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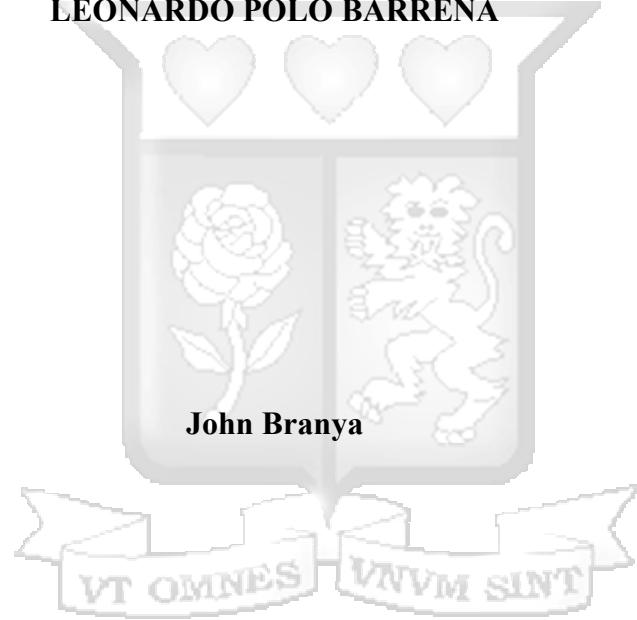
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STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SYNDERESIS

ACCORDING TO

LEONARDO POLO BARRENA

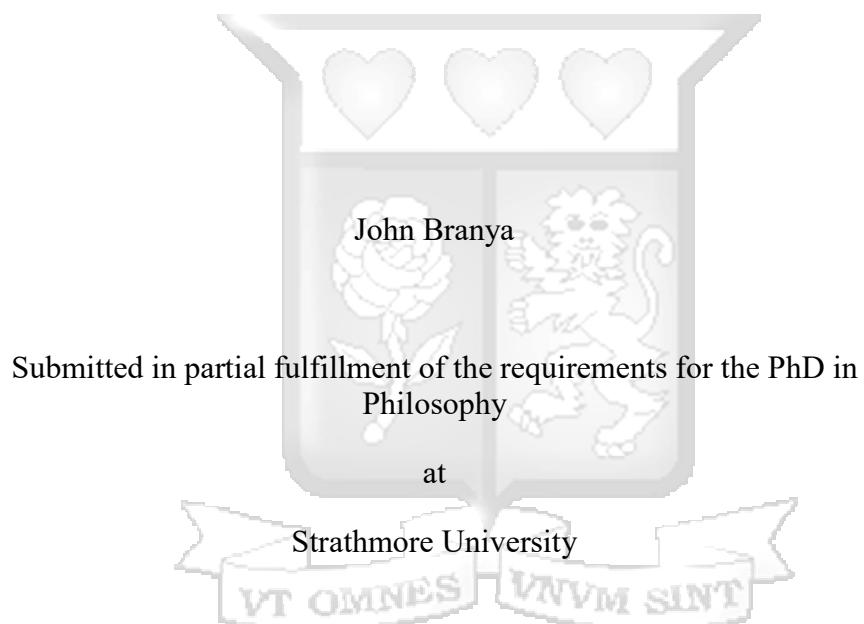


PhD in Philosophy

2016



SYNDERESIS
ACCORDING TO LEONARDO POLO BARRENA



School of Graduate Studies

Strathmore University

Nairobi, Kenya

15th April 2016



DECLARATION

I, John Branya, declare that all the work done for this thesis and hereby presented has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

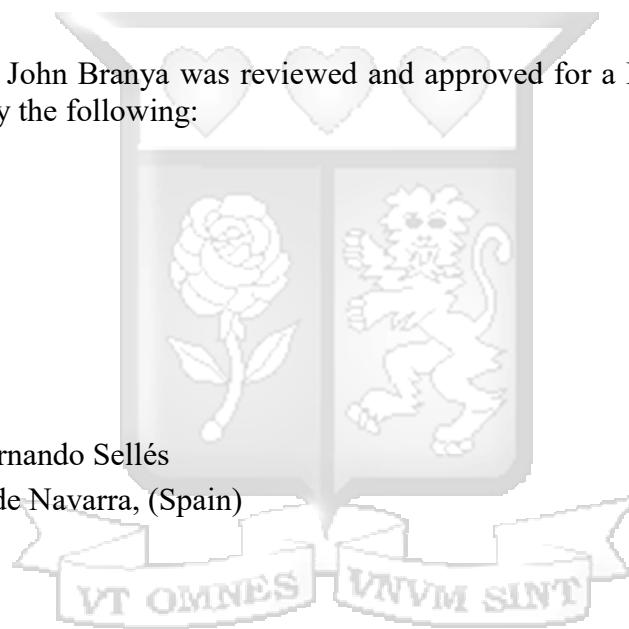
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Approval

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ABSTRACT

The present work tries to see whether Leonardo Polo's proposal expands synderesis in a way that, assuming the medieval traditional views, it can be the ontological basis for grounding a personalistic view of ethics.

Synderesis seems to be a controversial topic. The human reality behind the term was touched upon by Greek and Latin philosophers but the term was not used in classic philosophy. It was Jerome the first to use this term in his commentary to *Ezequiel 1:4-14*. This was a theological treatise. Synderesis was a popular term among philosophers in the Middle Ages especially after Peter Lombard included St. Jerome's commentary in his *Sentences*. Peter Lombard's *Sentences* was a common text book in most universities and therefore synderesis became a compulsory and therefore well known term in medieval philosophy. Aquinas used it extensively as well as his commentators. Aquinas considered synderesis an intellectual habit responsible for the first principles of morality. For Bonaventura synderesis was the will's inclination to do good. Ockham does not mention synderesis in his works. Luther in his early works mentions it but later breaks with tradition and no longer accepts synderesis as he defended that nature was totally corrupt after the original sin, and synderesis was seen as an unpolluted remain of the original nature which kept men aware of sins. From thereon the topic, with rare exceptions, was only developed by those who followed medieval traditions. It looks as if Leonardo Polo not only regains the traditional view of synderesis but makes it a pivotal topic in anthropology. For him synderesis becomes the innate habit through which the personal act of being activates all human faculties. Synderesis then, is at the root of all human decisions, because it becomes the unifying structure of the intellect and will. Because of this it also becomes the root of ethics because it allows viewing human decisions in their relationship with the human integral good.



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INTRODUCTION

1. Foreword

“The way is not from ignorance to knowledge but from knowledge to more knowledge”¹. This Leonardo Polo quote can be a good introduction to this dissertation as well as to Polo’s philosophy. This thesis has to start with the acquired knowledge —the historical development of synderesis— to what may be an addition: Leonardo Polo’s proposal. Because he is not a well-known philosopher, it may be necessary to give the background of his overall philosophical work, so as to understand his specific proposal on synderesis. While Leonardo Polo’s works show an extensive and deep conversation with Greek, Roman, Medieval and modern philosophers he does not explain synderesis historical development, which is discussed in the fourth chapter and first part of the fifth chapter.

Polo understands synderesis as an innate habit which is responsible for the knowledge of practical reason’s first principles —this is the classic view²— and that synderesis is the only link between the personal act of being and all other human faculties which, while being in line with the classic view is radically new in history of philosophy³. If this is the case, the study of this habit will help to understand all human activities in a deeper way; more specifically the inbuilt ethical content of all human decisions⁴. It may also help to clarify the ontological foundation of a personalist ethics. Ethics is struggling to find a universal foundation⁵ that makes it objective and therefore universal

¹“No se pasa de ignorar a saber, sino de saber a saber más”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*. 4, 2nd ed. (Pamplona: Ed. Univ. de Navarra, 2004), 470. Robert Spaemann also shares this idea: “Progress is only possible as a continuation of what one already knows”. “El progreso solamente es posible como continuación del pensamiento procedente de lo que ya se sabe”. Spaemann, R., *Etica, Política y Cristianismo* (Madrid: Palabra, 2007), 60.

² Cfr. Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. 23, (1956). Ferrater Mora, J., Terricabras, J.-M., *Diccionario de Filosofía 4 tomos*, (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, S.A., 1994), 3294.

³ Chapters IV and V on the History of Synderesis Development support this statement.

⁴ Humanistic sciences cannot be developed without due reference to ethics, that guides humans and society towards their proper end. As Simon indicates in his classic book: “And thus it is that those who, in opposing economic and political amorality, speak of the need to submit economics and politics to ethics show only that they have not fully understood the irreducibly moral character of economics and politics”. Simon, Yves René Marie. *A Critique of Moral Knowledge* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 85.

⁵ There are contemporary calls to find this universality in an empirical way, as done by the psychologist Solomon Schwartz and Hans Küng, “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic, Parliament of the World’s Religions”, Chicago, 1993. Accessed June 17, 2015. http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/_includes/fckcontent/file/toward-saglobalethic.pdf. On these attempts we share the opinion of Agera: “In the first

—common to all human beings—but is also takes care of the personal differences⁶, i.e. applied to each person according to one's endowment, circumstances and destiny⁷. Saying it simply, synderesis could be the foundation of a personalist ethics which could also be seen as the foundation of a vocational ethics. A personalist ethics is not a speculative science, that determines in an absolute way what each individual has to do, but the justification that the morality of an action is linked to a personal vocation, not only to the three fountains of morality, or better said, that the three fountains of morality have to consider the personal vocation, the personal final end, which is then seen as a specification of the common human final end. It is true that the final end in general is common to all universe⁸ and, as such, to all human beings, but each person has a personal end, a personal way to

place, the ethical minimum eclectically culled from the ethico-religio-cultural traditions lacks a binding force any ethics needs for an inner authority. Secondly, it may lack the rational evidence that should reportedly (as per Kung) replace all authority. Thirdly, it may lack a concrete character that any ethics should possess. Nevertheless, in an attempt towards a quest for a universal ethic, there surely is a merit. It consists in the recognition that reason must listen to the great religious traditions, if it is not to go blind, deaf and dumb in matters pertaining to human existence". Agera, C. R., "Truth of Freedom: A Study in Ratzinger", *Journal of Human Values*, vol. 16/2 (2010), 138.

⁶ Romano Guardini's ethics is based on a personal response to God that takes into account the different situations or figures of value. Guardini places the foundation of ethics on a phenomenological analysis that relies on religious experiences, rather than in an ontological and epistemological analysis, which is what Polo's proposal may do. A sample of this is the following Guardini's quotation: "It is true that in the relationship with Him man's singularity stands out. God, my soul and nothing else. Man is essentially himself from God's perspective and in relation with Him; and when he abandons God, leaves this being himself, becomes a number, in the attitude or a mere living being". "Es verdad que en la relación con Él aparece el hombre en su singularidad. Dios y mi alma y nada más. El hombre es esencialmente el mismo desde la perspectiva de Dios y en relación con Él; y cuando abandona a Dios, se sale de ese ser el ser el con el mismo, cae en el número, en la actitud del mero ser vivo". Guardini, R., *Etica. Lecciones en la Universidad de Munich* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1999), 186.

⁷ The balance between the universal and the particular in ethics was already discussed at length by Aristotle, but the specific personal free destiny and the topic of vocation is not present in him: "Since, then, the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others for we are inquiring not in order to know what excellence is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use". Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b27-1104a9. This text was commented by Aquinas as follows: "Dicit ergo, quod praesens negotium, scilicet moralis philosophiae, non est propter contemplationem veritatis, sicut alia negotia scientiarum speculativarum, sed est propter operationem. Non enim in hac scientia scrutamus quid est virtus ad hoc solum ut sciamus huius rei veritatem; sed ad hoc, quod acquirentes virtutem, boni efficiamur". "He says therefore that the present study, moral philosophy, is not pursued for the sake of the contemplation of truth like the other studies of the speculative sciences, but for the sake of action. In this science we seek a definition of virtue not only to know its truth but to become good by acquiring virtue". Thomas. *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*. (Romae: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969), Lib. 2 l. 2 n. 2.

⁸ For an explanation of Aquinas' traditional view of the universal law, and its relation to the synderesis cfr. Pattaro, E., "An Overview on Practical Reason in Aquinas", *Scandinavian Studies in Law* (2005), vol. 48.

reach the common end, because of the diverse endowments each possesses and the free decisions one takes, because God does not give freedom and then micro-manages each person. So each person's end may depend a lot on the free personal decisions taken by his parents, teachers, and other people who have shaped his body, material and social environment.

Some few observations are important at this initial stage:

- a) That the purpose of this thesis is not to find the foundations for a personalist ethics, but to see whether Polo's proposal regarding synderesis is a valid approach;
- b) That in order to be closer to Polo's texts we have used a non-inclusive language. It was the standard style at the place and time of Polo's writings. Whenever we use the masculine it means both masculine and feminine, unless otherwise stated;
- c) That though we understand morals as personal good behaviour, and ethics as the scientific study –philosophical study– of morals, nevertheless, for simplicity and because Polo does not use such distinction we shall use them indistinctively⁹.

⁹ Abbà seems to have used a similar distinction: “El capítulo III muestra que la experiencia moral, que está en la base de toda teoría ética, requiere una teoría de la virtud e indica los requisitos a los que debe responder si quiere adecuarse a la experiencia moral: es decir, indica que la virtud debe ser definida en referencia a la conducta, al ideal de vida buena y a la regla de la razón práctica”. Abbà, Giuseppe. *Felicidad, Vida Buena y Virtud: Ensayo de Filosofía Moral*. (Barcelona: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, 1992), 20. A different interpretation of both terms can be found in Ricouer as quoted by Moratalla: “Ethics refers to the concrete life, to the desire, the search for happiness, while morals to the norms to duty. In this way ethics and morals refer to the two great ethical traditions, Aristotelian and Kantian”. “La ética hace referencia a la vida concreta, al deseo, a la búsqueda de la felicidad; la moral a las normas, al deber. Etica y moral así apelan a las dos grandes tradiciones éticas: la aristotélica y la kantiana”. Moratalla, T. D., “P. Ricoeur, Una Antropología Hermenéutica”, in *Propuestas Antropológicas del siglo XX*. 2, ed. Sellés, J.F. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2007), 279. Molina, following Falgueras, proposes to differentiate both terms as follows: “Pero prestemos atención a la distinción entre ética y moral que en su artículo *Destino, Responsabilidad y Ética* nos propone. Viene a llamar ética a aquella actividad que el hombre realiza desde ‘la verdad como futuro destinal humano’. La moral, por el contrario, surge más bien de la costumbre, de la experiencia del pasado junto a otros hombres. Tiene, por tanto, un origen colectivo”. Molina, F., “Conciencia y Destino”, in A. García González J., and Padial Bentuciaga Juan José. *Autotrascendimiento: Homenaje Al Catedrático De Filosofía, D. Ignacio Falgueras Salinas, Por Su Jubilación*. (Málaga: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Málaga, 2011), 4. Others adscribe the term Ethics to the philosophical study of morality, while Morals to the theologically revealed study of morality. “Según esta concepción, se ha llegado a calificar la ética como «civil» y la moral como «religiosa»”. Sánchez-Migallón, S., *Ética Filosófica: Un Curso Introductorio* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2008), 15. The references could multiply, so what we can learn from this is that one cannot take for granted how different authors understand these terms and that if we use them, readers may also understand them in different ways, so it is good to define them at the beginning.

d) That we are aware that there are many footnotes and that some are extensive. This is to facilitate easy cross-check of quotations and our interpretation of texts. This is especially important for those who have difficult access to well-stocked libraries. Also to allow Polo's thought to speak directly to the reader and for this purpose we include the Polo's original text in Spanish. His texts are somehow cryptic, even for well-read Spanish people, and therefore difficult to translate, which means that they can be translated in many different ways. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated;

e) That the thesis is done having in mind a public not familiar with Leonardo Polo's philosophy; so in order to fit his proposal on synderesis we found it necessary to explain Polo's theoretical framework;

f) In spite of the above it is important also to indicate that we are not studying Leonardo Polo (1926-2013), nor his transcendental anthropology nor his theory of knowledge, but only his proposals regarding synderesis.

We chose Leonardo Polo because, to our knowledge, he is the contemporary philosopher who has studied synderesis more than any other author; while statistics are not proper of philosophy's method, they nevertheless can give an idea of the extent to which a topic has been dealt with. Aquinas uses the word synderesis 255 times in his numerous works, while Polo uses it 507 times in the books published up to the end of 2013.

A more important reason is the depth and relevance of the topic in anthropology that Polo's proposal has. An added reason is the few works which deal with this topic. While synderesis in St. Thomas and its commentators is well researched¹⁰, synderesis in the works of Professor Leonardo Polo and its integration in the whole of human anthropology is not yet done in full as we discuss in Chapter II, Literature Review.

Regarding Polo's originality he has given new light to this innate habit as a consequence of his aim to incorporate the classic and modern findings in anthropology. Many of his ideas break new ground but,

¹⁰ Cfr. Just to cite but a few: Lottin, O. D., *Psychologie et Morale aux XII et XIII siècles* (Louvain: Gembloux, J. Duculot, 1948), vol. II, 1; Crowe, M. B., "The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics", *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. 23 (1956) 151-164; Sellés, J. F., "La Sindéresis o Razón Natural como la Apertura Cognoscitiva de la Persona Humana a su Propia Naturaleza", *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, 10, (2003), 321-334; Langston, D., "The Spark of Conscience : Bonaventure's View of Conscience and Synderesis", *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 53, (1993); Greenwell, A. M., "Duns Scotus: On Synderesis and Conscience", *Lex Christianorum*. Accessed June, 12 2014. <http://lexchristianorum.blogspot.co.ke/2011/09/duns-scotus-and-natural-moral-law.html>. Accessed 14 Nov 2014; Weber, D., "Thomas Hobbes' Doctrine of Conscience and Theories of Synderesis In Renaissance England", *Hobbes Studies*, vol. 23, 1, (2010), 54–71; García Junceda, J. A., "La Sindéresis en el Pensamiento de Santo Tomás", *Augustinus*, vol. 24, (1961), 7-42.

according to him, are in line with perennial philosophy¹¹. Polo suggests reconsidering some limitations of traditional philosophy – limitations that are inevitable in any human enterprise. Philosophy is not dogma¹². Polo's proposals, according to him, expand the field of classical philosophy and shed light on some of the discoveries of modern and contemporary philosophers. He also points out the flaws of each thinker whenever necessary. He expressed this as follows: “My reflection starts from the real distinction between being and essence formulated by Thomas Aquinas, which is traditional philosophy's last important discovery. In this sense, I do not consider myself a Thomistic rebel, as others have been, neither a mere commentator (...) In short, the sense of my proposal is clear: it is to take advantage of the nuclear theory of Thomism. This is not to backpedal to the 13th Century; it is possible to deal with what modern philosophy has tried to bring to light, but understanding it correctly, i.e. without diminishing metaphysics when proceeding to the enlargement of the transcendentals”¹³.

My hypothesis is that Polo's *Transcendental anthropology*, and synderesis within it, can be the base for a positive and inspiring view of personalistic ethics. Ethics is seen not only as an ethics of norms, a teleological ethics based on an end already established by human nature¹⁴, or on a fixed and precast way of relating to a God who has

¹¹ Cfr. Falgueras, I., “Los Planteamientos Radicales de la Filosofía de Leonardo Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 25, (1992), 55-99. Regarding Polo's congruence with classical philosophers: Corazón, R., *El Objeto de la Metafísica en la Tradición Aristotélico-Tomista y en Polo* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2013). Yepes Stork, R., “Leonardo Polo, Su Vida y Escritos”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, vol. 1, (2005). Accessed July 26, 2013. <http://www.leonardopololo.net/intro.html>.

¹² “Had philosophy been already done in full, had we achieved unquestionable formulations agreeable to everyone, philosophy would be boring. All that could be done would be to transcribe a series of philosophical dogmas, as if along many centuries we hadn't discovered a thing, or as if there were all-encompassing philosophical dogmas. This is not so”. “Si la filosofía se hubiese hecho de una vez por todas, si se hubiesen logrado formulaciones inamovibles, con las que todo el mundo estuviese de acuerdo, sería muy aburrida. Lo único que se podría hacer es transcribir de manera formularia un elenco de dogmas filosóficos, como si desde hace muchos siglos no hubiésemos dado un solo paso adelante, o como si existieran dogmas filosóficos abarcantes. No es así”. Polo, L., *Introducción a la Filosofía* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1995), 36.

¹³ “Mi planteamiento arranca de la distinción real de ser y esencia formulada por Tomás de Aquino, que es la última averiguación importante de la filosofía tradicional. En este sentido, no me considero un tomista rebelde, como han sido otros, ni tampoco un comentarista. (...) En suma, el sentido de mi propuesta es claro: se trata de sacar partido a la tesis nuclear del tomismo. Con esto no se retrocede al siglo XIII, sino que es posible enfrentarse con lo que la filosofía moderna ha intentado sacar a la luz, entendiéndolo en términos correctos, es decir, sin deprimir la metafísica al proceder a la ampliación de los trascendentales”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, 3rd ed. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010), 13.

¹⁴ This development of an ethics based on the Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, is not morally wrong but it is incomplete. The traditional interpretation is summarised by Dewan: “Thomism is a ‘naturalism’”; Dewan, L. O., *Fundamentos Metafísicos de la Ética* (Bogotá: Fondo de Publicaciones Universidad Sergio Arboleda, 2009), 22. This interpretation is linked to the consideration of metaphysics

already decided everything that is to be done by each individual. Polo's view instead allows for ethics to become a personal challenge, different for each person, within a human general challenge. Ethics becomes an adventure of growth, moved by the freedom of a person in love, who can grow continuously in freedom and love, without a known limit. Moral life, more than a repetition of acts, becomes an increasing growth, a flourishing that each day can be more challenging, more fruitful and more rewarding. Moral life cannot be considered any longer as just mere compliance with a set of common norms – which are good and should be there– but as a personal individual call to a better and ever growing fulfillment each day.

Polo's proposal may give this innate habit an ontological and structural position in anthropology, relate it with other innate habits – mainly the habit of first principles and the habit of wisdom– and clarify its function with regards to ethics. In this topic Polo does not evaluate his proposal with previous thinkers; he just mentions that he feels he adds some little contribution to what Aquinas discovered which may be an understatement on his part.

We have spoken of the topic but not of the person. We shall try now to briefly indicate who Leonardo Polo was.

2. Who was Leonardo Polo?

Leonardo Polo Barrena was born in Madrid (Spain) in 1926. After his undergraduate degree in Law in the Complutense University in Madrid, and a brief professional dedication, he decided to become an academic and obtained a grant to study the philosophical foundations of Law, which took him to Rome. He never finished his PhD in Law; instead he decided to do it in Philosophy, which was later published as *Evidencia en Realidad en Descartes*¹⁵. His lecturing and research life was almost totally spent at the recently inaugurated University of Navarre (from 1954 to 1996), except for the two years he spent as a Professor in the University of Granada (1966-68).

His main areas of research were metaphysics, epistemology and anthropology. By July 2014 he had 45 books published¹⁶, and about 74 short essays, mainly from conference papers. There are also about 21 other unpublished works. His manuscripts and audio tapes are kept at the University of Navarre in the “Instituto de Estudios Filosóficos

being superior to anthropology. Polo shares this view on Aquinas' anthropology limitations. Man cannot be interpreted with categories based on non-spiritual, nor on non-living things, as we shall see later.

¹⁵ Polo, L., *Evidencia y Realidad en Descartes* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963).

¹⁶ Cfr. Franquet, M. J., “La Trayectoria Intellectual de Leonardo Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 29, 2 (1996). Also Esclanda R. and Sellés, J.F., *Leonardo Polo: A Brief Introduction* (South Bend, Ind.: Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy, 2014).

Leonardo Polo” which is an institute devoted to the study and publication of his works. This year the Institute has started an ambitious plan to publish his complete works in 27 volumes, 9 of which are already printed and available to the public¹⁷.

There are also two journals dedicated to him in Spain: *Studia Poliana*¹⁸ and *Miscelanea Poliana*¹⁹ and recently two more journals have published their first issue: one in Argentina, “Estudios Filosóficos Polianos”²⁰, and another in the United States “Journal of Polian Studies”²¹.

Four websites are exclusively dedicated to studies on Polo, where one can find a detailed biography and some of his works: “www.leonardopololo.net”, and “www.unav.es/centro/studiapoliana” in Spain, Iter hominis²² in Brazil, and the Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy in the United States. This was started to make the works of Leonardo Polo available to the English-speaking public: “www.leonardopoloinstitute.org”.

There are also several blogs by some of his disciples dealing with his works: e.g. “Preguntas Polianas”²³, “Estudios Polianos”²⁴, “Polianos”²⁵, “El hábito de la sindéresis”²⁶, among others.

Several of his disciples are researching on the new lines of thought opened by Polo in anthropology, epistemology and metaphysics as can be seen in the number of articles and the annual congress on his works organised by the above mentioned Instituto de Estudios Filosóficos Leonardo Polo²⁷.

While he is well-known by his former students, his work is virtually unknown to the greater public and to scholars around the world. This can be mainly due to the difficulty of his writings and Polo’s devotion to research that kept him away from public and academic life. He himself mentions this: “The first risk was that the research project be stopped by lack of strength, or else, that even if it went forward, it were not accepted by the community of philosophers. I risked remaining unpublished or published without anybody understanding me.

¹⁷ Cfr. <http://www.EUNSA.es/tienda/106 leonardo-polo>

¹⁸ www.unav.edu/centro/studiapoliana

¹⁹ www.leonardopololo.net/revista

²⁰ <https://revistaestudiosfilosoficospolianos.wordpress.com>

²¹ <http://www.leonardopoloinstitute.org/journal-of-polian-studies.html>

²² <http://www.iterhominis.com/03 Polo/Obras LP.htm>

²³ <http://preguntaspolianas.blogspot.com.es>

²⁴ <http://polianos.blogspot.com.es>

²⁵ <http://ieflp.blogspot.com.es>

²⁶ <http://habitosinderesis.blogspot.com.es>

²⁷ García González, J. A., “Bibliografía De y Sobre Leonardo Polo”. Accessed October 4, 2014. <http://www.leonardopololo.net/textos/biblio.htm>.

Although, fortunately, some readers have understood the thematic and methodical dimensions that I am proposing for more than forty years, the circle of specialists who have paid attention is small. As it is clear, I have no cause for complaint. The situation of being a minority author is comfortable because it avoids headaches after the publication of a doctrine which has given enough of them. On the other hand, to dialogue with thinkers who maintain already consolidated positions, or school positions, rarely leads to a fruitful dialogue”²⁸.

For a quick English overview of his life and works the recently published *Leonardo Polo: A brief Introduction*²⁹ and the voice “Leonardo Polo” in Wikipedia³⁰ could be a good introduction. While there is a growing number of studies on Polo in Spanish, there is little in other languages. Only one of his books has been translated into English³¹ and more recently a short essay “Why a Transcendental Anthropology”³². The greatest source of information and references in the web is the “Instituto de Estudios Filosóficos Leonardo Polo” started and maintained by Professor Juan Antonio García González³³ in the University of Malaga and the above-mentioned Leonardo Polo Institute in South Bend, Indiana. Other sources are “Philosophica: Leonardo Polo”³⁴, and “Wikipedia” in Spanish³⁵.

Once we have explained the topic and the author, we have to give some background to why this topic has been chosen.

²⁸ “El primer riesgo era que el proyecto de investigación se detuviera por escasez de fuerzas, o bien, que si salía adelante, no fuese aceptado por la comunidad de filósofos. Me exponía de antemano a permanecer inédito o a publicar sin que nadie me entendiera. Aunque, por fortuna, algunos lectores han comprendido las dimensiones metodicas y temáticas que vengo proponiendo desde hace más de cuarenta años, el círculo de especialistas que le han prestado atención es reducido. Como es claro, esta circunstancia no es motivo de queja. La situación de autor minoritario es cómoda porque evita quebraderos de cabeza posteriores a la publicación de una doctrina cuya elaboración los ha exigido en demasía. Por otra parte, entrar en discusión con pensadores que mantienen posturas ya consolidadas, o de escuela, raramente conduce a un diálogo fructífero”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental* I, op. cit., 11.

²⁹ Cfr. Esclanda, R., - Sellés, J. F., *Leonardo Polo: a Brief Introduction*, op. cit.

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_Polo

³¹ Polo, L., *Ethics: A Modern Version of its Classic Themes* (Manila: Sinag-Tala, 2008).

³² Polo, L., *Why a Transcendental Anthropology?* (South Bend, Ind.: Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy, 2014).

³³ www.leonardopolon.net

³⁴ www.philosophica.info/voces/polo/Polo.html

³⁵ es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_Polo

3. Background to the Study

Synderesis seems to be a controversial topic. Simon's opinion is that synderesis "should be allowed to join the number of forgotten controversies"³⁶ or, as Aranguren says, it is a 'useless', 'dead' and 'embalmed' word³⁷, while others prove Simon right by not mentioning it at all, like MacIntyre in his well known *A Short History of ethics*³⁸.

The word synderesis was not used in classical philosophy, though one can argue that the reality behind was studied and mentioned under other names because it is deeply human.³⁹ It was Jerome in his commentary to Ezequiel the first who uses it. "St. Jerome, in the opening chapter of his *Commentary on Ezechiel* 1, 4–14 (PL 25, 22 B), is credited with introducing the Greek term 'synteresis' into Latin, referring to it as the spark of conscience (scintilla conscientiae) which even Cain's sin could not eradicate from his nature. Derived from the Greek verb 'syntereo' (to watch closely, to preserve or keep safe) it seems to have been nothing more than a poetic way of describing conscience".⁴⁰ According to De Blic (1949), it was a medieval scribe who

³⁶ "It has been suggested that the term synderesis should be allowed to join the number of forgotten controversies". Cf. Simon, Y., *Critique De La Connaissance Morale* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1934), 56 quoted in O. Lottin, *Principes de Morale*, I, (Louvain: Editions du Mont César, 1947), 123, note I. Simon suggests that the term synderesis be replaced by *sens moral*. Cfr. also Crowe, M. B., "The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics", op. cit., 151, n. 1.

³⁷ "The Scholastic doctrine we have summarily explained and containing embalmed useless terminology (...) The first obstacle, terminology, is the easiest to overcome: the words die, while philosophy is, it must be, living knowledge". Aranguren, J. L., *Obras Completas*, Vol. 2: *Ética* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1994), 351.

³⁸ Macintyre, A. C., *A Short History of Ethics*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

³⁹ It is doubtful though, that Aristotle, for example, defended that all men tended to the good and the first principle 'do good'. Cfr. "Whether, then, it is not by nature that the end appears to each man such as it does appear, but something also depends on him, or the end is natural but because the good man does the rest voluntarily, excellence is voluntary, vice also will be none the less voluntary; for in the case of the bad man there is equally present that which depends on himself in his actions even if not in his end". Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1114 b 17, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, op. cit., 40. Though some authors may defend that Aristotle had a hint on it, which can be "a more or less steady natural inclination to direct one's own conduct in accordance with reason. According to Aristotle, this inclination exists. It is an inclination that does not consist simply of acting in accordance with a morally neutral reason, as, for him, acting according to reason is the same as acting according to the virtues, to which we have a natural aptitude. However, speaking of an inclination within the reason (the reason being for Aristotle a potency for opposites) presupposes the existence of something that robs reason of its original indeterminateness. Aristotle himself did not discuss this, but Aquinas alludes to the problem when he mentions the existence of a natural habit of the reason known as synderesis, which he refers to elsewhere, significantly, as "the nursery of virtues". González, Ana Marta, "Depositum Gladius Non Debet Restitui Furioso: Precepts, Synderesis, And Virtues in Saint Thomas Aquinas", *The Thomist*, 63 (1999), 223.

⁴⁰ "That which is called Synteresis, and that which is called properly Syneidesis, or conscience. By the former of which, man having as it were a standard within himself of good and evil, he may guide himself in the choice of his actions; by the

made the error of writing "synteresis" (conservation) for "syneidesis" (conscience) when copying Jerome's *Commentary on Ezechiel*. The error was incorporated into the popular *Glossa ordinaria* and, through Peter Lombard's *Sentences*⁴¹, passed on to the scholastic theologians, who speculated as to its exact nature, usually giving it a special function distinct from conscience"⁴².

Aquinas considered synderesis an intellectual habit responsible for the first principles of morality. For Bonaventura synderesis was the will's inclination to do good. Ockham does not mention synderesis in his works. Luther in his early works mentions it but later he breaks with tradition and no longer accepts synderesis as he defended that nature was totally corrupt after the original sin, and synderesis was seen as an unpolluted remain of the original nature which kept men alert of their sins. From there on the topic, with rare exceptions, was only developed by those who followed medieval traditions.

Leonardo Polo not only recovers the traditional view of synderesis, but makes it a pivotal point of his anthropology. Synderesis becomes the innate habit through which the act of being, the person, activates all human faculties.

This is in a nutshell the background to the topic which will be developed at length in the following chapters. Now it is time to express the problem definition in a more succinct form.

4. Problem definition

The problem that this research wants to clarify is: whether Polo's proposal regarding synderesis is accurate and whether it can be a good approach for a personalist view of ethics.

latter he is able to reflect upon himself, and... pass a judgment upon himself'. Goodman, J., *The Penitent Pardon'd*, 6th edition, corrected and enlarged, (London: J. Leake, John Meredit, 1707).

⁴¹ This will be discussed in detail when discussing the historic development of synderesis. For the full text of Jerome check p. 55.

⁴² Wolter, A. B., Frank, W. A., *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 45.

5. Research questions, hypothesis or propositions

The research has to elucidate:

What is Polo's conception of synderesis?

How does synderesis act according to Polo?

How do Polo's proposals fit with the proposals of previous philosophers?

How do Polo's proposals compare with contemporary philosophers?

Whether Polo's proposals can explain in a better way, human actions with regard to ethics?

6. Boundaries/Scope of the study

Synderesis, as such, was not mentioned by classic philosophers (as seen above). It was mainly a medieval topic of discussion which was practically forgotten by the modern and contemporary philosophers, except for those studying medieval philosophy.

We consider it beyond the scope of our work to study in depth the precise use of the term, its history and the dispute regarding whether "synderesis" was a mistake of a copyist or a deliberate decision of St Jerome. The historical background, nevertheless, is particularly important because Leonardo Polo was a keen reader of philosophy and knew well its history as can be seen in the references he makes in his texts to their works and concepts⁴³.

Similarly, we should not deal with the associated concepts or terms linked to "synderesis", like conscience, common sense, and natural moral law; nevertheless, we shall refer to them whenever necessary.

7. Significance of the study

Three issues make the study of synderesis relevant at this stage: a) it may help to understand the silence of modern and contemporary philosophers about synderesis, b) it may enhance the positive approach to ethics, and c) it may give a theoretical base for a personalist approach to Ethics. We discuss each in a general way here, but the full

⁴³ Besides the works on specific philosophers e.g. Eckhart, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bergson, Polo is in continuous discussion with other philosophers. The most cited are normally Aristotle among the classics, Aquinas among the medieval, Hegel, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz among the modern, and Heidegger among the contemporary. Cfr. R. Yepes, "Leonardo Polo y la Historia de la Filosofía", *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 25/1 (1992) 101-124; Franquet, M. J., "La Trayectoria Intelectual de Leonardo Polo", op. cit.

extent of Polo's contribution will only be understood at the very end of the dissertation.

a) *Oblivion of Synderesis in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*

The general view is that modern and contemporary leading philosophers had hardly paid any attention to synderesis e.g. Descartes⁴⁴, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger.⁴⁵ It seems as if it was considered as one of the subtleties of scholastic philosophy that had no foundation in reality and therefore it will not make any contribution to human affairs. The protestant background, incompatible with the notion of synderesis which is not affected by the original sin, of many of the modern philosophers may also be a reason why they do not mention it.

What Timothy C. Potts says of conscience can be applied with greater reason to synderesis: "Conscience has been much neglected by philosophers. It is not directly treated in ancient philosophy, while, apart from Bishop Butler, who was primarily interested in the aspect of self-deception, there is scarcely a philosopher from Descartes to the present day who has touched upon it more than tangentially"⁴⁶. An example of this is the opinion of the British linguist Dr. Bill Long who said: "So, when the Oxford English Dictionary was first put together in the 19th century, the English language had various verbal excrescences from the past regarding conscience, filmy traces of concepts that pointed to something from earlier times. It had conscience, the "big" term that had come from syneidesis through conscientia. In fact, that is all we ever really needed. But then, we had the word syneidesis, transliterated from the Greek. And then, we had synteresis, that mistake that Jerome introduced into the language, which then sent Catholic theologians on a journey they probably have never recovered from. If only the human mind would just for once be content with simplicity when simplicity actually does define what is before us. But that would be asking too much of people, I think. Instead of the prayer of St. Francis, 'where there is darkness, (let me sow) light', it must have been the prayer of these divines, "where there is light, (let me sow) darkness". And, they spoke, and behold, there was darkness"⁴⁷.

Simon supports the view of the insignificance of synderesis in the modern and contemporary scene, and extends it to psychological

⁴⁴ Descartes cites it as sinteresis at least once and gives it just the remorse function of conscience that influenced Bossuet. Cfr. García Junceda, J. A., "La Sindéresis en el Pensamiento de Santo Tomás", op. cit., 435.

⁴⁵ In most of these author's dictionaries the term synderesis does not appear. We enumerate the ones consulted in Chapter II below.

⁴⁶ Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

⁴⁷ Long, D. B., "Synteresis II". Accessed September 3, 2010.
<http://www.drbilllong.com/EvenMoreWords/SynteresisII.html>.

works: “First of all, notice that ‘conscience’ plays no role of significance in either philosophical ethics or psychology in the twentieth century”⁴⁸. Nevertheless, without such a name it is still an important concept in Freud’s psychoanalysis, but after that its significance dwindles. M. Kroy rightly observes that in the Twentieth Century as a whole (or that part of it that lay behind him when he made his observation), “academic psychologists generally deny the term conscience (...) any legitimate place in their theories”⁴⁹. Another confirmation of these assertions is that the on many counts impressive *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* in ten volumes by Donald M. Borchert does not include any of the voices: synderesis, synteresis or synedesis in their magnificent thematic index, and it is mentioned in passing only three times in the articles: Alexander of Hales, Gerson and Aquinas⁵⁰.

The opinion of synderesis’ lack of importance is somehow backed by no other than Cardinal Ratzinger, (later Pope Benedict XVI): “I would like, therefore, without entering into philosophical disputes, to replace this problematic word (synderesis) with the much more clearly-defined Platonic concept of anamnesis. It is not only linguistically clearer and philosophically deeper and purer, but anamnesis above all, also harmonizes with key motives of biblical thought and the anthropology derived from it”⁵¹. Even moral theologians, well-versed in medieval authors, support this argument as Crowe: “It has been suggested that the term synderesis should be allowed to join the number of forgotten controversies”⁵². He also suggested the substitution of synderesis by moral sense.

Synderesis cannot be seen, it cannot be measured, it cannot be perceived so it is difficult for positivist psychologists and philosophers to deal with it. Synderesis seems not to be a clear and distinct idea and because of this it is also a difficult topic for rationalist and idealist philosophers to pay any attention to it. Synderesis as such does not have direct external manifestations in real life so it is also a difficult

⁴⁸ Cf. Simon, Y., *Critique de la Connaissance Morale*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1934), 56 (cited by O. Lottin, *Principes de morale*, I, Editions du Mont César, Louvain, 1947), 123, note I).

⁴⁹ Kroy, M., *The Conscience, a Structural Theory* (Herndon, VA, USA: Transaction Publishers, 1974), XII.

The same opinion is share by Klein: “Curiously enough, despite their alert interest in motivation, psychologists seem to have overlooked [conscience] in their analyses of mental phenomena. As a rule, the topic is not even mentioned in current texts”. Klein, D. B., “The Psychology of Conscience”, in *International Journal of Ethics*, 40/2 (1930) p. 247:

⁵⁰ *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed, Borchert, D. M. ed., (USA, Detroit: Thomson Gale/Macmillan Reference 2006) s.v. Alexander of Hales: vol. I, 114; s.v. Gerson: vol. 4, 67; s.v. Aquinas: vol. 9, 434.

⁵¹ Ratzinger, J., Benedict. *On Conscience: Two Essays* (Philadelphia: National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2007), 31.

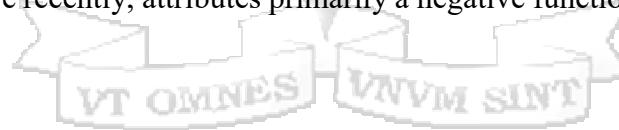
⁵² Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 23 (1956) p. 151, n. 1.

topic for existentialist or voluntarist philosophers. So why does Leonardo Polo give so much importance to it? For him, as we shall see, synderesis is a key piece of the ontological structure of human beings. It is the habit linking the personal level⁵³ to all human activities. Synderesis, according to Polo, manifests itself through two faculties; the intelligence and the will. Polo also speaks of synderesis as being the “self” or “I”, and the “soul”. Polo suggests that previous philosophers had a tenuous glimpse of this innate habit under those two concepts.

b) Positive Approach to Ethics

Ethics is normally seen in our days as a corrective measure to bad behaviour or bad tendencies. It tends to be normative and most people see it as a threat to a pleasant life. This is reflected in the popular saying that “anything good is either a sin or makes you fat”.

Pinckaers has tracked back the negative approach to ethics to the duty-ethics of Kant and to the earlier notion of freedom as indifference of Ockham⁵⁴. Ethics is viewed as the type of knowledge that prevents us from doing bad things. Ethics sets the limits that should not be crossed, and conducts that should be avoided. Virtues are presented as remedies to vices, in that they help to overcome our bad tendencies. A sample is this quotation: “The second reason I am glad you asked this question is because it shows that you have understood the key dynamic at work in a program of spiritual work, a ‘reform of life’ program, as it is sometimes called. The core of such a program is the patient, prayerful, and consistent effort to grow in virtues that correct our deepest sinful tendencies”⁵⁵. The negative approach to ethics influenced also moral theology; in the words of Garrigou-Lagrange: “The two centuries from 1650 to 1850 were devoted to casuistry... Moral theology is the science rather of avoiding sin than of cultivating virtue”⁵⁶. Messner, more recently, attributes primarily a negative function to the



⁵³ While Polo speaks of ‘nature, essence and person’ to speak of the different parts of the human ontological structure, I prefer to call them ‘natural, essential and personal levels’. This avoids the confusion between ‘person’ as unity and person as act of being; of ‘nature’ as principle of operations and nature as the physical and psychological elements of man, and of ‘essence’ as the form of man and the human essence in the way Polo understands it. Dilthey uses, for different purposes altogether, the image of floors of a house: “Our thinking linked to special images separates somehow a superior floor of our psychic life with another lower floor, or inferior”. Dilthey, W., *El Sistema de la Ética* (Buenos Aires: Nova, 1973), 53.

⁵⁴ Cfr. Pinckaers, S., *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

⁵⁵ Bartunek, J., “Spiritualdirection.com”, *Spiritual Direction*, 2010. Accessed October 4, 2014. <http://spiritualdirection.com/2010/05/03/what-virtues-can-i-practice-to-overcome-the-root-sin-of-sensuality>.

⁵⁶ “Regnum casuisticae fuit a medietate saeculi XVII ad medietatem saeculi XX (...). Sic est potus, ut appareat, ad peccatum vitandum quam at virtutem exercendam”. Garrigou-Lagrange, R., *De Beatitudine* (Rome: Marietti, 1951), 2.

moral conscience⁵⁷. This attitude permeated also the modern approach to ethics according to Bauman⁵⁸.

Though the negative approach is accurate and effective, it could be perhaps more encouraging, more popular and powerful to have a positive approach to ethical matters, because it is more respectful to reality, where what is, is real, and trascendentally good, while evil is its absence, so it is unreal, like a hole in reality⁵⁹. Saying it in a classic way, what is real is transcendentally good. Bad and evil are privations as Augustine defended: “evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name ‘evil’”⁶⁰; so to be realistic in ethics it pays to be positive. This could rekindle the interest for moral issues, by providing an attractive direction and motivation for action.

It has to be noted that there were voices that reacted against this view of ethics, like Romano Guardini⁶¹, Joseph Ratzinger⁶² and more recently MacIntyre’s celebrated proposal of taking up the Aristotelian tradition of virtue-ethics that has greatly helped to correct the negative view⁶³. Consequently, the topics of happiness and virtues have raised

⁵⁷ “Man experiences moral consciensce as a braking force”. “El hombre experimenta la conciencia moral como fuerza de freno”. Messner, J., *Etica Fundamental* (Madrid: Rialp, 1969), 14.

⁵⁸ “The tacit assumption —virtually without exceptions— of the modern ethical thought and practice was recommending that in leaving the individuals to their freedom [...] they should be prevented from using their freedom to do evil”. Bauman, Z., *Ética Posmoderna* (México: Siglo XXI, 2005), 13.

⁵⁹ The same approach is shared by Marina: “todavía me cuesta trabajo pensar que la ética no es el museo de las prohibiciones sino la máxima expansión de la creatividad humana”. Marina, J. A., *Etica Para Náufragos*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995), 11.

⁶⁰ Augustin, St., “City of God”, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2. Accessed October 4, 2014. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2053>.

⁶¹ “Therefore, it is ethically good what promotes good living, making it healthier, stronger, more fruitful and profound. The logical consequence is to assert that ethical conduct is happiness, joy, joyful experience of a good expanding life”. Guardini, R., *Etica. Lecciones en la Universidad de Munich*, (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1999), 274.

⁶² “Morals are not man’s jail, but what is divine in him”. “La moral no es la cárcel del hombre, sino aquello divino que hay en él”. Ratzinger, J., *Una Mirada A Europa: Iglesia y Modernidad en la Europa de las Revoluciones* (Madrid, Rialp, 1993), 58.

⁶³ MacIntyre’s positive attitude can be seen in this short text: “Because my life is to be understood as a teleologically ordered unity, a whole the nature of which and the good of which I have to learn how to discover, my life has the continuity and unity of a quest, a quest whose object is to discover that truth about my life as a whole which is an indispensable part of the good of that life. So on this view my life has the unity of a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, beginning with birth and ending, so far as concerns the final judgment to be passed on it – in respect of the achievement of my good – with death”. Macintyre, A., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, And Tradition Being Gifford Lectures Delivered in The University Of Edinburgh in 1988* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 197. See also Macintyre, A. C., *After*

the interest of social scientists⁶⁴ and have been at the center of a fruitful forty-year long debate, generating a vast literature⁶⁵. Polo's positive approach to ethics may make give ontological grounding to this appealing and motivating approach⁶⁶.

c) Personalistic foundation of ethics

The third benefit of this study is that, in our opinion, Polo's view of synderesis can be a good foundation for a personalist understanding of ethics. Teleological ethics tends to link moral actions to a final end based on human nature. This final end is common to all humans, which is lost in the generality. A "personal" task, is unique and tends to be more attractive. What is general is not as attractive as something that is exclusive and unique; a designed dress is rather more appealing than a ready-made one. Perhaps the reason for fashion and tattooing is that what is unique is appealing because it shows our individuality, fruit of our personality. Our personal freedom may foster the desire to be unique by being different. In the teleological views individuality is exercised in the election of the means towards the final end. The means and specific end are different for each people depending on their endowment and their situation in life, but the generic end is common to all. Some ideologies understand that even the path and means are chosen by God, as a kind of predestination, where freedom is reduced to accept or not to accept what is nevertheless going to happen⁶⁷.

Virtue: a study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

⁶⁴ For example: "Social scientists have caught the butterfly. After 40 years of research, they attribute happiness to three major sources: genes, events and values". Brooks, Arthur C. "A Formula for Happiness - The New York Times". Accessed July 8, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/15/opinion/sunday/a-formula-for-happiness.html?_r=0.

⁶⁵ Cfr. Sison, Alejo G., *Happiness and Virtue Ethics in Business: The Ultimate Value Proposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Giorgino, V., *The Pursuit of Happiness and the Traditions of Wisdom* (New York: Springer, Cham, 2014); Abbà, G., *Felicidad, Vida Buena y Virtud* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1992).

⁶⁶ Polo's proposal is not the only way to defend a positive approach to ethics. It is possible to do it through different approaches. Aristotles and Aquinas were positive. In our days Millán Puelles, among many, also had a very positive approach: "All morally correct action is a free, extra free, affirmation of our being as human beings, a practical affirmation, factual". "Toda conducta moralmente correcta es una libre, una libéríma afirmación de nuestro ser de hombres, una afirmación práctica, con hechos". Millán-Puelles, A., *Ética y Realismo* (Madrid: Rialp, 1996), 19.

⁶⁷ Spinoza in modern philosophy has such a view: "Further conceive, I beg, that a stone, while continuing in motion, should be capable of thinking and knowing, that it is endeavouring, as far as it can, to continue to move. Such a stone, being conscious merely of its own endeavour and not at all indifferent, would believe itself to be completely *free*, and would think that it continued in motion solely because of its own wish. This is that *human freedom*, which all boast that they possess, and which consists solely in the fact, that men are conscious of their own desire, but are ignorant of the causes whereby that desire has been determined". Spinoza, B., "Letter 62 (58) to G. H. Schaller". Accessed July, 8 2015. http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Spinoza/let6258.htm PO-3.

Against this background, Polo's view of synderesis and of the "personal transcendentals" may shed new light on the fundamental topics for ethics; freedom and personal love. Synderesis will be the link between personal freedom and the lower levels of each personality. It can be the link that helps to explain the merits and demerits of actions, the final value of the person. Therefore, if Polo's intuitions are right, synderesis could be useful to explain ethical decisions, which are always personal and specific.

If we realize that each person is unique and unrepeatable, then his future perfection will also be unique and unrepeatable. Each person has specific characteristics, talents and opportunities which one has to respond to. The proper answer to these personal challenges is what will make the person grow as a person and become happier. Where does this individuality come from, and how does it connect with our common inheritance as human beings? Where can the link be found between what is good for all and what is good for me? The tug of war between relativism and objectivism could be better understood by finding out what is permanent and what can and should change in the human person, and how those changes affect personal growth. This will have a direct application in ethics. Ethics should help each individual to discern what is good or bad for him. What makes him better as a person is good, what makes him lose personality is bad, it is evil. If we find the way to help each person to distinguish what is good for all, and what is only specifically good for him, and how to put this knowledge into practice, we will have discovered the foundation of personalistic ethics. An ethics that while judges what is good for all, applies this knowledge distinctively to each person. Ethics as a science has to consider the person, not only human nature and this both at the theoretical and practical level⁶⁸.

Personal perfection –which is the objective of positive ethics– is achieved by personal decisions that take into account the unrepeatable personality of each person. In this way it will be clearer that ethics helps to achieve one's personal specific perfection, not just to submit to general rules. This will prevent the misconception that ethics is a set of rules that prevents personal creativity and therefore stunts freedom rather than potentiating it, when it is, in fact, the other way round.

After having seen the benefits it is due time to see which areas of this problem have already been dealt with by other researchers.

⁶⁸ The practical character of ethics is emphasized by Aristotle, Aquinas and those who defend the ethics of the 'first person' as Bertone does. cfr. Bertone, T., *L'etica Del Bene Comune nella Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008), 57.





**METHODOLOGICAL
AND
HISTORICAL APPROACHES**



CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of our research is Leonardo Polo's view of synderesis, and we should limit this literature review to this precise topic. The topics of natural law¹, conscience, self-identity, consciousness, prudence, synderesis in medieval philosophy, etc. are not directly within the scope of this review. Though some books and articles are very useful to understand synderesis, or Leonardo Polo's philosophy, the main purpose of this section is to limit the search to those who have studied synderesis in Leonardo Polo. Nevertheless, we have expanded the search to other areas, e.g. synderesis in general, because the literature on Leonardo Polo is rather scanty. In Chapter IV we shall see the historical development of synderesis up to the XX century, and will somehow complement this chapter.

We first look into literature regarding the name, which comprises: a) the name itself and related terms, b) common language through dictionaries, c) the origin of both synderesis and synedesis, d) technical language through philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias and then on, e) the topic itself by looking at the current studies on Leonardo Polo's synderesis.

