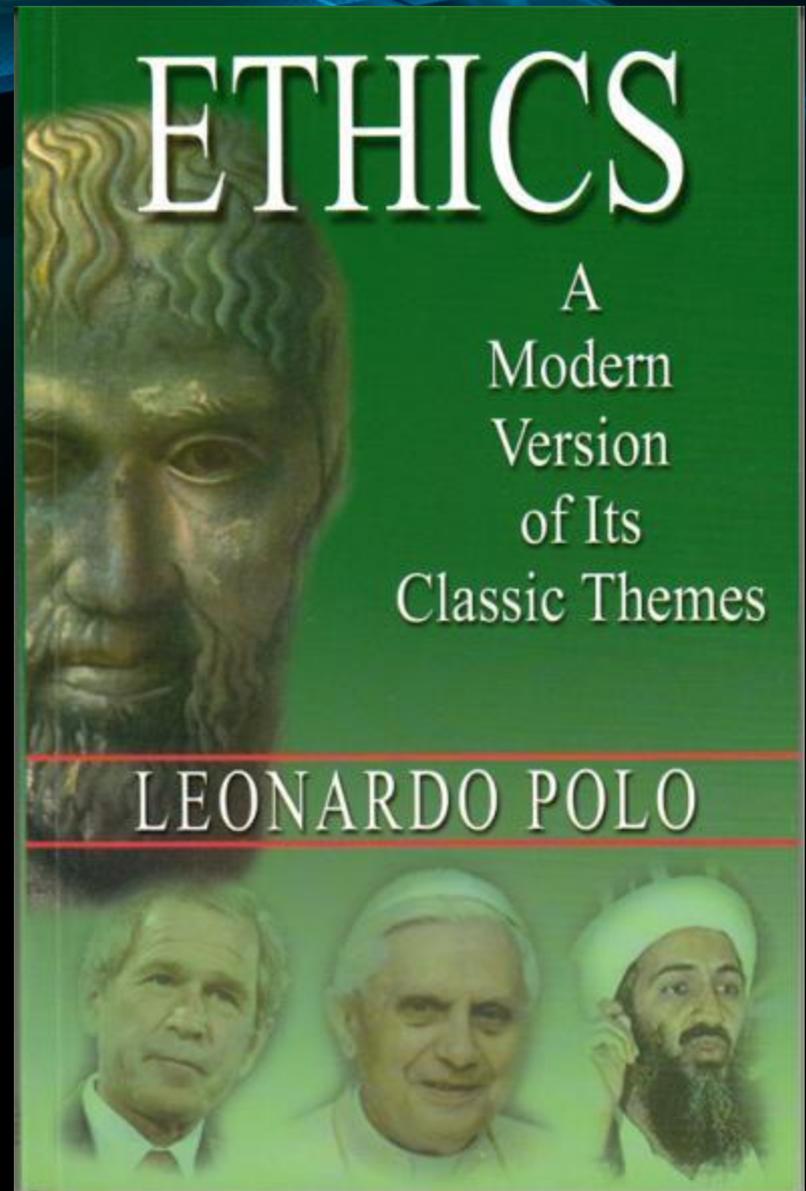
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Self-gift (radical love) (cont'd):

Each human person is in the first place an accepting with respect to God; and, in second place, is a giving, that is to say, a loving giving of oneself with respect to the Creator and to others; and then, in third place, the person is a gift, a loving gift with respect to them (Polo & Llano, 1997*).

***Polo, L. & Llano, C. (1997). *Antropología de la acción directiva*. Madrid: Unión Editorial**

Polo's transcendental anthropology makes it clear that the human essence takes on a *donal* character (natural tendency to receive gifts at the same time to give of oneself): each person gives growth to his essence throughout his life, and it is obvious that the mature "I" is, even from an economic perspective, more fruitful.



By way of a *summary*:

Polo's philosophy has faced the challenge of understanding society from the *freedom* perspective: his is a proposal that successfully distinguishes between a necessary being and a *FREE* being. Thus, his *transcendental anthropology* is able to study the personal act of being, differently from (and extending) that of *metaphysics*. But such an anthropology also requires, on one hand, a theory of knowledge capable of knowing freedom in act, and, on the other, a theory of free human action... **[cont'd]**

Adapted from Alberto I. Vargas, *Prologue*, "Los tres agentes del cambio en la sociedad civil : familia, universidad, empresa" by Juan Fernando Sellés.

By way of a *summary* [cont'd]:

Behind any theory of human action, one finds a theory —whether metaphysical or anthropological— that discerns the *act of being* —whether necessary or free— which lays the foundations for action: note that metaphysics is unable to lay foundations for itself nor provides meaning for itself but rather simply manifests the anthropological. The *Transcendental Anthropology* of Leonardo Polo, thus, is a theory of the person as act of being which, taking off from an adequate Theory of Knowledge and an Ethics (which Polo also provides) is capable of laying the foundations for —and, above all, providing meaning to— society, pushing to the limit the full meaning of *true freedom*.

Adapted from Alberto I. Vargas, *Prologue*, “Los tres agentes del cambio en la sociedad civil : familia, universidad, empresa” by Juan Fernando Sellés.



Studia Poliana

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Please address questions/critiques to: aliza.racelis@up.edu.ph