1. On the names synderesis, synteresis and synedesis

As González says, “philosophical ethics tends to develop a set of concepts through which the reality of action can be understood in a better way, in a way that the common moral experience can be defined

¹ Many authors refer to Natural Law in a way that it looks as it is something objectively known, rather than the habitual knowledge given by synderesis which is therefore not objective. Otherwise by making this distinction what they defend is absolutely valid, it is just not as subtle as it can be. Cfr. Bertone, T., *L'etica del Bene Comune nella Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, op. cit.; Jaroszynski and P., Anderson, M., *Etica: El Drama de la Vida Moral* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2012); De-wan, L. O., *Fundamentos Metafísicos de la Ética*, op. cit.; Millán-Puelles, A., *Ética y Realismo*, op. cit.

more precisely”². Our first approach is, then, to clarify the usual meaning of the term through common and specialized dictionaries.

Synderesis is not a common-use word in most languages. It does not even appear in some standard dictionaries and it cannot even be found in a number of philosophical dictionaries or lexicons as shown below. It is different from synesis (conscience) which is considered the actual origin of both synteresis and synderesis.

In English it can be spelt either as synteresis (closest to the original Greek) or synderesis (which is the more common spelling which was taken from Medieval Latin). It is mainly used as a technical philosophical or theological word, though it has also a medical meaning as a synonym to prophylaxis which is obsolete³.

In most languages the transcription is practically identical: synderesis in Greek, German, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Polish, Romanian, Afrikaans, Swedish, Norwegian, and with little variations in Spanish, (sindéresis); French, (syndérèse); Italian, (sideresi); and Portuguese, (sindérese). This is a clear indication that it is a technical, not intuitive term, incorporated from a foreign language⁴.

We now look at the popular language dictionaries to see how the word is used in common language, and then more specifically within dictionaries of philosophy.

2. Common Language dictionaries

“Sinderésis” is a word hardly used in common and even educated parlance in Spanish. One has to explain its meaning even in academic circles despite of being included in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua* and some other good dictionaries. We could only trace its use in common language in Venezuela and Colombia were it sometimes appears in newspaper headings⁵.

² “La ética filosófica tiende a desarrollar un cuerpo de conceptos mediante el cual se pueda hacer cargo de la realidad de la acción, en unos términos que permitan precisar mejor la experiencia moral ordinaria”. González, A. M., *Tomás de Aquino. De veritate. Cuestiones 16 y 17, La Sindéresis y la Conciencia* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1998), 5. Accessed November 13 2014. <http://dadun.unav.edu/handle/10171/5998>.

³ “Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language.” (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1903).

⁴ Lexbook, <http://lexbook.net/en/synderesis>. Accessed December 11, 2014. In the same page it is said that “The term «synderesis» is normally little used and occupies the 148.213 position in our *list of most widely used terms in the dictionary*”.

⁵ Just some samples: Cfr. Mejía, E. C., “¡Sindéresis, Hombre!”, *El Espectador*, 2008, Medellín. Accessed March 28, 2013, <http://www.elespectador.com/columna-sinderesis-hombre> 10 feb. 15. “Venezuela Pide ‘Sindéresis y Responsabilidad’” Alan García - Perú 21”. “La Sindéresis de las FARC.” Accessed June 10, 2015. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-sinderesis>

The *Real Academia de la Lengua*. The official dictionary of the Royal Language Academy in Spain gives a meaning related to prudence or natural common sense: “(From Greek συντήρησις) Discretion, natural capacity to judge rightly”⁶.

Moliner. “from Greek synteresis; good judgement: aptitude to think with accuracy or prudence”.⁷

Random House. This dictionary gives two meanings. The second one is based on the mystical knowledge recommended by Master Eckhart: “1. Innate knowledge of the basic principles of morality. 2. Christian Mysticism, the essence of the soul that unites with God. Also, synteresis”⁸.

Merriam Webster. Similar to *Random House* but distinguishing the first meaning from syneidesis. “1. Inborn knowledge of the primary principles of moral action —distinguished from syneidesis 2. The essence, ground, or center of the soul that enters into communion with God: the spark or emanation of divinity in the soul”⁹.

The *Collins English Dictionary* only lists synteresis and refers it exclusively to Theology: “(Theology) the function of consciousness that guides one’s conduct”¹⁰.

The American Heritage includes neither synderesis nor synteresis¹¹.

Wiktionary: “The supposed innate ability of the human mind to realise the basic principles of ethics and morals”¹².

The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia: “1. In med., preservative or preventive treatment; prophylaxis. Συντήρησις 2. Conscience regarded as the internal repository of the laws of right and wrong. “Synteresis, or the purer part of the conscience, is an innate habit, and

farc/341398-. Brigard, R. De, “Ausencia de Sindéresis”, *El Tiempo*, 2000, Colombia. Accessed February 23, 2013.

<http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-1223815>

⁶ “(Del gr. συντήρησις). *Discreción, capacidad natural para juzgar rectamente*”. *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 22, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2001).

⁷ “(Del gr. syntérēsis) buen juicio: aptitud para pensar con acierto o prudencia”. *Moliner*, M., *Diccionario De Uso del Español*, 2. ed, (Madrid: Gredos, 1998).

⁸ *Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House Reference, 2001).

⁹ *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2005).

¹⁰ *Collins English Dictionary*, Anderson, S. Ed., 7th ed, (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publ, 2005).

¹¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

¹² “Wiktionary.” Accessed October 2, 2014, <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/synteresis>.

doth signify "a conversation of the knowledge of the law of God and Nature, to know good or evil"¹³.

Free Dictionary Online: “1. (Med.) Prophylaxis. 2. (Metaph.) Conscience viewed as the internal repository of the laws of duty”¹⁴.

3. Etymon of Synderesis

Breve Diccionario Etimológico: “Synderesis, med. S. XVII, Tom. Del gr syntérēsis, deriv. de syntérēō ‘yo observo, estoy atento’, y este de tēréō ‘yo velo, guardo’¹⁵.

EnAcademic: “1350-1400; ME < ML synderesis, synteresis < Gk syntéresis a guarding, equiv. to syntere-, var. s. of syntereîn to guard closely (syn- SYN- + tereîn to guard) + -sis –SIS”¹⁶.

The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia: “Synteresis (sin-te're'sis), n. [NL., Gr. συντήρησις, a watching closely, observation, συντήρειν, watch closely, observe together, sin abv, together, + τήρειν, watch over, take care or heed, τηρος, a watch, guard.]”¹⁷.

Merriam Webster: “Synteresis Medieval Latin, from Greek syntērēsis preservation, from syntērein to preserve (from syn- + tērein to guard, observe) + -sis; akin to Greek tinein to pay”¹⁸.

4. Synedesis

Some authors suggest that both terms, synteresis and synderesis, are a corruption of syneidesis. This is why it may be prudent to include a couple of references and etymons of this word for referential purposes.

Merriam-Webster: “the capacity to apply general principles of moral judgment to particular cases —distinguished from Synderesis”¹⁹.

¹³ Burton, Anat. of Mel. p. 106” “The Century Dictionary Online in DjVu.” Accessed October 2, 2014, <http://www.global-language.com/CENTURY>.

¹⁴ *Free Dictionary Online*. Accessed October 2, 2014. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/synderesis>.

¹⁵ Coromines, J., *Breve Diccionario Etimológico de la Lengua Castellana*, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Gredos, 1973).

¹⁶ *EnAcademic*. Accessed February 26, 2013. www.enacademic.com.

¹⁷ *The Century Dictionary Online in DjVu*. Accessed October 2, 2014, www.global-language.com/century.

¹⁸ *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, (Springfield: Mass Merriam-Webster, 2005).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Collins: “(theology, obsolete) the function of consciousness concerned with making judgement on performed acts”²⁰.

Merriam-Webster Etymon: “Syneidesis: Medieval Latin, from Greek *syneidēsis*, literally, consciousness, awareness, from *syneidenai*, to have knowledge of something, be aware of something (from *syn-* + *eidenai* to know) + -sis”²¹.

5. Philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias

Lexique de Philosophie: “Syndérèse. Dans la langue des scolastiques, ce mot signifie la conscience ou plutôt la première étincelle de la conscience, ce principe inné d'action qui nous pousse au bien et nous détourne du mal. Par extension, la syndérèse sera aussi le remords. Ce mot se trouve pour la première fois dans saint Jérôme, et Überweg pense qu'il faut lire ‘ζ’: il aurait donc pour origine une erreur de copiste”²².

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy: “synderesis, in medieval moral theology, conscience. St. Jerome used the term, and it became a fixture because of Peter Lombard's inclusion of it in his *Sentences* despite this origin. ‘Synderesis’ is distinguished from ‘conscience’ by Aquinas, for whom synderesis is the quasi-habitual grasp of the most common principles of the moral order (i.e., natural law), whereas conscience is the application of such knowledge to fleeting or unrepeatable circumstances”²³.

A Dictionary of Philosophy: “Synderesis (or synteresis) in Aquinas and other scholastic writers, the innate intellectual quality that enables every man to intuit the general and basic principles of practical moral reasoning. It is equated with St. Jerome's *scintilla conscientia* (spark of conscience) and derives from the late Greek word meaning ‘careful guarding’ or ‘preservation’”²⁴.

Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy: “(or synteresis) the supposed natural or innate ability of the mind to know the first principles of ethics and moral reasoning. Although traced to Aristotle, the phrase came to the modern era through St Jerome, whose *scintilla conscientiae* (gleam of conscience) was a popular concept in early scholasticism.

²⁰ *Collins English Dictionary*, “Definition of «syneidesis».” Accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/syneidesis>.
<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/syneidesis>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bertrand, A., *Lexique de Philosophie* (Paris: Delaplane, 1892).

²³ Audi, R., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁴ Flew, A., - Priest, S., *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Pan, 2002). Accessed October 3, 2014. <http://www.credoreference.com/book/macdpphil>.

But it is mainly associated with Aquinas, as an infallible, natural, simple, and immediate grasp of first moral principles. Conscience, by contrast, is more concerned with particular instances of right and wrong, and can be in error”²⁵.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition: “Synderesis, a term in scholastic philosophy applied to the inborn moral consciousness which distinguishes between good and evil. The word is really synteresis (to look after, take care of), but synderesis is the commoner form. Diogenes Laertius in his account of the Stoics (VII.85) uses the phrase to describe the instinct for self-preservation, the inward harmony of Chrysippus, the recognition of which is. The term synderesis, however, is not found till Jerome, who in dealing with Ezek. I. 4 -15, says the fourth of the "living creatures" of the vision is what the Greeks call (i.e. scintilla conscientiae) the “spark of conscience”. Here apparently synderesis and conscience are equivalent. By the schoolmen, however, the terms were differentiated, conscience being the practical envisaging of good and evil actions; synderesis being, so to speak, the tendency toward good in thought and action. The exact relation between the two was, however, a matter of controversy, Aquinas and Duns Scotus holding that both are practical reason, while Bonaventura narrows synderesis to the volitional tendency to good actions”²⁶.

Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names: “Philosophical terminology; immediate, intuitive apprehension of the fundamental principles of morality. For such medieval ethicists as Peter Lombard and Aquinas, synderesis, unlike mere conscience, is both infallible and general”²⁷.

The Philosophical Dictionary: “Immediate, intuitive apprehension of the fundamental principles of morality. For such medieval ethicists as Peter Lombard and Aquinas, synderesis, unlike mere conscience, is both infallible and general”²⁸.

Catholic Encyclopaedia: “Synderesis, or more correctly synteresis, is a term used by the Scholastic theologians to signify the habitual knowledge of the universal practical principles of moral action. The reasoning process in the field of speculative science presupposes certain fundamental axioms on which all science rests. Such are the principle of contradiction, “a thing cannot be and not be at the same time” and self-evident truths like “the whole is greater than

²⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²⁶ Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica 11th ed. “Synderesis - 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica - Bible Encyclopedia”, *StudyLight.org*. Accessed October 2, 2014. <http://www.studylight.org/encyclopedia/bri/view.cgi?n=31810>.

²⁷ *A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names from FOLDO*. Accessed October 2, 2014.
<http://www.swif.uniba.it/lei/foldop/foldoc.cgi?A+Dictionary+of+Philosophical+Terms+and+Names>.

²⁸ *The Philosophical Dictionary, The Philosophical Pages*. Accessed February, 26 2014. <http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/s9.htm>.

its part”. These are the first principles of the speculative intellect. In the field of moral conduct there are similar first principles of action, such as: “evil must be avoided, good done”; “Do not to others what you would not wish to be done to yourself”; “Parents should be honoured”; “We should live temperately and act justly”. Such as these are self-evident truths in the field of moral conduct which any sane person will admit if he understands them. According to the Scholastics, the readiness with which such moral truths are apprehended by the practical intellect is due to the natural habit impressed on the cognitive faculty which they call synderesis. While conscience is a dictate of the practical reason deciding that any particular action is right or wrong, synderesis is a dictate of the same practical reason which has for its object the first general principles of moral action”²⁹.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: “Synderesis is a technical term from scholastic philosophy, signifying the innate principle in the moral consciousness of every person which directs the agent to good and restrains him from evil. It is first found in a single passage of St. Jerome (d. 420) in his explanation of the four living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision”³⁰.

Wikipedia English: “Synderesis, in scholastic moral philosophy, is the natural capacity or disposition (habitus) of the practical reason to apprehend intuitively the universal first principles of human action”³¹.

Modern Catholic Dictionary: “Synderesis or synteresis. The habit of knowing the basic principles of the moral law; the knowledge of the universal first principles of the practical order. Sometimes applied to conscience, which is, however, rather the mind’s concrete application of known principles, judging on the moral goodness or badness of a specific human action. (Etym. Greek synteresis, spark of conscience.)”³².

Diccionario de Términos Éticos: “Procede del griego synthéresis (conservación) –que algunos santos padres (como san Jerónimo, por ejemplo) tradujeron como *scintilla conscientia* o chispa de la conciencia, no extinta tras el pecado original– o de syneidhesis (con-scientia, en latín), que puede traducirse como ‘evidencia moral’. Aranguren prefiere traducir como sentido moral, porque –según él– nos dicta lo que, en general debemos hacer y lo que en general debemos omitir (como que socorrer al necesitado es bueno y matar es malo). Los pensadores cristianos la entendieron como una facultad innata de

²⁹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912). Accessed February 26, 2014. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14384a.htm>.

³⁰ *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed December 24, 2013. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/synderes>.

³¹ *Wikipedia*. Accessed February 26, 2014. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synderesis>.

³² *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, The Real Presence Association, 2014. Accessed February 26, 2014. <http://www.therealpresence.org/dictionary/sdict.htm>.

distinguir el bien del mal; por ella, por esta “chispa” de la conciencia –decían– discernimos que hemos pecado: “es una facultad innata que revela la ley moral de Dios inscrita en el alma de los hombres” (San Agustín). Santo Tomás –y con él todo el pensamiento tomista– entendió que la sindéresis constituye la primera concrección de la regla suprema de la moralidad (hacer y perseguir el bien y evitar el mal), y la identifica con la recta ratio (orthos logos de los griegos) o recta razón. De ahí el significado que perdura hoy de la sindéresis es el de la “capacidad de pensar rectamente y con prudencia”³³.

Glosario de términos filosóficos: “From Greek “synteresis” (discretion) which also comes from “syntero” (to be attentive, to observe) this word synderesis refers to the souls’ capacity to distinguish the good from the evil and to discover and recognise the first moral principles. It is not used today, but it was used by the scholastic philosophers to defend that human beings are capable of discover good (to which they gave absolute value) and distinguish it from evil, in an intuitive way (by nature) in the same way that they are capable of recognising the first principles of reasoning, such as the principle of no contradiction”³⁴.

Diccionario de Filosofía, Ferrater Mora: “El verbo griego (te-reo) significa, en Homero, «vigilar atentamente». En la forma sintereo significa, en Aristóteles (De Plantis), «guardar», «conservar». Se atribuye a San Jerónimo (*Commentarium in Ezchielem*, lib. I, cap. 1 [Migne, P. L., XXV, col. 2]) la introducción de la forma sustantiva sinteresis significando la «chispa de la conciencia», scintilla conscientiae, cuya misión es corregir los errores de la razón y dominar los apetitos sensibles. Según Joseph W. Yedlicka (art. cit. en bibliografía), la expresión scintilla conscientiae fue usada por autores escolásticos antes de aparecer la expresión synderesis, la cual parece haber sido usada ya como sinónima de ‘razón’ en las *Quaestiones* (ca. 1160-1165) de un cierto Udo, en el primer comentario de las Sentencias de Pedro Lombardo. «Entre los Decretistas —escribe Yedlicka [...] etc.”.³⁵.

Dictionario Akal de Filosofía: “Sindéresis, en la teología moral medieval, conciencia. San Jerónimo usó el término, que quedó consolidado con su inclusión en las Sentencias de Pedro Lombardo. Pese a

³³ *Diccionario de Términos Éticos* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1999).

³⁴ “Del griego “syntéresis” (discreción) que deriva, a su vez, de “syntéreo” (estar atento, observar) el término sindéresis se refiere a la capacidad del alma para distinguir el bien del mal, para captar y reconocer los primeros principios morales. Hoy en desuso, el término fue utilizado por los filósofos escolásticos para defender que el ser humano, en general, está capacitado para reconocer el bien (al que daban un valor absoluto) y distinguirlo del mal, de un modo intuitivo (por naturaleza, pues), del mismo modo que está capacitado para reconocer los primeros principios del razonamiento, como el principio de no contradicción”. *Sindéresis - Glosario de filosofía*. Accessed October 2, 2014. http://www.webdianoia.com/glosario/display.php?action=view&id=276&from=action=search%7Cby=S%7Cnr_page=2.

³⁵ Ferrater Mora, J., Terricabras, J.-M., *Diccionario de Filosofía* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1994).

su origen, Tomás de Aquino distingue “sindéresis” de “conciencia”, puesto que pare él la sindéresis es la captación cuasi habitual de los principios más comunes del orden moral (es decir, la ley natural), mientras que la conciencia es la aplicación de ese conocimiento a circunstancias fugaces e irrepetibles”³⁶.

Biblioteca Filosofía en español: [464] “Principio fundamental o sindéresis de la ética o moral según el materialismo filosófico. La ley fundamental o norma generalísima de toda conducta moral o ética, o, si se prefiere, el contenido mismo de la sindéresis, podría enunciarse de este modo: «debo obrar de tal modo (o bien: obro ética o moralmente en la medida en) que mis acciones puedan contribuir a la preservación en la existencia de los sujetos humanos, y yo entre ellos, en cuanto son sujetos actuantes, que no se oponen, con sus acciones u operaciones, a esa misma preservación de la comunidad de sujetos humanos.» El principio fundamental de la sindéresis se desdobra en dos planos correspondientes a los dos contextos (el distributivo y el atributivo) en los cuales se da la existencia de los sujetos corpóreos: el que contiene a la ética y el que contiene a la moral”³⁷.

Le Garzantine di Filosofia: “Sideresi, termini (in gr. sintéresis, esame, conservazione) ricondato da san Gerolamo nel suo Commento a Ezechiele come sinonimo di quella parte delláima abidualmente definita conscienza (I, c, 1); in san Tommaso esso mantiene el senso originario di tendenza verso il bene e di fuga dal male (*Summa teologiae*, I, 1 q. 94, art. 1). Lo stesso significato di attitude dell'anima a riconoscere il primi principi morali e attestato in tutta la scolastica, che sulla scorta dei testi preccedentemente citati concepisce la sideresi, o scintilla conscientiae, come la parte dell'anima non toccata del pecato originale. Nello stesso senso di funzione attiva della conscienza il termine si ritrova in J. B. Bossuet (*Trattato sulla conoscenza di Dio e di sé stesso*, cap. I, par.7), mentre in età contemporanea è caduto in disuso”³⁸.

6. Consulted dictionaries where synderesis and synteresis are not listed:

*Key Terms in Philosophy and Their Importance for Theology*³⁹.

³⁶ Audi, R., Marraud, H., Alonso, E., *Diccionario Akal de Filosofía*, Akal Ediciones, Tres Cantos, Madrid, 2004.

³⁷ García Sierra, P., *Biblioteca Filosofía en Español*. Accessed October 14, 2014. <http://filosofia.org/filomat>.

³⁸ *Enciclopedia Garzanti di Filosofia*, Nuova ed. ampliata e aggiornata, (Milano: Garzanti, 1993).

³⁹ Clark, K. J., *101 key terms in philosophy and their importance for theology* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

*A Companion to African-American Philosophy*⁴⁰.

*A Companion to Hume*⁴¹.

*A Descartes Dictionary*⁴².

*A Hobbes Dictionary*⁴³.

*A Kant Dictionary*⁴⁴.

*A Rousseau Dictionary*⁴⁵.

*American Philosophy: An Encyclopedia*⁴⁶.

*Dictionnaire du corps*⁴⁷.

*Dictionnaire Sartre*⁴⁸.

*Encyclopedia of Empiricism*⁴⁹.

*Jacques Maritain. Dizionario delle Opere*⁵⁰.

*John Locke Bibliography*⁵¹.

*Le vocabulaire des philosophes: Philosophie contemporaine*⁵².

*Metzler Lexikon Philosophie*⁵³.

⁴⁰ Lott, T. L., Pittman, J. P., eds., *A Companion to African-American Philosophy* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2003).

⁴¹ Radcliffe, E. S., ed., *A Companion to Hume*, (Blackwell Pub, Malden, MA, 2008).

⁴² Cottingham, J., *A Descartes Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Reference, USA, 1993).

⁴³ Martinich, A., *A Hobbes Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

⁴⁴ Caygill, H., *A Kant Dictionary*, (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Pub, 1995).

⁴⁵ Dent, N. J. H., *A Rousseau Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992).

⁴⁶ Lachs, J., Talisse, R. B., eds., *American Philosophy: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁷ Marzano, M., *Dictionnaire du Corps* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007).

⁴⁸ Noudelmann, F., Philippe, G., *Dictionnaire Sartre* (Paris: H. Champion, 2004).

⁴⁹ Garrett, D., Barbanell, E., eds., *Encyclopedia of Empiricism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ Viotto, P., *Jacques Maritain: Dizionario delle Opere* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2003).

⁵¹ Yolton, J. S., *John Locke: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996).

⁵² Zarader, J.-P., ed., *Le Vocabulaire des Philosophes* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002).

⁵³ Burkard, F. P., Precht, P., *Metzler Lexikon Philosophie: Begriffe Und Definitionen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, J B, 2008).

*The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*⁵⁴.

*The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy*⁵⁵.

*The Descartes dictionary*⁵⁶.

*The Freud Encyclopedia*⁵⁷.

*The Kant Dictionary*⁵⁸.

*The Oxford companion to philosophy*⁵⁹.

*The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*⁶⁰.

6. Conclusion on the search on dictionaries and lexicons

From the general dictionaries reviewed above we can conclude the following:

- Synderesis and synteresis are two spellings of the same concept in English.
- Spanish and other languages use almost exclusively, sindéresis.
- In most languages synderesis is a technical word, except in Venezuela and Colombia where it has permeated common language.
- The term is considered more a theological than a philosophical term.
- Most dictionaries expound that synderesis:

Is a type of knowledge, knowledge of principles, that is inborn, that helps us to judge, what is morally good;

There is no unanimity whether synderesis is the same as moral conscience;

There are two interpretations regarding its original meaning: keeping vigilant, or preserving.

⁵⁴ Bunnin, N., Tsui-James, E. P. Eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Pub2003).

⁵⁵ Urmson, J. O., Rée, J. Eds., *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy* 3rd Ed, (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁵⁶ Smith, K., *The Descartes Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

⁵⁷ *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy, and Culture*, Erwin, E. (Ed.), (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁵⁸ Thorpe, L., *The Kant Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

⁵⁹ Honderich, T. Ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁰ *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Craig, E., Ed., (London: Routledge, 2005).

- From the philosophical dictionaries reviewed we can conclude:

There is unanimity on the identity between synderesis and syn-teresis.

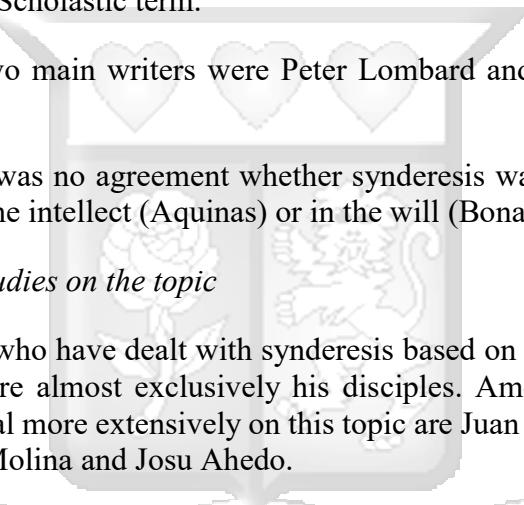
That synteresis was not used until S. Jerome.

That the common name used before was syneidesis, which means conscience.

That it is not clear whether St. Jerome used it as differentiating it from syneidesis (conscience).

That the distinction between synteresis as unchangeable principles of morality and syneidesis as the judgement of the conscience (this is syneidesis) was a medieval theological-philosophical distinction.

That it is a Scholastic term.



That the two main writers were Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas.

That there was no agreement whether synderesis was located mainly in the intellect (Aquinas) or in the will (Bonaventure).

7. Current studies on the topic

The authors who have dealt with synderesis based on Leonardo Polo's proposals are almost exclusively his disciples. Among them those who have deal more extensively on this topic are Juan Fernando Sellés, Francisco Molina and Josu Ahedo.

Francisco Molina published a short book *La sindéresis*⁶¹ and a few other articles. In them he mainly deals with Aquinas' proposals interpreted following Leonardo Polo's interpretation. Molina's were written mainly before the publication of the second volume of *Antropología trascendental*, where Polo explains synderesis at length. In the articles: "Sindéresis y Conciencia Moral"⁶², "Recta razón y sindéresis"⁶³, "El yo y la sindéresis"⁶⁴, "Sindéresis y voluntad"⁶⁵,

⁶¹ Molina, F., *La Sindéresis* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1999).

⁶² Molina, F., "Sindéresis y Conciencia Moral", *Annuario Filosófico*, vol. 29 (1996) 773-786.

⁶³ Molina, F., "Recta Razón y Sindéresis", in *La Filosofía Práctica De Aristóteles*, (1999). Accessed June 24, 2015. <https://Sinderesis.Filosofia.Wordpress.Com/2008/10/Recta-Razon-y-Sind.Pdf>.

⁶⁴ Molina, F., "El Yo y la Sindéresis", *Studia Poliana*, Vol. 3 (2001), 35-60.

⁶⁵ Molina, F., "Sindéresis y Voluntad", in *Futurizar El Presente: Estudios Sobre la Filosofía de Leonardo Polo*, (Málaga, Universidad De Málaga, 2003), 193-212.

“Anámnesis del origen”⁶⁶, “El principio de ley natural y sus principios”⁶⁷, “Conciencia y destino”⁶⁸. Molina develops in more detail some of the topics dealt in his book. Molina also started two blogs in which he popularises some of the topics dealt with in the academic publications⁶⁹. Molina is very conversant both with Aquinas and Leonardo Polo’s texts, which he understands in depth. Two small issues may need further discussion: the placement of synderesis at the personal level while Leonardo Polo texts seem to place it at the essential level, and the view that Polo differentiates only two human levels ‘personal and psychosomatic’ while in our interpretation it is more understandable to speak of three level; personal, essential and natural, as we shall discuss later.

Professor Juan Fernando Sellés is probably the person who has written more about synderesis as seen by Leonardo Polo. He has two articles devoted to this topic: “La Sindéresis o Razón Natural como la Apertura Cognoscitiva de la Persona Humana a su Propia Naturaleza”⁷⁰, and “The Anthropological Foundations of Ethics and its Dualities”⁷¹. Synderesis, nevertheless, is a recurrent topic in most of his books of anthropology and theory of knowledge. *Antropología para Inconformes*⁷² deserves special mention because it could probably be one of the best introductions to Polo’s *Trascendental Anthropology*. In it he tries to make Polo’s trascendental anthropology understandable to the general public. Other relevant books are: *Conocer y amar estudio de los objetos y operaciones del entendimiento y de la voluntad según Tomás de Aquino*⁷³, *Curso breve de teoría del conocimiento*⁷⁴, *Hábitos y Virtudes I to III*⁷⁵, *Razón Teórica y Razón*

⁶⁶ Molina, F., “Anámnesis del Origen”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, 13 (2007): 1-5.

⁶⁷ Molina, F., “El Principio de la Ley Natural y sus Príncipios”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, vol. 9 (2006): 58-66.

⁶⁸ Molina, F., “Conciencia y Destino”, op. cit.

⁶⁹ Molina, F., “A Modo de Prólogo,” (blog), <http://habitosinderesis.blogspot.com.es/>; and “Scintilla Animaee” (blog) <http://scintillaanimaee.blogspot.com.es/>

⁷⁰ Sellés, J. F., “La Sindéresis o Razón Natural como la Apertura Cognoscitiva de la Persona Humana a su Propia Naturaleza”, *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, 10, (2003) pp.321-333.

⁷¹ Sellés J. F., “The Anthropological Foundation of Ethics and its Dualities”, *Journal of Polian Studies*, 1 (2014) 47-77.

⁷² Sellés, J. F., *Antropología para Inconformes* (Madrid: Rialp, 2006). This book has been translated in a reduced version as *Anthropology For Rebels: A Different Way of Doing Philosophical Anthropology* (Nairobi: Strathmore University Press, 2011).

⁷³ Sellés, J. F., *Conocer y Amar Estudio de los Objetos y Operaciones Del Entendimiento y de la Voluntad Según Tomás De Aquino* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1995).

⁷⁴ Sellés, J. F., *Curso Breve de Teoría del Conocimiento* (Bogotá: Universidad de la Sabana, 1997).

⁷⁵ Sellés, J. F., *Hábitos y Virtud III* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1988).

*Práctica según Tomás de Aquino*⁷⁶, *Los hábitos intelectuales según Tomás de Aquino*⁷⁷, *Los hábitos adquiridos. Las virtudes de la inteligencia y de la voluntad según Tomás de Aquino*⁷⁸. These books are a good introduction to Leonardo Polo's works, since they give the background of Polo's thought, and make them more relevant to the reader's situation.

Sellés' contribution regarding our topic can be summarized in his latest and dense article in English, "The Anthropological Foundations of Ethics and its Dualities", already mentioned above, in which he explains how synderesis is the habit that allows the knowledge of ethics as an intermediary science between metaphysics and transcendental anthropology; how synderesis is the link between the intellect and the practical reason, and how it is the support of all virtues and acts of the practical reason and of the will. To understand it in full one needs to understand some of Leonardo Polo's basic concepts, such as what he means by dualities, and the difference between the personal and essential levels. This article will benefit from including some more daily life examples to make it easier to understand the process of making decisions, as is done in his *Antropología para Inconformes*.

Josu Ahedo published in 2009 his doctoral thesis *La Dualidad Tipológica Básica desde la Antropología Trascendental de Leonardo Polo*⁷⁹, which was the base for *El conocimiento de la naturaleza humana desde la sindéresis: estudio de la propuesta de Leonardo Polo*⁸⁰, and "La necesidad de educar según el hábito de la sindéresis"⁸¹. Ahedo's works are good for an internal hermeneutics of Polo's text because he uses Polo's own terminology and frequently cites Polo's texts together with those of his disciples. This makes reading it a bit difficult for those not acquainted with Polo's terminology, but rich for those knowing it. The dual consideration of act of being and essence which sometimes appears as triadic may be confusing as also does the remark in the same page that "only what is perfect can be distinguished from the act of being, and thus nature, which is not yet perfect, it is not

⁷⁶ Sellés, J. F., *Razón Teórica y Razón Práctica según Tomás De Aquino* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2000).

⁷⁷ Sellés, J. F., *Los Hábitos Intelectuales según Tomás De Aquino* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2008).

⁷⁸ Sellés, J. F., *Los Hábitos Adquiridos. Las Virtudes de la Inteligencia y de la Voluntad Según Tomás de Aquino* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2000).

⁷⁹ Ahedo, J., *La Dualidad Tipológica Básica desde la Antropología Trascendental de Leonardo Polo*, Doctoral Thesis, (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2009).

⁸⁰ Ahedo, J., *El Conocimiento de la Naturaleza Humana desde la Sindéresis: Estudio de la Propuesta de Leonardo Polo* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2010).

⁸¹ Ahedo, J., "La Necesidad de Educar según El Hábito de la Sindéresis", *Metafísica y Persona*, 10, (2013), 3-21.

the essence”⁸² can be missinterpreted as is the essence can be fused with what is natural, mainly corporeal, when the essence for Polo is strictly spiritual. The application of synderesis to education is a practical illustration of how theory could support or even modify practice.

Other publications that are helpful to understand Polo’s concept of ethics are the following: *La voluntad de poder y el poder de la voluntad. Una glosa a la propuesta antropológica de Leonardo Polo a la vista de la averiguación nietzscheana*⁸³ which has some indirect references to the topic. Among the journal articles two are relevant to our topic: “Ideas centrales de la ética de Leonardo Polo”⁸⁴, “Persona y naturaleza en la ética de Polo”⁸⁵. This deep and well-documented study of Ana Marta González is centred on the consideration of the person as the act of being that makes it the root of free decisions, which is the first condition for any ethical decision.

While there are very many reviews on Polo’s books on anthropology and theory of knowledge we found only the three reviews on his book *Ethics*, two of *La voluntad y sus actos* and one of *El yo*. These books are the ones more related to the topic we are interested in. This indicates the little attention that the foundation of Ethics in Polo has so far received in comparison to his anthropology and epistemology, not to mention the little impact that his overall work has had in the English speaking world as commented above with regards to *Ethics*⁸⁶. Not that he is well known in other languages because there is only one other work translated to any other language: *Chi è l'uomo: uno spirito nel tempo*⁸⁷ in Italian.

⁸² “La esencia es la perfección, y como tal se distingue del *actus essendi* porque sólo lo perfecto se puede distinguir del *actus essendi*, por eso la naturaleza, que no es perfecta, no es todavía la esencia”. Ahedo, J., *El Conocimiento de la Naturaleza Humana desde la Sindéresis: Estudio de la Propuesta de Leonardo Polo*, ed. cit., 54.

⁸³ Posada, J. M., *Voluntad de Poder y Poder de la Voluntad. Una Glosa a la Propuesta Antropológica de Leonardo Polo a la Vista de la Averiguación Nietzscheana* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 2004).

⁸⁴ Gallardo et al., “Ideas Centrales de la Ética de Leonardo Polo”, in *Futurizar el Presente: Estudios sobre La Filosofía de Leonardo Polo* (Málaga, Universidad de Málaga, 2003).

⁸⁵ González, A. M., “Persona y Naturaleza en la Ética De Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 29 (1996), 665-679.

⁸⁶ Polo, L., *Ethics: A Modern Version of its Classic Themes*, op. cit.

⁸⁷ Polo, L., *Chi È L'uomo: Uno Spirito nel Tempo*, trans. Patrizia Bonagura, (Milán: Vita e pensiero, 1992), translated articles and books cfr. <http://www.leonardopol.net/idiomas.htm>

Other Publications that use his anthropology and ethical views to comment on various issues: “La seriedad de la ética”⁸⁸, “Eudaimonía y destino”⁸⁹, “La ética pública o la doble moral”⁹⁰, “Caracterización de la voluntad nativa”⁹¹, “La voluntad y el voluntarismo en gnoseología según los escritos del profesor Polo”⁹², “La unidad de la vida humana (Aristóteles y Polo)”⁹³ and “Vita viventis est essentia”⁹⁴, “La experiencia de la libertad (Bergson-Polo)”⁹⁵, “La experiencia del tiempo humano. De Bergson a Polo”⁹⁶. There are also references to our topic on: “El tiempo humano y la virtud ética como modo de ganar tiempo”⁹⁷, “La tarea del educador: la sindéresis”⁹⁸.

8. Concurrent views on Polo's understanding of synderesis

There is agreement between the quoted authors that Polo understands synderesis as an innate habit which is responsible for the knowledge of the first principles of practical reason and that in this he follows the traditional view, originated by Jerome in his commentary to the book of Ezekiel 1:10, and that the study of synderesis was mainly developed in the middle ages and summarized by St. Thomas Aquinas.

They also accept that in Polo's philosophy synderesis is developed further and his role is amplified and explained, becoming the channel by which the personal level (act of being) “activates” the intelligence and will. Synderesis is also the connection between the

⁸⁸ Barco del, J., “La Seriedad de la Ética”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 29/2 (1996) 387-396.

⁸⁹ Corazón, R., “Eudaimonía y Destino”, *Studia Poliana*, 2 (2000) 165-189.

⁹⁰ Corazón, R., “La Ética Pública o la Doble Moral”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, vol. 18 (2008) 1-6.

⁹¹ Aranguren, J., “Caracterización de la Voluntad Nativa”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 29/2 (1996), 347-358.

⁹² García González, J. A., “La Voluntad y el Voluntarismo en Gnoseología según los Escritos del Profesor Polo”, *Studium*, vol. 25 (1985), 515-522.

⁹³ Castillo, G., “La Unidad de la Vida Humana (Aristóteles y Leonardo Polo)”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 29 (1996), 415-426.

⁹⁴ Castillo, G., “«Vita Viventis est Essentia». La Actividad Vital Humana en el Planteamiento de la «Antropología Trascendental»”, *Studia Poliana*, vol. 3, (2001), 61-71.

⁹⁵ Umeres, L. G., “La Experiencia de la Libertad: Bergson-Polo”, in *Futurizar El Presente: Estudios sobre la Filosofía de Leonardo Polo*, Universidad de Málaga, Málaga, 2003), 145-151.

⁹⁶ Umeres, L. G., *La Experiencia del Tiempo Humano. De Bergson a Polo* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2001).

⁹⁷ Castillo, G., “El Tiempo Humano y la Virtud Ética como Modo de Ganar Tiempo”, *Studia Poliana*, 12 (2010), 117-127.

⁹⁸ Izaguirre, J.M., - Moros, E. R., “La Tarea del Educador: La Sindéresis”, *Studia Poliana*, 9 (2007), 103-127.

intelligence and the will and through them of soul and body. The links between synderesis and ethics are touched upon only by the three authors mentioned: Ahedo, Molina and Sellés but not as the main topic of their studies.

8. Synderesis in Polo's works

A quick analysis on the number of times the word synderesis appears in the books and articles of Polo's already published works shows where he touches on this topic, and helps in the chronology of its development.

No	Work	No sindéresis appears
1	Antropología transcendental. Tomo II: La esencia de la persona humana	235
2	Antropología transcendental. Tomo I: La persona humana	55
3	La voluntad y sus actos (I)	53
4	La voluntad y sus actos (II)	41
5	Epistemología, Creación y Elevación	29
6	Nietzsche como pensador de dualidades	26
7	Ética: hacia una versión moderna de los temas clásicos	22
8	El Yo	19
9	Ética socrática y moral cristiana	7
10	El cto. racional de la realidad	5
11	La conexión sistemática de las virtudes	3
12	Las organizaciones primarias y la empresa	3
13	La conexión de las virtudes	3
14	Antropología de la Acción Directiva	2
15	El Conocimiento del Universo Físico	2
16	Persona y Libertad	2
17	Las virtudes morales	1
18	Curso de teoría del conocimiento. Tomo IV. Segunda parte	1
19	La crítica kantiana del conocimiento	1
20	La Amistad en Aristóteles	1
Total		511

Table 1: 'Synderesis' Frequency in L. Polo works.

According to the chart the second volume of *Antropología trascendental* (Polo, 2003) is the one in which the word synderesis is most used, more than the rest of the books put together. Thematically the book deals with the essence of man, which, in Polo's philosophy, studies synderesis and the human faculties; the mind and the will and their habits. The two volumes of *Antropología trascendental* are, according to Polo, his most important works, and the ones that explain the greatest gains achieved by his philosophical method.

The will is one of the faculties linked to the synderesis, so it is only natural that synderesis will be treated at length in *La voluntad y sus actos* I y II, which were published just before the first volume of *Antropología trascendental*.

Epistemología, Creación y Elevación is the book where Polo applies the findings of his transcendental anthropology to Christology.

Being the last book Polo wrote, it summarises regarding synderesis what he explained at length in *Antropología transcendental*, volume II.

In his book *Nietzsche, creador de dualidades* contrasts Nietzsche's understanding of the will to his own anthropology.

Polo only deals directly on Ethics in two books: *Ética: hacia una versión nueva de los temas clásicos* (1993) and *Lecciones de Ética*. The content of *Lecciones de Ética (1981-1982)* is older than *Ethics. Ethics* clearly is a more mature work.

In *El yo*, Polo analyses the understanding of the self by different philosophers.

In the remaining works synderesis is touched upon incidentally but not discussed at length. Nevertheless, synderesis, though coming late in his works, became crucial in Polo's philosophy. Because of synderesis being a linchpin between the person and the essence of man, it cannot be understood without making reference to Polo's other works on ontology and theory of knowledge which we shall quote in this dissertation.

The earliest book in which synderesis appears cited is in 1993 in his book *Ética*. Nevertheless, the content of *Lecciones de Ética* was delivered in the academic year 1981-1982, even if it was published in 2013 and in it synderesis is mentioned four times. Because Polo used to revise and modify all books for publishing we cannot be certain that the use of synderesis started in 1981 until the critical edition of his works is done⁹⁹.

10. Gaps in research

There is little documentation that proves the existence of synderesis. There are few works that contrast Polo's proposal with alternative proposals.

Polo's synderesis can help explain some of the difficulties modern authors find when dealing with topics related to the synderesis such as moral law, ethics' foundation, vocational ethics, etc.

⁹⁹ “Es más, esta descripción de la sindéresis que Polo desarrolla en la *Antropología Trascendental* no la encontramos como tal en sus escritos anteriores. Hay que hacer notar al respecto que en el *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento* no aparece el hábito innato de sindéresis, por lo que allí se dice que los hábitos adquiridos dependen directamente del intelecto personal (cfr. Polo L., *Curso de Teoría*, IV/2, 370). Sin embargo, Polo no entra en contradicción en la *Antropología*, I; más bien, con el estudio de la sindéresis esclarece y eleva’—tras una etapa de maduración— las indicaciones de sus escritos precedentes”. Piá Tarazona, S., “Sobre las Dualidades Intelectuales Superiores”, *Studia Poliana*, 3 (2001), 151.

Polo and his commentators are scant in showing how the knowledge of the synderesis can improve the life of humans in practical life, except for the two articles on education already cited above.

The previous literature on this subject could be enhanced by including all the texts in which Polo refers to synderesis and interlinking them in order to establish Polo's doctrine on synderesis.

How synderesis relates to common sense, natural moral law, and the self, can be dealt in more depth, rather than repeating Polo's proposals.

It will be good to try to explain Polo's thought using common words that will make his Anthropology more understandable for those with little background on his special terminology.

II. Research objectives

First and foremost the dissertation will try to see:

Whether synderesis exists. How can it be proven?

If it does exist, does it work according to Polo's explanation?

Is synderesis the door that allows communication between the different structural levels of the human being?

Is synderesis the key to understanding the relationship between the person and his/her decisions?

Is Polo's 'Transcendental anthropology' a tool that helps to understand how moral decisions are taken?

Secondly, the dissertation will compare Polo's proposals with some philosophers who dealt with the foundation of ethics. We nevertheless, should focus on Leonardo Polo's contribution, because the topic is too wide and we think that his contribution can have deeper insights than the other great authors.

In this section we have seen what has been said, so far, regarding Polo's view on synderesis. In the next chapter —Methodology— we discuss how we are to tackle the questions we have raised.



CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation will probably be read by two types of people: those who know and have read Leonardo Polo in depth and those who hardly know his philosophy. The dissertation is done in a way that people with little background on Polo's philosophy may understand his basic principles. We apologise to those who know Polo's philosophy because their knowledge of Polo's philosophical works has probably more breadth and depth than the summary given in this work.

Generally, it is better to move from the known, that which can be understood by any literate person, to establish a common ground, and from there move gradually to the less known. This is not easy because Polo liked to give new meaning to common expressions as it is frequent with creative philosophers. As we shall mention, he found it difficult to find terms for his ideas and had to struggle with language. His struggle is noticeable, giving at times several names to the same concept in order to give a more precise account of a particular reality. The meanings he gives are mainly taken from Madrid's colloquial Spanish, and from his extensive philosophical readings, especially Heidegger among contemporary philosophers. The reader is supposed to have some knowledge of Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas philosophies to understand properly what Polo asserts. The terms Polo uses can be confusing —even to Spanish readers— so to minimise the unavoidable limitations of all translations, especially noticeable in the case of Polo's works, we include Polo original texts in Spanish¹.

¹ Mimbi comments about Polo's cryptic language: The honest seeker is only confused by this endless labyrinth of words. One is then left wondering if scholarship would not be overplaying its hand with such reconstructions"... "In my view three things make Polo's thought cryptic: a) his love for negative statements ("el intelecto agente no es..."); this has the effect of sending the mind off on a wild goose chase without ever settling on anything; b) the change he has wrought on the meaning of some classic concepts, thus 'transcendental', 'nature', 'essence', 'person', 'agent intellect', etc.; when one reads Polo he assumes these concepts keep the meaning given them by classical philosophy, yet...; c) his penchant for applying many terms to the same idea, e.g. to characterize what he calls mental presence (*presencia mental*), he uses no less than eighteen terms (cf. *El Acceso Al Ser*, 14): *diferencia pura, lo vasto, mismidad, unicidad, ya, suposición, haber*, etc.; now this is a sure recipe for perplexity!!! *Multiplicantur entia (rationis) sine necessitate...*". Cfr. Mimbi, P., "The Discourse of the Method, Questions On Polo's Method of the Abandonment of the Limit", *Miscelánea Poliana*, 33 (2011), 31.

We have used two types of methodology in our research: personal research of his works and conversations with people who are conversant with his works and knew him personally. The personal research consisted in the critical reading of Polo's works that are related to the foundation of ethics in order to get a unified interpretation of his conception of synderesis and of the works of his disciples who have dealt on the topics researched. In the historical chapter we have read those authors who had dealt with synderesis in a relevant way.

We have discussed Polo's ideas with several of his disciples and also with students and faculty not conversant with his philosophy, to see whether the topics discussed are relevant to their lives. We also met other researchers specialised in Leonardo Polo's philosophy to contrast the tentative interpretations of the texts and gather some more points of view.

1. Quotation style

The thesis' external director requested us to use the citation style of the Studia Poliana because most of Polo's books and of those studying his works use it, and this makes cross references easier. Nevertheless, later it was agreed to use the Chicago-Turabian style, which is more frequent in academic literature written in English.

We have used bold numbers in the superscripts of each note for easy reading.

2. On citations

Leonardo Polo's quotations, as explained above, are given both in English and Spanish for easy cross-checking. The disadvantage is that quotes become lengthier.

We may also indicate that Polo books, and in general philosophical books, are not easily accessible to African readers. Because of this, whenever possible, we have quoted the internet version, which makes the original texts more accessible.

It might be relevant to clarify some points regarding the method at this stage.

Regarding sources, we are open to any source that may shed light on the topic at hand. Any assertion that appeals to different cultures, or different levels of knowledge may have some deep reality behind it. Quotations from the *Bible*, *Quran*, *Vedas*, religious authors, philosophers, poets or any other testimony are taken at their face value, i.e. as expressions of human experiences, not as "authorities". Because of this we have not used nobility titles or other public recognition titles

such as count, saint, cardinal, and so on throughout the text unless they are used in the quoted texts.

On the term “synderesis”, while we have limited to find its sources we are more interested about the reality it points at, than to its actual origin and the evolution of its meaning, be it ontological or merely functional.

Whenever we have found it helpful to include some comment within a quote we have done it between square brackets [], which we use exclusively for this purpose.

3. On Bibliography

In order to facilitate cross-checking we have listed the books, articles, web-blogs in alphabetical order according to the author's surname. Some people prefer to distinguish primary and secondary sources but due to the number of quotations books and articles consulted it will also be difficult to make a fool-proof classification understood equally by all readers.

4. Organic method

It is good, nevertheless, to take a leaf from Leonardo Polo's method in that synderesis, like most topics related to the core of human structure, have to be treated organically, not analytically nor synthetically². Synderesis is not part of a mechanism that can be isolated and studied apart from the rest. Synderesis cannot be considered as an element that mixes with other elements to form a compound. It is an all-involving aspect of a spiritual and organic structure. This is why its partial study, focusing exclusively on it, is rather difficult because it has to do with many different interrelated topics. This also means that its study can be started from many different areas. We start by painting a general view of the different methods listed above, to be followed by a more detailed ontological analysis. This will make some repetitions

² Polo utilises the comparison with the ecology to point out how the organic systems should be studied. “The ecological approach pays attention mainly to the side effects, i.e. the disturbances that the ecological system experiences when intervening in some of its parts, without taking into account the correlation among them. When those interferences take place in an ecological system, the disturbances are less intense than those produced in an organism or in the human essence”. “El planteamiento ecológico fija su atención principalmente en los efectos secundarios, es decir, en las perturbaciones que el sistema ecológico experimenta cuando se interviene en algunas de sus partes, sin tener en cuenta la correlación que existe entre todas ellas. Cuando esos inconvenientes tienen lugar en un sistema ecológico, las perturbaciones son menos intensas que lo que se produce en un organismo y en la esencia humana”. Polo, L., *Ayudar a Crecer: Cuestiones de Filosofía de la Educación* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006), 55.

and cross references unavoidable. We point out some of the different perspectives next.

5. Different perspectives

Synderesis is one reality but multi-faceted and therefore it can be accessed from many angles. This partially responds to the traditional distinction between the ‘material object’ (the reality) and the ‘formal object’ (the angle or method used to study it). We can try to see the reality behind the term ‘synderesis’ from the linguistic, psychological, anthropological, epistemological, sociological, moral, ontological and natural theology views. We look into some of these different approaches:

a) Linguistical

Leonardo Polo hardly deals on the issue of names; he does mention frequently the etymology of words, or at times he uses the original words in Greek, Latin or German, but does not give the references or different possible meanings. He seems to be more interested in the realities behind the words and only refers to their original meaning when they clarify the issue at hand. He also does not give many direct quotations and hardly ever cites his sources. In the later books his assistants tried to find citations for him, which he usually acknowledged either in the introduction or at the end of the book³. There is therefore ample room for research in finding the actual texts Polo refers to or to find the likely inspiring sources to his proposals⁴. One can try to go deeper and analyse the different levels of meaning as Putnam suggests⁵, but that will be a really difficult task because of the width and length of Polo’s interests. Polo is mainly concerned with the development of topics and therefore he either does not want to get distracted remembering the exact place where he found the information or he does not want to distract the readers with it. More than on authorities he relies on the weight of the reality he is speaking about. This explanation is important especially on this topic because the only quotation we have found on the original meaning of synderesis is as follows: “The etymology of the word synderesis refers to this [vigilance]: ‘sintereo’ I accompany with attentive invigilation. A

³ Cfr. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental* II, 2 (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010), 300.

⁴ Some of his disciples did this in their own publications. Cfr. González Ginocchio, D., *El Acto De Conocer: Antecedentes Aristotélicos De Leonardo Polo* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2005); Yepes Stork, R., *La Doctrina Del Acto En Aristóteles* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1993). Molina, F., *La Sindéresis*, ed. cit. Sellés, J. F., “La Sindéresis o Razón Natural como la Apertura Cognoscitiva de la Persona Humana a su Propia Naturaleza”, op. cit.; Corazón, R., *El Objeto de la Metafísica en la Tradición Aristotélico-Tomista y en Polo*, op. cit.

⁵ “I shall be defending what one might call pragmatic pluralism, the recognition that it is no accident that in everyday language we employ many different kinds of discourses”. Putnam, H., *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005), 21.

superior light that illuminates the praxis of means that makes itself the admission criteria”⁶.

We have already discussed the origin and current use of the word in Chapter I, and we may conclude that while there are good studies on the linguistic origin and use of the word, Polo does not refer directly to any of them.

b) Psychologically

The psychological approach is discussed in Section II, Chapter I, when discussing whether synderesis actually exists. Synderesis appears mainly as an internal experience, on which we have to reflect to be able to speak about it. People, without knowing it, use different names that hide its ontological reality: ‘I’, ‘self’, ‘myself’ and other words which are related mainly to consciousness. Synderesis is for Polo, the “I”, the “Me” depending on how we translate the Spanish “Yo” and also as “conscience” in its psychological acception, more than in its moral meaning⁷. A similar confusion, or at least not proper distinction, can be found in Rosmini⁸. We believe that what is psychological has an important value to know reality better as Levinas suggests: “I believe that psychological ‘accidents’ are the ways under which the ontological relationships are shown. The psychological is not a vicissitude”⁹.

c) Anthropologically

Some approaches to anthropology have no room for synderesis, others treat it in different ways depending on the focus they have. Sociological Anthropology looks at the way society gives or recognises the individuality of the different members of society; Archaeological Anthropology looks at the traces of self identity left in the human cultural artifacts left by men; Paleontological Anthropology does it looking at the marks of self identity left by the human remains; Biological Anthropology to the biological signs of self identity in the DNA, and so on. Polo’s *Trascendental Anthropology* considers synderesis as the link between the root of each person which is the act of being with the powers that constitute its manifestations at the essential and natural level. We are discussing Polo’s proposal and we use some of the established achievements of the other approaches when relevant,

⁶ “La etimología de la palabra sindéresis alude a esto: sintereo, vigilo con atención acompañando. Una luz superior ilumina la praxis medial erigiéndose en criterio de admisión”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 164.

⁷ It is interesting to note the the ‘I’ and ‘conscience’ are related but not identical.

⁸ “Este sentimiento con el cual somos conscientes de percibir la honestidad de nuestro juicio práctico con la ley, acompañada de paz del corazón, o la deformidad del disenso acompañada de los remordimientos se llama conciencia”. Rosmini, A., *De La Conciencia Ética* (Barcelona: PPU, 1996), 163.

⁹ “Yo creo que los «accidentes» psicológicos son las maneras bajo las que se muestran las relaciones ontológicas. Lo psicológico no es una peripecia”. Levinas, E., *Ética e Infinito* (Madrid: Visor, 1995), 65.

but we do not enter into specific discussions at their level, since we are not specialists on any of them.

d) Epistemologically

There are several things we may consider regarding synderesis as knowledge: 1) it's being an intellectual habit, 2) the specific type of habitual knowledge synderesis gives, 3) the hierarchical position of synderesis with regards to other types of knowledge, 4) the way synderesis is known 5) the actual content synderesis gives as knowledge, 6) synderesis capacity to grow as knowledge.

We may advance that synderesis is a way to know but neither sensitive, nor objective but habitual knowledge. Habitual knowledge for Polo is higher than the “objectual” or “operational” knowledge. It is an “actual” knowledge which is always in act but as a habit. It is not an object, not an operation. It is not “presentative” but “habitual” or “monstrative”. Because of this in the moment one tries to make it “objective” it ceases to understand what it actually is. It is something similar as trying to consider the “esse” as an object because what one then gets is the “ens”¹⁰. When Polo tried to explain his anthropological approach he realised that he had to explain in more detail his theory of knowledge and after several years of research and lectures on the topic he published the 4 volumes of his *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*¹¹. Only then did he feel comfortable and wrote the two volumes of *Antropología transcendental*. He sometimes calls habitual knowledge “mostrative” indicating that it just indicates something is, but that the habit cannot be reduced to what is ‘objective’ or ‘presential’ knowledge¹².

e) Sociologically

Leonardo Polo links synderesis with culture, as the habit that controls the way the person relates with the external world and with other people¹³. This will not be possible without language which is the first cultural product and the only way to communicate among people to both work together producing new things and to share intimacies.

¹⁰ It is interesting how ‘natural law’ is seen as the way to have a remedy to the effects of globalization in economy. Tarcisio Bertone seems to understand ‘natural law’ objectively, more than as synderesis, which is habitual knowledge. Bertone, T., *L'etica del Bene Comune nella Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, op. cit. In this he is not alone, but we have the impression that the common tendency is to understand natural law in an objective way rather than as a habit.

¹¹ Cfr. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental* I, op. cit., 16-18.

¹² “The expression or manifestation of the verb in the names is not a demonstration: to show is not to demonstrate”. “La manifestación o expresión del verbo en los nombres no es una demostración: mostrar no es demostrar”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento* II (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006), 329.

¹³ Cfr. Murillo, J. I., “La Teoría de la Cultura de Leonardo Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 29 (1996), 851-868.

An important thing Polo states is that there is a kind of typology that can be established among people both because of their biological inheritance and their cultural environment, both modulated by the consequences of personal decisions. The type of being either a woman or a man, for example, is one of the most easily recognised types. “The manifestation of the personal self is modulated, above all, by types. The correspondence between types and culture allows certain generalizations, which are specific to the method of cultural sociology”¹⁴.

Typification has to do with culture and therefore with society and with ethics. Aristotle already noticed the importance of culture that Leonardo Polo takes to a superior level, explaining how the personal level influences and improves the received culture. “All human societies have a number of common convictions; about this Aristotle wrote one of his most important works, ‘The Topics’, which is a logical theory of convictions and of discussions. We are able to share among ourselves much more than animals, precisely because we have personal identity, a display of our spirit that can be typically manifested to others; man is a manifestative being, but can retract this manifestation, not wanting to appear; this has to do with truth and lies. What is typical of man is organised in habits. Habits are the essentialization of specific types. Moral habits are another dimension of ethics”¹⁵.

This is not the place to point out the sociological importance of synderesis; that demonstration will come from proving how society is part of man’s inner core and how that core comes out through synderesis. Here we just point out that there is a relationship between the ontological nature of man and his social behaviour and that sociology has to be aware that synderesis has a part to play in it.

An interesting sociological topic is the study of human rights, which is a growing topic as societies of originally different cultures are increasingly more linked thanks to the new means of communication and transport. In our topic this is the connection between synderesis and natural moral law, which is also very interesting for

¹⁴ “Personal being manifestation is spread out, above all, by the types. The correspondence between types and culture allows for some generalizations that are proper to cultural sociology’s methodology”. “La manifestación del ser personal es modulada, ante todo, por los tipos. La correspondencia entre los tipos y la cultura permite ciertas generalizaciones, que son propias del método de la sociología cultural”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, (Madrid: Aedos, 1997), 78.

¹⁵ “Todas las sociedades humanas tienen una serie de convicciones comunes (sobre esto Aristóteles escribió una de sus obras más importantes, los Tópicos, que es una teoría lógica de las convicciones y de la discusión). Somos capaces de poner en común mucho más que los animales, precisamente porque tenemos una identidad personal, un despliegue de nuestro espíritu; y eso se lo podemos manifestar típicamente a los demás; el hombre es un ser manifestativo, pero puede retrajerse, no querer manifestarse (esto tiene que ver con la verdad y con la mentira). Lo típico en el hombre es coordinable en virtud de los hábitos. Los hábitos son la esencialización de los tipos específicos. Los hábitos morales son otra dimensión de la ética”. *Ibid.*, 77.

international law. Dupla points out that even if the agreement about the content of these rights is almost universal the agreement on their foundation is far from being agreed upon¹⁶.

f) Ontologically

Synderesis for Polo is the highest habit at the essential level of the human person¹⁷. It is an innate habit and depends on the act of being to be actualised, which is done through the bodily faculties, and more specifically through the brain, because, Polo believes that unless the senses are actualised, the act of being cannot configure the intelligence and the will in their potentialities, as Aristotle, Aquinas and Bonaventure defended¹⁸. This does not mean that knowledge is a bodily function, or that all knowledge is sensitive as Polo clarifies in detail in his four volumes of *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*.

The personal transcendentals, which could be one of Polo's most important contributions to anthropology, are constitutive or better said, are identical to, the act of being. As we shall explain, the agent intellect and personal love are personal radicals, and are the ultimate source of the operations of the intelligence and the will. In case of defective body functions the radicals remain as acts, but will not be able to activate the intelligence and will, which are just instruments or potentialities. Synderesis is innate but different from the other two innate habits –the habit of the first principles and the habit of wisdom– that

¹⁶ “The researcher whose attention is drawn towards human rights will soon notice a clear lack of proportion between the large degree of agreement reached on the content of those rights and the blatant discrepancy regarding their foundation. Indeed, human rights stand at contemporary consciousness as moral reference in spite of the profuse cultural and ideological fragmentation our world. They practically enjoy universal acceptance; thought this unanimity changes to its opposite as soon as one asks to make explicit the reasons that guarantee the objectivity and universality of human rights”. “El estudioso cuya atención se vea solicitada por el tema de los derechos humanos no tardará en advertir una clara desproporción entre el amplio grado de alcanzado acerca del contenido de esos derechos y la clamorosa discrepancia en lo tocante a su fundamentación. En efecto, los derechos humanos se yerguen ante la conciencia contemporánea como referentes morales que, a pesar de la profusa fragmentación cultural e ideológica de nuestro mundo, gozan de aceptación prácticamente universal; mas esta unanimidad se muda en su contrario tan pronto reclamamos se hagan explícitas las razones que garantizan la objetividad y universalidad de esos derechos”. Rodríguez Dupla, L., *Etica de la Vida Buena*, (Bilbao, Desclée de Brouwer, 2006), 79.

¹⁷ Polo uses the word apex, as the highest point. "Human powers are perfectible by habits, which themselves are not accidents, because even I must say that the apex of the human essence is an innate habit, synderesis named from the Middle Ages, which has already been discussed in the transcendental Anthropology II". "La potencia humana es perfeccionable por hábitos, los cuales propiamente no son accidentes, pues incluso hay que decir que el ápice de la esencia humana es un hábito innato, del que ya se ha tratado en la Antropología trascendental II, la sindéresis, así llamado desde el Medievo". Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2014), 87.

¹⁸ “Intelligence depends on what is given to abstract, because intelligence begins abstracting from images “La inteligencia depende de lo que se le dé para abstraer, porque la inteligencia empieza abstrayendo a partir de las imágenes”. Polo, L., *Ayudar a Crecer: Cuestiones de Filosofía de la Educación*, op. cit., 149.

Polo places at the personal level, and that are mainly related to the knowledge of beings. The innate habit of synderesis is, nevertheless, different on two accounts, one in that it belongs to the essential level and two, that it is dual in itself, having to do with knowledge (I-see) and with the will (I-want).

Summing up, the ontological status of synderesis for Polo is that of a spiritual innate habit, directly linked to the act of being, and being the communication centre with the human material condition, the body.

g) Theologically

There are two ways or two knowledge levels dealing with theology. They do not depend on the theme, which is always God and the relations to Him, but on the way of acquiring knowledge, that is, on the method. To the best of our understanding this can be easily confused, when dealing with revealed texts. These texts can be used as examples, cultural or psychological manifestations of spirituality, which will indicate that one remains at the natural level of thinking proper of philosophy rather than the supernatural proper of the faith where they are considered as unfailing truths that are the basis of theological knowledge and enquiry. The first approach is what I believe Polo does in most of his works. Nevertheless, he specifically says that his last work he uses his philosophical findings to penetrate deeper in the faith he professes.

Leonardo Polo, who had a deep faith and lived by it, frequently uses texts from many different sources, frequently from the Bible or other religious works, mainly of the Roman Catholic Church. He does not use them as authorities, but sometimes as examples for his readers, who are mainly acquainted with the Roman-Catholic traditions, and at other times to show how his philosophical discoveries can help to understand better the truths of faith. It is not infrequent, though, especially in conferences or articles directed to mainly Roman Catholic participants, that he bases some of his arguments on their shared faith. On our topic, even if he knew well the mystical interpretation of synderesis, especially through Eckhart and Bonaventure, he does not refer to synderesis under such aspect. For Polo, the direct way to contact God is at the personal level, not above it—which is the mystical way defended by Eckhart and Bonaventure—, unless God elevates the soul above its natural capacities. For him synderesis is at the essential level even if it is at its apex, as we mentioned before. The intellectual habit that knows about personal relationships is “wisdom” and there it is where the relationship with God of every human person takes place.

In this dissertation we shall keep to the philosophical method, the natural or metaphysical method.

h) Ethically

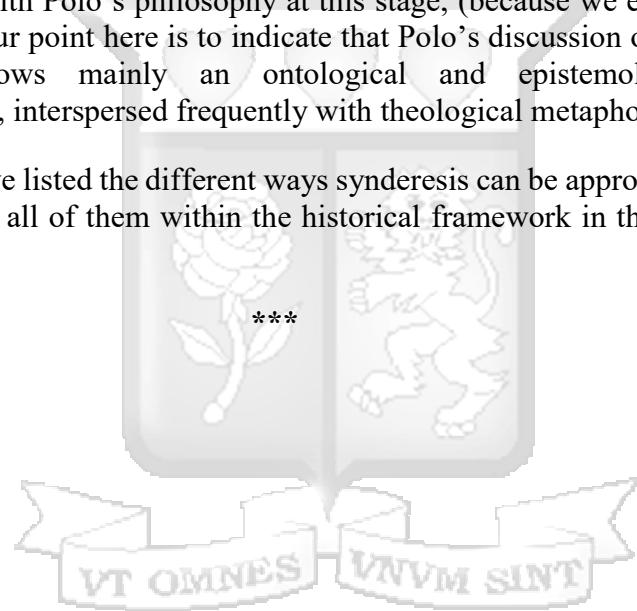
What we look in synderesis is whether it can be standard criteria of morality. As MacIntyre wisely says, “when we inquire about what

it is for something to be just or red or equal, the rational first move is to offer examples, to try and give a list of just actions or red objects or cases of equality. But such a list misses the point of the inquiry. What we want to know is not which actions are just, but what it is in virtue of which actions are just. What is it that enables us to mark off those cases which genuinely belong on our list from those that do not? We need a criterion. Wittgenstein will suggest that the criterion is embodied in a rule, and the rule in a socially established practice. Augustine will suggest that the criterion is given by an interior illumination which is a gift of God. Plato finds his criterion in the knowledge of the Forms”¹⁹. We shall see whether Polo’s criteria can be synderesis.

6. Summary of Methodology

While many of the references we have made on ways to approach Polo’s proposal can be rather confusing for those who are not acquainted with Polo’s philosophy at this stage, (because we explain them later) our point here is to indicate that Polo’s discussion of synderesis follows mainly an ontological and epistemological methodology, interspersed frequently with theological metaphors.

We have listed the different ways synderesis can be approached. We shall use all of them within the historical framework in the next chapter.



¹⁹ MacIntyre, A. C., *A Short History of Ethics*, op. cit., 48.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL APPROACH I

CLASSIC AND MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHERS

1. Introduction

The historical section should give a broad view of the origin, evolution, the related topics and the different and sometimes divergent views of synderesis. If synderesis is real, is there a chance of having only one view that can encompass all positions? To be able to do this one needs to be aware of all interpretations and show how they can be combined. Will this mean that we may fall into syncretistic or eclectic expositions? By syncretism we understand a position that accepts opposing and even contradictory views without being aware of it; this we should try to avoid because it will be accepting internal contradictions. What about eclecticism? Properly speaking eclecticism is a positive approach. An eclectic combines ideas coming from different sources leading to a deepening and clarification of the issue at hand. To be eclectic does not necessarily mean to join contrary or contradictory ideas, but to take ideas from different sources, that, at first view, may not go well together. Eclecticism is a mark of a great thinker. Aristotle and Aquinas could be described as great eclectics. Polo does not use this distinction. Polo employs the term eclectic mainly in its negative meaning¹. He prefers to use synthesiser rather than eclectic e.g. saying that Aquinas is a great synthesiser². This refers to our topic in the sense that Polo may also be a great synthesiser if he manages to combine the different, apparently contradictory, historical views of synderesis.

While Polo brings many novel ideas and terms, and his approach to synderesis is new, he nevertheless tries to uplift and acknowledge

¹ E.g. “In the present time there is an eclectic tendency, to mix models, without care for their consistency”. “En la época actual hay tendencia al ecleticismo, a la mezcla de modelos, sin preguntarse por la coherencia”. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Ética* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2013), 31.

² “Because being able to blend Aristotle with Neoplatonism, Thomistic philosophy is a very powerful synthesis”. “Por conciliar a Aristóteles con el neoplatonismo, la filosofía tomista es una síntesis muy potente”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental* II, op. cit., 210. This view is not unique to Polo but widespread: “La doctrina de Santo Tomás del fundamento de la moralidad es una síntesis maravillosa que integra elementos del pensamiento ético de Platón, Aristóteles y del estoicismo, trasponiéndolos y desarrollándolos en una misma visión que basa la moralidad en la naturaleza humana creada por Dios”. Elders, L., “El Fundamento de la Moralidad de Nuestros Actos”, in *Actas De La XXVIII Semana Tomista* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad Católica Argentina, 2004), 36.

the previous contributions to the topic. Novelty, originality, does not mean to be totally different from tradition which could be a sign of lack of penetration and perhaps a bit of intellectual pride. Leonardo Polo, is extremely original in his approach to philosophy and in the use of novel terms to explain it; nevertheless, he never wanted to be original: “I insist on this point. To seek the truth means to try to advance in research. If one is a philosopher or a scientist this is a must. To be or not to be original is secondary. Furthermore in philosophical disciplines it is not possible to propose something new without finding a pied-à-terre in previous thoughts that deserved to be commented and developed. This is why I have recommended my disciples not to just repeat me”³.

One could say that reality is not dependent on our knowledge, but we do depend on our knowledge of reality, and this knowledge can grow. Because of this capacity to grow our understanding of the world is greatly based on what others have discovered. Not only we grow in the knowledge of reality, this knowledge also changes reality. Aristotle could not speak about aeroplanes, rockets, electricity, etc., which now we can. Furthermore new knowledge and techniques allow us to have better instruments to know reality (telescopes, microscopes, particle accelerators and so on); the continuous progress in thinking allows us to see reality in a better, deeper way. The topic at hand is not indifferent to its historical development. Though we agree that “all this question of origins is secondary”⁴, it is good to know as much as we can about synderesis’ genealogy, to spot all nuances and see how the topic evolves and becomes clearer, or the consequences of having forgotten it. In this way “synderesis” can be better known; not because we are smarter than our predecessors, or that we have discovered their mistakes. It is a refinement of approach and an increased capacity for research. Nowadays the number of people devoted to research in any field are far more than in previous centuries, we have more means — libraries, better editions of sources, facility to share resources, etc.— and above all, we have more means to know and listen to previous scholars than ever before, so we can improve on what they worked on, so we can know reality perhaps with a bit more detail, or in a little more depth.

The purpose of this section is twofold: firstly, to set the “status quaestionis”, which will help us set Polo’s proposal in perspective; and secondly will also allow us to understand Polo’s references to previous authors’ proposals. This historical section cannot be exhaustive; it is just indicative of the mosaic of opinions regarding synderesis. It does not intend either to touch on all associated topics such as conscience,

³ “Insistiré en este punto. Buscar la verdad comporta tratar de avanzar en la investigación. En la medida en que uno puede, debe hacerlo si es filósofo o científico. Ser original o no es una cuestión secundaria. Por otra parte, en esas disciplinas no cabe proponer novedades sin encontrar un punto de apoyo en planteamientos anteriores, que merecen una glosa y una continuación. Por lo demás, siempre he recomendado a mis discípulos que no se reduzcan a repetirme”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 12.

⁴ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 155.

natural law, habitual knowledge, intellect and will, which will distract us from the main topic.

Following the traditional historical division, we have structure the section into authors of classical, medieval, modern and contemporary philosophies. We have divided the sections in two chapters due to their length.

2. *Synderesis in Classical Philosophers*

“Synteresis” or “synderesis” is not a topic discussed by any of the classical philosophers⁵. Even the word is hardly found on classic literature. Outside St. Jerome (c. 347–420) the word appeared only in 4 occasions in the whole of the classic Greek preserved texts⁶. A related topic “synedesis” was used more frequently. “J. Dupon holds that synedesis –found in the classical dramatists and in Plato and Aristotle but becoming rare after the period of Chrysippus– owed its prevalence at the beginning of the Christian era to the ‘enseignement populaire d’allure cynico-stoicienne’ whence St. Paul borrowed it”⁷.

But even the “synedesis” was not studied directly, nor in depth as Potts comments: “Conscience has been much neglected by philosophers. It is not directly treated in ancient philosophy”⁸. So in spite of what medieval authors say seeking the authority of classic philosophers to support their positions we can conclude that both the term and the reality behind synderesis is foreign to classical thinkers.

Nevertheless, the need to understand oneself, others and society permeates mythical, religious and wisdom knowledge. The topics related to law were worked both by philosophers and jurists. The most quoted jurists of the Roman classic period are Cicero (106-43 B.C.)⁹,

⁵ “Classical Greek and Roman ethics, to my knowledge, do not contain anything like the principle, “Do good and avoid evil”. Of course it is impossible to establish a historical negative of this sort, but in several years of research for my History of Ethics, nothing really like the synderesis principle was found”. Bourke, V.J., “The Background of Aquinas’ Synderesis Principle”, in Lloyd P. Gerson (ed.), *Graceful Reason* (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983), 352.

⁶ Cfr. Stephanus, H., *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, vol. 7, 14.2. 1290-1 as quoted by Crowe, op.cit., 154.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 153 note 3.

⁸ Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

⁹ “Natural law is that which has not had its origin in the opinions of men, but has been implanted by some innate instinct, such as religion, affection, gratitude, revenge, attention to one’s superiors, truth” Cicero, M.T., *De Inventione* trans. Yonge, C.D. II, 161. Accessed Jan 12, 2014. <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/cicero/dnvindex.htm>. “Naturae ius est, quod non opinio genuit, sed quaedam in natura vis insevit, ut religionem, pietatem, gratiam, vindicationem, observantiam, veritatem”. *De Inventione*, *Ibid.*, II, 161.

and Ulpian (170-228)¹⁰ as seen in the Justinian *Digest*¹¹. Both authors were very influential on the medieval period.

3. Medieval thinkers. Transition Period

The classical treatise by O. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XII et XIII siècles* speaks of three periods in the conceptual development of synderesis: an elaboration period which goes up to the middle of the XIII Century, the consolidation of the treatise by Bonaventure and Thomas though in divergent ways, and a third period that is the consolidation of the two approaches¹².

While Origen, Jerome, Augustin and Boethius live within the classic period they tend to be studied among medieval authors because the content and method they use is clearly different from the non-Christian philosophers of their time. We follow this tradition because of the influence that the Christian revelation had in their thought.

While Origen (185-254) did not deal directly with the topic and did not use the term synderesis, his first homily on Ezequiel vision is, nevertheless, thought to have influenced Jerome's commentary. Jerome was an admirer of Origen and he had translated his homilies on Ezekiel before writing his own commentary “with the difference that for Origen the eagle signifies ‘spiritus praesidens animae’¹³, not synderesis¹⁴.

¹⁰ “Natural law is what nature teaches all animals”. “Ius naturale est, quod natura omnia animalia docuit”. Justinian Digest, Dig. 1.1.1.3. *The Latin Library*, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/justinian/digest1.shtml>. Accessed Sept. 1, 2015. “As far as the ius civile is concerned, slaves are not regarded as persons. This, however, is not true under natural law, because, so far as natural law is concerned, all men are equal”. *Ibid.*, Dig. 50.17.32.

¹¹ The Justinian Digest is a collection ordered by the Emperor Justinian in 530 a.d. that summarised 1.500 previous law books, and became the only non-statutory source for legal disputes. “Book, I Title I. Concerning Natural Law, The Law of Nations, And The Civil Law. Natural Law is that which nature has taught to all animals, for this law is not peculiar to the human race, but applies to all creatures which originate in the air, or the earth, and in the sea. Hence arises the union of the male and the female which we designate marriage; and hence are derived the procreation and the education of children; for we see that other animals also act as though endowed with knowledge of this law”. Accessed Sept. 1, 2015. http://www.constitution.org/sps/sps02_j1-1.htm “Dig. 1.1.1.3. Ulpianus 1 inst. Ius naturale est, quod natura omnia animalia docuit: nam ius istud non humani generis proprium, sed omnium animalium, quae in terra, quae in mari nascuntur, avium quoque commune est. hinc descendit maris atque feminae coniunctio, quam nos matrimonium appellamus, hinc liberorum procreatio, hinc educatio: videmus enim cetera quoque animalia, feras etiam istius iuris peritia censer”. Accessed Sept. 1, 2015. <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/justinian/digest1.shtml>

¹² Lottin, O. D., *Psychologie et Morale aux XII et XIII siecles*, vol. II, 1, (Louvain: Gembloux & J. Duculot, 1948), 105.

¹³ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 15.

¹⁴ “Wherever the spirit went, the living creatures also went’. These living creatures have this ‘likeness over themselves of a man’, though they are ‘of four faces’. *Ezek*

a) Jerome (c. 347–420). Jerome was never aware, nor anyone else until eight hundred years later, that a single word would cause such rivers of ink. Jerome's use of "synteresis" instead of "synedesis" in his commentary to Ezekiel I, 10, generated, and is still generating, lots of texts as this dissertation is proof. Peter Lombard is, in part, the main cause because, some eight hundred years later, he included Jerome's commentary in his book *Sentences*, which became the basic textbook for medieval universities and a required text to comment for those who wanted to become Lecturers of Theology. This meant that Jerome's synderesis was commented in no less than 200 medieval summas¹⁵. This was because any lecturer had to present a commentary to the *Summa* as a requisite to become a master and use his text to lecture.

It is important to read the full text of Jerome's commentary to be able to understand these commentaries: "Most people interpret the man, the lion and the ox as the rational, emotional and appetitive parts of the soul, following the division by Plato, who calls them the *logikon* and *thymikon* and *epithymetikon*, locating reason in the brain, emotion in the gall-bladder and appetite in the liver. And they posit a fourth part which is above and beyond these three, and which the Greeks call *synteresin*: that spark of conscience which was not even extinguished in the breast of Cain after he was turned out of Paradise, and by which we discern that we sin, when we are overcome by pleasures or frenzy and meanwhile are misled by an imitation of reason. They reckon that this is, strictly speaking, the eagle, which is not mixed up with the other three, but corrects them when they go wrong, and of which we read in Scripture as the spirit 'which intercedes for us with ineffable groaning' (*Romans*, VIII, 26). 'For no one knows what a man is really like, except the spirit which is in him' (*I Corinthians*, 2:11). And, writing to the Thessalonians, Paul also entreats for it to be kept sound together with soul and body (*1 Thessalonians*, 5:23). However, we also see that this conscience is cast down in some people, who have neither shame nor insight regarding their offences, and loses its place, as is written in the book of *Proverbs*: 'When the wicked man reaches the depths of sin, he doesn't care at all'. (*Proverbs*, XVIII, 3.) So they

I, 5. It is not said at the beginning that they are of four faces, but since among the four faces a human face rises above and holds precedence, it is described. It is also called 'a human face and the face of a lion on the right of the four parts, and a face of a calf to the left of the four, and a face of an eagle to the four parts' (*Ezek* I: 5, 10). Let us see, then, whether it signifies the tripartite soul concerning which it has also been discussed in the doctrines of others. Let us see whether in the tripartite soul another part, the fourth, that is, force, presides. What is the tripartition of the soul? By 'man' the rational part is being indicated; by 'lion' its irascible part; by 'calf' its desirous part. But the 'spirit' who presides to help is not 'to the right', as the man and lion, he is not 'at the left', as the calf, but he is over all three faces. For in another passage the eagle is declared (*Ezek.*, I: 4, 10), so that through the eagle he signifies the presiding spirit of the soul. But I am speaking of the "spirit of man who is in him" (cf. *I Cor* 2:10). And thus all things are led by the will of God". PG, 13, 681B; cf., PL 25, 706-7.

¹⁵ Cfr., Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., 2002, 90.

deserve to be told: ‘You have acquired the face of a prostitute, you refuse to blush’ (*Jeremiah*, III, 3)’¹⁶.

Though the text has already been over-commented we would like to distinguish here between the linguistic to the theological, anthropological, psychological, epistemological and ontological approaches which are usually intertwined in most commentators.

Linguistically there are a number of researchers that defend that Jerome never used the word “synteresis”, that he used “syneidesis”. Later either he or more likely a Latin copyist got confused and wrote synteresis instead of syneidesis¹⁷. What is factual is that “synteresis” was the term used by Habranus Mauring in his own text on *Ezech. I* (PL, 110, 508) probably written about 842 A.D. He does not actually comment on the text; he only transcribes it. Another factual thing is that the commentators use “synderesis” rather than “synteresis” and that both terms are acceptable in English while only “synderesis” and its equivalents are used in most other modern languages. It is also important to note that the “the term that came into the Schools was synderesis and not syneidesis (which the scholastics never use)”¹⁸. Whatever the case, the term caught fire on moral medieval philosophy. In the XIII Century synderesis was said to be different things, perhaps never thought by St. Jerome himself. In modern philosophy and perhaps due to the influence of Luther the term was hardly used both in theology and in philosophy¹⁹.

Theologically we can say that Jerome’s work and that of his commentators have a clearly theological grounding and a theological

¹⁶ “Alii vero qui philosophorum stultam sequuntur sapientiam, duo hemisphaeria in duabus templi Cherubim, nos et Antipodas, quasi supinos et cadentes homines supicantur. Plerique, juxta Platonem, rationale animae, et irascitivum, et concupiscitivum, quod ille vocat ad hominem, et leonem ac vitulum referunt: rationem et cognitionem, et mentem, et consilium, eamdemque virtutem atque sapientiam in cerebri arce ponentes: feritatem vero et iracundiam atque violentiam in leone, quae consistat in felle. Porro libidinem, luxuriam, et omnium voluptatum cupidinet in jecore, id est, in vito qui terrae operibus haereat. Quartamque ponunt quae super haec et extra haec tria est, quam Graeci vocant quae scintilla conscientiae in Cain quoque pectore, postquam ejectus est de paradyso, non extinguitur, et qua victi voluptatibus, vel furore, ipsaque interdum rationis decepti similitudine, nos peccare sentimus. Quam proprie Aquilae deputant, non se miscentem tribus, sed tria errantia corrigentem, quam in Scripturis interdum vocari legimus spiritum, qui interpellat pro nobis gemitis inenarrabilibus (*Rom. VIII:26*). *Nemo enim scit ea quae hominis sunt, nisi spiritus qui in eo est* (*I Cor. II:11*). Quem et Paulus ad Thessalonenses scribens, cum anima et corpore servari integrum deprecatur (*I Thess. V*). Et tamen hanc quoque ipsam conscientiam, juxta illud quod in Proverbis scriptum est *Impius cum venerit in profundum peccatorum, contemnit* (*Prov. XVIII: 13*): cernimus prcipitari apud quosdam et suum locum amittere, qui ne pudorem quidem el verecundiam habent in delictis, et merentur audire: *Facies meretricis facta est tibi, noliusti* (Al. Nescis) *erubescere* (*Jerem. III: 3*)”. Minge Patrologia Latina, 25, (Paris: Garnier frères et J.-P. Migne successores, 1884), Lib I Cap I, 21 Translation taken from *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁷ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 153, note 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁹ Cfr. Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit.

intent. It is based on God's word through one of his great prophets, Ezekiel. It is furthermore supported by three canonical texts of St. Paul's letters and a text of the *Proverbs*²⁰. This is why some authors dismiss the study of synderesis as a Christian theological issue, with no relevance to philosophy. For the commentators it had also the authority of St. Jerome who was the great scholar saint who translated the entire *Bible* into Latin and that was, and still is, the recognised authorised translation for the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless he also quotes Plato and refers to other Greeks who he does not specify and being an issue relating to man it does have interest in anthropology.

Anthropologically we can see Jerome knows Plato's tripartite division of the soul -the rational, irascible and concupiscent, that he quotes in Greek. The interesting thing is that he adds a fourth one (the eagle), which he places above all the other three. In Plato's approach the reason is the charioteer that controls the two horses: the irascible and the concupiscent. Jerome's fourth element is above reason and does not mix with any of the other three. This means that it is a different type and furthermore that it is infallible, which none of the other three are. This affects all humans, not only Christians. So it is not difficult to understand why there was a lot of interest on this topic to the point of being set for special "disputations" in the XII and XIII Centuries.

Psychologically it presents numerous questions, for example, whether it is related to the appetitive or to the cognitive powers, or whether synderesis is a new type of faculty. What type of supremacy will it have to the rational and to the appetitive powers? Will it be identical in all men? Will it be the same in men and women?

Epistemologically there are two basic questions: how do we know synderesis, and, if it is a type of knowledge, what type of knowledge is it? If it is different from the intelligence, how does it control the rational part of the soul? The quote of *Romans* VIII, 26 points out to something different from *ratio*, for two reasons: one, because it is above "*ratio*"; and secondly, because "it produces ineffable groanings". Ineffable means that reason does not understand, cannot represent it, and therefore cannot speak about it.

Ontologically are perhaps the more radical questions: what type of being has synderesis? Is it 'potency', a 'habit' or an 'act'? How does it relate to the other powers, potencies, habits and acts? What moves it to act? What type of activity does it have? Even more radical modern scholars ask: does it exist at all? Or is just a construct of Jerome to explain a mystical vision?

Morally: Morality seems to be synderesis' main purpose; to remind what is good and what is evil even to the damned; "by which we discern that we sin". Furthermore, it keeps the moral commands,

²⁰ *Rom.* VIII: 26; *I Cor.* II: 11; *I Thess.*V; *Prov.* XVIII: 13.

notwithstanding the behaviour of the person, such as the unrepented Cain, to whom the synderesis reminds continuously of his sin. Jerome is nevertheless, aware that one can become insensible to synderesis' promptings as the Jeremiah's quote included in his text, indicates.

b) *Augustine* (354–430). The Bishop of Hippo, who was contemporary to Jerome, did not use the term *synderesis* or *synteresis* in any of his works. He nevertheless will be influential in the discussion that started in the XII Century because of his theory of the two reasons: the “*ratio inferior*” and the “*ratio sublimior*”²¹. “Yet action, by which we use temporal things well, differs from contemplation of eternal things; and the latter is reckoned to wisdom, the former to knowledge. For although that which is wisdom can also be called knowledge, as the apostle too speaks, where he says: ‘Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known’; when doubtless he meant his words to be understood of the knowledge of the contemplation of God, which will be the highest reward of the saints; yet where he says: ‘For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit’, certainly he distinguishes without doubt these two things, although he does not explain the difference, nor in what way one may be discerned from the other. But having examined a great number of passages from the Holy Scriptures, I find it written in the Book of Job, that holy man being the speaker: ‘Behold, piety, that is wisdom; but to depart from evil is knowledge’. In thus distinguishing, it must be understood that wisdom belongs to contemplation, knowledge to action”²².

Augustine may have got this distinction through Plotinus, or from the Stoic Posidonius “hegenomikon”. This topic somehow reappears in later authors as the distinction between the “intelligentia” as contrasted with “ratio”²³.

c) *Isidore of Sevilla* (560–636). The *Etymologies* of Isidore of Sevilla was one of the most important reference books for the early medieval times. He modified the definition of Natural Law of the Justinian *Digest*. Some authors claim that his alterations created more

²¹ Cf. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, vol. 3, trans Philip Schaff, (Grand Rapids Michigan: WM B Eerdmans, 1887), 240. Accessed September 12, 2014.
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.html>.

²² “Distat tamen ab aeternorum contemplatione actio qua bene utimur temporalibus rebus, et illa sapientiae, haec scientiae deputatur. Quanvis enim et illa qua sapientia est, possit scientia nuncupari, sicut el Apostolus loquitur, ubi dicit, Nunc scio eae parte, tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum (*I Cor. XIII*, 12); quam scientiam profecto contemplationis Dei vult intelligi, quod sanctorum erit premium summum: tamen ubi dicit, Alii quidem datur per Spiritum sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae secundum eumdem Spiritum (*Id.*, XII, 8); haec utique duo sine dubitatione distinguit, licet not ibi explicit quid intersit, et unde possit utrumque dignosci. Verum Scripturarum sanctorum multiplicem copiam scrutatus, invenio scriptum esse in libro Job, eodem santo viro loquente: Ecce pietas est sapientis; abstinere autem a mails est scientia (*Job XXVIII*, 28). In ha differentia intelligentium est ad contemplationem sapientiam, ad actionem scientiam pertinere”. Augustine, St., *De Trinitate*, XII, 14: 22.

²³ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 156-157.

confusion than clarity²⁴. The link of his definition with synderesis is that he used the expression “the instinct of nature”, which will influence, through Gratian, most Canon lawyers in medieval times.

d) Other early medieval authors. Other influential authors, for example Boethius or the very influential book Pseudo-Denis, do not mention *synderesis*. At the beginning of the XII Century Gundislinus brought up the two divisions of the soul between the upper and lower one in his translation of Avicenna's *De Anima* and his *De immortalitate Animae*, which was commented by William of Auvergne's *De immortalitate*, which will be linked to synderesis by the XII century commentators since it could be easily linked to the superior and inferior reason of Augustine²⁵.

It is also interesting to note that important authors among the early medieval theologians do not use the term *synderesis* in their works, for example, William of Campeaux (c.1070-1122), Peter Abelard (c.1079-142), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and that Crowe concludes that in the time from St. Jerome to the end of the XII Century both in theology and canon law, “the term occurs sporadically. The canonists, in fact, never adopted it; and its popularity with the theologians was only assured after the year 1200”²⁶.

4. XII Century

According to Cunningham, the early commentators were mainly considering two topics regarding synderesis: “These earlier thinkers, however, were mainly preoccupied with two problems: the indestructibility of synderesis, and its infallibility as guardian of the moral order directing man to moral goodness”²⁷.

a) Gratian c. 1150. We know very little about Gratian because, like many medieval artists, architects, sculptors and builders of the

²⁴ “IV. QVID SIT IUS NATVRALE. [1] Ius autem naturale [est], aut civile, aut gentium. Ius naturale [est] commune omnium nationum, et quod ubique instinctu naturae, non constitutione aliqua habetur; ut viri et feminae coniunctio, liberorum successio et educatio, communis omnium possessio, et omnium una libertas, adquisitio eorum quae caelo, terra marique capiuntur. [2] Item depositae rei vel commendatae pecuniae restitutio, violentiae per vim repulsio. Nam hoc, aut si quid huic simile est, numquam iniustum [est], sed naturale aequumque habetur”. “What natural law is (Quid sit ius naturale) 1. Law is either natural, or civil, or of nations. Natural law (ius naturale) is common to all nations, and, because it exists everywhere by the instinct of nature, it is not kept by any regulation. Such is the union of a man and woman, the children's inheritance and education, the common possession of everything, a single freedom for all, and the right to acquire whatever is taken from the sky, the earth, and the sea”. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 117.

²⁵ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 157.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁷ Cunningham, S. B., *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 220.

great cathedrals, he gave more importance to his work than to his name. Gratian is the author of the greatest compilation of law after the Justinian *Digest*. His work, which tried to revise all Canon Law up to his time and resolve the conflicting canons, was the textbook used in all universities to teach canon law until it was superseded with the publication of the official *Code of Canon Law* in 1917. This fact alone explains the influence of his definition of natural law which was taken from Isidore²⁸.

b) Other earlier jurists. As Ojakangas points out²⁹, other XII-XIII Century jurists –most of them in Bologna– continue using the term “naturalis ius” though without precision. The texts of the main jurists of that time, Azo of Bologna, (1150–1230), Accursius (1182–1263) and Henry of Bracton (1210–1268) lack the precision that the theologians will demand³⁰. Some of their texts can be interpreted as if “natural law” meant that all nature was God³¹ –which probably was

²⁸ “Humanum genus duobus regitur, naturali videlicet iure et moribus. Ius nature est, quod in lege et evangelio continetur, quo quisque iubetur alii facere, quod sibi vult fieri, et prohibetur alii inferre, quod sibi nolit fieri. Unde Christus in evangelio: ‘Omnia quecumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, et vos eadem facite illis. Hec est enim lex et prophete’. Hinc Ysidorus in V libro *Ethimologiarum* ait: Divine leges natura, humane moribus constant. Omnes leges aut divine sunt, aut humane. Divine natura, humane moribus constant, ideoque he discrepant, quoniam alie aliis gentibus placent. (§ 1) Fas lex divina est: ius lex humana. Transire per agrum alienum, fas est, ius non est. Ex verbis huius auctoritatis evidenter datur intelligi, in quo differant inter se lex divina et humana, cum omne quod fas est, nomine divine uel naturalis legis accipiatur, nomine uero legis humane mores iure conscripti et traditi intelligantur. (§ 1) Est autem ius generale nomen, multas sub se continens species. Unde in eodem libro Ysidorus ait: (D. 1 c. 2) Ius genus, lex species eius est”. Gratian, *Decretum* D.1 d.a.c.l, ed. Emil Friedberg (Leipzig, 1879, repr- Graz, 1959).

²⁹ Ojakangas, M., *The Voice of Conscience: A Political Genealogy of Western Ethical Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 52.

³⁰ For example, Accursius defines it as follows: “Natural law is a type of law, that all animals are knowledgeable and experts from birth, i.e. from God. [...] I correctly say all animals: because it applies not only to humans, but to all animals, even to the heavens”. *Accursius Institutionum* Vol. 4 (Paris: Claude Chevallon, 1529) col. 13 on Inst. 1.2 “Ius naturale est quoddam ius, quo iure omnia animalia sunt instructa et perita a natura id est a Deo. [...]. Bene dico omnia animalia: quia non solum habet locum in hominibus, sed in omnibus animalibus: Sive in coelo”, as cited by Steven A. Epstein, in *The Medieval Discovery of Nature* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³¹ “In fact, the passing references to the natural law give the impression that the eclecticism has been self-defeating –for it can hardly be said that a clear image of the natural law emerges. And to add to the uncertainty, Accursius, like some of his predecessors, notably Placentinus and Azo, uses the phrase *idest Deus* as an expansion of *natura*. On the face of it this was pantheistic and was to be formally asserted in this sense much later. Accursius makes it clear that he understands God as creator of the world and in that sense the source of the natural law. And in two other contexts Accursius, instead of God, uses the philosophical term *natura naturans*. With Azo and Accursius one sees the explicit influence of the canon lawyers’ definition –natural law, according to Gratian, being what is found in the Law and the Gospel. But, not surprisingly, the real meaning of natural law for the civilians is that found in the Roman law, namely Ulpian’s definition: *quod natura omnia animalia docuit*. This the civilians retained, despite the difficulties in understanding it; and from them it was to find its way into the canonists and, more importantly,

very far from their thinking—. Some texts say that it applied to all that was created by God, and in others that “natural law” only affected human beings³². They probably just wanted to indicate that the base of all law was the will of God inscribed in nature and that His authority was the ultimate reason to obey them.

In fact the disconnection between the canonists and theologians was noticeable, as Ullman points out using Aquinas as point of reference: “on the whole, the mutual relations between St. Thomas Aquinas and the canonists were somewhat strained, and the mutual influence negligible”³³. This does not mean that Aquinas did not deal on Law, but that he treated it in philosophical way from his first works, as other theologians did. One has also to be aware of the great influence his treatise on Law in the Summa had later³⁴. It does not mean either that

into the theologians”. Crowe, M.B., *The Changing Profile of the Natural Law*, (Rotterdam: Springer Science & Business Media, 1978), 91.

³² “The great work in civil jurisprudence was done at Bologna, starting with Irnerius (c.1055–1130/38) and reaching its height with Accursius (c.1184–1263). Accursius gave various descriptions of natural law, including references to natural instinct, *ius gentium*, simple justice or equity as perceived by reason, and a canonic definition that incorporated an element of revelation. Azo, Accursius’ predecessor in Bologna, who died around 1230, had made a similar multiple analysis of natural law. Their eclecticism is characteristic of the civilians generally. They were attentive to the problem(s) of natural law. But if they were puzzled by the different directions it had taken in the past, they were evidently not much concerned whether their reconciliation was more than superficial. It is difficult to conclude that much progress was made, except perhaps to expose the difficulties more plainly”. Weinreb, L., *Natural Law and Justice* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 50. Accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674604261>.

³³ “The Roman idea that the pope as a prince was not bound by the laws, was made to apply not only to human, but also to divine laws. And this particular instance of natural (divine) law provides a fitting occasion to observe, firstly, how little canonistic scholarship was influenced by contemporary scholastic theology and philosophy, and, secondly, that the Thomistic system of law in particular made no impression upon contemporary or later canonists. On the other hand, the Stagirite’s Christian interpreter was frequently at loggerheads with his brethren in the canonistic camp. In one place he charged them with following the human rather than the divine law, whilst in another he complained of the professors of sacred theology who referred to the “glossulas juristarum” as an authority. On the whole, the mutual relations between St. Thomas Aquinas and the canonists were somewhat strained, and the mutual influence negligible”. Ullmann, W., *Medieval Papalism*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 47.

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 90 to 97. “The great thirteenth-century philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas, played a pivotal role in the history and development of Western jurisprudence. During his productive but short life, Aquinas wrote extensively on moral matters, and as a corollary, on topics in political and legal philosophy. His exposition in *Summa Theologiae* on matters of law is often referred to as the classical canon of natural law theory”. Liskka, A., in Pattaro, E. (ed.), *A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence*, (New York: Springer, Dordrecht, 2005), 284. Cfr. also Finnis, J., *Aquinas. Moral, Political and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford, University Press, 1998).

he does not use some of the terms which the jurists, for example, “instinct”³⁵, which his master Albert also used³⁶. As anecdotal proof of this continued schism between theologians, philosophers and jurist is that the author quoted above, Weinreb, in his book *Natural Law and Justice*, written for jurists, does not even mention “synderesis”³⁷. This will excuse us from continuing to look into juridical sources which will divert us from our main topic.

c) Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160). The first actual commentary to Jerome’s text was by Peter Lombard, about eight centuries after Jerome wrote it, in the *Liber Sententiarum*, where he discusses the nature of the will with regards to sin. He asks whether the will is always determined to the good, even in sinners. In the discussion he refers to Jerome’s text but he does not use the word “synderesis” using instead Jerome’s “scintilla conscientia” changing it to “scintilla rationis”³⁸. We give the full text to show how shy he was of using an uncommon word. “Man is therefore rightly said to naturally want what is good, because he was constructed with a good and righteous will. For the higher spark of reason which, as Jerome says, could not even be extinguished in Cain, always wants what is good and hates what is bad (*Commentary on Ezekiel*, I, 7). Others, however, say that there is a mental motivation by which the mind, having abandoned the law of higher things, subjects itself to sins and is attracted by them. Before grace is present to someone, this motivation, according to them, tyrannises and rules over man and suppresses the other motivation.

³⁵“Now, laws that are established should stem from the instinct of nature [ex naturali instinctu], if they are human: just as in the demonstrative sciences, also, every human discovery takes its origin from naturally known principles. But, if they are divine laws, they not only express the instinct of nature but also supplement the deficiency of natural instinct, as things that are divinely revealed surpass the capacity of human reason. Leges autem positae oportet quod ex naturali instinctu procedant, si humanae sunt: sicut etiam in scientiis demonstrativis omnis humana inventio ex principiis naturaliter cognitis initium sumit. Si autem divinae sunt, non solum instinctum naturae explicant, sed etiam defectum naturalis instinctus supplant: sicut ea quae divinitus revelantur, superant naturalis rationis capacitatem”. Aquinas, Th., *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 123 n. 7. Accessed February 13, 2015 <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg3111.html#26768>.

³⁶ It is the instinct, the ‘instinct of conscience (*instinctus conscientiae*), as Albert the Great put it in *Summa De Bono*. Cfr. Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale aux XII et XIII siecles*, vol. II, 1, (Louvain: Gembloux & J. Duculot, 1948), 218.

³⁷ Weinreb, L., *Natural Law and Justice*, op. cit., 50.

³⁸ “Recte ergo dicitur homo naturaliter velle bonum, quia in recta et bona voluntate conditus est. Superior enim scintilla rationis, quae etiam, ut ait Hieron. (18), in Cain non potuit extingui, bonum semper vult, et malum semper odit. Alium auten dicunt motum esse quo mens relicta superiorum lege subjicit se peccatis, eisque oblectatur. Iste motus, ut aiunt, antequam adsit alicui grata, dominatur et regnat in homine, alterumque deprimit motum; uterque tamen ex libero arbitrio est. Veniente autem gratia ille malus motus eliditur, et alter naturaliter bonus liberatur, et adjuvatur ut efficaciter bonum velit bonum, no tamen absolute concedi oportet bonam habere voluntatem set potius malam. Alii autem dicunt unam esse voluntatem, it est, unum motum, quo naturaliter vult homo bonum, et ex vitio vult homo malum, eoque delectatur: et in quantum vult bonum, naturaliter bonus est; in quantum malum vult, malus est”. Lombard, P., *Liber Sententiarum*, II, d. 39, par. 3 (PL, 192, 747A).

However, this is by free choice. When grace comes, the bad motivation is crushed and the other, naturally good one is freed and helped so that it is effective in wanting what is good. But before grace, although a man naturally wants what is good, yet it must not be allowed without qualification that he has a good will, but rather an evil one”³⁹.

It is worth noticing that Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* “down to the sixteenth century it was the textbook in the university courses, upon which each future doctor had to lecture during two years”⁴⁰. It can be guessed that further speculation on the topic was mainly based on Lombard’s text. Also that he does not really mention, nor discusses synderesis directly, and furthermore that he does not accept or reject Jerome’s position with regards to the problem he is discussing. It is left open for the future commentators to read Jerome’s original text and make their enlightened choice.

It is only after the death of Peter Lombard that the word “synderesis” appears for the first time after Jerome’s in the Commentary in the *Sentences*⁴¹ of Master Udo, written about 1165 and in the five books on the commentary to the *Sentences* of Peter Poitiers (c.1130 c.1215). Simon of Bisiniano (1173-1176), a canonist, in his *Summa super Decretum* seems to be the first who suggested a link between synderesis and natural law: “Nearly seventy years before Albert had ever tackled these questions, that is, around 1175, one of the decretists, Simon de Bisiniano, had already anticipated the Albertinian position by equating natural right with synderesis”⁴². But it was Stephen Langton (c.1150 c.1228) who was the first one to discuss synderesis as a topic on its own, placing it squarely as part of our rational knowledge⁴³. Godfrey of Poitiers (c. 1231) adds to the discussion the relationship between synderesis and sin, merit and demerit⁴⁴. For Alexander Neckam (1157-1217) synderesis is closer to the will than to the intelligence; nevertheless he also says that it belongs to the Augustinian “ratio superior”⁴⁵. William of Gascoigne, asserts in his treatise

³⁹ Translated by Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., 93.

⁴⁰ Ghellinck, J., “Peter Lombard”, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

⁴¹ “Aquila uero significat sinderesim (*Vienne 1050*: sinendesim) id est superiorem rationem que etiam “in Cain extincta non est, nunquam se miscentem tribus, sed ipsa semper errantia corrigentem”. Text from Lottin, O., op. cit., 107.

⁴² Cunningham, S. B., *Reclaiming Moral Agency*, op. cit., 220. & Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 156.

⁴³ “Est quaeda vis qua homo naturaliter detestatur malum, et est pars vis rationis!”. p.114 (another version) has “Synderesis est pars accidentalis vis rationalis”. Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 112.

⁴⁴ “Such questions were provoked by Jerome’s phrase, Comm. in *Ezech. I:1* (PL, 25, 22) “Et tam hanc ipsan quoque conscientiam cernimus praecipitare apud quosdam et suum locum ammittere”. Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 115-119.

⁴⁵ “Ratione ergo usus talis sinderesis comparatur scintillae, ratione simplicitatis puero, ratione contemplationis rerum supracestium aquila... secundum dicentes sinderesim esse desiderium, deberet sinderesis potius figurari per vitulum quam per aquilam”. Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 122.

(1203-8) that natural law is an “instinct of human nature”, adding that its discovery arises from a “contemplation of a unique sort”⁴⁶.

The XII Century progress can then be summarised as follows: synderesis becomes part of the mandatory discussions in all universities thanks to Peter Lombard’s inclusion of Jerome’s commentary in his *Sentences*. The jurists on their own develop the topic of natural law mainly based on Cicero as transmitted and changed slightly by Isidore’s *Ethymologies*⁴⁷. Both topics are linked by Simon de Bisiano. Thanks to Stephen Langton the name and topic of synderesis becomes a topic on its own. From then on there is an open discussion whether synderesis belongs to the intellect or the will, and its relationship with conscience and natural law and that at these early stages there is no clear agreement between the different proposals.

5. XIII Century: first half

Taking into account that there is a chronological continuity because the division on centuries is arbitrary, the XIII Century is where the topic of synderesis is dealt with in depth and somehow crystallises to our days. The topics dealt with in the previous Century continue during the first half of the XIII century. The second half is where the three great minds of medieval philosophy, Albert the Great, Thomas of Aquinas and Bonaventure give the two classical and somehow divergent approaches to synderesis. After then the commentators will repeat either Thomas or Bonaventure positions, while others will follow the “via nova” and not even mention the topic, for example, William of Ockham.

a) *William of Auxerre* (†1231), who lived across the two centuries, dealt with synderesis in his *Summa Aurea*. He was asked by Pope Gregory IX to revise the available books of Aristotle in Latin in spite of his Augustinian background. He defended that synderesis was within Augustines’ *ratio superior* but that nevertheless, it could be corrupted⁴⁸. Also “in his *Summa* he connects the precepts of natural law to those of synderesis”⁴⁹, and in this he influenced Phillip the Chancellor.

⁴⁶ Greene, R.A., op. cit., 180.

⁴⁷ “In a recurrent way, Cicero underlines his purpose of attaining a plane of philosophically organic justification of the moral order”. Cfr. Corso de Estrada, L., “Marcus Tullius Cicero and the Role of Nature in the Knowledge of Moral Good”, *Natural Law: Historical, Systematic and Juridical Approaches* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008), 9.

⁴⁸ “Quaeritur utrum ratio peccet et praecipue utrum ratio superior sive sinderesis peccet. Nobis videtur sine praejudicio quod sinderesis est superior pars rationis et Ipsa aliquando peccat”. Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 123 and p. 125 note 1.

⁴⁹ Celano, A., “The Foundation of Moral Reasoning”, *Diametros*, 38 (2013) p. 9.

b) *Hugh of Saint-Cher, O.P., (c. 1200–1263)* and his disciples followed William of Auxerre's proposals. Roland of Cremona (1178–1259), clarified that the conscience's errors do not come from synderesis, but from the "ratio inferior"⁵⁰. William of Auvergne (1180–1249) disagrees with his predecessors saying that synderesis⁵¹ is not a different faculty, but one of the functions⁵² of the "ratio superior inasmuch as it makes the natural law known"⁵³.

c) *Phillip Chancellor (c. 1160-1236)*. The importance of Phillip is highlighted by Cunningham when he compares his work with what his predecessors had achieved: "From the middle of the twelfth century, the recurrence of the concept of synderesis sparked a number of questions, but almost invariably these questions dealt only with its properties... What is synderesis? Remained largely unanswered. The merit from this impressive undertaking falls to Phillip the Chancellor"⁵⁴. In his *Summa de bono* he was the one who "virtually created the formal treatise on the subject"⁵⁵. But not only his contemporaries speak well of his work; the fact that most of his successors followed his scheme of topics and most of his solutions, also conveys his originality. "Later writers... and even St. Thomas Aquinas, did little more than discuss, and in the same order, the questions raised by Phillip. In the successors of Phillip the Chancellor little that is novel appears, beyond a certain ringing of the changes on the concepts of synderesis, conscience, natural law and habitus"⁵⁶. Phillip puts it in this way: "regarding synderesis which is called the spark of conscience we should ask... whether it is a power of the soul... or a connatural habit of the soul? And if it is a power whether it belongs to the superior or inferior part of the soul, as Augustine classifies them in *The Trinity* book, and the Master of the *Sentences* repeats... To which it should be said that

⁵⁰ "Synderesis est summus rex in regno animae et imperat non fieri malum, et non obeditur sibi sicut facit bonus abbas et mali monachi non obedient ...non sic se habet superior ratio ad inferiorem sicut inferior ratio ad inferiores vires et vide quare; aliquando non potest prohibere inferiorem rationem, quia inferior ratio abstrahitur et allicitur, id est inficitur dulcedine peccati". Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 133.

⁵¹ "Hoc autem sufficienter fit per donumscientiae antedictae, sive per scientiam legis Dei: supervacuae igitur ponunt synderesim istam". William of Auvergne *De Anima*, t. 2, c. 7, 13, 219. Ed. William, and Roland J. Teske (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette UP, 2000).

⁵² "Ex his igitur omnibus manifestum est tibi quod synderesis nunquam errans et nunquam cessans a contradictione et rebellione malorum non potest esse vel dici in anima humana nisi splendor iste legis, naturalis aut vis intellectiva in quantum splendet lumine huius legis scilicet naturalis". Lottin, O., *Psychologie et Morale*, II, op. cit., 125, note 2.

⁵³ Crowe, M. B., "The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics", op. cit., 159.

⁵⁴ Cunningham, S. B., *Reclaiming Moral Agency*, op. cit., 220.

⁵⁵ Crowe, M. B., "The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics", op. cit., 160.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

synderesis, even if according to the form receives the name of a habitual power, I say that it is an innate habit not an acquired one”⁵⁷. In an interesting remain of his Augustine tradition Phillip situates synderesis above freedom⁵⁸. Synderesis belongs to the superior part of the soul, while freedom belongs to the inferior part. In this way he guarantees the infallibility and universality of morals as Plato did. There is some identification of synderesis with the innate will disposition to the good that “will lead to Bonaventura’s concept of the synderesis as the will’s natural inclination”⁵⁹.

d) Alexander of Hales (c. 1185–1245). Alexander’s *Gloss on the Four Books of the Sentences* of Peter Lombard “was particularly important because it was the first time that a book other than the *Bible* was used at the ordinary hours reserved for the study of the *Bible*”⁶⁰. So his influence was great. On our topic he explained the relationship between natural law, conscience and synderesis. Conscience and synderesis are both involved in the cognitive and affective parts of the soul⁶¹. In the hierarchy of knowledge conscience is above reason and synderesis above conscience⁶². For him “natural law is the primary rule, regulating reason through conscience and will through synderesis. However, the distinction between conscience and synderesis

⁵⁷ “Quaerendum est de synderesi, quae dicitur scintilla conscientiae... utrum sit potentia animae es an habitus aliquis connaturalis a principio ens in anima? Et si est potentia utrum sit illa quae est ratio secundum superiorem vel inferiorem partem ejus, prout dividit Augustinus in libro de Trinitate, et Magister in Sententiis ejus recitat divisionem... Ad quod dicendum est quod synderesis, licet secundum formam nominis habitualis potentia, non dico de habitu acquisito sed innato”. Lottin, O., *Op. cit.*, II, op. cit., 1948), 140–2, 145–8.

⁵⁸ “Intellectus duobus modis accipitur. Quandoque dicitur intellectus cognitio principiorum in unaquaque facultate, secundum quod dicit Aristoteles quod intellectus est acceptio immediate propositionis, et secundum hoc intellectus semper est verus in speculativis; eodem modo synderesis semper est vera quantum ad primam viam in faciendis; quia sicut in speculatiis sunt quaedam quae per se sunt nota, que sunt pura natura speculationis, ita in agendis sunt quedam principia agendi per se nota, in quibus ius nature consistit. Quandoque dicitur intellectus potentia intelligendi usualiter, et huius est conferre intelligibilia, et quandoque utitur apparentibus rationibus, quandoque existentibus, et sic intellectus quandoque est verus, quandoque est falsus, sicut dicit Aristoteles quod intellectus potens est fingere multas compositiones que non uenient in rerum natura”. Phillip the Chancellor, *Summa Aurea*, (Paris-Rome: J. Ribaillier, 1982), II, X, c. 6, q. 1, ad. 1), 302.

⁵⁹ Celano, A., “The Foundation of Moral Reasoning”, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁶⁰ Brown, S. F., - Flores, J. C., *The A to Z of Medieval Philosophy And Theology* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2010).

⁶¹ Alexander of Hales, *Summa* II.73.1.2 (Florence: Quaracchi, 1949), II.418.

⁶² “Lex naturalis non est conscientia nec synderesis licet extendendo conveniant in hoc quod est regulare. Differunt tamen quoniam lex proprie est regula facultatis, et primo et per se; mediante autem conscientia est regula facultatis et primo et per se; mediante aut est regula rationis, quoniam conscientia ex lege formatur; mediante vero synderesi, quae est scintilla conscientiae, est regula ipsius voluntatis”. *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, III, q. 27, memb. 2, a.3, (Florence: Quaracchi, 1949), 345.

is a bit blurring when he affirms that in conscience there are two levels and that the superior one is the same as synderesis”⁶³.

e) *John of La Rochelle (c. 1200–1245)*. This author clarifies three senses of conscience: a) one as synderesis; b) the second as the *habitus naturalis dictandi bonum et malum* and; c) the third as “*opinio habita de agendis vel non agendis*”⁶⁴. This already shows a desire of combining the nature of synderesis with its function and relating it with conscience which will be done later by Albert the Great and his disciple Aquinas.

f) *Other authors*. One of them was Gautier de Chateau Thierry (Gualterus de Casto Theodorici, †1249). He continues the discussion trying to distinguish and relate the terms. Gautier distinguishes four meanings of conscience: natural law, synderesis, judgment of inferior reason and the *habitus naturalis* or superior part of reason. He concludes that the four are the same faculty “conscience” endowed with a *habitus* and with different operations. Another was Odo Rigaldus (†1275). According to Davies, Odo “seems to have had direct influence on Bonaventure’s understanding of synderesis”⁶⁵, in that he stresses that synderesis belongs to the affective part of the soul and conscience exclusively to the knowledge. He considers that synderesis illuminates conscience, to which Bonaventure disagrees⁶⁶.

The stage is ready now for the classic treatment of synderesis which will remain fixed up to our days thanks to the work of Albert, Aquinas and Bonaventure in the second half of the Century.

6. XIII Century: second half

The second half of the XIII Century sees the change of influence from the Platonic interpretation of synderesis as “ratio superior” to the Aristotelian view of synderesis being the major premise of the moral syllogism, change that culminates in the works of Albert the Great and his disciple Aquinas. As Crowe insinuates, this is the time in which the classic theories on synderesis, conscience, practical intellect are casted: “it was not until the thirteenth Century that the uncertainties of terminology involved between conscience, synderesis, ratio superior and scintilla were resolved”⁶⁷.

⁶³ *Summa* II.73.2.6, (Florence: Quaracchi, 1949), 426. Cf. Davies, R. G., “The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure”, (Cambridge: Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard, Harvard, 2012), 41. Accessed February, 26 2015, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:9385627>.

⁶⁴ Cfr. Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 160-161.

⁶⁵ Davies, R. G., “The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure” (Cambridge: Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard, Harvard, 2012), 42.

⁶⁶ Lottin, O., *Op. cit.*, II.1.

⁶⁷ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 158.

a) *Bonaventure* (1221–1274)⁶⁸. Bonaventure's interpretation of synderesis is highly influenced by Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246) in his *Mystical Explanatio in libris Dionysii*, probably received through Odo of Rigaud. According to Gallus, synderesis is the “vis anima” (motor of the soul) and the spark of the soul, which is the one able to unite the soul to the divine spirit whenever God touches the soul and ignites it in pure ecstasy of love⁶⁹. Both Gallus and Odo consider synderesis to be a light that illuminates conscience. Bonaventure differs with them on this point; for him synderesis is not light, it is heat. Light is knowledge and as such it belongs to conscience. In the same way that the intellect judges with the help of some innate natural light, the will has its own natural weight which guides it to what is good. It is worth to note that Bonaventure does not use light –*lumen*– but weight –*pondus*–, to stress that synderesis belong to the affective domain not to the cognitive⁷⁰. To make this distinction clearer, Bonaventure compares conscience and synderesis with the supernatural virtues; while faith is knowledge, charity is affection: “synderesis is to conscience as charity is to faith, or as the habit of affect itself is to the habit of the practical intellect”⁷¹. This in Bonaventure does not mean a decrease of the importance of the intelligence as Davies points out: “In doing so, the intellect is not so much abandoned as drawn up into and concentrated in the faculty of love, since for Bonaventure the faculties are ultimately identical to the soul itself in substance. Thus the *mens* is exceeded in a way that includes the intellect within the faculty of affect”⁷². For St. Bonaventure “There is symmetry of activities, and natural dotation. In the same way that the intelligence is endowed with principles to judge and lead to the truth, so in the appetite there should be a natural inclination to the good, and this is synderesis”⁷³.

That the intelligence is natural does not mean that it comes with preconceived knowledge as Plato defended. Bonaventure quotes Aristotle saying that the intelligence is like a “tabula rasa”. Bonaventure agrees with Aristotle: “As the philosopher says ‘there is nothing in the intelligence that was not first in the senses’ and ‘all our knowledge starts in the senses’ which should be understood that all that is in the

⁶⁸ This section owes many of the insights to the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Robert G. Davies: “The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure” (Cambridge: Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard, 2012). Accessed December 14, 2014.

https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9385627/Davis_gsas.harvard_0084L_10307.pdf?sequence=1.

⁶⁹ Lawell, D., “Affective Excess: Ontology and Knowledge in the Thought of Thomas Gallus”, *Dionysius*, 26, (2008), 147.

⁷⁰ “Intellectus; aut necesse erit praeter *conscientiam* et *synderesim* ponere in nobis aliquid directivum, aut necesse est ponere, quod *synderesis* se teneat ex parte affectus”. *In II Sent. d. 39, a. 2, q. 2, concl. ed.* (Florence: Quaracchi, 1949), II. 910.

⁷¹ Bonaventure, St., *In II Sent d. 39, a. 2, q. 2, ad 4, Opera Omnia*, (Florence: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1837), 911.

⁷² Davies, R. G., “The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure”, op. cit., 21.

⁷³ Bonaventure, St., *In II Sent. d. 39, a. 2, q. 1, fund. 4, Opera Omnia*, op. cit., 908.

intelligence is an abstract simile”⁷⁴. The power it has is just potential until it is successively activated by the senses: “no one would ever know ‘whole’ or ‘part’ or ‘father’ or ‘mother’ without some exterior sense receiving its species”⁷⁵. Similarly, synderesis needs to be activated. Bonaventure argued that conscience is an acquired habit in two senses: insofar as it depends on the acquisition of species derived from sense to judge universals and particulars, and insofar as it needs supplemental education to judge particulars. Because of this, conscience has two levels, which Langston calls “potential” and “applied conscience”⁷⁶. Potential conscience is the power the soul has to know the general principles of action, like “obey God”, “respect your parents”. This conscience is innate, as a power, not in its contents, but cannot be wrong. “As the gloss and saints say, synderesis *per se* always encourages to the good and rebukes evil, while we are in this life”⁷⁷. The applied conscience is the application of the general rules to the specific situations of life.

Bonaventure’s conception of synderesis, therefore, contrasts with his predecessors in that he considers conscience as an exclusive habit of knowledge and attributes to synderesis exclusively an affective or motivational purpose. Simplifying his proposal, we can say that synderesis is the flame that kindles conscience, or saying it with another example, it is the starter, the mover that coaxes conscience to work; conscience becomes the repository of the general rules of behaviour in a first instance and then in a second level, applies those rules to the particular circumstances of each decision. Both synderesis and conscience at the general level are innate and therefore cannot be suppressed, though both can be obscured by lack of exercise or by using them incorrectly⁷⁸.

But there is a second sense in which Bonaventure speaks of synderesis, which is linked with Augustin’s and Gallus’ mysticism. Synderesis is the highest degree of union with God. It is not an intellectual union as in Aristotle or Aquinas but a loving union, and this is

⁷⁴ “Unde si aliquando dicat Philosophus (Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 4), quod «nihil est in intellectu, quod prius non fuerit in sensu» et quod «omnis cognitio habet ortum a sensu»; intelligendum est de illis quae quidem habent esse in anima per similitudinem abstractam; et illa dicuntur esse in anima ad modum scripturae”. Bonaventure, St., *In II Sent.* d. 39, a. 1, q. 2, concl. *Ibid.*, 904.

⁷⁵ “Nemo enim imquam cognosceret totum, aut partem, aut patrem, aut matrem, nisi sensu aliquo exteriori speciem eius acciperet; et hinc est, quod «amittentes unum sensum necesse habemus unam scientiam amittere»». Illud aulem lumen sive naturale iudicatorium dirigit ipsam animam in iudicando tamde cognoscibilibus quam de operabilibus”. Bonaventure, St., *In II Sent.* d. 39, a. 1, q. 2, concl. *Ibid.*, 903.

⁷⁶ Langston, D., “The spark of conscience: Bonaventure’s view of conscience and synderesis”, op. cit., 80.

⁷⁷ “Sicut dicunt Sancti et Glossae manifeste, synderesis, quantum est de se, semper habet ad bonum stimulare et peccato remurmurare, quandiu sumus in statu viae”. Bonaventure, St., *In II Sent.* d. 39, a. 2, q. 3, *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., 914.

⁷⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between synderesis and conscience, cfr. Lázaro, M., “Vivencia Interior de la Ley Natural en San Buenaventura: Sindéresis”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 41/1 (2008) p. 87.

why he speaks of an excess of affection⁷⁹; a coming out of oneself, or better, rapture, a taking up by God himself. Actually this is the main topic of Bonaventure's book *The Itinerary of the soul towards God*. The purpose of life is this itinerary, and the purpose is to identify with Christ, perfectly reflected in the life of his founder, Francis of Assisi. Limiting ourselves to the epistemological way it consists of six steps: the first two are based on the world (outside the soul, where it discovers the traces of God) and are sense and imagination; the following two are based on the person (within the soul where the soul discovers the image of God) and are reason and the intellect; and the last two are beyond reason (beyond the soul, where it unites with God) and are intelligence and the spark of synderesis, which is the summit of the soul: "We have six steps in our ascension towards God, 'Therefore, according to the six stages of ascension unto God, there are six stages of the soul's powers by which we mount from the depths to the heights, from the external to the internal, from the temporal to the eternal - to wit, sense, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence, and the apex of the mind, the illumination of synderesis. These stages are implanted in us by nature, deformed by sin, reformed by grace, to be purged by justice, exercised by knowledge, perfected by wisdom'"⁸⁰. This passage suggests that the transformation that occurs in the soul's exceeding of itself is fundamentally one of the soul's motions. To know God ecstatically means to be drawn out of oneself and into God. Another name for the soul's motion toward its object is *amor*. Thus one could say that to love God is to know God in an ecstatic way, or conversely, that to know God ecstatically is love, "because this is a difficult type of knowledge that can only be acquired by the experts and only if the experts are rooted and grounded in love"⁸¹.

Bonaventure's conception of conscience and synderesis is considered opposite to that of Albert the Great, his disciple Aquinas and

⁷⁹ "Excessivum autem modum cognoscendi dico, non quo cognoscens excedat cognitum, sed quo cognoscens fertur in obiectum excedens excessivo quodam modo, erigendo se supra se ipsum". Bonaventure, St., *Quaestiones Disputatae De Scientia Christi*, q. 7, concl. op.cit, VII, 40.

⁸⁰ "Iuxta igitur sex gradus ascensionis in Deum sex sunt gradus potentiarum animae, per quos ascendimus ab imis ad summa, ab exterioribus ad intima, a temporalibus concendimus ad aeterna, scilicet sensus, imaginatio, ratio, intellectus, intelligentia et apex mentis seu synderesis scintilla. Hos gradus in nobis habemus plantatos per naturam, deformatos per culpa, reformatos per gratiam; purgandos per institiam exercendos per scientiam, perficiendos per sapientiam". Bonaventure, St., *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., V. 5, 297. op.cit.

⁸¹ "De quo etiam mystice quasi est tota Scriptura divina, et de quo Apocalypsis secundo: "Dabo ei calculum, et in calculo nomen novum scriptum, quod nemo scit, nisi qui accipit"; quia istum cognoscendi modum vix aut nunquam intelligit nisi expertus, nec expertus, nisi qui est "in caritate radicatus et fundatus, ut possit comprehendere cum omnibus Sanctis, quae sit longitudo, latitudo etc"; in quo etiam experimentalis et vera consistit sapientia, quae inchoatur in via et consummatur in patria; ad cuius circumlocutionem magis sunt idoneae negationes quam affirmations, et superpositiones quam positivae praedicationes; ad cuius experientiam plus valet internum silentium quam exterius verbum. Et ideo hic finis verbi habendus est, et orandus Dominus, ut experiri donet quod loquimur". Bonaventure, St., *Scientia Christi*, d. 7, 19, *Ibid.*, vol 5, 43.

their commentators. Bonaventure's is the archetype of the affective (Augustinian, Platonic) view while Aquinas will be the prototype of the intellectual view (Dominican, Aristotelian)⁸². We shall see how all this is significant to Polo's proposal in the next chapters.

b) *Albert the Great (c. 1193–1280)*. Albertus Magnus, as his name indicates, is one of the great thinkers of medieval times. His importance is shaded by his outstanding disciple Aquinas, who built upon and improved some of his master's findings. Regarding the topic at hand, Albert uses the word synderesis at least 145 times in his works, most of them in his *Summa Theologiae*⁸³. Even if statistics are not as important as the content it does give an indication of the consideration given by an author to the topic, for example, as we already commented in the introduction, Aquinas uses the word almost as twice as his master: 255 times.

Albertus Magnus' understanding of synderesis evolved as he managed to gain access to Aristotle's successive translations of the *Ethic to Nichomacus*. His complete second commentary to it, *Super Ethica*, was finished shortly before 1250, and "It was the most influential work on Ethics in the Middle Ages"⁸⁴. Of the works in which he mentions synderesis we shall concentrate on what is referred to as *De Synderesi*, though it is not an independent treatise, but question 71 of his *Summa de Creaturis*, in *De Homine*⁸⁵. We shall add some comments from his later work the *Summa Theologiae*, which was left unfinished upon his death in 1280.

With his habitual clarity Albert starts by defining what he understands by synderesis attributing it to Basil, though Basil did not use the term. He defines it as "the power of the mind which has within it the seeds of judgment by which we separate the evil from the good"⁸⁶. In a similar way, he links natural law with synderesis, this time under

⁸² Cfr. The section on "Theological Concept of Conscience in: Zagar, J., *Acting on Principles: A Thomistic Perspective in Making Moral Decisions*. (Orlando: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010). Also the article Billy D.J., "The Authority of Conscience in Bonaventure and Aquinas", *Moralia*, 31 (1993), 237-263.

⁸³ The search was done in the Waterloo University Alberti Magni E-corpus using "sinderes" as the searching word with the following results: 113 (145) matches (instances) in all selected texts: 1 (1) match (instances) in *De XV Problematis* (ed. Mandonnet, 1908); 4 (6) matches (instances) in *De IV Coaequaevi* (ed. Borgnet, 1895); 14 (20) matches (instances) in *Super Sententiarum* (ed. Borgnet, 1893-4); 94 (118) matches (instances) in *Summa Theologiae* (ed. Borgnet, 1894-5) Accessed Nov 10, 2014. <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/albertus/searchAlbertus.cgi>.

⁸⁴ Celano, A., "The Foundation of Moral Reasoning", op. cit., 20.

⁸⁵ While Albert scarcely mentions the concept of synderesis in his other works on moral philosophy, he devotes an entire section to its importance for moral action in the *De homine* Celano, *Ibid.*, 25".

⁸⁶ "Diffinitio synderesis, scilicet quod ipsa est virtus animi habens in se naturaliter sibi insita et inserta semina judicandi, per quam mala segregamus a bonis". Albertus Magnus, *De Homo* q. 71 a. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, (Paris: Vives, 1896), vol. 35 p. 590.

the authority of St. Augustine, who did not use the term either: “universal law is written by nature in the natural judgement: and he calls the natural judgement synderesis”⁸⁷. The third authority he uses is St. Jerome’s passage on Ezekiel, which he quotes extensively. It is interesting that it concludes that synderesis is the only of the four faculties Ezekiel mentions, which is spiritual, the other three being linked to the body (irascible is linked to the gall, the concupiscent with the liver, and the reason to the brain, but synderesis is above them)⁸⁸. Following Jerome’s version, he also quotes St. Paul reference to the “spirit” which he links to synderesis as both being above reason: “synderesis is the spirit that intercedes for us with indescribable cries”⁸⁹.

Of great interest is that Albert links synderesis with the “agent intellect” which is also the light of science and prudence. The agent intellect is the light that illuminates both the theoretical and practical intelligences from the first principles of knowledge and action; first principles which as such cannot be demonstrated (to avoid regress to the infinite) and therefore are self-evident⁹⁰. Synderesis is then the place of the first principles of practical action. Albert affirms nevertheless, as Bonaventure also saw, that the general principles, in spite of being innate, are empty until they are put into practice⁹¹. This is probably why he likes to quote Basil’s reference to synderesis as having “the seeds of judgment”. “Albert does not claim that the principles of synderesis are learned, but rather that reason comes to recognize them through teaching and practice”⁹².

Regarding whether synderesis is a power or a habit, Albert concludes that it is a power with a habit “potentia cum habitu”⁹³ because it is able to judge and simultaneously incline towards the good. He also

⁸⁷ “Quod ipsa sit virtus animae habetur a beato Augustino (S. *Augustinus*, Lib. II *De libero arbitrio*, cap. 10) qui dicit quod universalia juris scripta sunt naturaliter in naturali judicatorio: appellans naturale judicatorium synderesim”. *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “Tertium est, quod ipsa sola inter quatuor est sine organo per omnem modum, ex eo quod ratio ponitur in arce cerebri, irascibilis vero in felle, concupiscibilis autem in jecore, ista vero extra, hoc est, supra haec”. Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis*, q. 71, a. 1, 3, in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., vol. V, 35, 591.

⁸⁹ “Synderesis is spiritus qui interpelat pro nobis gemitus inenarrabilibus”. Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis*, q. 71, a. 1, 4 op.cit. *Ibid.*, vol V, 35, 591.

⁹⁰ “Si autem quaeritur, quae sit illa vis naturae, dico, quod absque dubio illa naturae vis est lumen intellectus agentis, cuius lumen est species specierum intelligibilium... Illud enim lumen distinctum ad species terminorum, quae sunt in principiis primi intellectus agentis et practici, facit per se, hoc est sine probatione et demonstratione, assentire principiis primis scientiarum et operationum”. Albertus Magnus, *De bono*, tr. V, q. 1, a. 1, in *Opera omnia*, 28, (Münster: H. Kühle et al., Aschendorff, 1951), 265, ll. 58–67.

⁹¹ Albertus Magnus, *De bono*, tr. I, q. 4, a. 2, in *Opera omnia*, 28, op.cit., 49, ll. 70–78.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 527, ll. 21–26.

⁹³ “Licet enim potentia de se non juvet potentiam vel inclinet ad bonum, tamen potentia cum habitu juvat et inclinat”. Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis*, q. 72, a. 1 sol, in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., vol 35, 599.

says that it is not part of reason, but of the intellect, and more specifically of the practical intellect. He connects it with the upper intellect following Augustine's classification. He also subscribes that synderesis never errs, "*numquam habet errorem*", because it deals with universal reasons, and errors are due to the particular application of the principles. He explains this in the article on conscience. "The major of this syllogism is synderesis of which is proper to incline to the good due to the universal reasons of goodness"⁹⁴. Regarding whether synderesis was not affected by original sin (*fomes peccati*) he indicates that synderesis is what is furthest from corruption and indicates that some authors say that synderesis was never corrupted because it did not suffer the consequences of the fall, but he leaves it just as a comment. One very interesting last question he answers is: why did classic philosophers not speak about synderesis? In his answer he compares "philosophi" with "sancti", and says that philosophers decided morals on pure human understanding, while the saints placed moral law above human, in divine justice, and therefore they looked for eternal reasons⁹⁵.

In the next question, following the order of Lombards' *Sentences*, he discusses conscience which he defines as the conclusion of a practical syllogism: "We affirm that conscience is the conclusion of the practical reasoning of two premises being the major synderesis and the second reason"⁹⁶. From this definition it is easy for him to explain how conscience does err and therefore how it can be distorted in the following two short articles. As Celano points out, Aristotle's psychology is the key to interpret Albert's understanding of synderesis and conscience: "The Aristotelian doctrines of the practical syllogism and the relation between the speculative and the practical intellect were the framework that he used to explain the relationship between synderesis

⁹⁴ "Et istae quaestiones ponunt talem syllogismum: Omne bonum faciendum: hoc est bonum: ergo hoc est faciendum. Major autem istius syllogismi est synderesis, cuius est inclinare in bonum per universales rationes boni. Minor vero est rationis, cuius est conferre particolare ad universale. Conclusio autem est conscientiae. Quod sic probatur: Ab omnibus communiter supponitur, quod conscientia aggravat vel excusat in toto vel in parte. Inter tres autem actus praehabitos primus non attingit actum particularem, sive opus meritorium vel demeritorium hoc vel illud. Secundus autem qui rationis est, non est de faciendo, sed de ratione faciendi: cum enim dicit, quod hoc est bonum, rationem dicit faciendi, sed nec adhuc imperat faciendum vel non faciendum: sed quando infert per modum sententiae hoc esse faciendum vel non faciendum, tunc excusat si sequitur in illo opere, vel excusat si non sequitur. Dicendum ergo ad primum, quod actus conscientiae est actus rationis, sed consequens ex alio actu praecedente". Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis* q. 72, a. 1 sol. Op.cit.

⁹⁵ "Dicendum, quod Philosophi distinguunt potentias secundum objecta generalia: et si considerant operabilia, faciunt hoc secundum rationem juris humani. Sancti autem specialius distinguunt secundum jus divinum et humanum, et secundum principia juris, et particularia inventa: et ideo Sancti ponunt synderesim ad principia et portionem superiorem rationis, quae inhaerescit justitiae divinae contemplandae secundum rationes aeternas, quarum neutrum ponunt Philosophi". Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II, q. 71, a. 1, ad 10. *Ibid.*, vol 35, 594.

⁹⁶ "Dicimus, quod conscientia conclusio est rationis practicae ex duobus praemissis, quarum major est synderesis, et minor rationis". Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis* q. 72, a. 1 sol. *Ibid.*, vol 35, 599.

and conscience. Synderesis provides the general principles of action to the practical intellect which brings the situation to be judged and the judgment becomes the conscience. From the general rules of what is good, we come to the application of the judgement to the particular situation”⁹⁷.

Albert attributes synderesis also to angels. This is pure theology or reasoning based on the strength of the truth of revelation. We bring it here to stress how Albert believes that synderesis is purely spiritual as we have seen in the quotation from *De Homine* above. He quotes Isaiah to show that the demons have remorse, which means that there is something within them that prompts them on the good and the bad. From this he claims that the good angels should have the same but making them happy rather than unhappy, by knowing they have taken the right decision⁹⁸: “Then it should be confirmed that both good and bad angels have synderesis, in the good for rejoicing of their conscience, in the bad for their affliction and the sadness of their conscience”⁹⁹.

Albert deals more directly on synderesis in question 99 of the second part where, in three articles, he successively considers the will, synderesis and conscience. It is interesting to note that he does not repeat the arguments of *De Homine*. The quote is brief, and the explanation shorter. He now quotes Gregory on his commentary to Ezechiel, I, 10 instead of quoting Jerome’s classic text. He does quote Jerome but this time on the commentary to *Malach.*, II, 15: “By the wife of your adolescence he understands natural law inscribed in the heart and in the spirit. By the spirit is not understood the animal part that does not perceive what is from God, but the rational spirit that claims for us with unspeakable groans”¹⁰⁰. He also links the spirit with synderesis and with natural law. Albert introduces a new quote from Augustin from the first book *On Children’s Baptism*, and relates the innate light which is later developed unto maturity with synderesis: “Such light

⁹⁷ Celano, A., “*The Foundation of Moral Reasoning*”, op. cit., 24.

⁹⁸ “Solutio. Dicendum, sicut dicitur, Isaías, LXVI, 24: Vermis eorum non morietur. Sicut daemones habent afflictionem ignis: ita etiam habent afflictionem ex remorsu conscientiae, sive synderesis murmurantis contra malum, et remordentis peccantem. Unde concedendum est, quod synderesis est in bonis et in malis Angelis, sed in bonis ad jucunditatem conscientiae, in malis autem ad afflictionem et tristitiam ejusdem conscientiae”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II, tract 5 q. 25 m. 2 a. 3, in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., vol. 32, 284.

⁹⁹ “Unde concedendum est, quod synderesis est in bonis et in malis Angelis, sed in bonis ad jucunditatem conscientiae, in malis autem ad afflictionem et tristitiam ejusdem conscientiae”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II, tract 5, q. 24 m. 2 a. 3 sol, op.cit.

¹⁰⁰ “Per uxorem adolescentiae intelligit legem naturalem scriptam in corde et in spiritu. Spiritus vero dicitur non animalis pars quae non percipit quae Dei sunt, sed rationalis spiritus, qui postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II tract 16, q. 99, ob., vol 33, 235, op.cit.

that always shines the good cannot be other than synderesis”¹⁰¹. He quotes also Aristotle using the parallel between the speculative reason and the agent intellect “that is like a light in the soul that rejects what is false and lights what is true where there is a light always inclining to the good, that cannot but be synderesis”¹⁰². Albert keeps to his previous conclusion that synderesis is a power completed with a habit “synderesis is a power with a habit within”; “*synderesis dicit potentiam cum habitu completam*”¹⁰³. His main argument is an argument of authority¹⁰⁴: “one only thing can be replied, that the power of the reason, is enumerated among the powers by the saints and the philosophers, principally the Platonic”. Regarding where this power inheres Albert seems to be happy both with Aristotle and Plato saying that it inheres in the ‘deliberative reason’ according to Plato and more precisely Aristotle in the ‘practical intellect’. Similarly Albert does not mind to say that is “part of the natural will”¹⁰⁵, but he does not specify reasons as he did in the *De Homine*.

In the article’s two solutions there is an interesting distinction that we may use later when discussing Polo’s views on synderesis. Albert distinguishes the relationship between synderesis and the powers above and below it, while defending that synderesis as such cannot err regarding what is superior to it (he does not specify here what he means by superior) in the same way that a horseman can fall because his horse fails him, not because the horseman’s fault. The powers he places under synderesis are the “*liberum arbitrium*” (free choice), the will and reason¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰¹ “Illud lumen quod cum semper illuminet ad bonum, non videtur aliud esse quam synderesis”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II, tract 16, q. 99, a. 1. *Ibid.*, vol. 35, 235.

¹⁰² “Philosophi posuerunt lumen semper incendens ad verum, quod est intellectus agens: qui (sicut dicit Aristóteles in III *De anima*) est in anima sicut lux quae repugnat falso et illuminat ad verum. Cum ergo hoc magis necessarium sit in practicis quam in speculativis, ad perfectionem rationalis animae pertinet, quod in operabilibus sive practicis sit lumen inclinans semper in bonum, et remurmurans malo hoc autem lumen non potest esse nisi synderesis, quia directe habet actum synderesis, et lumen est habitus et non potentia: ergo synderesis est habitus et non potential”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars II, tract. 16, q. 99, m. 2, art. 1, 235 b.

¹⁰³ Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, II, tract. 16, q. 99, memb. 2, a. 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Et ad omnia quae inducta sunt, una sola responsione respondent, quod ratione potentiae quam dicit, numeratur cum potentisi a Sanctis, et a Philosophis, maxime Platonicis”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars II, tract. 16, q. 99, m. 2, art. 1 solutio, 235 b.

¹⁰⁵ “Si sit aliquid voluntatis? Distinguendum, quod duplex est voluntas, naturalis scilicet, et deliberativa: et concedendum est, quod non est sine voluntate naturali, sed nihil est voluntatis deliberativa”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars II, tract. 16, q. 99, m. 2, art. 1, solution, 236 b.

¹⁰⁶ “Quod synderesis proprium est non peccare secundum se: tamen habet duas comparationes: unam scilicet ad superius, et secundum hanc numquam peccat: alteram quae est ad inferius quod regit, hoc est, ad liberum arbitrium, et ad rationem, et ad voluntatem extra quas et supra quas est, ut dicit Gregorius et secundum hunc modum praecipitatur per accidens, sicut miles cadente equo qui casus non est vitium militis, sed equi et non refertur ad militem, nisi quia non tenuit per fraenum

He explains this relationship better in the 2nd article of the 2nd section of this question when distinguishing conscience from synderesis. Albert clarifies that what is above synderesis is the habit of natural law “*habitum legis naturalis*”, and that because of this, synderesis is a kind of “content” that has a relationship with conscience. What is very interesting is that Albert clarifies that this is what makes synderesis a “*potentia habitualis*” rather than an empty power “*potentia nuda*”. Conscience nevertheless is related also to the “*liberum arbitrium*”, will and reason. Both are under synderesis and can be wrong. So, the fact that conscience can be wrong or right, clean or stained, is not a direct consequence of its relationship with synderesis.

Article three is also interesting in that Albert admits that part of synderesis stops working in those condemned, the part inclining them to the good. The other part, the one remonstrating for doing evil, remains, but not in that they regret the evil done, but in that they do not like the pain that accompanies it, which is a similar solution he applied to the devils in a question discussed previously (question 25).

Albert’s contribution to the consideration of synderesis may be considered eclectic in that it brings in all previous interpretations and links them together within the intellectual Aristotelian psychology without doing away the Platonic contributions. In this way Albert places synderesis as “ratio superior” somehow directly linked with God through the content of the natural law, and with the three Platonic soul powers: reason, concupiscence and irascible passions which are under it. It is eccentric in defending that synderesis is simultaneously potency with a habit. Similarly, there is some eclecticism in considering it an intellectual power but that moves, and it is linked somehow to the will though the will is under it. These ambivalences are combined with a surprising lack of consideration between synderesis and prudence that will be one of the points that his disciple Aquinas will explain.

A summary of the medieval philosophy achievements on the understanding of synderesis will be incomplete without Aquinas’ contributions who completed some of the points his master was left unattended.

c) *Aquinas (1225-1274)*. “For St. Thomas the *scintilla conscientiae* is synderesis, not alone because it is the purest part of conscience but because it flies above the conscience as the spark does over the fire (and as, one recalls, the eagle does over the symbols of the faculties in the vision of Ezechiel)”¹⁰⁷.

Crowe thinks that Aquinas does not add much to what his master Albert had discovered regarding synderesis. Aquinas’ thought evolved

ne cespitaret. Ita aliquando imputatur synderesi peccatum rationis, voluntatis, et liberi arbitrii: quia non tenuit ne caderet”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars II, tract.16, q. 99, m. 2, art.2, 237.

¹⁰⁷ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 158.

from an eclectic position to a detailed one and later he just gave cursory attention to the topic, or at least to the term. Potts shares the opinion that Aquinas added little to what already was proposed by Phillip the Chancellor and Bonaventure. “Aquinas’ treatment of synderesis, viewed as a whole, mainly consisted in a tidying-up operation. He grafted onto Phillip’s account some of Bonaventure’s developments under the heading of conscientia, and clarified some ambiguities and distinctions”¹⁰⁸.

Interesting also is the view that for Aquinas synderesis became a no-go topic at the end of his intellectual development. Crowe says: “In any event, as will be seen, St. Thomas, even before the writing of the *Prima Pars*, had practically abandoned synderesis as a term of major importance. In the *Secunda Pars* we should, perhaps, have expected synderesis and conscience to be considered at length. On the contrary neither gets more than a passing mention. In the question on the natural law we find the admission, in the answer to an objection, that synderesis is the *habitus* containing the precepts of the natural law, which are the first principles of human action. And in the *Secunda-Secundae*, in one of the articles on the virtue of prudence, St. Thomas makes use of the familiar parallel between the speculative and the practical intellect, remarking that both make use of first ‘naturally known’ principles. But it is not until he has to reply to the objections that he actually uses the term synderesis. The contrast with the extended discussions in the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *De veritate* is striking. Unfortunately, one can only surmise the development that led St. Thomas to give such little prominence to the term synderesis in his latest period. The *Commentary to the Nicomachaeon Ethics* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*, where one would have expected some mention of synderesis and which would have provided a chronological link between the early and the late stages in St. Thomas’ thought on the question, are not helpful since neither deals with the question”¹⁰⁹.

While Crowe thinks that the treatment of synderesis in the Summa shows a decreasing interest of Aquinas in this topic, others like González, think that the few references to synderesis in the Summa are due to a process of maturity and synthesis on the part of Aquinas. “If we compare the parallel narrations in the Summa we will discover to what point *De Veritate* considerations have been incorporated in the Summa structure after a praiseworthy work of synthesis”¹¹⁰. Both comments point to the fact that the treatment of synderesis is greater in Aquinas’ youth works *Supra Sententiam* and *De Veritate* than in his great maturity works, the two *Summas*.

¹⁰⁸ Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., 50.

¹⁰⁹ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 143.

¹¹⁰ “Si las comparamos con sus lugares paralelos en la Summa avertiremos hasta qué punto el tratamiento de estos temas en el *De Veritate* ha sido incorporado mediante una encomiable labor de síntesis a la estructura de la *Summa*”. González, A. M., *Tomás de Aquino, De veritate. qq. 16 y 17, La sindéresis y la conciencia*, op. cit., 7.

While it is true that philosophy is not done by numbers, numbers may indicate the attention given to a particular topic. A quick check on the number of times the word is used by Aquinas in all his works can help us to understand what Crowe says. Using the excellent search engine of the *Corpus Thomisticum*¹¹¹ that lists all the times the word is used and gives the associated sentence, we have recorded the following table:

Work	Year	No	%
De veritate	1256-58	159	62%
Super Sent.	1254-56	61	24%
Summa Theologiae	1271-73	27	11%
De malo,	1263-68	5	2%
Super Eph	1261-66	3	1%
Grand Count		255	100%

Table 2: 'Synderesis' Frequency in Aquinas works.

One can argue that instead of using the word synderesis Aquinas in his late works used the more general word “*ratio naturalis*” as Sellés points out¹¹², but this may be an object of discussion for two reasons: a) Aquinas only equates both in a single text¹¹³, and b) a number of times Aquinas uses *ratio naturalis* in a more general way than synderesis. Aquinas uses the term *naturalis ratio* in 60 other occasions with wider meanings, sometimes linking it to prudence, at other times to practical reason. The actual meaning given to it should be discussed in each case, which will divert us from the main purpose of this dissertation¹¹⁴. Hoffman also points out that in the Summa Aquinas “occasionally replaces the word synderesis by the term understanding (intellectus), the intellectual virtue of grasping the first principles of reason”¹¹⁵. Anyway, Aquinas himself seems to consider more important to know that there is a habit of the intellect which is permanent, innate, natural, and that is the foundation of assessing moral behavior rather than to use the name “synderesis” as shown in the quote from *De Veritate*: “It remains, therefore, that the name synderesis designates a natural habit simply, one similar to the habit of principles, or it means some power of reason with such a habit. And whatever it is makes little difference, for it raises a doubt only about the meaning of the name. However, if the power of reason itself, insofar as it knows naturally, is called synderesis, it cannot be so considered apart from

¹¹¹ Cfr. <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/index.html>

¹¹² Cfr. Sellés, J. F., “La Sindéresis o Razón Natural como la Apertura Cognoscitiva de la Persona Humana a su Propia Naturaleza”, *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, 10 (2003) 321-334.

¹¹³ Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 47, a. 6, ad 1.

¹¹⁴ The *Index Thomisticus* lists only 63 times the concordance for “*ratio naturalis*”, two of which are attributed to Thomas de Sutton and Guillelmus Wheatley. The word “*ratio*” in all its declensions is listed 40,792 times.

¹¹⁵ Davies, B., Stump, E., (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 256.

every habit, for natural knowledge belongs to reason by reason of a natural habit, as is clear of the understanding of principles”¹¹⁶.

Rather than checking whether Crowe’s or González’ interpretations are correct, it is worth studying in detail what Aquinas’ conception of synderesis is, because it is what would link to Leonardo Polo’s Aquinas quotes. We now summarise what Aquinas’ position on synderesis in the three main works in which he uses it: *Supra Sententiam*, *De Veritate* and the *Summa Theologiae*. We shall analyse his proposal in *De Veritate* which is the more systematic and detailed of the three.

c.1) *Commentary on the Sentences* (1254-1256). In *Supra Sententian* Aquinas uses two main arguments to explain synderesis: one following the practical syllogism taken from Albert, and the second using the graduation of perfection following the Pseudo-Dionysius. “Every movement must proceed from an immovable mover; everything that undergoes change must proceed from something that remains one and the same. The principle is clear from an inspection of natural bodies; and it applies to the process of reasoning, for reasoning is change or movement; a movement from principle to conclusion. Such movement requires, as it’s *point-de-depart*, a stable and unchanging knowledge, not obtained by the normal discourses but immediately given to the intellect. In speculative matters this immediate and unchanging knowledge is found in the *habitus* of first self-evident principles, known as *intellectus principiorum*. In practical matters a like *habitus* of self-evident principles is required; and that *habitus* is synderesis”¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁶ Thomas aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16 a. 1 co. For Aquinas quotations we use the system of the *Corpus Thomisticum* which gives the paragraph in square brackets first and then the traditional way. This make it easier to cross-check quotations. <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html>

¹¹⁷ “Respondeo dicendum, quod sicut est de motu rerum naturalium, quod omnis motus ab immobili movente procedit, ut dicit Augustinus VIII *Super Genes.* et philosophus probat in VII *Phys.*, et 8, et omne dissimiliter se habens ab uno eodemque modo se habente; ita etiam oportet quod sit in processu rationis; cum enim ratio varietatem quamdam habeat, et quodammodo mobilis sit, secundum quod principia in conclusiones deducit, et in conferendo frequenter decipiatur; oportet quod omnis ratio ab aliqua cognitione procedat, quae uniformitatem et quietem quamdam habeat; quod non fit per discursum investigationis, sed subito intellectui offertur: sicut enim ratio in speculativis deducitur ab aliquibus principiis per se notis, quorum habitus intellectus dicitur; ita etiam oportet quod ratio practica ab aliquibus principiis per se notis deducatur, ut quod est malum non esse faciendum, praeceptis Dei obediendum fore, et sic de aliis: et horum quidem habitus est synderesis. Unde dico, quod synderesis a ratione practica distinguitur non quidem per substantiam potentiae, sed per habitum, qui est quodammodo innatus menti nostrae ex ipso lumine intellectus agentis, sicut et habitus principiorum speculativorum, ut, omne totum est majus sua parte, et hujusmodi; licet ad determinationem cognitionis eorum sensu et memoria indigeamus, ut in 2 *Post.* dicitur. Et ideo statim cognitis terminis, cognoscuntur, ut in 1 *Post.* dicitur. Et ideo dico, quod synderesis vel habitum tantum nominat, vel potentiam saltem subjectam habitui sic nobis inato”. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 3, co. Translation in Crowe, M. B., op.cit. 230.

“St. Thomas’ second argument for the existence of synderesis is an interesting one, built upon a principle he borrows from the neo-Platonic *Liber de Causis* or from the book of *Divine Names* of the pseudo-Denis. The principle is that Divine Wisdom must arrange created beings in an orderly series without any gaps in a hierarchy”¹¹⁸. Synderesis is a natural habit of the intellect in its practical activity which can neither err nor be destroyed or corrupted, which is in between the intelligence as a power and the conscience which is its act, as a consequence of a practical syllogism. The content of this natural habit are the most general precepts of eternal law as they apply to the human person, as Aquinas understands it, and natural moral law. As Crowe says, “St. Thomas summarises the position: certain universal principles —*ipsa universalia principia juris*— constitute the natural law; synderesis is the habitual knowledge of those principles (or perhaps the faculty of reason as informed by such knowledge); and conscience is the application of the principles to conduct by way of conclusion”¹¹⁹. “To the fifth it should be said that a natural habit is never lost as is obvious in the habit of the first speculative principles,

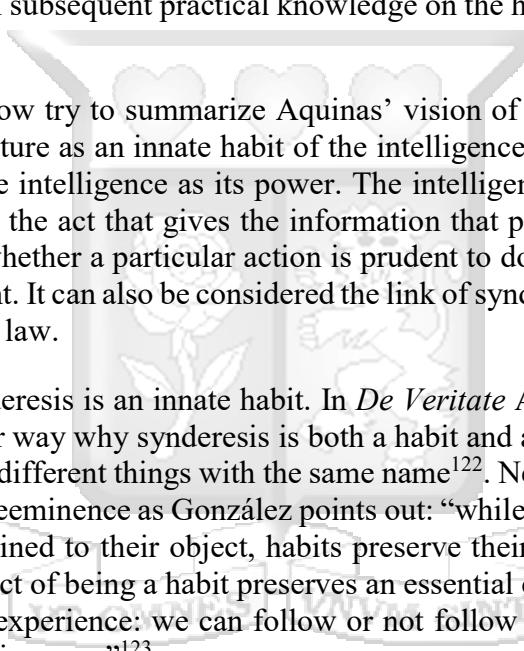
¹¹⁸ “Respondeo dicendum, quod, secundum Dionysium, divina sapientia conjungit prima secundorum ultimis primorum, quia, ut in Lib. de causis ostenditur, in ordine creatorum oportet quod consequens praecedenti similetur, nec hoc potest esse nisi secundum quod aliquid participat de perfectione ejus; quod quidem inferiori modo est in secundo ordine creaturarum quam in primo; unde hoc quod inferior creatura de similitudine superioris participat, est supremum in inferiori et ultimum in superiori, quia est deficientius receptum quam in superiori sit. Inter creaturas autem talis est ordo ut primo sit Angelus, et secundo sit rationalis anima. Et quia rationalis anima corpori conjuncta est; ideo cognitio debita sibi secundum suum proprium ordinem, est cognitio quae a sensibilibus in intelligibilia procedit, et non pervenit in cognitionem veritatis nisi inquisitione praecedente, et ideo cognitio sua rationalis dicitur. Quia vero Angelus simpliciter incorporeus est, nec corpori unitur; cognitio naturae suae debita est ut simpliciter sine inquisitione veritatem apprehendat: propter quod intellectualis natura nominatur. Oportet ergo quod in anima rationali, quae Angelo in ordine creaturarum configuratur, sit aliqua participatio intellectualis virtutis, secundum quam aliquam veritatem sine inquisitione apprehendat, sicut apprehenduntur prima principia naturaliter cognita tam in speculativis quam etiam in operativis; unde et talis virtus intellectus vocatur, secundum quod est in speculativis, quae etiam secundum quod in operativis est, synderesis dicitur: et haec virtus scintilla convenienter dicitur, quod sicut scintilla est modicum ex igne evolans; ita haec virtus est quaedam modica participatio intellectualitatis, respectu ejus quod de intellectualitate in Angelo est: et propter hoc etiam superior pars rationis scintilla dicitur quia in natura rationali supremum est; unde et Hieronymus dicit quod per aquilam significatur quae cetera animalia in volando transcendit; ita et haec virtus transcendent rationabilem, quae per hominem significatur, et concupiscibilem quae per vitulum, et irascibilem quae per leonem. Sicut autem non contingit in speculativis intellectum errare circa cognitionem primorum principiorum, quin semper repugnet omni ei quod contra principia dicitur; ita etiam non contingit errare in practicis in principiis primis; et propter hoc dicitur, quod haec superior rationis scintilla quae synderesis est, extingui non potest, sed semper repugnat omni ei quod contra principia naturaliter sibi indita est”. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Sent. lib. 2, d. 39, q. 3, a. 1 co.* Translation in Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 231.

¹¹⁹ CROWE, M.B., *Ibid.*, 233.

which are always present in man, and the same applies to synderesis”¹²⁰.

As we can see, in this first juvenile work of Aquinas there is no substantial difference to what Albert the Great explained in his works.

c.2) *Quaestio Disputata de Veritate* (1256-1259). In *De Veritate* the treatment of synderesis is more extensive and systematic than in *Supra Sententiam*, but it is substantially the same. Aquinas devotes a whole question to it, q.16. This question is nevertheless related to the previous question where the topic of the superior and inferior reason is discussed and to question 17 which deals with conscience. In this he follows the scheme of Peter the Chancellor: “On neither question, then, of synderesis or of conscience, does the *De Veritate* present any startling development of St. Thomas’ thought beyond that found in the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Rather is it the same thought presented in greater detail; with, in the *De Veritate*, a greater emphasis upon the dependence of all subsequent practical knowledge on the habit of synderesis”¹²¹.



We shall now try to summarize Aquinas’ vision of synderesis: its ontological nature as an innate habit of the intelligence in dependence of the active intelligence as its power. The intelligence through the conscience is the act that gives the information that prudence requires to know whether a particular action is prudent to do or not at a particular moment. It can also be considered the link of synderesis with the natural moral law.

c.2.1) Synderesis is an innate habit. In *De Veritate* Aquinas explains in a clearer way why synderesis is both a habit and a power but that they are two different things with the same name¹²². Nevertheless, the habit takes preeminence as González points out: “while the powers are naturally inclined to their object, habits preserve their freedom... In this way the fact of being a habit preserves an essential characteristic of our moral experience: we can follow or not follow it, in either case it does not disappear”¹²³.

¹²⁰ “Ad quantum dicendum, quod habitus naturalis nunquam amittitur, sicut patet de habitu principiorum speculativorum, quem semper homo retinet; et simile est etiam de synderesi”. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Sent. lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5*.

¹²¹ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 241.

¹²² “We do not say that synderesis means a power and a habit, as though the power and the habit were one thing, but because the power together with the habit which it underlies is designated by one name”. R.W. Mulligan translation. “Ad quartum dicendum, quod synderesis non dicitur significare potentiam et habitum quasi eadem res sit potentia et habitus; sed quia uno nomine significatur ipsa potentia cum habitu cui substernitur”. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 1, ad 4.

¹²³ “Mientras que las potencias tienden naturalmente a su objeto, los hábitos... se usan con libertad. En este sentido, la condición de hábito preserva una nota esencial de nuestra experiencia de la norma moral: podemos cumplirla o no cumplirla, y no por ello desaparece”. González, A. M., *De Veritate. Cuestiones 16 y 17, La Sindéresis y la Conciencia*, op. cit., 12.

Aquinas also clarifies that it is not only a natural habit, but also inborn, as González also points out: "What is natural is not necessarily inborn. What is inborn excludes any external intervention. What is natural, on the other hand, can be both partly inborn and in part from an external agent. According to St. Thomas this is what happens to natural habits that perfect human reason, both in its speculative as in its practical use"¹²⁴.

To be natural does not mean that it is always manifested: "In an analogic way, without sensitive knowledge our intelligence will not be able to form the habit of synderesis"¹²⁵. "This explains what (Aquinas) says also in *De Ver.* q. 16 a. 3 when he points out that harm in some corporeal organ can impede the habit of synderesis"¹²⁶.

c.2.2) Synderesis is Knowledge. Aquinas affirms that synderesis is knowledge. He repeatedly uses the words 'lumen', 'scintilla'¹²⁷. As he categorically states, "This habit exists in no other power than reason, unless, perhaps, we make understanding a power distinct from reason. But we have shown the opposite above"¹²⁸.

This type of knowledge, nevertheless, is different from speculative knowledge. Synderesis works as the major premise of a kind of practical syllogism. But because it has to be the immovable base to all moral judgements it has to be immutable and therefore it cannot be known as the conclusion of a discursive reasoning. What type of knowledge can it be? By comparing it to angelic knowledge it seems to be an intuitive type of knowledge: "Hence it is that human nature, insofar as it resembles the angelic nature, must both in speculative and practical matters know truth without investigation. And this knowledge must be the principle of all the knowledge which follows,

¹²⁴ "Lo natural no es siempre innato. Lo innato excluye la intervención de un principio exterior; lo natural, en cambio, puede proceder en parte de la naturaleza, y en parte de un principio exterior. Según Santo Tomás, esto es lo que ocurre con los hábitos naturales que perfeccionan a la razón humana, tanto en su uso especulativo como en su uso práctico". González, A.M., op. cit., 1998), 12.

¹²⁵ "Anolagamente, sin conocimiento sensible nuestro entendimiento no podría tampoco formar el hábito de la sindéresis". González, A.M., op. cit., 13.

¹²⁶ "Esto explica lo que afirma tambien en *De Veritate*. q. 16, a. 3 cuando anota que una lesion in los órganos corporales puede impedir el habito de la sindéresis" González, A.M., op. cit., 13, note 18. "Uno modo ut dicatur actus synderesis extingui, in quantum actus synderesis omnino intercipitur. Et sic contingit actum synderesis extingui in non habentibus usum liberi arbitrii, neque aliquem usum rationis: et hoc propter impedimentum proveniens ex laesione organorum corporalium, a quibus ratio nostra accipere indiget. Alio modo per hoc quod actus synderesis ad contrarium deflectatur". Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 3, co.

¹²⁷ "Responsio. Dicendum quod synderesim extingui, potest intelligi dupliciter. Uno modo quantum ad ipsum lumen habituale". *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 3, co; "Sicut scintilla est illud quod est purius in igne, ita synderesis est id quod supremum in conscientiae judicio reperitur; et secundum hanc metaphoram synderesis scintilla conscientiae dicitur". Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 17, a. 2, ad 3.

¹²⁸ "Hic autem habitus non in alia potentia existit, quam ratio; nisi forte ponamus intellectum esse potentiam a ratione distinctam, cuius contrarium supra, dictum est". Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 16, a. 1, co.

whether speculative or practical, since principles must be more stable and certain”¹²⁹.

There are two interesting affirmations regarding the type of knowledge that synderesis is. Synderesis is intuitive rather than discursive knowledge. Aquinas also seems to say that this type of knowledge is more perfect than the discursive, since there will not be discursive knowledge without it. The second point is that synderesis is a type of knowledge that somehow replicates the task of the estimative in animals: “Animals are said to possess a measure of prudence, but it does not follow from this that they are rational. Their prudence is a kind of participation in reason and is present in them ‘secundum quamdam aestimationem naturalem’. In a similar way man’s intuitive apprehension of first principles is ‘per quamdam tenuem participationem’ and does not demand a special faculty. Such apprehension is rather the perfection of the act of reason. The imperfect act of reason is discursive; its function is double: to work forward from intuitive apprehension, and to work back to it. There can be no discursus of the human mind unless it begins in the simple acceptance of truth in first principles; and the result of the discursus is only guaranteed by a return to first principles for comparison. Discursus may be compared with the rational act of intellectus as generation with being or motion with rest. Just as in bodies capable of both, motion and rest may be traced back to the same principle (the nature of the body) so the intuition of first principles and ordinary discursus are reducible to the same principle (the faculty of reason)”¹³⁰.

c.2.3) Totally certain and immutable. In the second article Aquinas gives the same argument as in his *Super Sentences* regarding the infallibility of synderesis. To guarantee moral certitude synderesis has to be stable; it cannot err. No truth can be achieved in a syllogism if the first premise is not certain. As Crowe puts it, “unless the principles are firmly established there cannot be stability or certitude in what follows. Now, since all changeable things depend upon a primum immobile, so all specific knowledge must derive from knowledge that is quite certain. This *certissima cognitio*, beyond the reach of error, is the knowledge of first universal principles; specific knowledge is referred to these principles and its truth accepted or its falsity rejected by reference to them. If error were possible in the knowledge of first principles, no certainty could be found in the knowledge which followed. In the same way in human actions there must be some permanent and unchangeable criterion of rectitude by which all actions must be judged; and this is provided by synderesis, which inclines towards good and away from evil. The universal judgement of

¹²⁹ “Unde et in natura humana, in quantum attingit angelicam, oportet esse cognitionem veritatis sine inquisitione et in speculativis et in practicis; et hanc quidem cognitionem oportet esse principium totius cognitionis sequentis, sive practicae sive speculativae, cum principia oporteat esse certiora et stabiliora.”. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 1, co.

¹³⁰ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics” *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 23/3 (1956), 238.

synderesis cannot err. Error —as was seen in the *Commentary on the Sentences*— occurs in the application of universal judgments to particular cases and may be caused by a false reasoning or by a false assumption”¹³¹.

The explanation of the errors in conduct are due, not to synderesis, but to the application of its principles during the deliberation process. Either because either by malice or weakness the mind and the will are moved by the passions and by the *fomes peccati* as this text explains: “On the contrary. Good can be purer than evil, for it is that some good may have no admixture of evil, but there is nothing so bad that it does not have some of the good mixed. But in us, there is something that always inclines us to evil, namely, the tinder (*fomes peccati*). Therefore, there will be something which always inclines towards the good. This seems to be only synderesis. Therefore, synderesis never sins”¹³².

c.2.4) Imperishable. Aquinas devotes article 3 of q 16 to explain why synderesis by its own nature cannot disappear. This is because it belongs to the essence of man, being an intrinsic part of his intelligence, and not to the passive, but to the active, to the agent intellect. This fact will be important for Leonardo Polo who will expand on the relations between synderesis and intelligence: “regarding it being habitual light; it is impossible that synderesis may be quenched: in the same way that the soul of man cannot be deprived of the light of the agent intellect through which we come to know the first principles of both what is to be understood and what is to be done; this light belongs to the nature of the soul itself, since through it this is an intellectual soul”¹³³.

c.2.5) Relation between synderesis and conscience. González says that “occasionally, conscience and synderesis were indistinctly called ‘naturale iudicatorium’ the law of our intellect”¹³⁴. Perhaps one should be more cautious because Albert, was practically the first who clarified the difference between conscience and synderesis: “Conscience is called the law of understanding by reason of that which

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 239

¹³² “Sed contra. Bonum potest esse magis purum quam malum: quia aliquod bonum est cui non admiscetur aliquid de malo; nihil autem est adeo malum, quod non habeat aliquid de bono permixtum. Sed in nobis est aliquid quod semper inclinat ad malum, scilicet fomes. Ergo et aliquid erit quod semper inclinat ad bonum. Hoc nihil videtur esse nisi synderesis. Et sic synderesis numquam peccat”. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 2, s.c. 1.

¹³³ “Quantum ad ipsum lumen habituale; et sic impossibile est quod synderesis extinguitur: sicut impossibile est quod anima hominis privetur lumine intellectus agentis, per quod principia prima et in speculativis et in operativis nobis innotescunt; hoc enim lumen est de natura ipsius animae, cum per hoc sit intellectualis”. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 3 co.

¹³⁴ “En ocasiones, la tradición recogida por Santo Tomás había llamado indistintamente a la conciencia y a la sindéresis *naturale iudicatorium* o ‘ley de nuestro intelecto’”. González, A. M., *Tomás de Aquino, De veritate. Cuestiones 16 y 17, La sindéresis y la Conciencia*, op. cit., 15.

it has from synderesis. It is never this, but something else which is the source of error”¹³⁵. While Aquinas’ treatment of conscience in this work is not as extensive as the one devoted to synderesis, Potts gives him some merit to it because of the novelties included: “It was only when he turned to *conscientia* that Aquinas introduced some really new ideas”¹³⁶. Potts, compares Aquinas to Bonaventure but it appears that what he considers a novelty of Aquinas can be attributed to his master Albert; the consideration of conscience as being an act of the practical reason.

Aquinas explains, as he did in *Supra Sententiam*, that in a similar way there is an intellectual or speculative judgement based on first principles, there is a practical syllogism. In this syllogism the major premise is given by synderesis, a habit of the intelligence being conscience a conclusion, an act of the intelligence done through this intelligence habit. So there should not be confusion between synderesis, and conscience. This helps to explain why conscience can err, while synderesis cannot¹³⁷. “Aquinas holds that conscience is not a power or a habitus (a stable disposition to act in a certain way), but an act”¹³⁸.

c.2.6) Inclination. The most debated question among those who follow Aquinas and those following Bonaventure is whether synderesis belongs to the appetitive or to the intellectual powers. For Bonaventure, as we have seen, it belongs to the appetitive. It is a kind of weight, ‘pondus’. Thomas is clear as well but in contrast for him synderesis is purely intellectual, as González remarks: “Synderesis is a habit, and an intellectual habit (practical). It is not a tendency, nor a moral habit... Even if this contrasts with some of St. Thomas’ expressions as in *De Veritate*, q. 16 a. 1, sc. 4, but in the same place he says that it is not an appetitive power that in his view are already completely well explained with the rational, irascible and concupiscent appetites”¹³⁹.

¹³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 17, a. 2, ad 4.

¹³⁶ Potts, T. C., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., 20.

¹³⁷ “Nomen enim conscientiae significat applicationem scientiae ad aliquid; unde consciere dicitur quasi simul scire. Quaelibet autem scientia ad aliquid applicari potest; unde conscientia non potest nominare aliquem habitum speciale, vel aliquam potentiam, sed nominat ipsum actum, qui est applicatio cuiuscumque habitus vel cuiuscumque notitiae ad aliquem actum particularem”. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 17, a. 1 co.

¹³⁸ “Respondeo dicendum quod conscientia, proprie loquendo, non est potentia, sed actus”. I^a q. 79 a. 13 co. Lamont, J., “Conscience, Freedom, Rights: Idols of the Enlightenment Religion”, in *The Thomist*, 73 (2009), 169-239.

¹³⁹ “La sindéresis es un hábito, y un hábito intelectual (práctico). No es una tendencia, ni un hábito moral. Tiene un objeto, indudablemente, merced al cual libra de la completa indeterminación a la potencia racional, pero su modo de “tener” el objeto no es inclinando hacia él; la sindéresis no es una potencia que tienda naturalmente a su objeto ni tampoco un hábito moral, que inclina a una determinada acción. La sindéresis como tal no inclina a nada. Sólo conoce y prescribe: es un hábito intelectual”. In the footnote to this text: “Esto contrasta con modos de decir del propio Santo Tomás por ejemplo en *De Veritate*, q. 16 a. 1 sed contra, 4; en

c.2.7) Natural Law. Without going deep into the topic of natural law in Aquinas we have to mention that for him it is directly integrated in synderesis, at least the principles of natural law, and this is in parallel with the first principles of all speculative sciences: “So in the same way as in the human soul there is certain natural habit which knows the principles of the theoretical sciences, which we call the understanding fo the principles, there is also in the soul a natural habit of the first practical principles which are the universal principles of the natural law”¹⁴⁰.

c.3) *Summa Theologiae*. As mentioned at the beginning, the treatment of synderesis in the *Summa* is surprisingly less detailed than in any previous work. Nevertheless, the Summa does not contradict what Aquinas discussed extensively in his previous works. What is interesting is the novelty that was not treated in detail by Albert which is the connection between synderesis and prudence, which Aquinas does in the reply to an objection “The moral virtues require to know the end by the natural reason which is called synderesis... synderesis moves prudence in the same way as the habit of the first speculative principles”¹⁴¹.

It will be inaccurate to say that previous thinkers did not link synderesis with the virtue of prudence, but it is Aquinas who, without doubt, has the best treatise on virtues since Aristotle. Nevertheless, the relationship between reason, practical reason, synderesis, conscience and prudence are not easy to place together as this text of Lamont shows, where prudence seems to take synderesis role: “prudence –as Aquinas understands it– is a virtue that is exercised in acts. Prudence is what supplies the intellectual component of good actions (cf. *S.Th.*, II-II, q. 47, a. 8). It is prudence, not conscience, that is, ‘the capacity for judging the rightness of actions’, but this capacity is exercised in the applying of right reason to action. The assent to a true judgement of conscience will form a component of an exercise of prudence, but it cannot itself be an exercise of prudence, because an exercise of that

esta ocasión, en efecto, afirma que el acto propio de la sindéresis es inclinar al bien y advertir del mal. Sin embargo, en ese mismo lugar descarta que sea una potencia motora, que a su juicio quedan suficientemente descritas en los apetitos irascible, concupiscible y racional (voluntad)”. González, A.M., *Op. cit.*, 1998, 16.

“Ad quartum dicendum, quod synderesis non dicitur significare potentiam et habitum quasi eadem res sit potentia et habitus; sed quia uno nomine significatur ipsa potentia cum habitu cui substernitur”. De veritate, q. 16 a. 1 ad 4

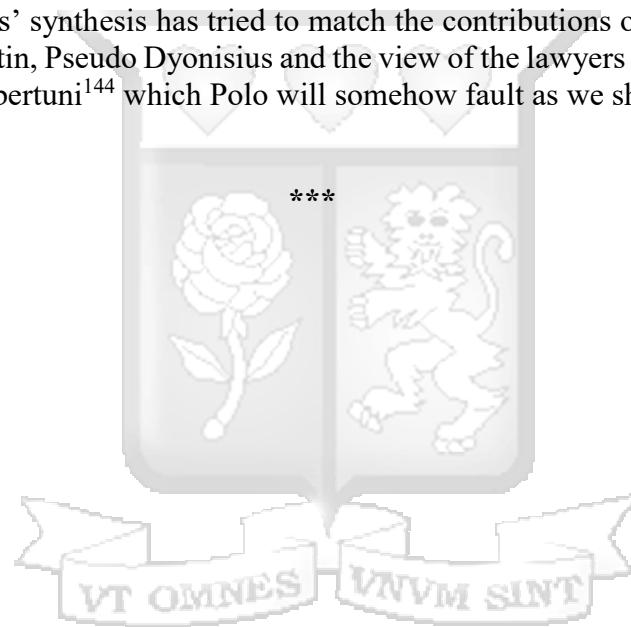
¹⁴⁰ “Sicut igitur humanae animae est quidam habitus naturalis quo principia speculativarum scientiarum cognoscit, quem vocamus intellectum principiorum; ita etiam in ea est quidam habitus naturalis primorum principiorum operabilium, quae sunt universalia principia iuris naturalis”. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 16, a. 1, co.

¹⁴¹ “Ad tertium dicendum quod finis non pertinet ad virtutes morales tanquam ipsae praestituant finem, sed quia tendunt in finem a ratione naturali praestitutum. Ad quod iuvantur per prudentiam, quae eis viam parat, disponendo ea quae sunt ad finem. Unde relinquitur quod prudentia sit nobilior virtutibus moralibus, et moveat eas. Sed synderesis movet prudentiam, sicut intellectus principiorum scientiam”. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 47, a. 6, ad 3. Cf. Crowe, M. B., op.cit., 243.

virtue goes all the way through to the act. One can make a true judgement of conscience without acting upon it”¹⁴².

We conclude the section on the *Summa* where we find the novelty of the relationship between prudence and synderesis better established than in the previous works, by citing Crowe again on the substantial conformity of his doctrine to the previous works in spite of Aquinas’ apparent reluctance to use the term: “But if synderesis were better abandoned as a term, the underlying reality need not necessarily be renounced. On the contrary, when he wrote the law-questions in the *Prima-Secundae*, and probably long before, St. Thomas must have realised that the term synderesis was not indispensable. The natural law, conceived as a series of fundamental propositions of the practical reason, the first principles of morality, together with the activity of the reason in knowing and applying them, allowed him to retain the reality of synderesis (and on this his thought does not seem ever to have varied significantly) without having to use the term”¹⁴³.

Aquinas’ synthesis has tried to match the contributions of Aristotle, Augustin, Pseudo Dyonisius and the view of the lawyers as well studied by Abertuni¹⁴⁴ which Polo will somehow fault as we shall see later.



¹⁴² Lamont, J., “Conscience, Freedom, Rights: Idols of the Enlightenment Religion”, op. cit., 175.

¹⁴³ Crowe, M. B., “The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics”, op. cit., 245.

¹⁴⁴ “Tomás de Aquino fez confluir no conceito de sindérese o “nous” de Aristóteles com o princípio da continuidade de Dionísio. Da mesma forma, a questão da sindérese oportuniza a Tomás de Aquino incorporar, nessa confluência de tradições, a autoridade de Agostinho, a saber, “algumas regras e virtudes verdadeiras e imutáveis”, permitindo ainda vincular a sindérese com a lei natural, o “hábito que contém os preceitos da lei natural”, conceito proveniente da tradição dos decretistas”. Abertuni, C. A., “Sindérese, o *Intellectus Principiorum* da Razão Prática”, *Veritas*, 56/2 (2011), 151.



CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL APPROACH II

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

PHILOSOPHERS

1. Synderesis after Aquinas

It is well known that Aquinas' doctrine was not immediately accepted in Paris, where his doctrine was actually condemned for one hundred and fifteen years¹. Nevertheless, it later became a standard text, to the point that the *Summa Theologiae* replaced the *Sentences* in most Catholic universities. As Crowe points out, synderesis continued to be discussed but only as part of the mandatory comments to the *Sentences*: "It is not intended to suggest that St. Thomas' successors did not discuss synderesis or that they showed distaste for the term. It would be tempting to think that St. Thomas had contributed to a decline in its importance, but it would be difficult to demonstrate. Dom Lottin finds much material on synderesis in the Oxford and Paris masters –the latter mostly disciples of St. Thomas or of St. Bonaventure– of the second half of the XIII Century. But he remarks that the questions on synderesis and conscience were not among those hotly discussed by the Schoolmen; there is scarcely a *Quodlibet* on either in the whole century. They usually cropped up –in fact were inevitable– in the *Commentaries on the Sentences* which alone would have ensured the survival of synderesis at least to the XVI Century when Peter Lombard's *Sentences* ceased to be the standard text-book of theology"².

The *Commentary to the Sentences* continue the discussion of synderesis and conscience until the XVI Century. The disciples of the two camps during the XIII Century are well studied by Lottin³. Among the Franciscans who followed mainly Bonaventura position with slight modifications like Gauthier the Bruges (1225-307), Guillaume de la Mare (†1285), Richard the Mediavilla (1249-1302), Pierre Jean Loive, Piere de Trabibus (c.1300), and Richard Rufus (†1260). Among the Dominicans who followed Aquinas like Hannibald, Romain the Rome, Jean Quidort (1255-306), Richard Fishacre (1200-1248), Godefroid de Fontaines (1250-1306), Pierre d'Auvergne (c.

¹ The bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, condemned Aquinas theories in 1210 and reaffirmed his condemnation in 1277. Aquinas was included in the canon of the saints in 1323. Two years later, in 1325, the Paris decree was repealed. Later Pope Pius V in 1567 proclaimed Aquinas a Doctor of the Church.

² Crowe, M. B., "The Term Synderesis and the Scholastics", op. cit., 245.

³ Cfr. Lottin, O. D., *Psychologie et Morale aux XII et XIII siècles*, op. cit., vol. II.

1240-1304), and Bernard d'Auvergne (†1307). Nevertheless, there was no established policy so one finds Franciscans who are much closer to Aquinas than to Bonaventure, like Simon de Lens (1273-1295) and Dominicans who follow Bonaventure like Robert Kiwardby (1215-1279) or others who try to combine both in an eclectic way like Richard de Mediavilla (c.1249-c.1308). Nevertheless, those who are going to change the way and direct philosophy eventually in a different direction are John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) and William of Ockham (1280-1349) who start the new Century.

a) *John Duns Scotus (1265–1308)*. The opening paragraph of Langston's chapter on Scotus and Ockham states the surprising fact that such well-informed and powerful thinkers had little to say about synderesis: "It is consequently surprising that these topics receive little direct attention from either Duns Scotus or William of Ockham... These two great thinkers' failure to treat conscience and synderesis, however, is an indication that the focus of the discussion of these issues has changed to issues about the virtues"⁴. More surprising is that Scotus, being Franciscan, sides with Aquinas and places both synderesis and conscience squarely as part of the practical reason, and following Aquinas, he says that conscience is the conclusion of a practical syllogism that has synderesis as the major premise. Scotus devotes the traditional chapters to synderesis and conscience in *Ordinatio II*, dist. 39, qq. 1-2, where he addresses *Peter Lombard's Sentences* (II, dist. 39): "I reply to these questions: If synderesis is assumed to be something having an elicited act that necessarily and at all times inclines one to act justly and resist sin, then since nothing of this sort is in the will, we cannot assume it to be there. Consequently, it is in the intellect, and it cannot be assumed to be anything other than that habitual knowledge of principles which is always right"⁵. Langston suggests that the interest of Scotus in placing synderesis squarely in the side of the intellect is to let the will free to decide without being constrained by any external or internal law: "To suggest that the will is compelled to do good would mean that there could be no sin. If synderesis always proposes what is right, and always opposes what is wrong, then it is not something that pertains to the free will, and so must be something that relates to the practical intellect"⁶.

b) *William of Ockham (1280–1349)*. Ockham is more radical than Scotus in breaking with tradition and does not mention synderesis at all in his works nor he treats conscience directly. Nor does he deal with natural law in his academic works. Only after he is called to the papal court of Avignon and starts questioning the authority of the Pope, does he deal with the topic of natural law, clearly for personal and practical reasons.

⁴ Langston, Douglas C. *Conscience and other Virtues: From Bonaventure to Macintyre* (Place of Publication Not Identified: Pennsylvania State Univer, 2001), 54.

⁵ *Ordinatio*, Book 2, distinction 39 in Langston, D. C., *Conscience and other Virtues from Bonaventure to Macintyre* op. cit., 54.

⁶ Cfr. Greenwell, A. M., "Duns Scotus", op. cit.

2. XIV and XV Centuries

High peaks are followed by deep valleys both in geography and in philosophy. Franciscans and Dominicans continued the tradition of their masters, mainly the doctrines of Bonaventure and Aquinas, without original developments, and in many cases without grasping the depth of the masters' vision. Synderesis, though discussed, was mainly a repetition without deep understanding of its possibilities.

Among the Dominicans in Germany there was a streak of mysticism which somehow links with the understanding of synderesis as the means of a direct communication with God, or rather to identify oneself with God. The great masters of this mystical line were Meister Eckhart (1260–1329), and Jean Gerson (1363–1429).

a) *Meister Eckhart (1260–1329)*. The XIV century most influential author regarding synderesis was the Dominican Eckhart. He gives a mystical function to synderesis following Bonaventure's highest level of knowledge. Synderesis is a supra rational⁷ way of knowing God, which, as we mentioned before, connects also with the platonic 'Superior Ratio' of Augustine: "What the eye sees or the ear hears is straightaway seized by desire, provided it pleases, and conveyed to the critical faculty which considers it well and, if lawful, passes it on to the superior powers, which take it and carry it up to the chief power, without likeness, for this power admits neither image nor likeness. It is called synderesis, and is all one with the soul's nature, a spark of the divine nature. It cannot abide what is not good. It is without stain; perfectly pure and wholly superior to temporal things, it dwells in unchanging stability, like eternity. Anything that enters here must first be freed from multiplicity and sensible affections. The powers of the soul, outer and inner, are all summed up in this, and whatever gets into this highest power it passes on to all the rest, an act eternal in its nature; it is so quick, it is practically timeless"⁸.

Eckhart main followers, Johannes Tauler (1300–1361), Heinrich Suso (1295–1366), Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293–1381) and Jean Gerson (1363–1429) consolidated the German mysticism which also influenced one of the intellectuals of the followed century, Nicholas the Cusa (1401–1464), who was an avid reader of Eckhart. His "docta ignorance" speaks of his debt to Meister Eckhart mysticism.

⁷ "Neither in Cain nor in any other sinner is synderesis silent, but it always calls out in opposition to evil and in inclination to good with an appropriate voice that neither time nor place ever interrupts or diminishes. 'This is so even though its external voice is not audible in time and place, because it is neither temporal nor material'. Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart Sermons* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1981, # 164), Volume 1981, Part 2, 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*

b) *Jean Gerson* (1363–1429). Gerson places synderesis in the affective side of the soul together with the will and the sensitive appetite: “There are then three affective powers, proportional to the forms of cognition: synderesis, will, and the sensitive appetite”⁹. His approach is interesting for two reasons: one because he uses the word ‘instinct’ translated as a ‘natural inclination’, as the jurists did in medieval times: “Synderesis is an appetitive power of the soul that comes immediately from God. It takes on a certain natural inclination to the good. Through this proclivity it is drawn to follow the movement of the good on the basis of the understanding presented to it in the simple intelligence”¹⁰. It is interesting secondly because his book on mysticism –*On Mystical Theology*– gave credit to the mystical way¹¹.

For Gerson, “synderesis is an appetitive power of the soul that comes immediately from God. It takes on a certain natural inclination to the good. Through this proclivity it is drawn to follow the moment of the good on the basis of the understanding presented to it in the simple intelligence”¹². In *De mystica theologia speculativa* Gerson presents the soul as having three cognitive and three affective powers in a parallelled, hierarchical arrangement. Under Cognitive (*Vires Cognitivae*) there are *intelligentia simplex*, *ratio*, and *sensualitas* in descending order. Under Affective (*Vires Affectivae*) there are *synderesis*, *appetitus rationalis* and *appetitus sensualis* in likewise descending order. Gerson defines the three powers of the *Vires Cognitivae* as follows. *Intelligentia simplex* (pure intelligence) is “the cognitive power of the soul which receives a certain natural light immediately from God, in and through which first principles, with the apprehension of the terms, are known to be true and unquestionably certain”¹³. Gerson points out that this reality has been described by a variety of names including mind, the highest heaven, spirit, the light of intelligence, the shadow of angelic understanding, divine light in which truth immutably shines, and the spark or peak of reason.

The mysticism of Gerson is different from Eckhart’s because he tries to unite with God as a creature, through the highest capacities

⁹ Gerson, J., *Jean Gerson: early works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 280.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ “Jean Gerson was not only the last of the great Scholastics but also one of the most significant medieval mystics. It was he who defined the mystical union (*unio mystica*) as the perfection of a contemplative life”. Ojakangas, M., *The Voice Of Conscience: A Political Genealogy Of Western Ethical Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 6. “A common pattern in mystical theology and the key to the via mystica for Gerson is synderesis which has been naturally implanted in the soul. As the innate point of contact between God and man, the synderesis becomes the home of the Holy Spirit where Christ is spiritually born into the soul”. Ozment, S., “The University and the Church: Patterns of Reform in Jean Gerson”, *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 1 (1970), 118.

¹² Gerson, J., *Jean Gerson: Early Works* (New York, Paulist Press, 1998), 279.

¹³ *Quodlibet Online Journal*: “On the Life and Mystical Theology of Jean Gerson (1363-1429)”. Accessed December 11, 2014. <http://www.quodlibet.net/gerson.shtml>. De myst. 10, 26. 4 ff.

man is endowed –knowledge and love– not a near pantheist identification as some texts of Eckhart may suggest. We shall touch again on Gerson's double line of triple ascent when discussing synderesis in Leonardo Polo.

c) In the nascent Renaissance independent voices which wanted to break with the scholastic and go back to the classics we find Marcelo Ficino (1433-1499) in Italy, who translated Plato to Latin and re-created the Platonic Academy in Florence, does not make any direct reference to synderesis in his works.

In Holland Erasmus (1466-1536) also avoided the name of synderesis.

In Spain Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540) considers synderesis¹⁴ a theological technical term. Though he uses the term twice in his works, he nevertheless gives it a clear importance to the point that by neglecting synderesis one degrades himself to the level of the animals¹⁵.

¹⁴ "Sed restant nihilominus in nobis reliquiae illius tanti boni, quae satis testantur quantum id fuerit quot amisimus; haec a vulgo theologorum synteresis nominatur, quasi conservatio, Hieronymo est conscientia, Basilio naturale judicatorium, Damascenus lucem mentis nostrae vocat; philosophi quidam tale sunt procul intuiti, qui anticipaniones tradunt, et naturales informationes, quas nos dicimus a magistris, vel usu, sed hausimus, et accepimus a natura, tametsi alii alliis pro magnitudine ingenii plures certioresque sunt has regulas sortiti, tum excoluntur, elimanturque, usu, experimentis, disciplina, meditatione". Vives, J. L., *De Anima, Opera Omnia* (Valencia: Archiepiscopi Typographi, 1782), Vol 3, 356.

"Haec mentis nostrae sive lux, sive censura, qua recte, qua oblique, semper tamen ad bonum et verum devergit, et fertur prona, unde existit approbatio virtutum, et improbatio virtiorum, atque hinc leges et precepta morum, et intus in unoque conscientia, qua delicta ipsa sua arguat, reprehendar, damner, nisi penitus sensu humano caret, et degeneret in brutum". *Ibid.*

"But sin has clouded our mind with great and heavy darkness, and therefore the right norms have been corrupted. Many errors are due to ignorance when we deduct them from those universal norms to the individuals and species. Nevertheless, there is in us some remains of that great good that tell us how great the good we lost was. This is what a majority of theologians call "sinteresis" this is "preservation". For St. Jerome it is conscience, for St. Basil it is the natural judgment, for St. John Damascenus it is the light of our mind. Some philosophers had some kind of confused intuition of it when they spoke from anticipations, or natural knowledge we have not received from our teachers or from experience; though some because of the quality of their intelligence, have understood these norms with greater certainty and depth than others, later they cultivate and perfect with practice, experience, instruction and meditation. This light or understanding of our mind either directly or indirectly always leads us to the good and the true and to them it goes with strength. From here comes the approval of virtues and the rejection of vices, from it the moral precepts and norms in the interior of each conscience that chastises our crimes and repreahends and condemns them unless one has totally lost human sensibility and has degraded to the condition of an animal". Vives, J. L., *De Anima*, op. cit., 356.

¹⁵ "Sunt in nobis igniculi quidam, seu semina virtutum a natura indita, ut Sotici Philosophi observarunt; nostri *Synteresin* Graeco verbo nominant, quasi conservationem et scintillam justitiae illius, qua primo auctor generis humani donatus erat a Deo; ille igniculus, adolescere modo liceret, ut illi sentiunt ad magnam nos virtutem perduceret, sed obruitur depravatis iudiciis atque opinionibus et dum lucere incipit, ac in flamman se attolere, non modo nullo adjutus alimento, sed adversis

In England the Renaissance author Thomas More (1478-1535), the great defender of the intimacy and inviolability of personal conscience¹⁶ who died rather than go against it, surprisingly did not use the term synderesis¹⁷.

3. Modern Thinkers. The XVI Century

The XVI Century marks the division between the Medieval and Modern thought in Philosophy and Theology. The seeds of Ockham, Scotus, Eckhart and the Renaissance thinkers helped by the development of the printing press changed the ideological and political landscape of Europe. The great upheaval was started by Martin Luther. Nevertheless in order to show the diversity of the interplaying currents we list thinkers following a chronological rather than a doctrinal order, i.e. irrespective whether their doctrines are closer to the medieval or departing from them.

a) *Denis the Carthusian (1402–1471)*. This author, known also by the names of Denys van Leeuwen, Denis Ryckel, and Dionysius

quoque flatibus et imbre opressus, extinguitur; parentes, nutrices, nutricii, magistri eruditionis, consanguinei, necesarii, familiares, magnus erroris magister populos, hi omnes semina illa virtutum radicibus conatur extirpare, et emicantem igniculum stultitia suarum opinionum tanquam ruina opprimere". Vives, J. L., *De institutione Feminae, Opera Omnia* (Valencia: Archiepiscopi Typographi, 1782), Vol 4, 260.

"As Stoic philosophers said, there is in us a kind of sparks of light or seeds of virtue placed by nature. Christians call it synderesis using a Greek term that is like a reproduction of that spark of justice that God donated to the first man. This small flame can grow even to the greatest virtue, according to them, but is overpowered by perverted opinions and judgments, so that when it starts flaring as a big light, it is not only deprived from food, but it is little by little extinguished by rain and wind. Parents, nurses, caretakers, learned teachers, relatives, common people who are masters of error, all struggle to uproot these seeds of virtue and extinguish with the stupidity of their opinions, as if it were a disgrace, the light of that little flame". *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "But surely among those that long to be rulers, God and my own conscience clearly know, that no man may truly number and reckon me. And I suppose each other man's conscience can tell himself the same". *Dialogue of Conscience*, in: <http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/docs/Dialogue%20on%20Conscience%20Modernized.pdf>. Accessed November 27, 2014

¹⁷ More used the word of conscience abundantly, but as Brian Cummings says: "It is possible also that here More, like Luther, begins the slow historical process of abandoning the distinction between synderesis and conscientia". Cummings, B., "Conscience and the law in Thomas More", *Renaissance Studies*, 23/4 (2009), 482. In a search done by the search engine of <http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/search.html> the word appears only once in a footnote on the article by Fr. Joseph Koterski, S.J. "The technical name for the faculty by which a person has this infallible knowledge of the first practical principle is synderesis. The term conscience is then reserved for the disposition that is built up in an individual (however well-formed or ill-formed this disposition may be) to make judgments of moral evaluation in practical cases". "Failed Politician? Saintly Statesman? Faithful Conscience!"

van Rijke, left a vast work in 43 volumes¹⁸. In his *Commentary to the Sentences* he basically follows Aquinas. What is interesting is that in his Commentary to the Proverbs he uses the term ‘lucerna Domini’, lamp of God, which he identifies with the synderesis. The idea is not new, but the expression is: “The spirit or the soul of man is the candle of the Lord, this is, the thing lit up by the light of God with the intellectual light, contains in itself the light of his intelligence and of synderesis. Of whom it is said that in the Psalm, is signed upon us the light of thy countenance, O Lord, for this natural light is some kind of sign or impression of the uncreated light in the soul. And the breath of the soul is called, according to that word of Genesis says: He breathed into his face the breath of life”¹⁹.

b) *Thomas de Vio, Cajetan (1469-1534)*. Cardinal Thomas de Vio is the official commentator of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. His comments are included in the Leonine edition which is the standard version of Aquinas’ complete works. His comments do not change what Thomas said on synderesis. For him it is the natural habit of the first principles and it is sometimes referred to as conscience, taken broadly²⁰; “commonly it firstly denotes the habit of first consciousness, namely, ‘synderesis’, which is the root and the rule of conscience... And the cause is given, because commonly we name the cause by the effect and the habit by act”²¹.

c) *Martin Luther (1483–1546)*. Luther could be considered as the hinge between the medieval and modern times. In order to obtain a teaching post, he commented Peter Lombard *Sentences* between 1501 and 1511, where he describes synderesis in the classical way following Aquinas. He continues doing so in subsequent years²², but as his doctrine departs from orthodoxy his view of the total corruption of

¹⁸ Several volumes are available online at <http://stevenedwardharris.com/2012/10/12/denys-the-carthusian-opera-omnia>.

¹⁹ “Lucerna Domini spiraculum hominis, id est, spiritus seu anima hominis est lucerna Domini, id est res illuminata a Deo lumine intellectuali, continens in se lumen ingenii atque synderesis. De quo lumine fertur in Psalmo, Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine: quia hoc lumen naturale, est quoddam signaculum atque impressio increatae lucis in anima”. Denis the Carthusian, *Enarrationes*, XX, art 20, *Doctoris ecstatiici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia* (Montreuil/Tournai: Monströlli, typis Cartusiæ S.M. de Pratis, 1896–1935), vol. VII, 136.

²⁰ “Quoad secundum, conscientia communiter sumitur pro habitu primo, scilicet synderesi, qui est conscientiae principalis radix et regula. Declaratur auctoritatibus Hieronvmi, Damasceni et Basilii. Et redditur causa: quia consuetum est ut causas effectuum nominibus appellemus, et habitus ab actibus nuncupemus”. Caeant Commentary to, I, q. 79, a. 13, in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 5, (Vatican City: Leonina, Typographia Polyglota Vaticana, 1945), 281 Commentary.

²¹ Already quoted in the previous note.

²² “The synteresis of the reason pleads inextinguishably for the best, the true, the right, and the just. For this synteresis is a preservation (conservation), a remainder (reliquiae), a residue (residuum) and a survivor (superites) of our nature... in the corruption and faultiness of perdition”. Luther, M. M., *Sermone aus den Jahren, 1514-1517*, in *Martin Luthers Werke*, (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1908), vol. I. p. 32. 1-6. Cfr. as quoted in Ojakangas, M., *The Voice of Conscience*, op. cit., 65.

nature does not leave room for synderesis: “After 1519 the term disappears altogether, best explainable by Luther’s increasingly pessimistic anthropology”²³. There is no remaining goodness, no source of goodness in humans, whose nature is totally corrupted.

In spite of rejecting synderesis, Luther believes that there are morals and fixed standards. Nevertheless, by not having a stable, universal foundation he will have flexible moral standards and his successors will devise as many moral systems as different theological systems which come out of the principle of free interpretation of the Bible. The ‘sola Scriptura’ will give as many different churches as different interpretations of the *Bible*²⁴. Luther’s approach to natural law is more bewildering since he appeals to it severally when political matters of obedience and disobedience to different authorities came up. Strange that natural law works in society, but not on personal matters, due to the rotten nature of man, as McNeill explains in the second and third part of his article²⁵. A conscience without synderesis will stop being a judge of actions and become just a simple witness to the actions done and the evilness of all of them which is the way to help the corrupt nature to ask for commiseration from God. So the more wicked our conscience shows us the better for our spiritual development: “For Luther, in other words, conscience is no longer a guide of life but an instance which reproduces the divine judgement of absolute condemnation, revealing to the believer his absolute sinfulness, ‘blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate, and contempt of God’”²⁶.

d) Christopher of Saint German (1460–1540), was a civil lawyer in the city of London who wrote an influential book of a *Dialogues between a Doctor of Divinity and a Student in the Laws of England*, which reflects the use of ‘synderesis’²⁷ among lawyers in the city of

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “Luther employed in his early writings, especially his Psalms and Romans, the scholastic term synteresis, which is a moral sense (called by Aquinas a habit) common to all men, a residuum or remnant of unfallen nature, which becomes the entering point of God’s work in the soul. It is admitted that Luther abandoned this term as he sharpened the distinction between nature and grace; but he did not therewith cast away the notion of a natural morality”. Mcneill, J. T., “Natural Law in the Thought of Luther”, *Church History*, 10/3 (1941) p. 219.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ojakangas, M., *The Voice of Conscience*, op. cit., 66.

²⁷ “Sinderesis is a natural power of the soul, set in the highest part thereof, moving and stirring it to good, and abhorring evil. And therefore sinderesis never sinneth nor erreth. And this sinderesis our Lord put in man, to the intent that the order of things should be observed. For, after St. Dionyse, the wisdom of God joined the beginning of the second things to the last of the first things: for angel is of a nature to understand without searching of reason, and to that nature man is joined by sinderesis, the which sinderesis may not wholly be extinted neither in man, ne yet in damned souls. But nevertheless, as to the use and exercise thereof, it may be let for a time, either through the darkness of ignorance, or for undiscreet delectation, or the hardness obstinacy. First by the darkness of ignorance, sinderesis may be let that it shall not murmur against evil, he believeth evil to be good, as it is in heretics, the which, when they die for the wickedness of their error, believe they die for the very truth of their faith. And by undiscreet delectation sinderesis is sometime so

London. The book was so popular that the term, misspelled, was used in some popular plays²⁸. Christopher uses synderesis as the justification for the universal application of natural law. He wrote in English and his work was very influential even outside England.

e) *Francisco Suárez (1548–1617)*. The great theologian of the second scholasticism has a brief passage which summarises well the Thomistic view on synderesis²⁹. Suárez nevertheless hardly uses synderesis in the rest of his works. We could find another citation in the second book of *De Legis* where he defends that natural law is not proper of an individual but of all men as synderesis is³⁰. He gives a

overlaid, that remorse or grudge of conscience for that time can have no place. For the hardness of obstinacy sinderesis also let, that it may not stir to goodness, as it is in damned souls, that be so obstinate in evil, that they never be inclined to good. And though sinderesis may be said to that point extinct in damned souls, yet it may not be said that it is fully extinct to all intents". Christopher Saint German, *The Doctor and Student, Or, Dialogues Between a Doctor of Divinity and a Student in the Laws of England*, (New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2014), 39.

²⁸ "Shakespeare's fellow dramatists Ben Jonson and John Marston read Doctor and Student as they take a word from the treatise and use it respectively in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (III.iv), dedicated to the Inns of Court, and *Satires* (III.viii), written in Marston's rooms in Middle Temple. The word picked up, misspelling and all, is 'synderesis'. Marston writes 'returne sacred Synteresis, Inspire our trunches', and Jonson mocks it in a list of inkhorn terms as 'the soules Synderesis'. Synthesis is Greek for the mystical bond between the body and the Soul, the flesh and the spirit. In *Doctor and Student* it signifies the spark of life which Equitie (the bond) gives to the Law (the flesh) and Justice (the spirit of the law), making a living legal system out of the bare bones of the letter of the law". Knight, W. N., *Autobiography in Shakespeare's Plays: Lands So by his Father Lost* (New York: Lang, 2002), 26.

²⁹ "Duo tamen non praetermittam, synderesim et conscientiam: synderesis nomen est non intellectus, sed habitus in eo existentis, facilemque reddit ad assentiendum principiis practicis, unde Latine sonat conservationem, fortasse quia judicio talis habitus plura sunt conservanda, vel certe, quia illius munus est conservare in nobis officium rationalis naturae. De hoc habitu, atque altero, qui circa speculativa versatur, intellectusque principiorum dicitur, videantur dicta apud Aristotelem in posterioribus. Jam conscientia significat habitum quemdam dimanantem a syndesi immediate, vel mediate judicio alicujus conclusionis practices, est enim conscientia quoddam actuale examen nostrarum operationum, quo judicamus illas malas esse, aut bonas: si forte judicamus malas, e vestigio sequitur in voluntate remorsus, et tristitia quaedam, quae vermis appellatur. Si autem nihil apprehensibile in illis invenimus, subsequitur quies quaedam et gaudium. Unde 2, Corinth. 1, dicitur: Gloria nostra est testimonium conscientiae nostrae. Qua de causa Durandus, in 2, dist. 9, quaest. 2, putavit conscientiam esse habitum voluntatis, sed minus vere, nam, ut ex ipso nomine constat, conscientia cognitionem significat, id autem, quod in voluntate sequitur, affectus est bonae, vel malae conscientiae. Solet etiam aliquando sumi conscientia pro ipso habitu synderesis, quo sensu Damascenus vocat nostri intellectos lucem: Basilius vero esse naturale iudicatorium, Hieronymus super Ezechielem appellat synderesim, prout haec omnia refert S. Thomas, prima parte, quaest. 79, art. 13, et optime exponit". Suárez, F., *Commentaria ac Disputationes in Primam Partem D. Thome De Deo Effectore Creaturarum Omnim* (Venice: Typographia Balleoniana, 1740) Cap. X, 9, 435.

³⁰ "Ratio est, quia haec lex est veluti proprietas consequens, non rationem propriam alicuius individui, sed specificam naturam, quae eadem est in omnibus. Item synderesis eadem est in omnibus hominibus, et per se loquendo esse posset eadem cognitio conclusionum; ergo et eadem lex naturae". Suárez, F., *De Legibus* II, VIII (Paris: Vives, 1856), vol. 5, 117.

number of authorities, mainly on natural law rather than of synderesis, like Aristotle, Cicero, Lactantius and Aquinas in his q. 94, a. 2. In the *Disputationes Metaphysicas* he just uses the word synderesis to explain the distinction between synderesis and intelligence, memory etc., in a passage where he discusses the distinction between ‘*rationis ratiocinata*’ and the real distinction³¹.

f) Other authors

While a number of Spanish theologians were involved in the discussions and development of natural and international law during the XVI and XVII Centuries which is clearly linked to synderesis, the discussion was mainly centred on natural justice. For those who would like to go deeper into this topic a good starting point could be the book *Contemporary Perspectives on Natural Law* prepared by Ana Marta González³².

The topic, was though, known in by the counter-reform theologians to the point of influencing popular mystics as María de Agreda who, without having formal education, gives a beautiful description of synderesis, synteresis in the English translation: “The two kinds of virtues, the infused and the acquired, are founded upon a third kind, called natural virtue; this is born within us as part of our rational nature and is called synteresis. It is a certain knowledge of the first foundations and principles of virtue, perceived by the light of reason, and a certain inclination in the will, corresponding to this light. Such, for instance, is the sentiment, that we must love those who do us good, or that we should not do unto others, what we do not wish to be done to ourselves, etc”.³³

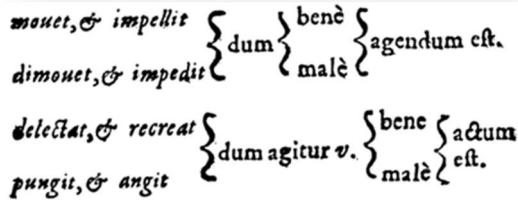


Figure 1: Godart's diagram.

Synderesis continued being used in traditional philosophical manuals throughout Europe. As an example we can see how in the textbook of Pierre Godart in France, *Totius Philosophiae Summa*. Synderesis is explained within the treatise of human actions under ‘The

³¹ “Et fere certum argumentum esse, illa non distingui actu in re, sed ratione ratiocinata. Probatur ex dictis, & primo inductione nam Petrus, homo, animal, caetera praedicata prout in re sunt in Petro, non distinguntur ex natura rei. Similiter in intellectu ratio superior & inferior, synderesis, memoria, & simila attributa eius, non significanda aliqua in re distincta, set ratione tantum racionata: quia illa potentia talis est, ut haec omnia in sua adaequata ratione comprehendat, nec sint in illa separabilia ullo modo etiam de potentia Dei absoluta, quoad ipsam facultatem, seu actum primu, lice quad usum possint separari”. Suárez, F., *Disput. Met. VII*, 3 op.cit, vol 25, 271.

³² González, A.M., *Contemporary Perspectives On Natural Law: Natural Law as a Limiting Concept* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012).

³³ Agreda, M. de J. de, *City of God* (Hammond, Indiana: Conkey, 1914), 373.

principiis congenitum actionum humanarum' as "Intellectus Moralis, est lux vitae, lex morum, dux rationis" which comprises "In eo sunt synthesis, lex naturalis, conscientia, Moralis, Prudentia Iurisprudentia", and gives the definition of synderesis as: "Synthesis, est anima custos, rectrix conservatrix, quasi 'fotagogos kai paidagogos', which "Definitur, habitus primarum bene vivendi regularum, p. neminem ladere suum cuique tribuere". He also includes a pedagogical chart to express the work of the synderesis before and after the action³⁴ (Figure 1).

In England the term synderesis was still alive at the beginning of the Century. An interesting fact is that the discussion was not centred on Jerome's *Comment on Ezechiel* but on *Proverbs*, XX, 27, both in Cambridge and London. The discussion was whether the interpretation of the text gave priority to God as light of understanding or to human natural light. The first interpretation is closer to the Calvinist marginal note to the influential *Geneva Bible*: "Theof God giveth life unto man and causeth us to see and trie the secrets of our dark hearts"³⁵. The second is closer to the Deists in the sense that man by himself can understand God and the moral law. The two interpretations seem to have been recorded in an eclectic way in the commentary ordered by the Synod of Dort: "The soul of man (meaning the rational or reasonable soul, which is endowed with the natural light of understanding, and distinction between good and evil, or also with the supernatural light of regeneration, whereby a man has the capacity to apprehend and understand, what he ought to believe, and how he ought to live) is the lamp of the Lord"³⁶. The main defender of the Calvinist position was Anthony Tuckne. The Deist position defender was Benjamin Whichcote, which he may have taken from Ephraim Huit's *Anatomy of Conscience*³⁷.

Nevertheless, it was also in England where the most radical critics will come, not only of synderesis but also of the judgment of moral

³⁴ "Lex naturalis, est actuale mentis dictamen quo naturae, luce, & duce novimus officia vitae), doctis, & probis non esse invidendum. Conscientia, est cordis scientia, quasi conscriptus cordis codex, in quo quidquid later, patebit. Dicitur actuale mentis dictamen quo concludimus ex universali pracepto aliquot particulare, vt. Puta hic, & nuc, hui viro probe, & docto non est invidendum. Excusat, ablsovit, delectat, insontes licet accusentur, imo, & damnetur: est enim fax veritatis & sincera pax cordis". Godart P., *Totius Philosophiae Summa* (Ludovicum Billaini, Paris, 1666), 166.

³⁵ Cfr. Greene, R. A., "Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52/4 (1991), 621.

³⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*

³⁷ "There is in Conscience a speculative part, called synderesis, comprising the principles of right reason, the lawes of good and evill; which in this Discourse affords the first proposition being indeed one of its principles. There is also a practicall part, called syneidesis (which by some is strictly taken for Conscience it selfe,) the which supplies the Assumption... from both which issues the Conclusion, composing a compleate Syllogisme". Huit, E., *The Anatomy of Conscience*, London, 1626, 134-35; quoted by Greene, R. A. "Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52/4 (1991), 625.

conscience. Hobbes and Locke could not understand how something that cannot be seen would be the guarantee of universal morals that were so different among so many people not just from different cultures but within the same country, which at the time was in constant turmoil. Both of them span the century and will be very influential in the following centuries in France and through France in the rest of the world.

f) *John of Saint Thomas* (1589–1644). A Dominican monk considered one of the more accurate commentators of Aquinas, and one of the clearer in exposing his doctrine, commented on the synderesis in his *Cursus Philosophicus* stating that both conscience and synderesis are part of the intellect³⁸. Nevertheless, it cannot be confused with the intellect because it is different from it. Regarding its origin he clarifies that synderesis is natural as the root of moral behaviour, but as the other natural habits, does not work until it is activated by other intellectual acts³⁹.

As a sample of the discussion going on in Spanish universities, the comparison of his interpretation with other contemporary theologians is interesting; he cites Gregorio Martínez and M. Báñez as understanding synderesis and the other practical intellectual habits incorrectly⁴⁰.

g) *Thomas Hobbes* (1588-1679). Anders Schinkel explains that “Hobbes was annoyed, to say the least, by the liberty with which men from different religious persuasions used the term (conscience) for their own purposes”⁴¹. This made him reject the appeals to conscience, and much more to synderesis which he does not use in his works.

³⁸ “Synderesis nominat habitum principiorum regulantium practice actions, conscientia vero applicationem eorum ad operandum, neutrum autem distinctam potentiam exigit ab intellectu”. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicum Thomisticus* (Olms: Arnaud, 1678), 874.

³⁹ “Dicit habitum principiorum esse partim acquisitum, partim naturalem. Est acquisitus, quatenus dependet a speciebus, ut ex ipsorum terminorum cognitione innescat, et ita de se intellectus, antequam species aliquas acquirat, sine ullo habitu est. Cum enim habitus iste sit lumen determinatum et circa determinata obiecta, ad quae inclinat, non potest esse idem cum potentia et ex sola eius indifferentia et potentialitate resultare, sed ex aliqua determinata repraesentatione obiectorum, quae speciale lumen determinat et circa specialia obiecta inclinationem ponant. Est autem naturalis ille habitus, non formaliter in se, sed radicaliter, quatenus positis speciebus et explicatis terminis ex ipsa natura intellectus provenit tanta adhaesio et inclinatio ad illam veritatem, quod nullo modo potest ei dissentiri, sed naturali vi adhaeret illi evidentiae”. John of St. Thomas, *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ “Alia synderesis, seu principiorum practicorum, sed unus, & idem habitus sit pro utrisque’. Gregorius Martinez, Quast. 57 art. 2, Dub. 1 circa secundum argumentum. Et idem sensit Bañez M., a. tom. 1 part. Quast. 79 art. 12 dub.1 & 2. Conimbricenses autem in Lib. Et hic disp.7 Quaest. 6. art. 1 ponunt synderesim, quae esst habitus circa principia, practica quas virtutem condistintam ab intellectu principiorum, sapientia, & scientia”. *Ibid.*, 192.

⁴¹ Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2007), 203.

Schinkel proceeds: “By speaking of conscience instead of their opinions, they transfer the aura of objectivity of conscience, ‘properly understood’, to this new private conscience, behind or within which their private opinions hide”⁴². The solution is the unanimity or agreement, which is “the social contract”. The rule of conscience and morals then becomes society and society expresses it by the laws.

Hobbes places law, this is society, above conscience, since conscience is unreliable. This does not mean that those without society do not have morals, or that those morals are not related to conscience because they follow the law of nature⁴³, and this is clearer in “common wealths relationships”, where the kings have to follow their consciences since there is no law of nations⁴⁴. “Good and Evil are names that signify our Appetites, and Aversions; which in different tempers, customes, and doctrines of men, are different... For moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind.”⁴⁵. This means that where there is law the law is the ultimate rule; where there is no law (as is the case of the relations among states) then the will of the ruler prevails, and the ruler will work according to his appetites and aversions, which directly follow their nature.

h) *John Locke (1632-1704)*. “Locke ...argues that there is no such thing as synderesis, for there are no such things, Locke says, as ‘innate principles’, whether practical or theoretical”⁴⁶. Yolton in his *Locke Dictionary* says that, ‘conscience’ “is not a term used very often by Locke”, and “after 1690, it fades out of his use”⁴⁷. While Hobbes

⁴² *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴³ “From this relation of sin to the law, and of crime to the civil law, three things can be inferred. First, that where law ceases, sin ceases. But the law of nature cannot cease, because it is eternal; so violation of covenants, ingratitude, arrogance, and all acts contrary to any moral virtue can never cease to be sin”. Hobbes, Th., *Leviathan*, John Bennett Edition, Part II, Chapter 27, 131. Accessed December 22, 2014. <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part2.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “Concerning the duties of one sovereign to another, which are covered by the so called ‘law of nations’, I needn’t say anything here, because the law of nations and the law of nature are the same thing. Every sovereign has the same right in procuring the safety of his people as any individual man can have in procuring the safety of his own body. And the same law that dictates to men who have no civil government what they ought to do and what to avoid in regard of one another dictates the same to commonwealths. That is, dictates it to the consciences of sovereign princes and sovereign assemblies; for there is no court of natural justice except the conscience, where not man but God reigns”. Hobbes, Th., *Leviathan*, John Bennett Edition, Part II, Chapter 30, 159, op.cit.

⁴⁵ Hobbes, Th., *Leviathan*, 1660, ch. 15. Accessed Nov 29. 14 http://www.ttu.ee/public/m/mart-murdvee/EconPsy/6/Hobbes_Thomas_1660_The_Leviathan.pdf.

⁴⁶ Byham, J., *Ordinary Citizens: Locke’s Politics of “Native Rustic Reason”*, (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2014), Accessed Oct 31, 2015, 60. etd.lib.msu.edu/islandora/object/etd%3A2764/view_premis.

⁴⁷ Yolton, J. W. *A Locke Dictionary*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), ‘conscience’ in Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2007), p.211.

still believes in some reference to a law of nature when the laws are not agreed upon by the commonwealth of society, Locke does not, as the following quote from his essay shows. There are no “rules being written on their hearts. To which I answer that many men can come to assent to various moral rules in the same way that they come to the knowledge of other things –without the rules being written on their hearts. And others may be led the same way by their education, the company they keep, and the customs of their country. Such an assent to the rules, however it is come by, will activate the conscience– which is nothing but our own opinion or judgment of the moral rightness or wrongness of our own actions. And if conscience is a proof of innateness, contraries can be innate principles; because sometimes men will conscientiously promote what others conscientiously avoid”⁴⁸.

For Locke there are no innate ideas, not a single one, and to believe in innate knowledge is proper to lazy people who prefer to believe in others rather than to devote themselves to prove what they can believe or not: “Some of the first sort, because of their general and easy reception, have been mistaken for innate: but the truth is, ideas and notions are no more born with us than arts and sciences; though some of them indeed offer themselves to our faculties more readily than others; and therefore are more generally received: though that, too, be according as the organs of our bodies and powers of our minds happen to be employed; God having fitted men with faculties and means to discover, receive, and retain truths, according as they are employed. The great difference that is to be found in the notions of mankind, is from the different use they put their faculties to. Whilst some (and those the most) taking things upon trust, misemploy their power of assent, by lazily enslaving their minds to the dictates and dominion of others, in doctrines which it is their duty carefully to examine, and not blindly to swallow others, with an implicit faith, employing their thoughts only about a few things, grow acquainted sufficiently with them, attain great degrees of knowledge in them, and remain ignorant of all other, having never let their thoughts loose in search of other inquiries”⁴⁹. To believe in others, not using our own intelligence leads to “a worship of idols. It is easy to imagine how, by these means, it comes to pass that men worship the idols that have been set up in their minds; grow fond of the notions they have been long acquainted with; and stamp the characters of divinity upon absurdities and errors; become zealous votaries to bulls and monkeys, and contend too, to fight, and die in defence of their opinions”⁵⁰. Leonardo Polo will point out that Locke and modern philosophers in general have not discovered the power of habitual knowledge.

⁴⁸Locke, J., *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1825), Book I, ch. III, § 8, 25.

⁴⁹Ibid., 82, Book I, ch. III, § 23.

⁵⁰Ibid., 83-84, Book I, ch. III, § 26.

Locke directs most of his criticism to the common sense theories, mainly Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid, and the Cambridge Platonist theologians.

i) *Joseph Butler* (1692-1752). He was a protestant pastor, and later Bishop, who in his sermons confronted the psychological egoism of Hobbes and Locke's rational approach to morals and religion. Together with the Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) and Francis Hutcheson (1694 -1746) he rejects Hobbes and Locke's approach and rather than speaking about 'conscience' he speaks of a general 'moral sense'⁵¹, which at the beginning of the following century will become 'Common Sense' in the Scottish of Thomas Reid. None of them make reference to synderesis but to nature and to behaving according to nature which "is the voice of God speaking in us"⁵². Butler explains the situation of multiple moralities in the world because there is need to develop that initial nature we receive⁵³.

4. Modern Thinkers. XVIII Century

The XVIII Century continues the diverse versions of morality; the traditional as shown by Peter Lemonnier (†1757) in his *Cursus Philosophicus ad Scholarum usum Accommodatus*: "Synderesis accipitur, modo pro habitu, modo pro actu"⁵⁴, and the more debated 'moral sense' by the Scottish philosophers of the Common Sense.

⁵¹ "Some British authors gave conscience a new name — impressed, perhaps, by the Hobbesian and Lockeian critique of conscience, but in line with their empiricism. For them, conscience became the «moral sense»". Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2007), 228.

⁵² "Our whole nature leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God, and to deny all imperfection in him. And this will forever be a practical proof of his moral character, to such as will consider what a practical proof is; because it is the voice of God speaking in us". Butler, J., *Butler's Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1897, vol. I, Introduction), 13. Cf. also: "so they often contribute also, not to the inversion of this, which is impossible: but to the rendering persons prosperous, though wicked; afflicted, though righteous; and, which is worse, to the rewarding of some actions, though vicious, and punishing other actions, though virtuous. But all this cannot drown the voice of nature in the conduct of Providence, plainly declaring itself for virtue, by way of distinction from vice, and preference to it. For our being so constituted as that virtue and vice are thus naturally favoured and discountenanced". *Butler's Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), vol. I, Chapter III, 79.

⁵³ "What passes before their eyes, and daily happens to them, gives them experience, caution against treachery and deceit, together with numberless little rules of action and conduct, which we could not live without; and which are learnt so insensibly and so perfectly, as to be mistaken perhaps for instinct: though they are the effect of long experience and exercise as much so as language, or knowledge in particular business, or the qualifications and behaviour belonging to the several ranks and professions". *Ibid.* p. 116.

⁵⁴ "Intellectus, est facultas cognoscendi ea omnia, quibus mediantibus, vita humana regitur, moresque diriguntur ad honestatem. Ad facultatem hanc pertinent Synderesis, prudentia & conscientia. Synderesis accipitur, modo pro habitu, modo pro actu. Si sumatur pro habitu, est facilitas cognoscendi prima principia moralia, hoc, verbi gratia, alteri ne feceris, quod tibi fieri non vis. Si vero sumatur pro actu, est

a) *Thomas Reid* (1710–1796). He was a contemporary and main adversary of Hume and founder of the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. While defending a realistic philosophy⁵⁵, he nevertheless does not mention synderesis in his works. In making reference to Malebranche⁵⁶, he refers to the innate abilities that allow to develop further experiences and sciences, and that are later improved further by philosophers, “Common Sense is like Common Law”⁵⁷ in that all people have its basis but only lawyers and philosophers are able to develop their principles further.

b) *David Hume* (1711-1776). Hume is no different from Hobbes in placing the universality of morals in social agreement but he is more precise in saying that this agreement is based on a moral feeling. Being sceptical about causation and about the substance, it would be difficult for him to appeal to a common nature, though he uses the name in his main work: “A Treatise of Human Nature which is an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects”⁵⁸.

primorum illorum principiorum cognitio. Prudencia sumitur pariter, vel pro habitu, vel pro actu. Si sumatur pro habitu, est facilitas eruendi conclusiones, ex primis principiis moralibus; si vero, pro actu, est illatio conclusionum, ex primis principiis moralibus. Conscientia, est sensus quidam intimus, consequens notitiam agendorum, aut fugiendorum: modo dicitur quies interna, modo vermis internus, prout nempe, vel secundum, vel contra sensum ilium intimum agimus”. Lemonnier, P., *Cursus Philosophicus ad Scholarum Usum Accommodatus*, VI tomus, Moralis, (Paris: Genneau L., et J. Rollin, 1750), 52-53.

⁵⁵ “No philosopher has ever formally denied the truth or disclaimed the authority of consciousness; but few or none have been content implicitly to accept and consistently to follow out its dictates. Instead of humbly resorting to consciousness, to draw from thence his doctrines and their proof, each dogmatic speculator looked only into consciousness, there to discover his preadopted opinions. In philosophy, men have abused the code of natural, as in theology, the code of positive, revelation and the epigraph of a great protestant divine, on the book of scripture, is certainly not less applicable to the book of consciousness: “Hic liber est in quo querit sua dogmata quisque; Invenit, et pariter dogmata quisque sua”. Reid, T., *On the Progress of Philosophy* (London: Trubner & Co, 1858), 147.

⁵⁶ “We admit, nay we maintain, as D'Alembert well expresses it, that the truth in metaphysics, like the truth in matters of taste, is a truth of which all minds have the germ within themselves to which indeed the greater number pay no attention, but which they recognise the moment it is pointed out to them. But if, in this sort, all are able to understand, all are not able to instruct. The merit of conveying easily to others true and simple notions is much greater than is commonly supposed; for experience proves how rarely this is to be met with. Sound metaphysical ideas are common truths, which every one apprehends, but which few have the talent to develope. So difficult it is on any subject to make our own what belongs to every one”. Reid, T. *On Common Sense*, III #10, in *Philosophical Works*, Volume 1, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1967), 751.

⁵⁷ “Common Sense is like Common Law. Each may be laid down as the general rule of decision but in the one case it must be left to the jurist, in the other to the philosopher, to ascertain what are the contents of the rule and though in both instances the common man may be cited as a witness, for the custom or the fact, in neither can he be allowed to officiate as advocate or as judge”. *Ibid.* p. 752.

⁵⁸ “We may only affirm on this head, that if ever there was any thing, which cou'd be call'd natural in this sense, the sentiments of morality certainly may; since there never was any nation of the world, nor any single person in any nation, who was utterly depriv'd of them, and who never, in any instance, show'd the least approbation or dislike of manners. These sentiments are so rooted in our constitution

The main purpose is ethical. Hume intends precisely that, to find a “scientific” method to defend the universality of ethics, nevertheless as Schindels says “Hume replaces both ‘synderesis’ and conscience with moral sentiments, with feelings of approbation and disapprobation. Hume bases morality on ‘nature’ in a new way, anticipated by Hobbes and Locke”⁵⁹, nevertheless by placing the base of morals in feelings he makes it rather subjective.

In the discussion on “*Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*”, Hume notes that in order to acquire knowledge of human nature, man is often compared to animals, or one man to another. Human nature is not defined by anything ‘metaphysical’, a divine spark, a mysterious moral faculty, but by man’s motives for action”⁶⁰. Yet, and this is an important difference with Locke, “Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition. So remarkable a phaenomenon merits our attention, and must be traced up to its first principles”⁶¹. Locke’s rejection of any innate ideas went too far for Hume.

c) *Adam Smith (1723–1790)*. It is interesting to include Adam Smith to indicate a fact not always mentioned, that Smith’s interest in morals was great and that it is reflected in the title of one of his books: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which already indicates his connection to Hume, Locke and Hobbes. Smith’s definition of conscience and his appeal to a faculty that tells us whether our action is agreeable or contrary to its directions seems to be a call for the forgotten ‘synderesis’ which Smith has never heard of: “The word conscience does not immediately denote any moral faculty by which we approve or disapprove. Conscience supposes, indeed, the existence of some such faculty, and properly signifies our consciousness of having acted agreeably or contrary to its directions... When love, hatred, joy, sorrow, gratitude, resentment, with so many other passions which are all supposed to be the subjects of this principle, have made themselves considerable enough to get titles to know them by, is it not surprising that the sovereign of them all should hitherto have been so little heeded, that, a few philosophers excepted, nobody has yet thought it

and temper, that without entirely confounding the human mind by disease or madness, ‘tis impossible to extirpate and destroy them”. Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (Auckland, The Floating Press, 2009), 722. “Willey (Willey, B., *The Eighteenth Century Background* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 122, notes that Hume ‘is aware (...) that different ages and races have approved different things, but for his purpose it is sufficient to make a catalogue of the qualities approved and condemned by his own age and social group. The moral judgments of this group, he evidently feels, are sufficiently representative to be taken as those of average humanity’. In Hume, then, we find that same remarkable feature of parochialism parading as universalism that appears to have been so widespread in his time”. Schinkel, A., op.cit., 288.

⁵⁹ Schinkel, A., *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Hume takes issue with Hobbes and his followers here, and refutes the idea that all man’s actions are purely the result of self-love.

⁶¹ Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature*, op.cit., 491.

worthwhile to bestow a name upon it?”⁶². He indicates that it is surprising that no philosopher has given it a particular name and that he will accept it to be called a kind of ‘moral sense’ though “the word moral sense is of very late formation, and cannot yet be considered as making part of the English tongue”⁶³. He also gives the impression that it is a kind of sentiment but different from common sentiments.

d) Rousseau (1712–1778). Rousseau had great influence in the following century, and he became the unavoidable reference to all Romantics. He praised and defended conscience against Montaigne’s scepticism and that of rationalists and empiricists⁶⁴. His clear and simple style won many hearts, because he was appealing mainly to the heart. “Conscience. Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God. In thee consists the excellence of man’s nature and the morality of his actions; apart from thee, I find nothing in myself to raise me above the beasts”⁶⁵. Rousseau understands conscience mainly as a feeling, a natural feeling, above intelligence, the most important director of life: “The decrees of conscience are not judgments but feelings. Although all our ideas come from without, the feelings by which they are weighed are within us”⁶⁶. And life is a struggle where the feelings of conscience are battling the feelings of the body, rather than the intelligence: “Conscience is the voice of the soul, the passions are the voice of the body. Is it strange that these voices often contradict each other? And then to which should we give heed? Too often does reason deceive us; we have only too good a right to doubt her; but conscience never deceives us; she is the true guide of man; it is to the soul what instinct is to the body”⁶⁷. Such statement really looks like a description of synderesis, where it not for the subjectivism that this conscience has, which depends on each subject in Rousseau’s doctrine, as his idea of God also depends on feelings.

The praise of conscience as director and its consideration as instinctive will be accepted by Kant with his *Practical Reason*, and by Darwin and Freud in the following Century. While none of them used

⁶² Smith, A., *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (London: Steward, Henry G Bohn, 1853), 479.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ “But at this word I hear the murmurs of all the wise men so-called, Childish errors, prejudices of our upbringing, they exclaim in concert! There is nothing in the human mind but what it has gained by experience; and we judge everything solely by means of the ideas we have acquired. They go further; they even venture to reject the clear and universal agreement of all peoples, and to set against this striking unanimity in the judgment of mankind, they seek out some obscure exception known to themselves alone”. Rousseau, J. J., *Emile* (New York, Dent & Sons Ltd., 1911), 252.

⁶⁵ Rousseau, J. J., *Ibid.*, 252.

⁶⁶ Rousseau, J. J., *Ibid.*, 252.

⁶⁷ Rousseau, J. J., *Ibid.*, 249.

the term synderesis they are referring to that innate source of goodness common to all men.

e) *Immanuel Kant* (1724-1804). The often-quoted saying of Kant, found in the first lines of his conclusion to the *Critic of the Practical Reason*: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within”⁶⁸, may express the importance that Kant gives to morals, and on the other hand it also manifests the dichotomy between nature and morals in his critical system. In this sense he has not overcome Hume. His foundation of ethics will be paradigmatic in that he grounds morals in a pure formal precept which is simple to understand. Nevertheless, the precept does not overcome the “social agreement” of the English empiricist, nor its subjacent subjectivism. As Schinkel summarises, “In a sense, Kant epitomizes the Enlightenment problem of grounding the authority of conscience, while he, in fact, made the most impressive effort to find a basis for it. A failure is simply most noticeable when a serious attempt was made. The problem is old, but for those in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who attempted to redefine conscience and to provide it with a new anchorage, be it in Nature or Reason, it went back most directly to Hobbes and Locke, for the latter”⁶⁹. As a deep philosopher, nevertheless, Kant had a hint of synderesis as Bouyer points out: “Above all however, as we have said earlier, Kant’s analysis of conscience, despite being encased in formalism, does include a real awareness of the inner capably religious element within it, and comes very close to the Thomist analysis of synderesis”⁷⁰. In his work *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* Kant states: “But now this is possible only because the free power of choice incorporates moral feeling into its maxim: so a power of choice so constituted is a good character, and this character, as in general every character of the free power of choice, is something that can only be acquired; yet, for its possibility there must be present in our nature a predisposition onto which nothing evil can be grafted”⁷¹ which sounds very close to the traditional synderesis, and to an habitual knowledge which Kant calls a feeling, following the empiricist approach.

f) *Jeremy Bentham* (1748–1832). Jeremy Bentham is the most radical proposer of utilitarianism, where subjectivity reigns. His distinction between the real (read sensible) and the fictitious leaves no room

⁶⁸ Kant, I., *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (London: Longmans & Co, 1889), 173.

⁶⁹ Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections*, op. cit., 271.

⁷⁰ Bouyer, Ch., BOUYER, L., *The Invisible Father: Approaches to the Mystery of the Divinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 290.

⁷¹ Kant, I., *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason and other writings* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51. Cfr. for a more detailed account of the good and evil foundation in Kant: Rodríguez Duplá, L. R. D., “¿Por qué sostiene Kant que el hombre es malo?, in *Ética Sin Religión? VI Simposio Internacional Fe Cristiana y Cultura Contemporánea, Instituto de Antropología y Ética*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2007).

for faculties so synderesis has no room in his system: “Faculties, powers of the mind, dispositions: all these are unreal; all these are but so many fictitious entities. When a view of them comes to be given, it will be seen how perfectly distinguishable, among psychical entities, are those which are recognised in the character of real, from those which are here referred to as the class of fictitious entities”⁷². Bentham can be even more specific with regards to natural rights: “That which has no existence cannot be destroyed –that which cannot be destroyed cannot require anything to preserve it from destruction. Natural right is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptible rights, rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts”⁷³.

5. Contemporary Thinkers. XIX and XX Century

The beginning of the XIX Century sees the explosion of the Romantic Movement. Romanticism is the rebellion against the extreme rationalism of the two previous centuries. From reason to senses, from the will to the instinct, from sculpture to music, from proportion to spontaneity, from urban to rural, from imperial to national, from international to local, from artificial to natural. As mysticism was a reaction to scholasticism, then, Romanticism was a reaction to the cult of reason⁷⁴. Romanticism affected philosophy as well, and there was a coming back to the Medieval, to the mysteries, to the oriental. The opening of Asia and Africa and the travel facilities together with the large number of publication of literary, historical and philosophical sources made it easier to stress the subjectivist view of ethics, already started in the previous three centuries.

a) *Charles Darwin (1809-1882)*. Darwin will not deny morals or their importance: “I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that, of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important”⁷⁵. Nevertheless, morals for him is a social feeling, that animals can eventually achieve: “The following proposition seems to me in a high degree probable, namely, that any animal whatsoever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man”⁷⁶. And this will depend on contrasting feelings: “Nevertheless the bee, or any other social animal, would in our supposed case gain, as it appears to me, some feeling of right and wrong, or a conscience. For each individual

⁷² Bentham, J., *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh: Bowring, William Tait, 1838, vol. 8), 196. Accessed December 12, 2014. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/bentham-the-works-of-jeremy-bentham-vol-11-memoirs-of-bentham-part-ii-and-analytical-index>.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2), 501.

⁷⁴ Cfr. Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections*, op. cit., 277.

⁷⁵ Darwin, C., *The Descent of Man* (New York: Appleton, 1871), vol. I, 67.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 68

would have an inward sense of possessing certain stronger or more enduring instincts, and others less strong or enduring; so that there would often be a struggle as to which impulse should be followed; and satisfaction or dissatisfaction would be felt, as past impressions were compared during their incessant passage through the mind”⁷⁷. “Ultimately a highly-complex sentiment, having its first origin in the social instincts, largely guided by the approbation of our fellow-men, ruled by reason, self-interest, and in later times by deep religious feelings, confirmed by instruction and habit, all combined, constitute our moral sense or conscience”⁷⁸.

Rousseau’s natural feeling has now a scientific base and an evolutionary explanation. It is an instinct directed to the physical survival. The *apex mentis*, which used to link men to God, is now the survival instinct of social animals with high intellectual capacity which eventually creates the moral norms and religion and God, as a means of survival. As such this instinct is totally undetermined, and will become the libido in Freud, the will to life of Schopenhauer, the will to power of Nietzsche. The concept of a human moral instinct is not new. What is new in Darwin is to reduce morals to animal instincts and link them to an evolutionary process.

b) *Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860)*. Schopenhauer uses the word synderesis in Spanish in one of his works. Nevertheless he seems to understand it according to his impulse to life rather than in the classical way that was used by the author he admires and quotes: “It may be that this impulse or instinct is the unconscious effect of a kind of prophetic dream which is forgotten when we awake lending our life a uniformity of tone, a dramatic unity, such as could never result from the unstable moments of consciousness, when we are so easily led into error, so liable to strike a false note. It is in virtue of some such prophetic dream that a man feels himself called to great achievements in a special sphere, and works in that direction from his youth up out of an inner and secret feeling that that is his true path, just as by a similar instinct the bee is led to build up its cells in the comb. This is the impulse which Balthazar Gracián⁷⁹ calls ‘la gran sindéresis’, the great power of moral discernment: it is something that a man instinctively feels to be his salvation, without which he would be lost”⁸⁰. Schopenhauer had great regard for Gracián whom he calls “My excellent Baltasar Gracián”. Schopenhauer used different words rather than ‘sindéresis’ in other passages of his translation of Gracián’s book *The*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁹ The 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica* wrote of Gracián that “He has been excessively praised by Schopenhauer, whose appreciation of the author induced him to translate the *Oráculo manual*, and he has been unduly depreciated by Ticknor and others. He is an acute thinker and observer, misled by his systematic misanthropy and by his fantastic literary theories”. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed. (New York: The Times, 1911), vol. 12, 311.

⁸⁰ Schopenhauer, A., *Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer* (New York: A. L. Burt, 1892), 171.

Art of Worldly Wisdom depending on the context, and did not seem to have used “synderesis” in his own works, except for the one quoted above⁸¹.

c) *Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)*. Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in conceiving the root of human behaviour as an instinctive force, which for him is the will to dominate; the will to power. He despises all Christian concepts, so it is no surprise that he does not mention synderesis in his works, even having read Gracián and admiring him⁸². What he says about conscience already gives a hint on why he does not even consider the traditional view on synderesis: “conscience: this is not, as you may believe, ‘the voice of God in man’; it is the instinct of cruelty, which turns inwards once it is unable to discharge itself outwardly. Cruelty is here exposed, for the first time, as one of the oldest and most indispensable elements in the foundation of culture”⁸³. For Nietzsche morality is just a psychological phenomenon, which somehow resembles what Freud will later say as Janaway points out: “Moralization is the elevation of feeling guilty into a virtue”⁸⁴. Something that is therefore artificial, not natural, not innate, what is innate is the will to power, not morals. Nevertheless this source of action in man which pushes him to power has some of the characteristics of synderesis, but instead of moving towards good it moves towards power. It is a different foundation for an evolutionary ethics that favours the reign of the fittest, without a purpose other than power that coincides with Schinkel’s comment: “There is thus a structural resemblance between Nietzsche’s view of conscience and the Christian idea of synderesis. Both are signs of an original state from which we have fallen; a better, natural state, which we long to return to”⁸⁵.

The XX Century inherits all the past achievements in a way that was never possible before, in the sense that the incredible technical advances initiated in the XIX Century come to make knowledge of the past available to practically anyone interested. So what already started in the XIX Century with historical research and publication of affordable classic books of all cultures; the improvement of means of

⁸¹ Cfr. Palacios, L.-E., “Cuatro Aspectos de la Sindéresis”, *Estudios en Honor del Dr. Luis Recasens Siches* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma México, 1980), 690.

⁸² Nietzsche wrote in BVN 1884. 536 –Letter to Peter Gast on: 09/20/1884. NF-1873.30 (34) –*Posthumous Fragments* Fall 1873– winter 1873-74. 30 (34). “Gracián shows wisdom and prudence in the life experience, making it possible to compare anything now. We are probably the Mikroskopiker of reality, to see to understand our novels (Balzac, Dickens), only to call and explain what no one understands”. Accessed March 18, 2015. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Selected_Letters_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche#Nietzsche_To_Peter_Gast_-_January.2C_1887

⁸³ Nietzsche, F., *Ecce Homo* (Portland, Me: Smith & Sale, 1911), 36.

⁸⁴ Janaway, C., “Guilt, Bad Conscience, and Self-punishment in Nietzsche’s Genealogy” in Leiter, B., Sinhababu, N. eds., *Nietzsche and morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 153.

⁸⁵ Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections*, op. cit., 308, note.

transport especially after the second World War; the unforeseen number of universities and congresses; the number of scholarly periodicals; and the facility of sharing resources on the internet, makes it now possible to know, assimilate and defend any type of philosophy. Synderesis has been studied, mainly in history of philosophy as a collateral term to conscience, and conscience inasmuch as it is either related to morals or its neurological base. On the other hand, the term is still being taught in secondary education, at least in Spain, and in centers of theology based on scholastic philosophy or in universities where natural law is being taught. Nevertheless, it is not a topic dealt with by most professional philosophers as can be easily seen by doing few searches in the internet.

d) Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). In the same way that Darwin gave scientific credibility to the feelings as motor of the moral life, Freud gave credibility to the unconscious as the motor of human decisions, the irrationality and struggle between the desire for pleasure and the desire of chastisement, the apollonian and the dionysiac of Nietzsche. Though Freud denied Nietzsche influence, it seems that it was that Freud knew Nietzsche's works as Leher points out⁸⁶. The well-known fact that for Freud the dynamic of the human psyche comes from the unconscious *id*, which is governed by the principle of pleasure and the *ego* and *superego*, which try to direct and repress *id*'s impulses. The *superego* has some resemblance to synderesis as Langston indicates⁸⁷, "And perhaps most surprising, the relationship between the *superego* and the conscience parallels the traditional relationship between the synderesis and conscience. Just as the synderesis stands as the repository of the universal moral rules one should obey, so the *superego* is the repository of the beliefs and dictates that guide behaviour in the medieval view"⁸⁸.

e) Max Scheler (1874-1928). Scheler was one of the most influential authors on Ethics in the XX Century. With his work *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, he first dismantled the formalistic Kantian ethics and secondly he proposed an intuitive access to 'objective formal values' with his theory on moral values and their hierarchy. His intuitive vision of values, which is universal, was

⁸⁶ Lehrer, R., *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's Life and Thought: on the Origins of a Psychology of Dynamic Unconscious Mental Functioning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1-10.

⁸⁷ "The power of the *id* expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs. No such purpose as that of keeping itself alive or of protecting itself from dangers by means of anxiety can be attributed to the *id*. That is the business of the *ego*, which is also concerned with discovering the most favourable and least perilous method of obtaining satisfaction, taking the external world into account. The *superego* may bring fresh needs to the fore, but its chief function remains the limitation of satisfactions. The forces which we assume to exist behind the tensions caused by the needs of the *id* are called instincts...After long doubts and vacillations we have decided to assume the existence of two basic instincts, *Eros* and the *destructive instinct*". Freud, S., *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (New York, Random House, 1955), 5.

⁸⁸ Langston, D. C., 2001, op. cit., 91.

largely based on a similar formulation of Franz Clemens Brentano (1838–1917)⁸⁹ through his contact with Husserl⁹⁰. None of them made reference to synderesis, but their quest is a different way of trying to find a guarantor of the universality and permanence of ethical principles. G.E. Moore (1873-1958), himself also very influential, shared the intuitionist Brentano's views as shown in his famous review to Brentano's work⁹¹.

e) *Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)*. The existentialists do not believe in a fixed human nature, but that there is a force within men that makes them become “authentic”, “self-realising” and other ways of becoming or making themselves. That force has different directions, and normally starts with a discovery and a rejection of being “one more”, “a thing”, “a nature”. That internal guiding force would have resemblance with synderesis as the impulse to become, but it is missing a normative. We only deal sketchily with Heidegger as representative of existentialism. It is not easy to understand what Heidegger calls ‘conscience’, but it appears more as an indeterminate force that brings one out of the unauthentic living to the authentic. No norms are given, only the push to be authentic⁹². If this is so, which is the interpretation given by Sepulveda, Heidegger's concept of conscience seems closer to the classic synderesis⁹³ than to the classic interpretation of conscience. What is clear is that the classic medieval philosophy had little influence in Heidegger's thought, which basically is a reaction to Hegel's rationalism: “In its symbolic aspect, it expresses what we might call a ‘romantic’ experience of conscience, reminiscent of Rousseau... Conscience makes itself felt (or heard), so to speak, by making something else felt: it opens up the possibility of authentic existence, in contrast with the present inauthenticity. But,

⁸⁹ Cfr. Brentano, F., *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁹⁰ In spite of basing himself in Brentano and believing in the objectivity of the values Husserl seems to have found some limitations to Brentano's system. Cfr. Crespo, M., *El Valor Ético de la Afectividad: Estudios de Ética Fenomenológica* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad Católica de Chile, 2012), 50. For a more detailed explanation of Husserl's Ethics cfr. Ferrer, U. and Sánchez-Migallón, S., *La Ética de Edmund Husserl* (Sevilla: Plaza y Valdés, 2011).

⁹¹ Cfr. Moore, G. E., “Review of F. Brentano's The Origins of Knowledge of Right and Wrong”, *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. 14 (1903), 115-123.

⁹² “In Da-sein's assumption of the choice to live authentically, where it finds itself primordially, conscience is revealed as existing ‘in the kind of being of Da-sein’. Heidegger, M., *Being and Time*, # 269. The word ‘in’ does not depict conscience as an inner voice (or set of voices) apart from Da-sein as represented in some caricatures, where the devil and the angel each on a human shoulder and whisper advice to the unwitting subject. Instead, ‘in’ differentiates the phenomenon of the conscience from ‘out’, and indicates that conscience does not occur as an outside voice which calls Da-sein. Conscience, revealed as a call (*Being and Time* # 269), calls from within”. Sepulveda, K., “The Call: Heidegger and the Ethical Conscience”, *Res Cogitans*, vol. 2/1 (2011), 76.

⁹³ “Instead, we silently listen in order to understand the call, and in this hearkening, partake in the call and become aware of it. We become aware of a call that comes ‘from me, and yet over me’”. *Ibid.*, 77.

although it figures in experience –although it *is* experience– it belongs (in the terms I have used previously) to insistent, rather than existent reality”⁹⁴.

f) *The Neo-thomists.* The Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Pope Leo XIII at the end of the previous century, 1879, spurred a renaissance of the study of Thomas Aquinas’ works which flourished at the beginning of the XX Century. The publication of Aquinas’ complete works, the Leonine Edition, which included the commentaries of Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas de Vio) gave an instrument for scholars to study more in detail Aquinas’ thoughts directly. Jacques Maritain⁹⁵, Etienne Gilson⁹⁶ in France, Joseph Pieper⁹⁷ in Germany, Cornelio Fabro⁹⁸ in Italy, Jesús García López⁹⁹, and Antonio Millán Puelles¹⁰⁰ in Spain were academics who studied and applied Aquinas’ doctrines to modern problems in philosophy while many others did it in the theological fields such as Garrigou-Lagrange¹⁰¹, Henry de Lubac¹⁰², Royo Marin¹⁰³, Joseph Mausbach,¹⁰⁴ and Octavio Derisi¹⁰⁵, among many

⁹⁴ Schinkel, A., *Conscience and Conscientious Objections*, op. cit., 304.

⁹⁵ “Moreover, Maritain emphasizes –and this is his distinctive contribution to natural law theory– that the first principles of natural law (particularly, ‘We must do good and avoid evil’) are indemonstrable and are known connaturally or preconsciously ‘through that which is consonant with the essential inclinations of human nature, an activity that Maritain, following Aquinas, called ‘synderesis’ (Critics have argued, however, that this kind of knowledge is obscure and problematic and is, therefore, inadequate as a basis for law)”. Berry Gray, C. “Jacques Maritain”, *The Philosophy of Law: An Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 1999), 534.

⁹⁶ Cfr. Gilson, E., *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

⁹⁷ “The living unity, incidentally, of synderesis and prudence is nothing less than the thing we commonly call ‘conscience’. Prudence, or rather perfected practical reason that has developed into prudence, is distinct from ‘synderesis’ in that it applies to specific situations. We may, if we will, call it the ‘situation conscience’. Just as the understanding of principles is necessary to specific knowledge, so natural conscience is the prerequisite and the soil for the concrete decisions of the «situation conscience»”. Pieper, J., *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance* (Notre Dame Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 11.

⁹⁸ Cfr. Fabro, C., *La nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione* (Torino: Società Editrice Internationale, 1950).

⁹⁹ Cfr. García López, J., *Escritos de Antropología Filosófica* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Millán-Puelles, A., *Léxico Filosófico* (Madrid: Rialp, 2002), 204 y 389.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. Garrigou-Lagrange, R., *Reality: a Synthesis of Thomistic Thought* (Seattle: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012).

¹⁰² Lubac, H. de, *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

¹⁰³ Cfr. Royo Marín, A., *Teología de la Perfección Cristiana* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1988).

¹⁰⁴ Some like Joseph Mausbach explain synderesis following Aquinas and without confronting it with other authors. Cfr. Mausbach, J. and Ermecke, G., *Teología Moral Católica*, I (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1971), 231.

¹⁰⁵ “Así como tenemos el *intellectus principiorum*, el hábito natural de la inteligencia para aprehender el ser y sus nociones primeras, del mismo modo la sindéresis es

others. Both the theologians and philosophers did not dwell on synderesis in depth because most of their work was based on Aquinas' maturity works, the two *Summas*¹⁰⁶.

g) *Romano Guardini (1885-1968)*. He wrote an influential book on ethics in which he approaches ethics with a phenomenological method based on Max Scheler axiology. While his approach is very attractive, and has several points of contact with classic ethics and Polo's view, it needs a deeper ontological foundation. This is shown in that he does not have a clear approach to the habits and does not mention synderesis as such, though he somehow refers to its reality as shown in this quote: "Thanks to this process a progressive purification and formation of conscience is achieved. One listens better, reaches a clearer acceptance and firmer judgments about the good (which, in turn, it perfects the executive conscience). What we have described in a round about way is the actual fact that conscience has something beforehand with its own force, which is precisely, is its foundation. This, nevertheless, requires to gradually be implanted, step by step, in the concrete existence of man. What is in it is a starting point that has to grow, to improve, constantly returning to the original call to freedom made by the good. Although conceptually we cannot break it down, we know what we mean and that it is right. And we know something else: that we are obliged to know it, and that if one does not know it is not an objection against it, but against our own weakness and interior dispositions. Because knowledge of the core of existence is, in itself, part of ethics' task"¹⁰⁷.

el hábito de la inteligencia práctica, que capta el bien o fin último y los primeros principios normativos de la voluntad (ya que ésta es facultad ciega y dirigida en sus pasos por la inteligencia), y el *appetitus naturalis*, el hábito de la voluntad que la inclina al bien". Derisi, O. N., *Los Fundamentos Metafísicos del Orden Moral* (Buenos Aires: Universitas, 1980), 49.

¹⁰⁶ As an example we can quote a text from the most modern of them, Cornelio Fabro. It is almost a literal translation of Aquinas' text. In *II Sent.*, d. 39, q. III, a. 1. "First principles are like 'seminal reasons' of all knowledge and virtue and their understanding is likened to a 'divine seal' and a 'spark of the soul'. This virtue is fittingly called 'spark', for just as a spark is a small flying particle of fire, so this virtue is a small participation of intelligence with respect to the intelligence that exists in an angel. Hence also the superior part of reason is called 'spark', because it is the highest thing in a rational nature". Fabro, C., "The intensive hermeneutics of Thomistic philosophy: the notion of participation", *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 27/3 (1974) p. 488.

¹⁰⁷ "Gracias a todo este proceso se logra una progresiva purificación y formación de la conciencia moral: se avanza para poder escuchar mejor, llegar a una más clara aceptación y a unos juicios más firmes respecto del bien (lo que, a su vez, hace que se perfeccione la conciencia moral ejecutora). Lo que hemos descrito con rodeos es la realidad de que la conciencia moral tiene de antemano algo con vigencia propia, y que este algo es su fundamento; pero esto con vigencia propia tiene que imponerse poco a poco en la existencia concreta del hombre. Lo que en él hay es un inicio, y tiene que crecer, mejorar, volviendo permanentemente a la originaria interpellación de la libertad por parte del bien. Aunque conceptualmente no podemos desmenuzarlo, sabemos a qué nos referimos y qué es lo correcto. Y sabemos algo más: que el bien tenemos la obligación de conocerlo, y que el no conocerlo no es una objeción contra él sino contra nuestra propia debilidad y disposición interior. Porque el conocimiento del núcleo de la existencia es, en si mismo, parte de la tarea ética". Guardini, R., *Etica*, Op.cit., 104.

h) Jacques Maritain (1882–1973). He is in agreement with Aquinas and his interpreter Cajetan as the quote in his book *The Degrees of Knowledge* indicates: “It must be said that moral philosophy itself proceeds according to a practical and composite mode (since *modus et finis scientia esse concomitantur*, as Cajetan says, In Iam., XIV, 16; for, if ethics is distinguished from speculative philosophy by its *ratio formalis sub qua*, why should it not also be distinguished from it by its mode of knowing?). As we have already said, the mode of knowing is to be understood as practical and composite in respect to the conditions of the object known (human acts), which object is considered in relation to its ends and in its practical values, and referred to the first principles of synderesis. For this reason, moral philosophy is oriented from the beginning toward the operable taken as such, and towards the positing of acts in existence”¹⁰⁸.

i) Etienne Gilson (1884–1978). This author hardly uses synderesis in his works, though he had a very clear idea of its meaning and history. In fact, he classified the different medieval positions in a footnote in his magnificent *The spirit of medieval philosophy*. He classifies them into four classes, three of which are voluntarisms: a) total voluntarism like the one of Henry the Ghent, b) semi voluntarism of Bonaventure, c) the transactional voluntarism of Richard of Middleton and d) one intellectualist which is the one defended by Aquinas¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁸ Maritain, J., *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 481.

¹⁰⁹ Gilson clasified then as:

“A) *Thoroughgoing voluntarism* (Henry of Ghent). Conscience belongs to the affective, not the cognitive, part of the soul. There are men who know quite well what ought to be done and lack the conscience to do it. Synderesis is then defined as being “*quidam universalis motor, stimulans ad opus secundum regulas universales legis naturae*”, while conscience is “*quidam particularis motor, stimulans ad opus secundum dictamen rectae rationis*”. H. of Ghent, *Quodlibet*, I, qu.18.

B) *Semi-voluntarism* (St. Bonaventure). Conscience is an innate habitus of the cognitive faculty, in its practical not its speculative function. The word designates either the intellectual faculty itself, or the habitus of practical principles, or the principles themselves contained in the habitus. (St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, 39, 1, 1, Resp.). In this, then, is included what St. Thomas calls synderesis, as St. Thomas himself admits it may be in all vigour; but St. Bonaventure’s synderesis itself is quite different. It stands to the affectivity as good sense does to the reason: “*affectus habet naturale quoddam pondus, dirigens ipsum in appetendis*” (*In II Sent.*, 39, 2, 1). We recognize the Augustinian pondus; thus St. Bonaventure puts synderesis in the affective part: “*Dico enim quod synderesis dicit illud quod stimulat ad bonum et ideo ex parte affectionis se tenet*”. *In II Sent.*, 39, 2, 1.

C) *Transactional voluntarism* (Richard of Middleton): synderesis may mean our natural and necessary inclination to the good in general, and then it is affective; or the persuasion of reason inclining, but not necessitating us to good, and then it is intellectual. Conscience is the prescription of the practical reason.

D) *Intellectualism* (Thomas Aquinas); synderesis and conscience both belong to the cognitive order on its practical side. Scotus, D., *In II Sent.*, 39, 1 (synderesis is in the higher reason where St. Jerome and Peter Lombard would put it); *In II Sent.*, 39, 2: synderesis is the ‘habitus principiorum’ belonging of right to the natural

Gilson, at least in the works consulted, does not discuss synderesis at length. According to Bradley, Gilson “always read the medievals with an eye on his contemporaries as well as the moderns, some have said with an eye too fixed on Heidegger’s dubious history of the forgetfulness of being”¹¹⁰. Which means that Gilson “narrated the history of philosophy as one long *praeparatio* for and one long *declinatio* from Aquinas: in particular, from Aquinas’s “existentialism”—linguistically marked by the Latin infinitive of the verb “to be” the metaphysics of esse”¹¹¹.

j) *On authors not mentioned.* We are aware that there are many authors not mentioned, though we think the most relevant ones for the topic at hand have been quoted. As mentioned before the purpose is more to give some temporal coordinates to the topic rather than an exhaustive account of authors and their doctrines.

We could not find any reference to studies on Pascal and Bergson reading synderesis, in spite of both of them highlighting the power of the “heart” above the intelligence (Pascal) and the inner power to act and direct life (Bergson’s *elan vital*)¹¹².

We do not consider in this section the works of Peter Kreef, William May, Grisez, MacIntyre, and other current authors who speak of synderesis in their works, because they do not alter the doctrine of the classics, mainly that of Aquinas, and because they did not influence Leonardo Polo regarding synderesis.

Synderesis is still being used in Secondary education manuals in some countries, e.g. Spain. It is being discussed through the treatises and manual of natural law, and mainly by philosophers reading Medieval Philosophy. As we shall see there is a revival on the topic thanks to the new approach given by the proposals of Leonardo Polo, which will generate more studies on the classic views on the topic which will also help to get a deeper understanding of the human intimacy.

practical reason; conscience is the ‘*habitus proprius conclusionis practicae*’, deduced from these principles. Cfr. Gilson, E., *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 477.

¹¹⁰ Bradley, D., “A Thomistic Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Etienne Gilson”, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2003, Accessed December 8, 2014. <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23574-a-thomistic-tapestry-essays-in-memory-of-etienne-gilson/>.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Polo comments that Bergson is closer to his proposal but that he did not manage to leave the essential level. “The habits may help to explain Bergson’s approach, that is, the distinction between intuitive -instinctive- and intellectual knowledge. Bergson correctly indicates the identity of the limit, but does not overcome it, instead he defends a definite contrast between intuition and rational knowledge”. “Con los hábitos es posible dar cuenta del planteamiento de Bergson, es decir, de la distinción entre el conocimiento intuitivo, instintivo, y el intelectual. Bergson llega a indicar correctamente la mismidad del límite, pero no lo abandona, sino que sienta un contraste definitivo entre la intuición y el conocimiento racional”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 293.

6. Historical Summary

In this section we have seen how synderesis, as a term, was developed, probably from a confusion of copyists unlearned in Greek, to deepen studies on the different ways conscience relates to nature and morals. The main positions have been:

1. To dismiss the topic as something religious.
2. To dismiss it as a figment of our imagination that gives reality to feelings.
3. To say that it is part of the practical intelligence.
4. To explain that is a function of the will.
5. To sustain that it is a habit of the intelligence.
6. To manifest that it is a habit of the will.
7. To considerer that it is in both the intelligence and will.
8. To say that it is a natural instinct.
9. Different relationships between synderesis, intelligence, reason, will, prudence, and God.

The main points of contact are that synderesis is related to the moral life of persons, that it is universal, either as a knowledge or a feeling, and that it influences one's behaviour.

Leonardo Polo was a deep and extensive reader and would try to give an answer to all unanswered questions and have a consolidated proposal, which may include all valid intuitions. Of his proposal and its evaluation is to what the next sections are devoted. We have deliberately refrained from evaluating each of the historical proposals to allow Polo's position deal with them.

In the next chapter we give an overview of Polo's anthropology to set the frame where synderesis will fit in.



CHAPTER V

INTRODUCTION TO TRANSCENDENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The philosophy of Leonardo Polo is innovative, dense, difficult to read but rich, and therefore worth the effort it takes. This section tries to give a bird's eye view of his philosophy and some keys to his nuclear concepts¹. This will give a framework to position synderesis within Leonardo Polo's philosophy. We can state in advance that synderesis is particularly important in his transcendental anthropology which, for him, is the highest way of doing philosophy.

1. Leonardo Polo's philosophical interest is mainly anthropological

There are several books and articles that explain Leonardo Polo's thought and his contributions to philosophy². His own intellectual biography can be found in the Prologue to *Antropología trascendental I*,³ where he explains his intellectual biography. There he states that *Antropología trascendental* is the culmination of his philosophy: "Certainly this book is the apex of my philosophical research. With this I mean that the method I have followed cannot go further. But as this method allows discovering abundant thematic areas, this book is an addition to the topics discussed but not exhausted in my previous works. Thanks to its dual value –methodical and thematic– the apex opens again the multiple thematic fields: re-considers them"⁴.

¹ Cfr. for an English reader the recently published introduction could be of assistance: Esclanda, R., Sellés, J. F., *Leonardo Polo: A Brief Introduction* (South Bend, Ind.: Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy, 2014). Though not dealing directly about Leonardo Polo it nevertheless is a very good entry point for understanding *Transcendental Anthropology*: Sellés, J. F., *Anthropology for Rebels: A Different Way of Doing Philosophical Anthropology* (Nairobi: Strathmore University, 2011).

² Cfr. for an abundant bibliography: García González, J. A., *Obra de y sobre Leonardo Polo*, (Madrid: Bubok, 2012), Available at <http://www.leonardopololo.net/polo.htm>

³ It is available in English and Spanish at <http://www.leonardopololo.net/re-vista/mp43.htm#Polo>

⁴ "Seguramente este libro es el vértice de mi investigación filosófica. Quiero decir con esto que el método que la ha conducido no da más de sí. Pero como ese método

Professor Juan A. García González confirms Leonardo Polo's assertion: "We want to emphasize his anthropology, because all the philosophy of Leonardo Polo is essentially anthropology"⁵. Professor Murillo shares the same opinion: "From the beginning of his dedication to philosophy his objective was to develop an anthropology, meaning that all his other philosophical endeavours have been in a way directed to this project"⁶.

In the same prologue, worth reading in full, he also gives two characteristics of his work he neither intended to be 'systemic'. "Traditional philosophy allows further development. This means that it is an open philosophy in the sense that it is aware that it has not thought of everything. Modern philosophy, on the contrary, does not allow to be continued, precisely because it is systemic and therefore 'closed'. The great modern philosophers confuse philosophy with absolute knowledge. Curiously some people think that classic philosophy is also complete. If St. Thomas Aquinas had thought out all that can be thought, then the other philosophers could only repeat what he said. But this is the same mistake that systematic philosophers fall into, though for different reasons, which could be the principle of authority or some mental laziness"⁷.

Nor did he think that some of his proposals would have the last word, because things can always improve: "The search for truth requires continuous researching. If one is a philosopher or scientist, he ought to continue. To be original or not is not relevant. On the other hand, in these subjects one cannot propose new things without having

permite acceder a frutos temáticos abundantes, este libro se añade a la cosecha contenida y no agotada en otros escritos. Por su doble valor –métodico y temático– la cima vuelve a abrir los diversos campos temáticos: los re-itera". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental*, I, (Pamplona, Eunsa, 1999), 13.

⁵ Garcia, J. A., "The transcendental anthropology of Leonardo Polo", *Instituto de Estudios Filosóficos Leonardo Polo*, (2008). Accessed February 16, 2013, <http://www.leonardopololo.net/textos/miating.htm>.

⁶ "Desde el principio de su dedicación a la filosofía, su objetivo era desarrollar una antropología, dando a entender que todas sus demás ocupaciones filosóficas han estado de un modo u otro orientadas a ese proyecto". Murillo, J. I., "Conocimiento Personal y Conocimiento Racional en la Antropología Trascendental De L. Polo", *Studia Poliana*, 13 (2011), 70.

⁷ "La filosofía tradicional se presta a ser continuada. Esto quiere decir que es una filosofía abierta o que sabe que no lo ha pensado todo. En cambio, la filosofía moderna se resiste a ser continuada, precisamente porque es sistemática y, por tanto, cerrada. Los grandes filósofos modernos confunden la filosofía con el saber absoluto. Curiosamente, sin embargo, para algunos la filosofía clásica es una filosofía terminada. Si Tomás de Aquino ha pensado todo lo que se puede pensar, los filósofos posteriores sólo pueden repetirlo. Pero eso es caer en el mismo error al que invitan los filósofos sistemáticos, aunque quizás por otros motivos, como puede ser el criterio de autoridad o cierta pereza mental". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental*, I, op. cit., 13.

a foundation based on previous achievements that deserve to be commented and developed further. Actually, I have always recommended my disciples not to limit themselves to repeat just what I said”⁸.

2. The language barrier

Philosophers have trouble using common language, firstly due to the topics they deal with, as Leonardo Polo says regarding knowledge: “Human language is not made to deal with knowledge: linguistics and cognitive structures are different; there are knowledge levels infra-linguistics and others above linguistics”⁹. A new philosophical method finds difficulties when using classical expressions. Levinas even says that this is a characteristic of any new philosophy: “The great recent innovations consist at least in making thematic what previously was not. Making them thematic requires genius and brings in a new language”¹⁰.

McIntyre explains how not taking into account these changes indicates lack of understanding of ethical concepts¹¹. The expression of new ideas can be done giving new meaning to classic terms. This can be rather confusing to readers who are not acquainted with his philosophy but the change of meaning of terms is a common feature in history of philosophy. In other instances Leonardo Polo gives new specific meaning to common language Spanish expressions. Polo is aware of these difficulties: “I acknowledge that these expressions are metaphors which are only adequate for a description, without adopting special terminology, and only as a first approach. It is clear that this needs to be thought out slowly and insisting on it for a long time, to develop the themes that are accessible with this method”¹².

⁸ “Buscar la verdad comporta tratar de avanzar en la investigación. En la medida en que uno puede, debe hacerlo si es filósofo o científico. Ser original o no es una cuestión secundaria. Por otra parte, en esas disciplinas no cabe proponer novedades sin encontrar un punto de apoyo en planteamientos anteriores, que merecen una glosa y una continuación. Por lo demás, siempre he recomendado a mis discípulos que no se reduzcan a repetirme”. *Ibid.*

⁹ “El lenguaje humano no está hecho para hablar del conocimiento: la formalidad lingüística no es la cognoscitiva; hay niveles cognoscitivos infra lingüísticos y supra lingüísticos”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, I (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006), 14.

¹⁰ “Las grandes innovaciones de hoy; pero estas consisten, por lo menos, en tematizar algo que no lo estaba antes. Tematización que exige genio y ofrece un nuevo lenguaje”. Levinas, E., *Ética e Infinito*, op. cit., 37.

¹¹ “There are continuities as well as breaks in the history of moral concepts. Just here lies the complexity of the history”. and “To alter concepts … is to alter behavior”. “So concepts like “pleasure” and “happiness” are stretched and extended in all directions until they are used simply to name whatever men aim at”. MacIntyre, A. C., *A Short History of Ethics*, op. cit., 1, 3 and 236.

¹² “Reconozco que estas expresiones son metafóricas, adecuadas a una exposición descriptiva, sin adoptar una terminología especial, y sólo preliminar. Es claro que esto se necesita ponderarlo lentamente, largamente, muy insistentemente, mucho tiempo, para desarrollar la temática accesible con este método”. L. Polo, in Cruz,

Leonardo Polo uses both methods; frequently he gives new meaning to classic expressions (e.g. nature, essence) and when he cannot he frequently common Spanish words giving them a technical meaning in his philosophy¹³. We may need to comment on two of them to continue with the introduction to his thought: ‘límite’ (limit) and ‘abandono’ (abandonment).

By ‘límite’ Leonardo Polo tries to convey the idea of border, boundary, something that encircles and limits the activities, constraining or confining at the same time to ensure that the activities within the boundaries are done in a particular way. Limit therefore signals the end of something, which is therefore constrained within the limit. We consider that both English terms ‘boundary’ and ‘limit’ adequately convey what Polo intends to say¹⁴.

More difficult to convey is the term ‘abandono’. Leonardo Polo uses the word to mean ‘leave behind’ but at the same time overcome or surpass¹⁵. Perhaps ‘surpassing’ conveys the meaning more accurately because it reflects better the idea of going beyond the limit, and continue progressing, without leaving behind what was achieved before. Polo himself states that he preferred to use the word ‘abandon’ over ‘surpassing’ to avoid that his idea be interpreted in the way Nietzsche uses it and also to avoid its physical connotations. We shall use indistinctively the words ‘surpassing’, ‘overcoming’ and ‘going beyond’, which we think are closer to Polo’s intended meaning¹⁶ in spite of him saying: “I do not like the word ‘surpassing’ because the one who has used it most is Nietzsche and it does not have an intellectual meaning. More than overcoming, I use ‘abandon’, to mean ‘going beyond the limit’”¹⁷. To confirm Leonardo Polo’s assertions we include two quotations from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, chapter 34: ‘Self-Surpassing’ where the word ‘surpassing’ is used 25 times, and ‘overcome’, 6 times. “I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man?”; “Ten

J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, 1992, 40. Accessed 16 February 2013, en: <http://dspace.unav.es/dspace/handle/10171/687>.

¹³ “En consecuencia, el estudio de lo físico es muy conveniente porque nos obliga a lo siguiente: si queremos entender lo otro tendremos que emplear desde luego otras operaciones mentales, pero tendremos que utilizar también otros términos”. Polo, L., *El Conocimiento del Universo Físico* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2008), 74.

¹⁴ “The definition of limit”, *Dictionary.com*. Accessed 27 February 2013 <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/limit?s=t>.

¹⁵ “The definition of abandon”, *Dictionary.com*. Accessed 27 February 2013, in <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/abandon?s=ts>.

¹⁶ The words ‘overcoming’ and ‘surpassing’ can also be correct translations. In matter of translations the traditional Italian saying “*traditore, traditore*” (translator, traitor) applies in full strength in the case of philosophical translations and more so in the case of Leonardo Polo, who is especially difficult not only for the topics he deals with but because of the special way he uses Castilian traditional idioms.

¹⁷ “La palabra *superación* no me gusta porque quien más la ha empleado es Nietzsche y no tiene sentido intelectual. Más que superar digo abandonar, ir más allá del límite”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

times a day must thou overcome thyself: that causeth wholesome weariness, and is poppy to the soul”¹⁸.

3. *The key to Leonardo Polo’s philosophy*

Leonardo Polo considers his philosophy as a continuation or, better said, a “furthering” of classic philosophy. Polo’s new discovery starts from the highest achievement of all previous philosophies: “The meaning of my proposal is clear: it is to get the best from the nuclear thesis of Thomism”¹⁹. According to him, Aquinas’ philosophy has been the highest philosophical achievement: “Specifically, my outline starts from the distinction between being and essence presented by Thomas Aquinas, which is the last important discovery of traditional philosophy”²⁰.

This distinction allowed Aquinas to distinguish the different types of being in their radical differences and Polo’s philosophy is based on this distinction between the essence and the act of being in all creatures: “In order to complete the exposition of the multiple dimensions of the proposed method it is good to refer again to the real distinction that is the discovery that culminates Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy. This discovery allows distinguishing the creatures from God. In the creatures the act of being and the essence are really different; not in God”²¹.

Nevertheless, Aquinas’ discovery needs to be rectified and, once rectified, applied to anthropology in a new way. Firstly it has to be applied to anthropology which Aquinas did not. He did it mainly to distinguish God from his creatures and the angels from human beings: “I will try to study how the real distinction between the being and the essence works in anthropology, which Thomas Aquinas does not do”²². This implies a subtler distinction of the anthropological structure of human beings, where the act of being is properly distinguished from the human essence. In order to distinguish the specific human act of being from the act of being of the non-spiritual creatures, he calls it in a different way: being-with or co-being. We shall see later why he

¹⁸ Nietzsche, F., *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (philosophy.eserver.org, 2013). Accessed 27 February 2013. <http://philosophy.eserver.org/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt>.

¹⁹ “El sentido de mi propuesta es claro: se trata de sacar partido a la tesis nuclear del tomismo”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental*, I, op. cit., 20.

²⁰ “En concreto, mi planteamiento arranca de la distinción real de ser y esencia formulada por Tomás de Aquino, que es la última averiguación importante de la filosofía tradicional”. *Ibid.*

²¹ “Para completar la exposición de la pluralidad de dimensiones del método propuesto, conviene volver a aludir a la distinción real, que es la averiguación en que culmina la filosofía de Tomás de Aquino. Esta averiguación permite distinguir la criatura de Dios. En la criatura el acto de ser y la esencia son distintos realmente; en Dios no”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental* I, op. cit., 117.

²² “Procuraré estudiar cómo juega en antropología la distinción real del ser con la esencia, lo que Tomás de Aquino no hace”. *Ibid.*, 19.

calls it that way: “In man one can speak both of the act of being and also of the human essence. Man is not his essence; on the contrary the essence is his. Regarding the act of being we cannot say that it belongs to man, but that man is that act of being”²³. The act of being of creatures, is a different being for each type of creature, nevertheless we cannot explain fully the differences between them, so there is need for a distinction between the essence and the act of being. This is a radical duality -between the act of being and the essence- present in all creatures. “A created reality which is different from another cannot be explained by the first one because no creature can be the sufficient reason of another. Because of this the real distinction between the act of being and the created human essence requires the divine action. Therefore, the act of being is not a sufficient reason of the essence”²⁴. This duality is especially important in human beings where the act of being will have control of the essence in a way that non-free creatures do not have. This duality is also the key to the foundation of morals.

In order to be able to apply the real distinction to anthropology and furthering Aquinas’ proposals Polo explains that two tasks are needed: some of the basic points of Aquinas’ philosophy need to be corrected because they are not compatible with the distinction between the act of being and the essence, and Aquinas was not aware of this: “Firstly, the real distinction between being and essence is not entirely compatible with other notions that Thomas Aquinas, as synthesizing philosopher, takes from previous philosophers”²⁵. According to Polo Aquinas was too attached to Aristotle and his commentator Averroes and this led him to some inconsistencies. “Thomistic philosophy does not reach the theme. I want to say that it falls short or better, that it is constrained by his Aristotelian background and by the influence of Averroes”²⁶.

Secondly, Thomas Aquinas did not apply his discovery to the realities where it bears more fruit, which is the study of the human person: “Secondly, that the already mentioned Thomist discovery can be extended, or better used, if it is applied directly to the human being, this is, if one actually distinguishes man’s act of being, which is the

²³ “En el hombre por una parte se podrá hablar de acto de ser humano, y también se podrá hablar de esencia del hombre. El hombre no es su esencia sino que la esencia es suya; en cambio el ser humano no es del hombre, sino que el hombre es ese ser”. Polo, L., “La esencia del hombre”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, 4 (2005), 26.

²⁴ “Una realidad creada distinta de otra no puede ser enteramente explicada por la primera, puesto que ninguna criatura es razón suficiente de otra. Por eso también la distinción real entre acto de ser y esencia humana, creados, exige el concurso divino. Por tanto, el acto de ser no es razón suficiente de la esencia”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad* (Pamplona, EUNSA, 2014), 236.

²⁵ “En primer lugar, que la distinción real de ser y esencia no es enteramente compatible con otras nociones que Tomás de Aquino, como filósofo sintetizador, recoge de la filosofía anterior a él”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 13.

²⁶ “La filosofía tomista no llega al tema; quiero decir que se queda corto, o mejor, que está frenado por la herencia aristotélica y el influjo de Averroes”. *Ibid.*, 14.

person, and man's essence”²⁷. This makes Polo consider himself a special Thomist: “I consider myself somehow a rebel Thomist and in another sense a developer of his philosophy. In reality this is to be a realist by distinguishing being from the essence and having in mind the intentional character of the object thought. I saw all these in an instant, but to ponder over it required many years, and to extract its consequences and adjust them, it is a lifelong task”²⁸.

Polo further explains that the modern and contemporary philosophies are not in line with traditional philosophy²⁹. This means that modern philosophy cannot strictly be part of the *philosophia perennis*, though some of the points highlighted by modern philosophers can be incorporated due to the openness of traditional philosophy: “Strictly speaking, traditional philosophy is a stretch of the perennial philosophy and, therefore, open to new discoveries”³⁰.

According to Polo, modern philosophy while giving great importance to the self is a closed philosophy that does not allow development³¹. He really makes a hard assessment of modern philosophy, which has to be understood within a precise context of doing philosophy without casting away previous achievements. Modern philosophy condemned itself by wanting a radical new start, as if what was done before was of no value. It is like the man who is cutting off the branch where he is standing and trying to build on the vacuum left as he falls together with the branch he was standing on. “Spinoza’s central notion is *causa sui* i.e. foundation. The key to Leibniz’s thought is the ‘principle of sufficient reason’, which he confuses with the principle of identity. In the *Critique of the Practical Reason* the transcendental subject becomes the real foundation for Kant. The Hegelian system is based on merging identity and causality. Transcendental anthropology is unreachable following these ways. As I say in *El Acceso* modern philosophy is a waste of time. After six centuries, we are in a position to say that they have been employed in

²⁷ “En segundo lugar, la aludida averiguación tomista puede ampliarse, o aprovecharse mejor, si se estudia *in recto* en el hombre, esto es, si se distingue realmente el acto de ser humano, que es persona, de la esencia del hombre”. *Ibid.*, 13. Cfr. for a detailed Study of Thomas Aquinas’ approach to the human act of being: Lombo, J. A., “La Persona y su Naturaleza: Tomás De Aquino y Leonardo Polo”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 29/2 (1996), 721-739.

²⁸ “Me considero un tomista en cierto modo rebelde y en cierto modo continuador. En definitiva, es esto: ser realista distinguiendo el ser de la esencia y teniendo en cuenta el carácter intencional del objeto pensado. Todo esto lo vi de golpe, aunque darle vueltas requiere muchos años, y sacarle fruto y ajustarlo es tarea de toda la vida”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental*, I, op. cit., 13.

²⁹ Cf. Note 7 above.

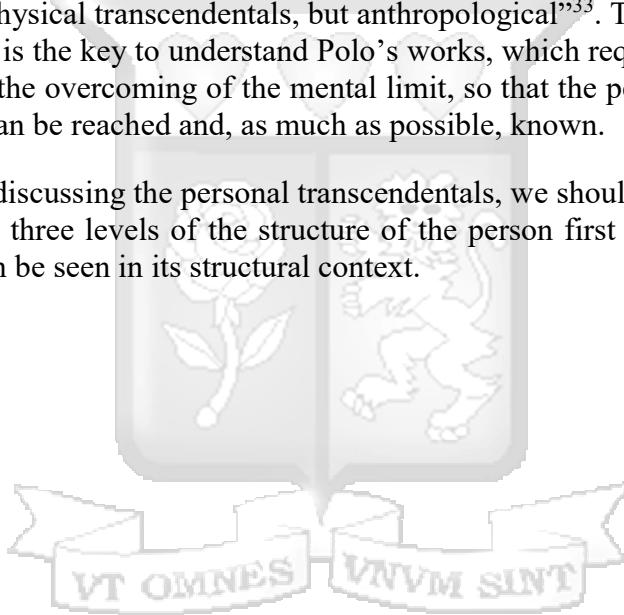
³⁰ “En rigor, la filosofía tradicional es un tramo de la filosofía perenne y, por tanto, abierta a nuevos hallazgos”. *Ibid.*, 32.

³¹ This was also commented by the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri as pointed in this article Castilla y Cortazar, B., “En Torno A La Díada Transcendental”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 29/2 (1996), 400.

a badly conducted philosophical research. This modern project requires to be thought again”³².

A new way has to be found to continue philosophy retaining the achievements of classic and medieval philosophies, rectifying what is needed, and this can be done through a more careful analysis of the act of being. Polo’s proposal to further develop traditional philosophy is radical and it comes from the main novelty found by Thomas Aquinas. Polo proposes a new understanding of the act of being, which, as act, will be different according to the different types of being, one act of being for all the material universe, one for each of the created persons, and one for God. In this dissertation we restrict our endeavour to the study of synderesis which is related to the discovery of the unique type of act of being each person has. This will require a deeper study of the triadic structure of the man and of the personal transcendentals: “The extra-mental being, including the act of being of the universe, is, no doubt, transcendental. But as the human act of being is different from the act of being of the universe, we should accept transcendentals that are not metaphysical transcendentals, but anthropological”³³. This triadic structure is the key to understand Polo’s works, which requires a new method, the overcoming of the mental limit, so that the personal act of being can be reached and, as much as possible, known.

Before discussing the personal transcendentals, we should summarise Polo’s three levels of the structure of the person first so that synderesis can be seen in its structural context.



³² “En Espinosa la noción central es la de *causa sui*, fundamento. La clave del pensamiento de Leibniz es el principio de razón suficiente confundido con el de identidad. El sujeto trascendental kantiano cumple la noción de fundamento real en la Crítica de la razón práctica, y de condición última de posibilidad en la Crítica de la razón pura. El sistema de Hegel se estructura fundiendo la identidad con la causalidad. Pero por estos caminos no se alcanza la antropología trascendental. Como digo en *El Acceso*, la filosofía moderna es una gran pérdida de tiempo. Al final de seis siglos, estamos en condiciones de sostener que han sido ocupados por una tarea filosófica mal conducida. Ello obliga a reformular el planteamiento moderno”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010), 87.

³³ “El ser extramental, incluido el acto de ser del universo, es sin duda trascendental. Pero como el acto de ser humano se distingue del acto de ser del universo, es menester admitir trascendentales que no sean metafísicos, sino precisamente antropológicos”. Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental I*, op. cit., 23.

4. The triadic structure of the person

Polo's proposal is an expanded structure of man, from the dualistic hylomorphic structure of matter and form, body and soul, to a triadic one. In the dualistic classic interpretation, the soul is the form of the body. The triadic has three levels: nature, essence and person³⁴, the person and essence constituting what in classic philosophy is called the human soul. This structure is only possible in human beings in whom the essence can receive the act of being and exist without matter, i.e. as an actualized pure form: "Man is a micro-cosmos in whom the intellectual, i.e. the non-physical, is united to a body. Nevertheless man is more than corporeal and, soul-corporeal, because he is also a personal being"³⁵.

The distinction between the fact that something exists (being) and 'what it is' (essence) seems traditionally well established. We can actually think many things that do not exist, and may never exist; and those essences or 'what's' have no existence or being. According to this, personal existence and human essence are not equivalent. Note that we do not say 'personal essence'. A person is different from the human being. This is because each person is different from any other person, but all humans coincide in being humans. The essence of man is humanity, not the whole man which is the humanity as actualised by his personal act of being. This does not happen in rocks, trees and animals. Each palm tree has the same essence and each is a different entity but it is not a different person. They all act alike, because their principle of operations (nature) is their essence which is common to

³⁴ While some authors had intuitions of the three levels, none actually proposed the structure as Polo does. For example, Scheler distinguishes between the 'I' and the person: "Of course, if personality's essence was founded on the I as Edward von Hartmann supposes in his sharp but purely dialectic studies about this question, the idea of a divine person would also be absurd. Because to every 'I' belongs essentially and necessarily an 'outside world' as well as a different 'you' and a 'body', all of which would be *a priori* absurd to preach God. And, conversely, the reasonable idea of a divine person already shows that the idea of person is not founded on the 'I'". "Claro que si la esencia de la personalidad estuviera fundada en el 'yo' —como supone Eduardo von Hartmann en sus estudios agudosos, pero puramente dialécticos, sobre esta cuestión—, sería también absurda la idea de una persona divina. Pues a todo 'yo' le pertenece esencial y necesariamente un 'mundo exterior' lo mismo que un 'tú' y un 'organismo', cosas todas ellas, que sería absurdo —*a priori*— predicar de Dios. E, inversamente, la idea razonable de una persona divina muestra ya que la idea de la persona no está fundada el 'yo'". Scheler, M., *Ética: nuevo ensayo de fundamentación de un personalismo ético* (Madrid: Caparrós Editores, 2001), 529. And "For the same reasons, "disease" and "health" cannot be predicates of the person, but they can be of the soul, of man, etc. There are "soul's diseases", but no "person's diseases". "Por iguales razones, no pueden ser predicados de la persona "enfermedad" y "salud" más sí del alma, del hombre, etc. Existen "enfermedades del alma", pero no hay "enfermedades de la persona". *Ibid.*, 634.

³⁵ "El hombre es un microcosmos en el que está reunido lo intelectual, es decir, lo no físico, con un cuerpo. Ahora bien, el hombre no sólo es naturaleza corpórea y anímica, o anímico-corpórea, sino que también es un ser personal". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos* (Madrid: Aedos, 1997), 200.

all palm trees. In human beings we do not act alike because our principle of operations is not in our essence-nature but it is in our person, our personal act of being. What we have in common with other persons is the essence (humanity; we are all human beings) but our person – act of being—is different. We are not something (essence) but someone (person). Our “who” is what properly identifies us, not our “what”, though naturally our ‘what’ makes us human with specific characteristics.

According to Leonardo Polo the first level of each human being is ‘human nature’ which comprises what one has received and can hardly be changed. The second level is the ‘human essence’ where the human faculties –the intelligence and the will– have their proper place where the growth of the human person can take place. And the third and highest level is the ‘person’ –or ‘personal level’– which corresponds to the act of being of each person³⁶. There is no need to get fidgety about the inadequacy of these words to refer to the spiritual realities because we have no sensorial experience of them, and because most of our words are taken from our sensorial experience.

To stress the unity of the human being and avoid giving the impression that they are three different things we translate Polo’s reference to the three constituent parts of human beings as “levels”:

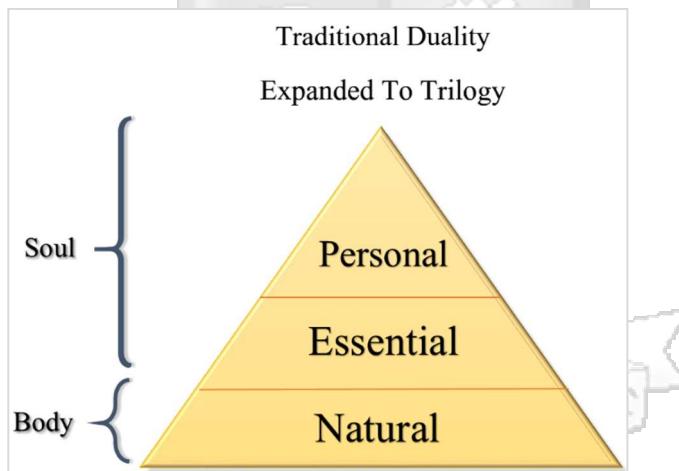


Figure 2: Triadic Structure of the Person.

the natural, essential and personal levels. A quick and fast method to distinguish what belongs to each level is to compare any particular activity with activities of other beings; i.e. to find whether any other being can do the same thing that a human being does at that particular level. Whatever can be done by animals belongs to the natural level; whatever can be done by other human being corresponds to the essential level –humanity–; and what can only be done by each person, as unique, belongs to the personal level. For example, eating is common to animals, cooking is common to men, but my mother is my mother;

³⁶ It is good to note that the term *person* has already been used with two different meanings; one to refer to the human being (as a unity or *suppositum*) and another to refer to the top level of the human being structure (which is the personal level).

she is unique to me and I am unique to her. What is proper to the personal level cannot be done by other professional, or animal; it is a personal relationship.

We include a simple chart that may assist those who are not acquainted with Leonardo Polo's triadic structure. For simplicity we call it 'triadic structure' because triadic means having "three" and it expresses well this structure. We shall now describe succinctly the main characteristics of each of the three levels. (Cf. Figure 2)

a) The natural level

'Nature' is one of the terms which causes more confusion when reading Leonardo Polo. He uses the classic philosophical terms nature and natural with different meanings; sometimes in the Aristotelian meaning as principle of operations; at other times, as opposite to artificial; others to mean the first level of the triadic structure of the man. For example he uses it in the classical way in the following texts: "Man is a being that possesses what is normally called a nature"³⁷; "In this nature are united, a spiritual dimension called the soul –an immortal soul– and a very peculiar body"³⁸. Other texts seem to contradict what we have just quoted, especially when he distinguishes the human being from the non-spiritual realities: "Aristotle, who is the one who thinks over concepts deeply, accepts that the act is previous and superior to potency and that the potency should be finite because the act follows it as substance. This is nature; nature means finite potency. Nevertheless man has no nature because he does not have a finite potency; it is not finite because man makes it infinite"³⁹. No doubt Leonardo Polo is aware of this as the following text suggests: "The human personal being has some characteristics that can be seen from Aristotle's understanding of human nature. But also, what is peculiar to human nature can be understood as coming from the personal character of the human being. To accept that man is person adds to his nature his proper understanding as essence. In this way anthropology is completed"⁴⁰.

³⁷ "El hombre es un ser que posee lo que suele llamarse una naturaleza". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 67.

³⁸ "En esa naturaleza están unidas una dimensión espiritual que se llama alma –un alma inmortal– y un cuerpo muy peculiar". *Ibid.*

³⁹ "Aristóteles que es el que madura más las nociones, admite que, siendo el acto anterior a la potencia y superior a ella, la potencia tiene que ser finita porque el acto le sucede como sustancia. Eso es la naturaleza; naturaleza significa potencia finita. Pues bien, el hombre no tiene naturaleza porque no tiene potencia finita y no la tiene porque infinitiza su potencia". Polo, L., *El ser I. La existencia extra mental*, Pamplona: Eunsa, 1997), 8 note. This treatment of 'nature' contrast with the classical one, which traditionally has been used to support the objectivity of morals as for example this text: "And because man has a nature, it is possible to say that his behaviour is either human or inhuman". "Y porque el hombre tiene una naturaleza, es posible decir de él que se comporta humana o inhumanamente"., Millán-Puelles, A., *Ética y realismo*, op. cit., 15.

⁴⁰ "El ser personal humano tiene unas características que se pueden ver a partir de la naturaleza humana tal como la entiende Aristóteles. A su vez, lo peculiar de su naturaleza se puede entender como derivado del carácter personal del hombre. Admitir que el hombre es persona añade a la naturaleza del hombre su cabal

Nature, or better the natural level, for Leonardo Polo does not coincide with the essence as it did for Aristotle. A new way other than the hylomorphic explanations to express the relationship between living beings' nature and their essence should be found: "For living beings the hylomorphic model is so special that it suggests we look for a different explanation. The living being is a body, form and matter, but not in a way a stone has it. The stone has a form and matter also, but the material and formal principles of the living are not the ones of the stone because the stone is not its movement"⁴¹.

The model which is insufficient for living creatures is even more inadequate for human beings: "It is better not to apply to man the notions of substance and accidents"⁴². To understand human beings as hylomorphic compositions between bodies and souls, –i.e. as matter and form– is totally inadequate, even if we state that the soul –the form– is spiritual. The act of being is the key to understand human beings, not just as living, but as persons. And this element, the personal act of being, somehow changes the nature of human beings and this is why human bodies are different from those of the animals. Humans have many common functions with other living creatures but even these common features are radically different; different because their root, their 'radix' is the personal act of being: "An anthropology that considers man as a soul-body cannot be the same as an anthropology that highlights the radical primacy of the person. This is because the person adds to nature its effusive, contributing dimension. Because man is a person, he is not subjected to the laws of nature but overshoots them and has radical freedom. Because of this and through its nature man's presence in the world is inventive. Men oozes out from himself, contributes; we have named this capacity 'manifestation'. Man is a being that manifests himself but that can also decline to manifest"⁴³.

b) The essential level

Above the natural level comes the essential level, which is the one classic philosophers developed most frequently. What constitutes

comprensión como esencia. De este modo se completa la antropología". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 92.

⁴¹ "El modelo hilemórfico en el viviente es tan especial que invita a buscar otro modelo. El viviente es un cuerpo, forma y materia, pero no como la piedra. También la piedra es un compuesto de forma y materia, pero los principios material y formal del viviente no son los de la piedra porque la piedra no es en el movimiento". Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, I, op. cit., 169.

⁴² "Conviene no aplicar al hombre las nociones de sustancia y accidente". Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2015), 86.

⁴³ "No es lo mismo una antropología que considere el hombre como ser anímico-corpóreo, que una antropología que resalte la primordialidad radical de la persona. Porque la persona añade a la naturaleza la dimensión efusiva, aportante. Por ser el hombre una persona, no está sujeto a las leyes de la naturaleza, sino que sobresale por encima de ellas y goza de una libertad radical. Por eso, su presencia en el mundo a través de su naturaleza es inventiva. El hombre saca de sí, da de sí, aporta; a esto lo hemos llamado manifestación. El hombre es un ser que se manifiesta y que puede también negarse a la manifestación". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 92.

this level are the intelligence and will, which are the powers that make humans radically different from animals. The identity of the person (the “self” or “I”) as it appears to oneself and to others, also belongs to this level. This is where our development, as humans, takes place. This development consists on the growth in knowledge and virtues, which perfect the intelligence and will respectively. Here is where our ideas, character and freedom are manifested. But the self is not the most important level, what is shown and seen are the manifestations of the personal level. The essential level is a co-principle, without which the human person would not exist, but it is not the radical one: “In man as created being the distinction between person and self is established as follows: the person is equivalent to the human act of being and the self is an element of the manifestation of the person. In this way it is clear that being is really different, the self and the person are not isolated, and the self is not independent from the person”⁴⁴.

The essence of man changes. This was one of the characteristics highlighted by Kierkegaard and the existentialists. Polo explains that this change takes place at the essential level: “Man is essence because the first beneficiary or the main victim of his performance is he himself”⁴⁵. But the changes in the essence are due to what makes a person radically different from all other persons. The personal level is the cause of the creativity of human beings and of their inner growth: “Man does not exhaust his species [essential level] but typifies it, and above the types he can grow in his essence; therefore, men should, properly speaking, not be counted. When we ask ‘how many chickens do you have?’ or ‘how big is Mexico’s population?’ the number is not used in the same way (to confuse both uses leads to serious ethical errors). A dog can be exchanged with another dog, not a person. Numeration is justified when one asks ‘how many lambs do you have?’ If you give me a lamb, I give you five chickens. In history one finds many accounts of massification but they are inhuman, precisely because each person, and only he, is the person who is; this is what we call ‘irreducibility’ in philosophy. No human interchanges should be done: if one negotiates with humans as it is done with chickens, one is denying their character as persons: persons are not interchangeable; they are irreducible. Also as each of them has a type, it is not good business to ignore their differences when choosing, for example team members for specific tasks”⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ “En el hombre creado la distinción entre persona y yo se establece de esta manera: la persona equivale al acto de ser del hombre y el yo es un ingrediente de la manifestación de la persona. De esta manera se sienta que, aunque sean realmente distintos, el yo y la persona no están aislados, y el yo no es independiente de la persona”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 258.

⁴⁵ “Con otras palabras, el hombre es esencia porque el primer beneficiario o la principal víctima de su actuación es él mismo”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 84.

⁴⁶ “El hombre no agota su especie, sino que la tipifica, y por encima de los tipos puede crecer su esencia; por tanto, tampoco los hombres son estrictamente numerables. Cuando preguntamos: ¿cuántas gallinas tiene usted? o bien ¿cuántos habitantes tiene México?, el número no se emplea de la misma manera (empeñarse

Polo summarises the three characteristics of the essential level in his last book: a) it is the manifestation of the personal level, b) it is a contribution, and c) it is free.

These characteristics are modulated differently through the intelligence and the will (I-see and I-want at a higher level) as we shall see when discussing synderesis: “In the first place the essence is the manifestation of the human person. This manifestation is done according to what I call the I-see and willing-I. Secondly I described the essence as contribution, based on the will that through its acts the human essence becomes ‘giving’; and as lighting lights, based on the intelligence. Thirdly the human essence is free, and according to the sum of it all is living reality”⁴⁷.

The knowledge of the differences among persons and how each carves his character leads to a superior instance: “The consideration of the essence gets us closer to the consideration of the irreducibility of the person”⁴⁸, which is the highest level.

c) The personal level

For Polo the personal level, the person, is the act of being, the human esse, the *actus essendi*⁴⁹. The act of being cannot be an accident, it is the highest level of the human being, to which both the natural level and the essential level are pliable, and therefore are like potencies to the act, but a special type of potency: “This has obliged us to accept a radical act, which would allow us to exclude the priority

en confundirlos conduce a cometer errores éticos graves). ¡Un perro se puede cambiar por otro perro, una persona, no! La numeración está justificada cuando se pregunta ¿cuántos corderos tiene usted? Si me da un cordero estoy dispuesto a darle cinco gallinas. En la historia se registran muchas veces fenómenos de masificación, pero son inhumanos, justamente porque cada persona, y sólo ella, es la persona que es; esto es lo que filosóficamente se llama irreductibilidad”. *Ibid.*, 79.

“No se deben hacer intercambios con seres humanos; si se negocia con ellos como con las gallinas, se está negando su carácter de personas: las personas no son intercambiables sino irreductibles. Como además cada una de ellas posee un tipo, no es buen negocio ignorar sus diferencias a la hora, por ejemplo, de seleccionar a los colaboradores para tareas concretas”. *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁷ “En primer lugar, la esencia es la *manifestación* de la persona humana. Esa manifestación tiene lugar de acuerdo con lo que llamo *ver-yo* y *querer-yo*. En segundo lugar, describí la esencia como *aportación*, en atención a la voluntad, a través de cuyos actos la esencia humana alcanza carácter donal; y como luz iluminante, en atención a la inteligencia. En tercer lugar, la esencia de la persona humana es *libre*, y, de acuerdo con todo ello, es una realidad viviente”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 257.

⁴⁸ “La consideración de la esencia nos acerca a la irreductibilidad de la persona”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 84.

⁴⁹ “The esse hominis has two distinct functions: on the one hand, give being to the finite entity of man and, moreover, make the intellect infinite as an extension. Thus the intellect is not, properly speaking, a faculty of a substance”. “El esse hominis cumple dos funciones distintas: por una parte, principiar la entidad finita del hombre y, por otra parte, dotar de infinitud al intelecto como continuación suya. Así pues, el intelecto no es propiamente una facultad de una sustancia”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 130.

of the potency to avoid confusing it with the notion of spontaneity. This meaning of the act is the *actus essendi*, which corresponds with a new meaning of the potency, which is the essence”⁵⁰; “To accept that man is a person adds to human nature its proper understanding as essence”⁵¹.

It is difficult to speak of the act of being because it is spiritual, purely formal, unique, undivided and is above the intelligence. In the same way that we have transcendentals that apply to all beings maybe we can have some transcendentals at the level of the act of being. In the same way that the “ens”, can be seen differently with relation to the other metaphysical transcendentals perhaps the personal act of being can be seen also from different angles. This is what Polo calls personal transcendentals or personal radicals.

c.1) The personal transcendentals

Leonardo Polo’s first volume of his *Antropología transcendental* explains in detail the similitudes and differences between the ontological transcendentals and the personal transcendentals. The study of the personal transcendentals is one of the most original of Polo’s contributions to Anthropology. Here we can only refer to them inasmuch as they are related to synderesis.

Polo uses the word ‘transcendental’ in different ways depending on the context. He can refer either to the classical, epistemological, metaphysical, logical or even the Kantian transcendentals. When Polo uses the term transcendental in its ontological meaning he distinguishes the properly metaphysical ‘transcendentals’ –which he reduces from five to three– from the ‘personal transcendentals’. The proper understanding of the difference allows him to rank transcendental anthropology above metaphysics. The personal transcendentals are coextensive to personal beings but not to non-personal beings. They apply to any spiritual creature but not to non-spiritual creatures. They are exclusive to persons, being persons not only the human person but also the pure spirits and God.

In logic, transcendental refers to what is beyond the categories and can be predicated of anything, which has a parallel meaning in metaphysics, which refers to any quality that is coextensive with being, i.e. that is present in all beings.

In epistemology Polo uses it to refer to realities beyond the ‘object’, beyond the content of our ‘objective thinking’. What we know

⁵⁰ “Ello nos ha obligado a admitir un acto radical, que permita excluir la prioridad de la potencia o evitar su confusión con la noción de espontaneidad. Ese sentido del acto es el *actus essendi*, con el que se corresponde un nuevo sentido de la potencia que es la esencia”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1998), 49.

⁵¹ “Admitir que el hombre es persona añade a la naturaleza del hombre su cabal comprensión como esencia”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 92.

habitually, as a habit, is beyond objective thinking. The act of thinking does not appear as the object. The act does not appear in the object being thought. This is a transcendental consideration of knowing. Polo often expresses it as follows: “what is thought does not think” (“*lo pensado no piensa*”)⁵² or “the ‘I’ thought does not think” (“*el yo pensado no piensa*”)⁵³.

The personal transcendentals are the ways the act of being (the person) can be detected. Because the transcendentals are above the intelligence and will, they are above all determination from the inferior levels. Another implication is that they accompany any personal manifestation in the same way as the ontological transcendentals accompany any natural being. This means that any human action can be referred always to any of the personal transcendentals indiscriminately.

c.2) Insufficiency of the classic transcendentals

We have to go beyond metaphysics in order to understand properly the ontological status of the habits and the existential knowledge. The reason being that the traditional transcendentals do not make room for freedom: “A method to study the great topics of metaphysics, and together with this, I defend the thesis that with this method it is also possible to distinguish metaphysics from transcendental anthropology. This distinction requires what I call an expansion of the transcendentals”⁵⁴.

To manifest the difference and need for the new transcendentals Polo gives the example of the transcendental good as an ontological transcendental as understood by Aristotle and the personal transcendental that supports it: “Metaphysics needs to be done: to recover and advance in the lines of classic metaphysics. But one has to avoid trying to apply the classic categories to the personal being, because the personal transcendentals are different. For example, for Aristotle the first principle is lovable, but it does not love; love is not a transcendental.

⁵² “El sentido del hecho como improsecución se puede entender en función de la proposición: *lo pensado no piensa*. El hecho como correlato real del objeto se debe al límite mental como no aparición de carácter de pensante en *lo pensado*”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, III (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006), 297.

⁵³ “Suelo emplear para el caso la fórmula *el yo pensado no piensa*, que vale según la constancia del estatuto de los objetos pensados (presencia mental). Ningún objeto piensa: puedo pensar que pienso, pero no puedo de ninguna manera comunicar mi carácter pensante a lo que pienso. La realidad del sujeto no está en *lo pensado*, y el sujeto no es una operación”. *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵⁴ “Un método para afrontar los grandes temas de la metafísica, y, junto con eso, sostengo la tesis de que con ese método también es posible distinguir la metafísica de la antropología en el plano trascendental. Esta distinción comporta lo que suelo llamar ampliación de los trascendentales”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 21.

Good is a transcendental in metaphysics, but not love; in anthropology love is a transcendental, a personal transcendental”⁵⁵.

c.3) Co-existence-with as the first of the personal transcendentals

What is the clearest distinction between the being of the non-spiritual creatures with the being of spiritual ones? For Leonardo Polo the non-spiritual beings are ‘persistent’. Persistence does not mean that they do not change but that the changes are not theirs; they do not have command over them. Polo states further that the non-spiritual universe has only one act of being and one unique essence, which is common to all non-spiritual beings. By contraposition each spiritual being has an essence, and a different act of being, and therefore co-exists with a multiplicity of co-beings and with the being of the universe. What is proper of the spirit is its inherent unavoidable expansiveness, the lack of limit, which is a consequence of freedom and in the final instance, of his spirituality: “The differences between the act of being of the universe –I call it persistence–, and the human one –I call it the character of ‘more’– ; and of God –I call it ‘originating identity’–, have to be highlighted”⁵⁶.

The act of being of the person is entitatively extrovert. It needs to relate to the exterior both to the persistence or the world, and to other personal beings⁵⁷. This is the radical difference between the personal act of being and the non-spiritual existence. And this distinction explains further the difference between Transcendental Anthropology and Metaphysics: “As a starting point, admitting that being and existing are equivalent expressions in metaphysics, transcendental anthropology is the doctrine that deals with the human co-being or human co-existing. Man is not limited to being, but co-being. Co-being means being-with. The being studied by metaphysics is equivalent to existing (simply as persistence). Anthropology cannot be reduced to

⁵⁵ “Hay que hacer metafísica: recuperar y avanzar por la línea de la metafísica clásica. Pero también hay que evitar endosar al ser personal las categorías de la metafísica clásica, porque los trascendentales antropológicos son diferentes. Por ejemplo, en Aristóteles, el primer principio es amable, pero no ama; el amor no es un trascendental. En metafísica es trascendental el bien, pero no el amor; en antropología es trascendental el amor: el amor es un trascendental personal”. Polo, L., in Cruz-Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

⁵⁶ “Hay que destacar la diferencia entre el acto de ser del universo –al que llamo *persistencia*–, el del hombre –al que llamo *carácter de además*– y el de Dios –al que llamo *Identidad originaria*–. De acuerdo con estas distinciones se evitan algunas confusiones, como son el *panteísmo* y la interpretación del hombre como un mero ente intracósmico”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 87.

⁵⁷ Guardini understands the innate social character of man, (even if his is mainly a phenomenological approach), who rejects the existentialists who tend to concentrate so much in the personal existence that they may lead to an ethics of personal perfection, of a false auto-realization. “Inasmuch as man revolves around himself, he loses sight of his true being”. “En la medida en que el hombre se centra en si mismo, pierde de vista su verdadero ser”. Guardini, R., *Etica. Lecciones en la Universidad de Munich*, op. cit., 51.

metaphysics because a human being is more than being or mere existence as he is co-being or co-existent which is ‘being with’ (naturally also with the being of metaphysics)”⁵⁸. The co-being of the personal level is shared at the essential level through its social manifestations: ethics, language, politics, and all the personal manifestations that spread our thoughts and good will naturally among our different societies. We can also say that this personal transcendental is so far the best explanation of the natural social character of human beings and of the natural origin of society⁵⁹. It can also make one have a glimpse, though never explain or fully understand, the multiplicity of persons in God.

c.4) Personal freedom

The second of the personal transcendentals is personal freedom. Leonardo Polo describes it as ‘radical novelty’. Radical because it is at the root of all decisions and changes we make, and novelty, because it cannot be ‘deduced’. It is always fresh. This freedom is entitative, which means that there is no person without personal freedom. If you remove the radical freedom from a person he or she stops being a person, one becomes a stone, tree or animal, a non-free being. The interesting corollary of being at the personal level, as the co-existence-with and the other radicals, is that it cannot be understood by the intelligence which is at the essential level. A second implicit corollary is that it permeates down to essential level as the free will (*liberum arbitrium*), and at the corporeal level, where we have the corporeal freedom.

Personal freedom is exactly the opposite of the fear to the classical *fatum*, the old stoic *kosmos*, and the *fatum* of the intransigence that the world understood in a mechanistic way portaits that Levinas also conveys but without ontological support⁶⁰.

Traditional philosophy considered freedom as a property of the will, not as something which could be identified with the person as such, because the traditional philosophy was limited to the essential

⁵⁸ “De entrada, admitiendo que ser y existir son expresiones equivalentes en metafísica, la antropología trascendental es la doctrina acerca del co-ser humano o bien de la co-existencia. El hombre no se limita a ser, sino que co-es. Co-ser designa la persona, es decir, la realidad abierta en intimidad y también hacia fuera; por tanto, co-ser alude a ser-con. El ser que estudia la metafísica equivale a existir (por lo pronto, a persistir). La antropología no se reduce a la metafísica porque el ser humano es más que existir o ser, en tanto que co-ser o co-existir; y, por tanto, ser-con (desde luego, con el ser de la metafísica)”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 29.

⁵⁹ Cfr. Altarejos, F., “La Co-Existencia, Fundamento Antropològico de la Solidaridad”, *Studia Poliana*, vol. 8 (2006), 119-150.

⁶⁰ “The fear of being in a world without any possibility of something new, without a future without hope, a world where everything is regulated in advance; the old horror at the destiny”. “Al espanto de encontrarnos en un mundo sin novedades posibles, sin porvenir de la esperanza, un mundo donde todo es regulado de antemano; al antiguo espanto ante el destino”. Levinas, E., *Ética e Infinito*, op. cit., 30.

level and that was the highest level reached in traditional anthropology⁶¹.

c.5) Personal knowledge

The personal knowledge is not the intellectual knowledge of the person or human being but the act of knowing oneself, some inner transparency which accompanies the personal act of being. Leonardo Polo uses the image of the light which is not seen unless it illuminates something. We know it at the essential level when we know the personal manifestations of something, but it hides the transparent light as it makes other things shine. Polo identifies this light with Aristotle's active intelligence; the agent intellect. The agent intellect is the one that activates with more or less intensity the passive intellect, that belongs to the essential level, and that from there activates or controls the sensitive knowledge⁶².

Polo develops the personal knowledge, the intellect '*ut actus*', or agent intellect, following Aristotle and Aquinas. Nevertheless his development goes far beyond what Aristotle and Aquinas discovered. We shall touch upon this topic when explaining synderesis in detail⁶³.

c.6) Personal love

The last of the personal transcendentals Leonardo Polo speaks about –he recognises that more maybe found in future – is personal love. Personal love is the highest manifestation of the expansiveness of the person. It activates the will which then becomes love at the essential level, and controls desires at the natural level. Polo speaks of a dimension of the act of being as personal love which starts with 'acceptance'⁶⁴ co-implicated with a second dimension of 'giving' and a

⁶¹ The classical manual of Moral is but just one testimony: "Como la libertad reside en la voluntad, solamente los actos e intenciones de la voluntad interna constituyen actos morales". Mausbach, J. and Ermecke, G., *Teología Moral Católica I*, op. cit., 93.

⁶² From Aristotle it is known that the capacity to think is distinctive of what is human. To link it to a personal level was also seen by Guardini, not as a transcendental, but as something specifically spiritual; "Only in the realization of truth the person reaches its meaning because the person is naturally referred to the truth. It exists for the truth, as a permanent possibility of realizing it. The person exists only if there is truth; why; because an autonomous being can only exist if it is conscious of himself". Guardini, R., *Eética. Lecciones en la Universidad de Múnich*, op. cit., 160.

⁶³ Cfr. for a more detailed explanation: Sellés, J. F., "El intelecto agente como acto de ser personal", *Logos*, 45 (2012) 35-63; *El Conocer Personal. Estudio Del Entendimiento Agente según Leonardo Polo* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2003).

⁶⁴ Guardini sensed the characteristic of the transcendental love as acceptance, i.e. as essential to the spiritual being of man, in a phenomenological way and in a direct relationship with God and places it as the foundation of ethics. "The demands of accepting are not only of accepting the condition of being created, but also of its content. One has to accept not only that one is, but also how he is". "Pero la exigencia de la aceptación se dirige no solo a la aceptación de la condición de realidad

third one which is the ‘gift’. The gift in humans has to be done at the essential or corporeal level, since the act of being cannot be donated because that is what one is and has received, one does not have control over it; we have received it as a gift, and we have no control at the ‘act of being’ level; we are not creators⁶⁵.

This has been a very brief description of the personal transcendentals the development of which is rich in possibilities. We have constrained ourselves to what is strictly necessary to understand the texts we shall quote when discussing synderesis. This explanation can be valuable to understand the levels of knowledge, levels of love, the levels of happiness and levels of law⁶⁶.

But how can these personal transcendentals be reached if they are above the intelligence and will? This is what Leonardo Polo considers the key to overcome the limitations of the classical and modern philosophy an open way to continue doing philosophy without having to reject all previous achievements. He calls it the “abandonment of the mental boundary”⁶⁷.

5. The new method

To reach philosophically the personal act of being one needs a new method that should be able to reach the act of being of man. This method has to fit the topic at hand what Polo calls the “theme”. A higher reality cannot be understood with methods fit for a lower reality⁶⁸. Even Aquinas, who discovered the act of being, did not have a method to reach it in a philosophical way: “Human co-existence, as a theme than can be reached, cannot be found in Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy. This is not an oversight of this great metaphysician and Christian theologian; neither it is an omission that can be overcome by adding a chapter to his works, because the reason for this omission is

creada, sino también a su contenido”. Guardini, R., *Ética. Lecciones en la Universidad de Munich*, op. cit., 863. El ser humano no sólo debe aceptar que es, sino también que es el que es”. The clarity and courage of this acceptance is the ethical basis of existence”. *Ibid.*, 398

⁶⁵ The coimplication between acceptance and freedom is also clearly seen by Millán Puelles, “Free acceptance is a truism, because acceptance is only real if it is free”. “Libre aceptación es una redundancia, porque la aceptación sólo tiene sentido si es libre”. Millán-Puelles, A., *Ética y Realismo*, op. cit., 14.

⁶⁶ Regarding the three levels of law see Sellés, J. F., “Natural Law, Essential Law and Personal Law”, in Torralba, J.M., (ed.), *Natural law: Historical, Systematic and Juridical Approaches*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub, 2008).

⁶⁷ Cfr. for more details: Sellés, J. F., “Trascendentalidad del Amor Personal Humano”, *Tópicos*, 45 (2013), 33-68.

⁶⁸ The fact that a richer theory cannot be understood, integrated or explained by a less developed one is explained well by MacIntyre with regards to the Aristotelian and Augustian theories in the medieval times. What he said can be applied to Polo’s theory with regards to the previous ones. Cf. MacIntyre, A., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, op. cit., 119.

much deeper: it is that the impulse that motivates his philosophy cannot reach the theme; I want to say that it falls short, or better, that it is constrained by his Aristotelian background and by the influence of Averroes. Because of this we can say that the human co-existence is only virtually contained in Thomistic philosophy and that in order to develop it, one should reorganise it. It is not possible to research co-existence by just adding it to the topics Thomas Aquinas deals with, because it is not in line with them”⁶⁹.

Both traditional and modern philosophies did not have a method to treat properly personal topics. Polo proposed a method that retains the metaphysical achievements of classic philosophy and also accounts for the latent achievements of modern philosophers with the adequate corrections needed: “Method is equivalent to intellectual act. The act through which metaphysics topics are achieved should be different enough from the act by which the topics proper to transcendental anthropology are reached”⁷⁰.

How does one reach there? Through a new method that is based on an intuition Polo had in 1950, when he was twenty-four years old. He called it the discovery of the mental boundary: “It came to me suddenly. I was just thinking about being and thinking, and the relationship between each other; then I realized that we cannot reach the being while we do not overcome the supposition of objective knowledge, because supposition limits intellectual objects, and a limited knowledge cannot be knowledge of being in a transcendental sense”⁷¹.

⁶⁹ “La co-existencia humana como tema susceptible de ser alcanzado, no aparece en la filosofía de Tomás de Aquino. Ello no obedece a una distracción de este gran metafísico y teólogo cristiano; no es tampoco una mera omisión que pueda subsanarse con sólo añadir un capítulo nuevo a su obra, porque la razón de esa omisión es más profunda: se trata de que el impulso que alimenta la filosofía tomista no llega al tema; quiero decir que se queda corto, o mejor, que está frenado por la herencia aristotélica y el influjo de Averroes. Por eso se ha de decir que la co-existencia humana sólo virtualmente está contenida en el tomismo, que por ello se ha de continuar de acuerdo con cierta reorganización. Para investigar la co-existencia, no basta con superponerla a los temas de que se ocupa Tomás de Aquino, porque no es alineable con ellos”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 20.

⁷⁰ “Método equivale a acto intelectual. El acto según el cual se conoce la temática metafísica tiene que ser suficientemente distinto del acto según el cual se alcanzan los temas de la antropología trascendental”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 99.

⁷¹ “En la primavera de 1950, Leonardo Polo cae en la cuenta del límite mental. La detectación del límite fue una intuición expresa. Según cuenta: “eso se me ocurrió de repente, y punto. Estaba pensando acerca del pensar y el ser, y cómo tenía que ver el ser con el pensar; entonces me di cuenta de que al ser no podíamos llegar mientras no se abandonara la suposición del objeto, porque la suposición hace que el objeto sea limitado y un conocimiento limitado no puede ser un conocimiento del ser si éste se toma en sentido trascendental”. Franquet, M. J., “La trayectoria intelectual de Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 305. Polo understands “supposition” as the objectivity of the concepts, “La presencia es la suposición del objeto”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento II*, op.cit., 106.

It is a kind of discovery that was preceded by a special interest in philosophy and lots of personal reading that started when he was fourteen years old and that matured ten years later. We are more interested in the development of that intuition, which marked all his philosophical development, than in the analysis of this moment, of which Leonardo Polo did not write much about. “The method I propose is what I call ‘abandonment of the mental limit’, and this, so to speak, is exclusive to me⁷². Not to have found a thinker that had discovered this before me does not ask for a special acknowledgement because, more than vanity, it gives me a lot of insecurity. ‘To abandon the mental limit’: this is the method the fecundity of which I have tried to explore for the last 40 years”⁷³. We shall try to explain this method and its implications to our subject step by step.

a) The act of being cannot be known ‘objectively’

For Leonardo Polo the boundary of knowledge is the barrier which prevents us from knowing the actual being. The boundary, what limits our intelligence to reach the being is objective knowledge: “The object, and nothing else, is the mental boundary”⁷⁴. The object is so powerful that it hides behind it other types of knowledge. This has blocked the development of philosophy since Parmenides. Objective knowledge, ‘the object-thought’ is like a photograph, devoid of life, devoid of acting, of thinking. Objective knowledge is unable to unhide the ‘thinker’ who is behind the object; the-one-who-thinks the object. Continuing with the photograph simile, we can say that the photograph does not show the photographer. The person who thinks cannot be reduced to the product of his thinking. The same idea can be said in many ways: you are not what you are thinking; what is thought is not the thinker; we are the thinker, not the thought we think.

In a vivid text Polo expresses the limitations of ‘objective’ knowledge which prevents the knowledge of ‘being’: “I had formulated the inadequacy of the knowledge about the human person in an expression that few have understood... which reads as follows: ‘the thought ‘I’ does not think’. The self cannot be known as an object-thought because no object thinks (but is being thought). I can think ‘I am I’ but I cannot give reality to the ‘I’, I objectivize because objects qua-objects are not real. Now, in the case of the human person knowing as being-not-real is not knowing the person properly. The human

⁷² “The abandonment of the mental boundary is the guiding thread of Polo’s philosophy”. “El hilo conductor de la filosofía de Polo es el abandono del límite mental”. Murillo, J. I., “Conocimiento personal y Conocimiento Racional en la Antropología Trascendental de L. Polo”, op. cit., 71.

⁷³ “El método que propongo es lo que llamo «abandono del límite mental», y esto, por así decirlo, es de mi exclusiva competencia. No se aduce con ello ningún mérito, pues más que de vanidad me llena de inseguridad el no haber encontrado algún pensador anterior que lo haya visto. «Abandonar el límite mental»: ése es el método cuyo alcance he tratado de explorar desde hace cuarenta años”. Polo, L., in Cruz-Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

⁷⁴ “El objeto es simplemente, y nada más, el límite mental”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 21.

person is not knowable as an object because what strictly is proper to it; what cannot be left behind, is that the person is real. If the character of being-thinking-now does appear as object-thought, then, properly speaking, the person does not appear as thinking”⁷⁵.

The ‘mental object’ is what we have possession of, a special type of possession, which is intimate and nevertheless constitutes the boundary to know the “being”: “As I have said, to have is equivalent to the intellectual operation by which it commeasures exactly to its object: the object is what we have. To ‘have’ is the mental boundary”⁷⁶. The objective knowledge has two facets (it is dual), one is the subject that knows, and in front of it is the object. We shall see that, for most philosophers, the subject does not mean the person but another object thought⁷⁷. “The dual character of the operational knowledge has to be recognised. On the one hand is the operation of knowing and on the other what the operation has which, precisely, is its object”⁷⁸. Leonardo Polo uses different terms to express the idea that the object-thought hides the life that created it, or rather, is creating the object. The other terms used for this type of knowledge are: ‘objective’; ‘supposition’; ‘intentional’; ‘operational’ and ‘present’.

⁷⁵ “Yo formulé la inadecuación del conocimiento de la persona humana en una expresión que pocos han entendido (los que lo han entendido son discípulos míos, lo que significa simplemente que han abandonado el límite por su cuenta), que dice así: el yo pensado no piensa. El yo no puede ser conocido como un objeto pensado porque ningún objeto piensa (sino que es pensado). Yo puedo pensar "yo soy yo", pero no puedo dotar de carácter real a ese "yo" que objetivo porque los objetos qua objetos no son reales. Ahora bien, en el caso de la persona humana el no ser real es conocerla impropriamente. La persona humana en términos de objeto es un tema inaccesible porque lo estrictamente propio, aquello de lo que no se puede prescindir es que es real. Si el carácter de pensante no puede comparecer según el objeto pensado, propiamente hablando como pensante no comparece”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 46.

⁷⁶ “Según he dicho el haber equivale a la operación intelectual commensurada con el objeto: el objeto es lo que hay. El haber es el límite mental”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 21 note 2.

⁷⁷ Some personalistic philosophers sensed and spoke about the difference between the knowledge of the person as an object and the real person, but were not able to find the method to apply their intuition into a transcendental anthropology. Among these Sellés in a private conversation mentioned: Frankl, V., Guardini, R., Nédoncelle, M., Ratzinger J. and Scheler, M. Regarding this topic we can bring a quotation from Scheler: “But an act is never an object. To the essence of the acts belongs only be experienced while performing them, and by ‘being given’ through reflection. Indeed, an act can never be, at the same time, in an object by a second act that considers it retrospectively. Neither is ‘object’ in the reflection in what it becomes conscious to the act overcoming its naïve implementation: the reflective knowledge ‘accompanies’ the act, but does not make it objective”. “Pero un acto no es nunca un objeto. Pues a la esencia de los actos pertenece el ser vividos únicamente en la realización y el ser dados en la reflexión. Efectivamente, nunca puede convertirse un acto, a su vez, en objeto merced a un segundo acto que lo considere retrospectivamente. Tampoco es ‘objeto’ en la reflexión que hace consciente al acto superando su realización ingenua: el saber reflejo ‘acompañá’ al acto, pero no lo objetiva”. Scheler, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 503.

⁷⁸ “Hay que admitir el carácter dual del conocimiento operativo, pues por una parte está la operación de conocer y, por otra, aquello que la operación posee, que es justamente su objeto”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 34.

“The intellectual operation is described as supposition, presence, actual act and unicity. All these descriptions are equivalent”⁷⁹.

Present in the sense that the object is ‘present to the mind’ and the act is an intellectual ‘operation’ which is ‘intentional’ and ‘presents’ the object: “Where can we see that the act of being cannot be the intentional act? This is because the intentional knowledge is already there, and because of this it is knowledge as present (because of this I call the intellectual operation, ‘presence’). To know intellectually is to present; and what is intentionally known is what is present, one knows in present when one knows objectively”⁸⁰.

The presence of the present is a rendering of Parmenides’ saying: “The same think for thinking and that is thought”⁸¹. This is to be within the boundary of the objective knowledge. Leonardo Polo says that this is to relinquish the act of thinking, which remains occult –in the object– in the thought. By paying attention to the activity, more than to the result one can notice, discover –but not objectively– the boundary, and by discovering it one automatically ‘detects’ the boundary and therefore one is open to explore what is not ‘present’, what is not object-like. “What we can learn from Parmenides is the-presence-of-the-present, i.e. that what is thought, is what is intentional. But then the presence, the boundary, remains occult, because what appears is what is present (the operation does not know itself, because what is known is intentional); therefore, to detect the mental boundary is to detect the presence and to detect the presence is to abandon what is present and notice the topic of being”⁸².

According to Polo, Aristotle did not clarify this matter sufficiently: “And again I have to point out a discrepancy with classic philosophy, where the contrary thesis frequently appears, this is, that being means actual-being, or, at least, that actuality belongs to being. In many passages of Aristotle they are also confused (being and essence). On the contrary I defend that actuality is equivalent to mental

⁷⁹ “La operación intelectual se describe como suposición, presencia, acto actual y unicidad. Estas descripciones son equivalentes”. *Ibid.*, 42 note.

⁸⁰ “Dónde se ve que el acto de ser no puede ser intencional? Justamente en que el conocimiento intencional es ya tenido, por lo que es un conocimiento según presencia (por eso a la operación intelectual la llamo presencia). Conocer intelectualmente es presentar; y lo conocido intencionalmente es lo presente; se conoce en presente cuando se conoce objetivamente”. Polo, L., in Cruz-Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 46.

⁸¹ “Parmenides”, en Gallop, D., *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments: A Text and Translation with an Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

⁸² “Lo que hay que salvar de Parménides es que lo mismo es lo pensado, lo intencional, lo presente de la presencia. Pero entonces la presencia, el límite, queda oculto, puesto que lo que comparece es lo presente (la operación no se conoce a sí misma porque lo conocido es intencional); por tanto, detectar el límite mental es detectar la presencia; y detectar la presencia es abandonar lo presente y advertir el tema del ser”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 46.

presence, which is different from being”⁸³. These terminological precisions are important in order to understand Polo’s texts regarding synderesis.

We have seen that the object, the objective knowledge, which is an operation of the intelligence, is the boundary which prevents access to the being as being. How can we overcome the boundary without using the intelligence? What type of knowledge can it be, if it is not operational?

Polo studies human knowledge in great detail in his *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*. The development of this *Course* was a consequence of the need to clarify the superior anthropological types of knowledge: “After some tentative expositions, it was seen that the knowledge of con-causality belongs mainly to judgement. This required the study of human knowledge, because judgement is preceded by abstraction. It was then necessary, therefore, to study the first intellectual operation and the habits and operations that follow it so as to discover the way to overcome the mental boundary and allow the intelligence to proceed; what meant that a course of theory of human knowledge had to be written”⁸⁴.

Polo distinguishes four basic levels of human knowledge: sensitive, operational, habitual and personal, as expressed in the following quote: “There are other levels or ways to know: other types of cognitive acts, of which we can highlight two: habitual knowledge –which I consider that is knowledge in act, even if not actual, superior to operational knowledge– and knowledge as act of being: as *esse hominis*”⁸⁵.

Sensitive knowledge is well studied in classic philosophy and is linked to each specific organ and the efficient working of the nervous system. Intellectual knowledge is entirely different and much more

⁸³ “Pero de nuevo tengo que señalar una discrepancia con la filosofía clásica, en la que aparece con frecuencia la tesis contraria, a saber, que ser significa ser-actual, o, al menos, que la actualidad es propia del ser. También ser y actualidad se confunden en bastantes pasajes de Aristóteles. En cambio, aquí se sostiene que la actualidad equivale a la presencia mental, la cual se distingue del ser”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento III*, op. cit., 17.

⁸⁴ “Después de algunos ensayos expositivos, se vio que el conocimiento de la con causalidad corresponde sobre todo al juicio. Ello obligaba a estudiar el conocimiento humano, pues el juicio es precedido por la abstracción. Era preciso, por tanto, proceder al estudio de la primera operación intelectual y de los hábitos y operaciones que la siguen, para averiguar el modo de abandonar el límite mental al proseguir la actividad de la inteligencia; lo que equivalía a escribir un *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento humano*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 17.

⁸⁵ “Existen otros niveles o modos de conocer: otros tipos de actos cognoscitivos, de los cuales podemos destacar dos: el conocimiento habitual –considero que es un conocimiento en acto, aunque no actual, superior al conocimiento operativo–, y el conocimiento como acto de ser: como *esse hominis*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 29.

complex than traditionally thought. Polo reserves the name “operation” to the intelligence’s activity as a faculty. An “operation” then means the activity of a faculty. There are two types of knowledge higher than the operations of the intelligence: ‘habitual’ and ‘personal’ knowledge. Habitual knowledge is proper of the intellectual habits; personal knowledge is the direct knowledge that the ‘act of being’ (personal level) has of himself. These distinctions are very relevant for our topic because according to Polo synderesis is a type of habitual knowledge, and therefore, it is above the knowledge intelligence gives as faculty, but below personal knowledge.

b) Incapacity of operational knowledge to notice the being

The first characteristic of Polo’s new method is that it cannot be “objective”. Objective here is understood as conceptual, as the ‘object’ is what the intellect presents. When the intelligence abstracts it “makes objects” because that is how it operates. The natural tendency of the intelligence is to ‘objectivize’, to ‘entify’ or ‘reify’, this is, to understand everything as ‘a thing’, as an ‘ens’⁸⁶. The new method has to overcome this problem; it has to go beyond this mental boundary, it has to go beyond the distinction between subject and its object. The subject is the opposite side of the object, but it is already ‘objectivized’, an object looking to the object, so to speak. This mental boundary has to be surpassed and this is done by noticing it from above. We can say that if we understand the text quoted below then we are in a very good position to understand Polo’s philosophy and therefore the topic at hand; the originality of his proposal regarding synderesis: “The being cannot be separated from being, I repeat, the being cannot be possessed objectively because in that way one makes it non-real, but if being is non-real, then it is nothing; the intentional consideration of being is a ‘quid pro quo’; being is its being but if one knows it ‘intentionaliter’ in Scholastic terminology, it becomes an extrinsic denomination. When I know an idea the idea does not affect the reality I know, because the idea is in my mind as an intelligible in act, and in the reality as intelligible in potency. The real distinction between the essence and being points out in an extreme way the importance of this issue, because if being and essence were the same, knowing something about the essence would know something about the being”⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ Some authors discovered the limitation of the objective knowledge in different ways, but they did not discover that there was a superior level, i.e. the way of overcoming it. We can cite as example this short text of Dilthey: “Todo nuestro pensar solo puede conocer, combinar, separar y relacionar la coexistencia, la sucesión, la identidad, la uniformidad. Pero esto significa directamente mecanizar”. Dilthey, W., *El Sistema de la Ética*, op. cit., 58.

⁸⁷ “No se puede separar, repito, el ser del ser, no cabe apoderarse objetivamente de él porque en esa medida se ‘desrealiza’, pero si el ser no es real, no es nada; la consideración intencional del ser es un *quid pro quo*; el ser coincide consigo, pero ser conocido *intentionaliter*, como decían los escolásticos, es una denominación extrínseca. Cuando conozco la idea no afecta para nada a lo que conozco, porque la idea de lo que conozco está en mi mente como inteligible en acto y en la realidad como inteligible en potencia. La distinción real entre esencia y ser extrema lo

Operational or objective knowledge is devoid of being, and therefore one cannot add knowledge of reality by relating objects to objects. Reality, i.e. being, cannot be reached by operating with objects: “I formulate this as follows: ‘in the proposition A is A, or A is B, A is already supposed’; I know something more than A but I do not know A better, which is exactly the same as what is already known; I cannot increase its knowledge just by thinking the object again, because objective knowledge is suppositional –knowledge can be increased going from object to object, but one cannot go beyond the object–. To suppose is equivalent to exclude. Knowing objectively is to exclude ‘being’ from the object. When executing knowing operations, the intentional object is possessed by the operation exclusive of being. The operation does not produce the object –this is Kant’s error– but the object is purely intentional and this means that it is disposed of real being. What is deprived of real being can be an illumination of reality, but it cannot be knowledge of the radicality of being, that if it is not –or if it is excluded– is nothing”⁸⁸.

This objective knowledge is the operational knowledge which makes present whatever it considers in the act of thinking, and this is the cause of the confusion between *ens* and *esse* that makes real metaphysics impossible: “From operations we know the present. The mental operation is described as mental presence. But one cannot say that the act of being is actual or present. Remember how we differentiate the Thomist’s distinction between the ‘be’ as a verbal union and the ‘be’ as act of being. The first is actual, objective and therefore the second meaning of ‘be’ should not be like that. Therefore if the object, as mental boundary, is not overcome, it does not seem possible to reach the act of being”⁸⁹.

agudo de la cuestión, porque si el ser y la esencia fuesen lo mismo, al conocer algo de la esencia conocería algo del ser”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

⁸⁸ “Esto lo formulé así: «en la proposición "A es A", o "A es B", A ya está supuesta»; conozco algo más que A, pero no conozco mejor a A, que es la misma en tanto que ya ha sido conocida; sobre el haberla pensado no puedo volver incrementándolo porque el conocimiento objetivo es supositorio (pasando de objeto a objeto se puede incrementar el conocimiento, pero no traspasar el objeto). Suponer equivale a eximir: al conocer objetivamente se exime de ser al objeto. Eximir de ser es el límite mental. Al ejercer operaciones cognoscitivas, el objeto intencional poseido justamente por la operación está eximido de ser. La operación no produce el objeto (eso es el error de Kant), sino que el objeto es puramente intencional y eso quiere decir que está exento de ser real. Lo que está exento de ser real puede ser iluminación de lo real, pero no puede ser de ninguna manera el conocimiento de la radicalidad del ser que si no es (o es eximido) no es nada”. *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Operativamente se conoce lo presente: el acto operativo se describe como presencia mental. Pero no debe sostenerse que el acto de ser sea actual o presente. Recuérdese que en la nota 19 de este planteamiento se expuso la distinción tomista del *est* como cópula verbal y como acto de ser. El primer sentido del *est* es actual, objetivo; por consiguiente, el segundo sentido del *est* no debe serlo. Así pues, si no se detecta el objeto como límite mental y no se abandona, no parece posible advertir o alcanzar el acto de ser”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 100.

c) The new method is based on habitual knowledge

Leonardo Polo finds that because the mental limit can be noticed in different ways, there are different ways of surpassing it, and that each of these methods reaches different topics, themes or dimensions: “It is necessary to point out that the mental limit is noticed in different ways, and that each is a different method that give access to different themes. Then it is good to point out that in order to overcome the limit in different ways, different acts of knowledge than the ones that are within the mental limit need to come into play”⁹⁰; “It is suitable, above all, to highlight that overcoming the mental limit cannot be unique; it is necessary to accept several dimensions, and also that through each one we reach different themes”⁹¹.

One of the difficult things to get used to is to accept differences, this is, to notice that the way we reach human realities gets to different, so to speak, sides of our being a person, and that naturally each will look different, and that each does not “see” the others, because they are reached from different angles. Only what they have in common ensures that they are all referring to the same being. This realization is important to understand synderesis and the personal transcendentals. They are not different things, but they are clearly distinct from one another and they look and feel differently. Now that we know that the boundary is the objective knowledge, and that to notice it means that automatically we are in a position to overcome the limit: “To go beyond the boundary is a way of using the intellectual capacity of infinity, which is different from merely not having a final thought-object, which is precisely to go beyond but without abandoning the boundary because the boundary is to think objects”⁹².

By noticing the mental boundary one is able to reach three realities —three types of being — that cannot be properly known ‘objectively’: God, man, and the non-personal realities, which Leonardo Polo calls the ‘extra mental-beings’: “On the other hand, if the limit were detected⁹³ one would discover what cannot be known within

⁹⁰ “Es preciso señalar que el límite mental se detecta de diversos modos, los cuales son otras tantas dimensiones metódicas que marcan el acceso a temas distintos. Ahora bien, para abandonar el límite de diversos modos, han de entrar en juego actos cognoscitivos distintos de aquéllos con los que se corresponde el límite mental”. *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹¹ “Conviene resaltar, ante todo, que el abandono del límite mental no puede ser un único método; es preciso admitir varias dimensiones suyas, de acuerdo con las cuales se llega a temáticas distintas”. *Ibid.*, 107.

⁹² “Ir más allá del límite es una manera de ejercer la infinitud intelectual, distinto del puro no haber un último objeto pensado, lo cual es justamente la manera de ir más allá sin abandonar el límite porque el límite es el pensar objetos”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

⁹³ Of the different words we wonder whether “notice” or “uncover” can reflect the meaning Leonardo Polo gives to “detectar”. We tend to like ‘notice’ because it indicates some newness, while ‘uncover’ indicates some “looking for” which indicates some previous knowledge of what one is looking for.

the limit, i.e. the realities for which a limited knowledge is totally inappropriate or not adequate. One notices immediately that there are two realities (apart from God) for which the limited knowledge (intentional knowlege) is inadequate: the human person and the extra mental being”⁹⁴. More specifically and with regard to human beings: “I can only properly know that ‘I am’ if I do not know it objectively, that is, if I find a method to reach the ‘I’ beyond the object”⁹⁵.

And with regards to the extra mental beings: “We have an objective knowledge of things, but not of the being of things”⁹⁶; “To open up this new transcendental level it is necessary to apply the method I call ‘to abandon the mental boundary’. Naming it in this way is adequate if one considers that the mental operations are the inferior acts of knowledge, so that what is known by them is necessarily limited. This limitation can be detected from the intellectual habits, which are the intellectual acts superior to the operations. The knowledge operation is described as measured by what it knows –what I call the object. If one takes into account the limitation of the object, when one abandons the mental boundary, one perceives the trans-objective themes: and if one detects the limitation of the operation, one achieves the trans-operational themes. The first correspond to metaphysics, the second to anthropology”⁹⁷.

<i>Act</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Reality</i>
Object	Trans-Objective	Metaphysics	World
Operation	Trans-Operational	Transcendental Anthropology	Humans

Table 3: Acts, Methods, Science, Reality.

⁹⁴ “En cambio, si detectara el límite, llegaría a lo que no puedo conocer limitadamente, es decir, a aquello cuyo conocimiento limitado (objetivo) es completamente impropio o inadecuado. Enseguida se ve que hay dos realidades (aparte de Dios) cuyo conocimiento limitado (intencional) es inadecuado: la persona humana y el ser extramental”. Polo, L., in Cruz-Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

⁹⁵ “Solamente puedo conocer propiamente que soy si no lo conozco objetivamente, es decir, si encuentro un método para alcanzar el yo al margen de la objetividad”. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Tenemos un conocimiento objetivo de las cosas, pero no del ser de las cosas”. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ “Para abrir este nuevo ámbito trascendental es preciso acudir al método que llamo ‘abandono del límite mental’. Esta designación es adecuada si se tiene en cuenta que las operaciones mentales son los actos cognoscitivos inferiores, por lo cual, lo conocido con ellas es forzosamente limitado. Dicha limitación puede ser detectada desde los hábitos intelectuales, que son los actos cognoscitivos superiores a las operaciones. Ahora bien, la operación cognoscitiva se describe como commensurada con lo que conoce –a lo que se llama objeto–. Si se atiende a la limitación del objeto, al abandonar el límite mental se advierte la temática transobjetiva; y si se detecta la limitación de la operación, se alcanza la temática transoperativa. Lo primero corresponde a la metafísica y lo segundo a la antropología”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 23.

Leonardo Polo's method should then be able to fulfil the aim of founding axiomatically the knowledge of 'extra mental realities' in their being and in their essence by reaching the trans-objective themes; the transcendentals. This will support a metaphysics of 'being', rather than a metaphysics of 'essences'. The trans-objective realities, the realities that are not personal, can be 'objectivized' because their being is 'permanence'; they do not have the power to change themselves.

The second way of overcoming the limit is more important because it is the foundation of the 'transcendental anthropology', which will reach the 'being' of the person, as unique, by analysing the activities proper to the person in a 'trans-operational' way. The trans-operational realities, those that are personal, cannot be 'objectivised' because they are above objectivity, they cannot be petrified, 'cosified', because they are free. The person is the agent that through his 'operations' objectivizes, so he has to be above the operations. The being of the person is radically different from the being of the extra-mental beings. Polo calls this type of being 'co-being' or 'co-existing' to distinguish it from the being of things which is just "being" in permanence, as we saw above when discussing the personal transcendentals. This is the real being of personal activity, which is studied by transcendental anthropology, and cannot be studied by metaphysics, because it transcends the object, the operations.

<i>Reality</i>	<i>Type of Being</i>
God	Identity
Persons	Co-being
World	Permanence

Table 4: Reality, Type of Being.

In order to overcome the mental limit, and still remain in the realm of knowledge, Polo defends the primacy and richness of two types of knowledge above 'objective' knowledge: habitual knowledge and personal knowledge, as mentioned above: "When one deals with knowledge or with other dimensions of what is immaterial and created, the proper distinction or the most correct is the distinction between degrees, hierarchical, and not the simple numeric distinctions. These are distinctions between what is superior and inferior. I insist, therefore, that operational knowledge is inferior knowledge. Above it are other levels of knowledge, other types of acts of knowledge, from which we can highlight two: habitual knowledge –I consider it being knowledge in act, but not actual, superior to the operational knowledge–, and the knowledge as act of being: as *esse hominis*"⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ "Cuando se trata del conocimiento o de otras dimensiones de lo inmaterial creado, la distinción más propia o más correcta es la distinción de grado, jerárquica, y no la simple distinción numérica. Se trata de distinciones entre lo superior y lo inferior. Pues bien, insisto, el conocimiento operativo es el conocimiento inferior. Por encima de él existen otros niveles o modos de conocer: otros tipos de actos cognoscitivos, de los cuales podemos destacar dos: el conocimiento habitual –

In order to know the acts, the objective method cannot be used because it paralyses, suspends, actualizes, makes present the object but not its reality as active acting. How can we know without objectivizing? Leonardo Polo says that it can be done through habitual knowledge. Naturally, habitual knowledge is different and cannot be “objectivized” because it lacks precisely the characteristics of “objectivity” but it does give a new type of knowledge that according to Polo is above the objective knowledge. This does not mean exclusion or lack of appreciation for the value of objective knowledge, but just complementarity. It is enrichment on what the objective knowledge gives⁹⁹.

<i>Method</i>	<i>Theme</i>
Personal	Personal Being
Habitual	Acts of Operations
Objective	Sensitive Presentations
Internal Sensitive	Acts of External Senses
External Sensitive	Acts of Body Organs

Table 5: Method, Theme.

d) Ontological character of habits

The study of habits can be done from the ontological point of view, that is, what type of reality habits are. They can also be studied regarding their content, for example. whether it is intellectual or moral. We are going to consider first the ontological character of habits, which is somehow to consider the ontological character of synderesis, because we cannot study habits in general without somehow studying actual habits.

e) Habit as possession

considero que es un conocimiento en acto, aunque no actual, superior al conocimiento operativo–, y el conocimiento como acto de ser: como *esse hominis*”. *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁹ “Conocer operativamente es conocer limitadamente, porque es conocer objetivamente. Las operaciones poseen objetos; se commensuran, como también suelo decir, con objetos. Si no tuviésemos más actos intelectuales que las operaciones, no podríamos abandonar el límite, puesto que el límite es el objeto y, correlativamente, la operación. Conocer operativamente es conocer objetivamente y, por tanto, limitadamente. Para que el abandono del límite no pase de ser un anhelo irrealizable tiene que existir un tipo de actos cognoscitivos superiores a las operaciones, que son los hábitos intelectuales”. Polo, L., *El Conocimiento Habitual de los Primeros Principios* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 1993), 9.

Habit comes from having, possessing¹⁰⁰. What type of possession is it? Leonardo Polo states that Aristotle speaks of three different types of possession: corporeal, knowledge and habits. Habits are a special way of having, of possessing, of belonging: "Corporeal possession is neither the unique nor the most intense way of having. There is another way of having which is spiritual: knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is a way of having, a way of owning specifically different from the first one, because in the first, one grasps external things, while the holding of the intellectual operations is purely immanent. It is the acquisition of ideas. Knowing is the act of having: this is how Aristotle sees it. It is a more intense way of having than the corporeal which is only attachment. And above these two ways of possession there is a third one that perfects the spiritual operational principles of man, the intelligence and the will. This third way of having is what Aristotle calls habit. Habitual possession is to have according to virtues"¹⁰¹.

This distinction between the different types of 'having' appears more clearly explained in the following text which adds the consideration of the three different types of habits and their mutual relationships: "The general characteristic of our nature is 'having'. This having is not univocal, there is not only one way of having; because it is evident that is not the same, to have virtues, than the having of operational knowing which is immanent, or the having of things attached to the body. They are not the same, but all of them are types of having. Precisely because of this, the one who may want exclusively to increase his physical possessions would do it at the expense of other capacities or powers: of other types of human having. And something similar would happen if one would want only to improve the acquisition of knowledge, or only virtues despising either increasing knowledge or physical possessions. It is a question of synthetic comprehension. Having should be understood in its triple modality and realizing that each is assisted by the other. This is why all types should be considered. In this way one avoids the derogative appraisal of having; though it is necessary to distinguish between being and having; there is no reason to make them incompatible, as if humans could be

¹⁰⁰ "Habit; conduct", from Latin *habitus* "condition, demeanour, appearance, dress", originally past participle of *habere* "to have, to hold, possess". "Habit". *Online Etymology Dictionary*, by Douglas Harper. Dictionary.com, Accessed Dec 20, 2014. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/habit>.

¹⁰¹ "El poseer corpóreo no es el único modo de poseer ni el más intenso; hay otra dimensión posesiva que es espiritual: es el conocimiento. El conocimiento intelectual también es un modo de poseer, un modo de tener suficientemente distinto del primero, pues el primero es la adscripción de cosas externas, mientras que la manera de poseer de las operaciones intelectuales es justamente inmanente. Es la obtención de ideas. Conocer es el acto de poseerlas: así lo ve Aristóteles. Es un tener mucho más intenso que el tener corpóreo, que simplemente es una adscripción. Y por encima de estos dos modos de tener, está un tercer modo que perfecciona los principios operativos espirituales del hombre, la inteligencia y la voluntad. Y este tercer modo de tener es el que Aristóteles llama hábito. La tenencia habitual es justamente la tenencia según las virtudes (o según vicios)". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 93.

without having”¹⁰². For Leonardo Polo the habits belong properly to the spirit, not to the body, even if in an analogical way, we can call habits the corporeal modifications that regular activities bring to the organs of our sensitive knowledge: “The organic faculties are faculties that are only principle of operations and not subject of habits. In them there is something similar to learning; it is the status of the imagination, memory and cogitative”¹⁰³.

In Aristotelian tradition the habits of knowledge were understood as secondary and dependent from the actual knowledge (which Polo calls operational knowledge and extant knowledge)¹⁰⁴. The habit was as a kind of store fed by the operational knowledge that stored knowledge to be later re-actualised. This consideration of the intellectual habits as a store of past knowledge is what Polo calls ‘circularity’ in the text quoted below. A second point is that Aquinas distinguished innate from acquired habits. Nevertheless Polo says that Aquinas had some ‘fluctuations’ because Aquinas was not consistent in using this distinction. Polo does not point out the discrepancies he found in Aquinas. He leaves it to the readers: “In Aristotelian philosophy the term ‘hexis’ appears frequently, which we translate as habit. The awareness that humans have habitual knowledge brings into question the relationship between the habitual and actual-presenting knowledge. The first aspect that is noticed of this relationship is that habitual knowledge is acquired after actual knowledge. This is why we speak about acquired habits. From this one tends to think that proper knowledge is actual knowledge and that habitual knowledge is just a circular preparation of the actual. This circularity is not purely repetitive but it is done in a way that it contributes to the progress of actual knowledge. Another aspect of the classic understanding of habitual knowledge is that it allows for the distinction between acquired and

¹⁰² “La rúbrica general de nuestra naturaleza es el tener, aunque no se trata de un tener unívoco o de un único modo de tener; porque es evidente que no es lo mismo tener virtudes que tener inmanentemente, según la operación del conocer, o tener en la forma de adscripción de cosas a un cuerpo. No es lo mismo y sin embargo todas son formas de tener. Precisamente por eso, el que pretenda aumentar exclusivamente las tenencias corpóreas, lo haría en detrimento de otras dimensiones o capacidades: de otras maneras de tener que son propias del ser humano. Y algo semejante ocurriría si uno quisiera solamente tener en cuenta el modo de tener cognoscitivo, o bien obtener virtudes despreciando las operaciones del conocimiento, o excluyendo el tener corpóreo. Es cuestión de comprensión sintética. El tener hay que comprenderlo según su triple modalidad y advirtiendo que las formas de tener se apoyan unas en las otras. Por eso hay que considerarlas a todas. Así se evita la valoración peyorativa del tener, aunque es preciso distinguir el ser del tener; no hay razón para oponerlas, como si el hombre pudiera ser sin tener o al revés”. *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰³ “Las que son sólo principio de operaciones, y no sujeto de hábitos, son las facultades orgánicas. En ellas cabe algo de similar al aprendizaje; es el caso de la fantasía, la memoria y la cogitativa”. Polo, L., *El Conocimiento Habitual de los Primeros Principios*, op. cit, 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Presencial” in Spanish has a double meaning: that it is now, and that it appears to you. Leonardo Polo uses it to highlight that the object is something that appears to the intelligence and only while it appears, so it is something static, not dynamic. It is mental fixation which is cotemporal and inseparable from the act of thinking it.

innate habits. This appears in Thomas Aquinas but not without some fluctuations”¹⁰⁵.

Leonardo Polo is aware that the proposal of the habitual knowledge being a type of knowledge higher than the objective knowledge was not going to be understood easily, and therefore probably rejected by traditional thinkers: “Traditional philosophy does not accept the superiority of habitual knowledge over the objective knowledge, but defends that objective knowledge is clearer than the habitual. This is the reason why the abandonment of the mental limit is foreign to traditional philosophy”¹⁰⁶. We must say that to understand this requires a wide open mind, in a double sense; because as Polo says, it is a novelty in history, which means that no philosopher in the roughly two thousand seven hundred years of philosophical history has thought of it, and secondly, because it is a type of knowledge which is very different from the sensitive and intellectual –read objective– types of knowledge. In a hierarchy what is superior cannot be understood from what is inferior, which also means that what is inferior cannot explain what is superior: “Many years ago I made the proposal to find a method to overcome the limits of the mental presence in man. This proposal brings out the fact that human beings have knowledge powers superior to those ‘present-showing’ and these are the habits. Certainly this proposal is not easily acceptable to Thomistic philosophers. Nevertheless, among the many reasons to support it are the following: firstly, that habits cannot be limited to be a mere static repository of knowledge. Secondly that from a long time ago –remember Plato– the knowledge of truth is considered in some way like a transcendental memory. But this transcendentality is not proper to the human mental presence, which in no way, progresses intrinsically by the remembrance of the truth”¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ “En la filosofía aristotélica aparece abundantemente el término héxis, que se traduce por hábito. El reconocimiento de que en el hombre existe un conocimiento habitual plantea la cuestión de su relación con el conocimiento actual-presencial. El aspecto que primero se capta de esta relación es que el conocimiento habitual es de adquisición posterior al actual. Por eso se habla de hábitos adquiridos. De aquí suele seguirse que el conocimiento en sentido propio es el actual, y que el habitual es una consecuencia y, por circularidad, una preparación de aquél. Dicha preparación no es meramente repetitiva, sino que contribuye al progreso del conocimiento actual. Otro aspecto de esta noción clásica es la posible distinción entre hábitos adquiridos y hábitos innatos, que aparece, aunque con algunas vacilaciones, en el pensamiento de Tomás de Aquino”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 48, note 24.

¹⁰⁶ “La filosofía tradicional no admite la superioridad del conocimiento habitual sobre el objetivo, sino que sostiene que el conocimiento objetivo es más claro que el habitual. Por esta razón, el abandono del límite mental es ajeno al planteamiento tradicional”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 127.

¹⁰⁷ “He formulado hace muchos años la propuesta de arbitrar un método para superar la limitación de la presencia mental del hombre. Esta propuesta comporta que el hombre posee dimensiones cognoscitivas superiores a la presentificante, las cuales son los hábitos. Seguramente esta interpretación del conocimiento habitual no es fácilmente aceptable por un tomista. Pero entre los muchos motivos para mantenerla están los dos siguientes. En primer lugar, que los hábitos no pueden limitarse a ser un depósito inerte de conocimientos. En segundo lugar, que ya desde muy antiguo —recuérdese a Platón—, el conocimiento de la verdad es algo así como

Nevertheless, he pins the core of his philosophical development –the abandonment of the mental limit– to the understanding of the supremacy of habitual knowledge over actual knowledge: “Without denying that that this interpretation of the Greek ‘hexis’ (normally translated as ‘habit’) is a valid one, when one abandons the limit the word ‘habit’ achieves a more intense meaning. Without denying that habitual knowledge is acquired, habitual knowledge becomes the only hope to overcome the boundary. Because of this, I defend that this way of knowing is superior to presenting knowledge which is normally called, objective knowledge”¹⁰⁸.

f) *Habits as enlarging the faculties*

What is really interesting in Polo’s conception of habits is that rather than being a store of previous knowledge, which is brought later when actual knowledge needed it, habits actually enlarge the faculties themselves. This will mean that the circularity —that one uses the same faculty in the same way as the first time— is not correct; the faculties themselves are empowered, become more, better faculties. The habit actually is a change of the faculty as faculty. This means that the faculty grows as faculty in the direction of the habit. This has two consequences, the faculty grows which means that it is ‘more faculty’ qualitatively, is more intense. Secondly that the faculty is actualised in a direction that makes it freer, that is, has more capacity than before. Without the habit it cannot act in that direction, either because it does not have the skill, or it does not reach the necessary level of actualization. We can use the example of the roots of a tree. They grow where there is water, so they become more roots, they have more capacity as roots but only in the direction they have grown, so its capacity to feed the tree has grown, it will be able to process more water and to make the tree firmer. The habit is a perfection of the faculty, this is, it is not something additional, an accident added to the faculty but it is an increased capacity of the faculty, a revamped faculty; a more activated faculty. The habit is not ontologically different from the faculty; it is the same but more active faculty, richer as faculty. With an example: if one does not understand what mathematical fractions are, one does not have the freedom to proceed with arithmetic’s. If one does not understand Portuguese one is not free to read Camões, the famous poet, or move around easily in Portugal, Angola or Brazil.

In the following text Leonardo Polo makes the point of the faculty growing as faculty for the intelligence: “The intelligence is able to actualise itself and not only through operations. The draft is already

una memoria trascendental. Pero esa trascendentalidad no es propia de la presencia mental humana, que de ningún modo progresá intrínsecamente en la reminiscencia de la verdad”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 251.

¹⁰⁸ “Sin negar que esta interpretación de la héxis sea aceptable, al abandonar el límite la palabra hábito adquiere un significado más intenso. Sin negar que sea adquirido, en el conocimiento habitual aparece la única esperanza de superar el límite. Por eso sostengo que este modo de conocimiento es superior al conocimiento operativo presencial, que suele llamarse objetivo”. *Ibid.*

in the imagination, though it is a jump down from above. The intelligence does not need the addition of a ‘program’ but of a habit. The habit is a perfection of the faculty *qua* faculty, what can only happen in faculties that are perfect faculties”¹⁰⁹.

g) Type of habits: Innate and acquired habits

There are two types of habits; innate and acquired. Acquired habits can be of the two faculties at the essential level; the intelligence and the will. The habits of the will are called virtues or vices depending on their moral bearing. Those of the intelligence do not have a generic name; they are called just intellectual habits. Nevertheless, traditional philosophy has a name for each of the habits of knowledge as follows: understanding, science, synderesis, habit of the first principles, and wisdom. Leonardo Polo’s novelty consists in that he says that the acquired habits are less actual than innate habits. He is also original in having two different structural places; the place of the acquired habits is the essential level (intelligence and will), while the proper place of innate habits is the personal level which is the personal act of being. Synderesis is a special case as we shall discuss later. “Then I place the method that reaches the person –the “more”– in the habit of wisdom. This is what the classics call the habit of wisdom... But there are more innate habits, the habit of the first principles is also innate and the synderesis has also to be an innate habit, and the synderesis as an innate habit is the ‘I’ (or self)”¹¹⁰.

For Polo the innate habits –ordered from more active to less active– are the habit of wisdom, the habit of the first principles and the habit of synderesis. In order to understand the text quoted below we should remember that “además” (more) refers to the personal level, to the person, the act of being, which we have translated as “more”, “being more” or “person”. The hierarchy means that what is above is more active than what is below but also that it activates what are below, so somehow shares in what is below, and is able to understand what is below it. An example can be to think of a mother, who is more active and understands her child, but the child is not as active and cannot understand the mother: “The superior habit naturally influences the inferior ones. The inferior ones are like a less activated form of the superior. This is arrived at when trying to explain how the self and the

¹⁰⁹ “La inteligencia es capaz de actualizarse a sí misma y no solo en la operación. El esbozo está ya en la imaginación, aunque el salto se da de arriba hacia abajo. A la inteligencia no se le ha de añadir “programa”, sino un hábito. Un hábito es la perfección de una facultad *qua* facultad, lo que sólo ocurre en las facultades que son perfectamente facultades”. Polo, L., “Sobre los Hábitos,” (Unpublished course, Pamplona, 1985), 2.

¹¹⁰ “Entonces el método por el que se alcanza la persona, el además, lo asimilo al hábito de la sabiduría, a lo que llaman los clásicos el hábito de la sabiduría. En cierto modo es una concesión, pero bueno, me parece que no estropea el asunto y me parece que aclara un poco lo que es el hábito de sabiduría. En Tomás de Aquino está muy bien apuntado lo que es el hábito de la sabiduría, pero yo creo que se puede decir algo más de él”. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 181.

knowledge of extramental realities are possible from the ‘more’. The superior habit has somehow to be the condition of possibility of the inferior. Without the superior habit the inferior are not possible and therefore the ‘conversio’ not only belongs to synderesis but also to the habit of the first principles”¹¹¹.

The relationship between the innate and acquired habits is constitutive. The innate habits constitute the acquired habits by activating them (it is actually activating the faculty, but the faculty acts after being modified by the habits, it cannot act otherwise than through the habits, unless a superior act requires it to act against the habit). This means that the ontological character of the acquired habits of the intelligence and the will is purely habitual. Leonardo Polo expresses it as follows: “In this way, the will is superior to an active potency in that it is habitually perfected and inasmuch as the I-want constitutes the voluntary. In what sense are the virtues acts that perfect the potency? The perfecting of the potency is indispensable for the potency to be open to the infinite. Properly speaking, the passive potencies are not infinite, but capable of infinity. Also the intelligence is infinite because it can have habits. There are intellectual and moral habits. The consideration of the will as perfected by habits, what we can call *voluntas ut habitus*, is more than an active potency and furthermore it has freedom. Freedom reaches both the intelligence and the will through the habits. Before acquiring habits there is no freedom in the spiritual potencies: this is a thesis defended by Thomas Aquinas in his *Commentary to the Sentences* and frequently forgotten”¹¹².

¹¹¹ “El hábito superior naturalmente tiene que bajar a los inferiores. Los inferiores son como una bajada suya. Eso es ir dándole vueltas a por qué el yo y el conocimiento extra mental es posible desde el además. El superior de alguna manera tiene que ser condición de posibilidad del inferior. Sin el hábito superior no son posibles los inferiores y por lo tanto la *conversio* no sólo está en la sindéresis sino también en el hábito de los primeros principios. Lo que hay que ver es como el carácter de además se potencializa de alguna manera para que se distinga realmente de la esencia y al mismo tiempo de razón de la esencia, y eso es hacia abajo. También el hábito de los primeros principios es hacia abajo y también el hábito de los primeros principios es inferior a él, tiene que depender de él. Yo creo que ahí la clave es la libertad. El abandono del límite es siempre libre. Sin libertad no se abandona el límite. Por eso esto es una propuesta libre que puede ser aceptada o no. La libertad es trascendentalmente personal; todas las demás dimensiones del abandono del límite dependen de la libertad”. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 100.

¹¹² “Así pues, la voluntad es superior a una potencia activa en cuanto que es habitualmente perfeccionada, y en tanto que el querer yo constituye lo voluntario. ¿En qué sentido las virtudes son actos que perfeccionan la potencia? El perfeccionamiento de la potencia es imprescindible para que la potencia se lance hacia el infinito. Propiamente hablando, las potencias pasivas no son infinitas, sino capaces de infinitud. Asimismo, la inteligencia es infinita porque es susceptible de hábitos. Existen hábitos intelectuales y hábitos morales. La consideración de la voluntad como perfeccionada por los hábitos, a la que cabe llamar *voluntas ut habitus*, es más que una potencia activa y además tiene libertad. La libertad llega tanto a la inteligencia como a la voluntad a través de los hábitos. Antes de los hábitos no hay libertad en las potencias espirituales; ésta es una tesis sostenida por Tomás de Aquino en el *Comentario de las Sentencias*, y con frecuencia olvidada”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 53.

Another important information taken from this text is that the habits open the faculties to the infinite, not because habits are infinite but because they can grow without limit due to the unlimited perfection of their capacity as faculties by the habits, which increase the faculty as faculty, not the content of the faculty, but that habits increase the possibilities of acting. In an example of an artisan and his tools, the habits will be like new tools that give the artisan capacities which were not there before; think, for example, of a doctor and the X-ray or PET machines. Polo is now speaking of the acquired habits of the will and the intelligence, activated by the power of the innate habits which are synderesis and the personal level habits (first principles and wisdom): “It is good to distinguish synderesis, this is, the constitution of the voluntary, from the acquired habits that perfect the potencies. Without this perfectioning action it is not possible to have the transcendental possession of the good. Nevertheless the constitution of the ‘want’ by the synderesis is still higher in that it is the connection between ‘want’ and ‘love’, which is a personal transcendental. The personal love co-exists with the acceptance of the loved one. But one needs a third element which is love. Because the human person is created, his love, is the ‘want’. Nevertheless, even if human love is at the essential level, and because of this, not transcendental, it supports the possession of the good”¹¹³.

Another deep suggestion on the habits by Leonardo Polo is that they are above the four causes or predicamental causality. The relation of the habit with the faculty they belong to and perfect cannot be properly explained by the relationship between a substance and its accidents. As an example Polo uses synderesis and states that is the apex of the human essence, so this habit is the one that is more remote from the four cause’s explanation: “The act and potency when applied to different creatures have to be properly distinguished. The potency proper of the universe is what, following Aristotle, can be called the ‘causal analytics’ –the theory of the tetra-causality-. To distinguish the human potency from the material universe, it is better not to apply the notions of substance and accident. Human potency can be perfected by habits, which, properly speaking, are not accidents, because we can even say that the peak of the human essence is an innate habit, of which we have already spoken in the book *Transcendental Anthropology II*, the synderesis, as it was called from the Medieval times”¹¹⁴.

¹¹³ “Conviene distinguir la sindéresis, es decir, la constitución de lo voluntario, de los hábitos adquiridos que perfeccionan la potencia. Sin dicho perfeccionamiento no es posible la posesión del bien trascendental. Con todo, la constitución del querer por la sindéresis es todavía más alto en tanto que marca la conexión del querer con el amar, que es un trascendental personal. El amar personal co-existe con la aceptación del amante. Pero se precisa un tercer elemento, que es el amor. Por ser creada la persona humana, su amor es el querer. Con todo, aunque el amor del hombre sea esencial, y por esto no trascendental, respalda la posesión del bien”. *Ibid*, 52, note 19.

¹¹⁴ “También se debe distinguir la noción de acto y potencia aplicada a las distintas realidades creadas. La potencia propia del universo es lo que, siguiendo a Aristóteles, se puede llamar “analítica causal” –teoría de la tetracausalidad–. Para distinguir la potencia humana de la potencia del universo material, conviene no

More important though, is his definition of habit as ‘perfection of a non-organic faculty’. This has several consequences for our topic, which should be clarified later. What is the faculty that ‘synderesis’ perfects? What type of perfection does it give? If it is an innate habit, how can it be perfected? Would we need a second habit that adheres in the same faculty to perfect it? Is synderesis already perfect by the fact of being innate or can it be improved? “Similarly, the synderesis is a light that lightens, but not of objects, because it is not a knowledge operation, but an innate habit”¹¹⁵.

h) Ontological reality of habits and faculties

This interpretation of the innate habits as compared to the acquired habits makes us understand better what is the ontological reality of the faculties. In the text quoted above the ‘want’ which is the act of the will as faculty, is constituted by the synderesis actualizing it, as a habit. This constitutive action of the synderesis with regards to the faculty is more clearly expressed in the text below, where the intelligence, as a faculty, is purely an acquired habit: “The ontological statute of the notion of habit is shown at this moment: when does the intelligence become a faculty? When it acquires habits. In the meantime, it is not more than a capacity for operations. The intelligence is in act according to habits (the super program with intrinsic feed-back). It is a potency perfected as potency, and therefore not in an organic way. It is then, when it becomes a reality”¹¹⁶. The following texts are even clearer regarding the ontological status of the intelligence as a faculty which is purely habitual; it is an acquired habit, as the next texts clarify: “*Esse rei non veritas eius causat veritatem intellectus*, but the ‘intellectus’ has its own ‘esse’ and that that ‘esse’ is the habit. The intellectual habit is not an attachment as is the case with the predicamental habit”¹¹⁷.

Leonardo Polo’s most precise and radical statement regarding the ontological status of the habits is that what we call intelligence and will are just habits; “the ‘esse’ of the intelligence is the habit”. What does this mean? It means that what we call faculties are really powers,

aplicar al hombre las nociones de sustancia y accidente. La potencia humana es perfeccionable por hábitos, los cuales propiamente no son accidentes, pues incluso hay que decir que la cumbre de la esencia humana es un hábito innato, del que ya se ha tratado en la Antropología trascendental II, la sindéresis, así llamado desde el Medievo”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 87.

¹¹⁵ “A su vez, la sindéresis es una luz iluminante, pero no de objetos, pues no es una operación cognoscitiva, sino un *hábito innato*”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1998), 25, note 41.

¹¹⁶ “El estatuto ontológico de la noción de hábito se perfila ahí: cuando la inteligencia es una facultad, cuando tiene hábitos. Mientras tanto, no es más que una capacidad respecto de operaciones. Ella misma está en acto según hábitos (el superprograma en feed-back intrínseco). Es una potencia perfeccionada en cuanto que potencia, por tanto, de manera no orgánica. Entonces, es cuando es ya una realidad”. Polo, L., “Sobre los Hábitos”, op. cit., p. 2.

¹¹⁷ “*Esse rei non veritas eius causat veritatem intellectus*, pero es que el *intellectus* tiene su *esse* y ese *esse* es el hábito. El hábito intelectual no es un postizo como lo es el hábito predicamental”. *Ibid.*, 3.

potencies, which are either actualised, or they do not work, they actually do not exist. Faculties actually start when they acquire the first habits; without the habits there are human potencies, powers that are not actualised, powers that need the coordinated activity of the act of being (personal level) with the body (natural level). So the human essence has to be constituted. If there is a physical incapacity these powers cannot be actualised, either totally or partially, which is a matter of experience in discapacitated people. “Spiritual realities in man are habitual; this is the way the soul knows itself. The intelligence ‘esse’ is the habit”¹¹⁸.

Leonardo Polo points to the same when in the text below more radically assimilates the faculties (intelligence and will) with the soul, and says that in this point he agrees with Bonaventure¹¹⁹: “The ‘I’ can be distinguished but not differentiated. The duality of the ‘I’ is not the duality of two different things, but the duality of the ‘distinguere’ which makes the ‘I’ not transcendental, but that on which the potencies of the soul depend –I call them potencies instead of faculties–. In my point of view, the soul is not different from those potencies. Here I side with St. Bonaventure who identifies the soul with the potencies”¹²⁰.

For Polo this ontological status solves the disputed question whether the intelligence has its own memory or whether all memories belong to the sensitive memory: “The intelligence is more than nature thanks to habits, by which the intelligence is capable of freedom. Intelligence with habit is no longer tabula rasa. Because of this the memory is intrinsic: the intelligence is its own memory”¹²¹.

i) Summing up

We come to a provisional conclusion that faculties in reality are the sum of acquired habits in a hierachycal order. Faculties are acquired by the interaction of the personal level with the natural level by

¹¹⁸ “Las realidades espirituales en el hombre son habituales, así lo es el conocimiento del alma. El *esse* del entendimiento es el hábito”. *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁹ It is interesting to know that we found only a brief literal quotation of Bonaventure in the book “El Yo” p. 32, in all the works I consulted, and 4 brief references to him as the one who started giving more importance to the will than to the intellect that later influenced Scotus, Ockham and through them modern philosophy. Cfr. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 142 and 182.

¹²⁰ “El yo admite una distinción, pero no una diferencia. La dualidad del yo no es la dualidad de dos diferentes sino la dualidad del *distinguere* que hace que esa distinción hace que el yo ya no sea trascendental, sino aquello de que depende las potencias del alma (las llamo potencias en vez de facultades). Y a mi modo de ver me parece que el alma no es distinta de esas potencias. Aquí me apunto a San Buenaventura que identifica el alma con las potencias”. Polo, L., *Conversaciones en Torreblanca*, op.cit., 182.

¹²¹ Por el hábito la inteligencia es más que naturaleza, por él la inteligencia es capaz de libertad. Una inteligencia con hábito no es ya s. Por ella la memoria es intrínseca: la inteligencia es su propia memoria.

the activation done by the innate habits¹²². Among the innate habits synderesis is always present and is the habit that activates the faculties.

Synderesis is a transcendental habit, not a predicamental one. It is innate and linked to a potential faculty, not ‘corporeal or active’ and its being consists in its acting. It is neither a substance nor an accident because it is located at the essential level where being is acting.

We have also seen that there are three innate habits which are hierarchically related, being the more active, wisdom, followed by the act of the first principles and lastly by synderesis.

j) Habit as corporeal possession is subordinate

As a corollary to the superiority of personal and knowledge habits Polo explains how the spiritual habits influence the corporeal ones. The intellectual habits are also important because they explain the capacity, exclusive to human beings, of corporeal possessions. This is related to the habit of synderesis because, as we shall see in the anthropological consideration, synderesis is the innate habit which links the person to the corporeal human activities: “Man would not be able to possess materially or will have possessions in a very rudimentary way –as the hominids had– if he did not know through ideas. Thomas Aquinas clearly says: ‘The first requirement for one to do something is knowledge’ –acting is the exercise of activities in order to make the world habitable¹²³; because one cannot do anything blindly. If we did not have ideas, we would not be able to have things. Strictly speaking in order to really posses a suit, a room, we have to know; otherwise it will be an unconscious possession, and it would not be possible to increase or to give it away”¹²⁴. This explains why animals do not own things. One thing is to mark the boundaries of a territory in an instinctive way, and quite another to have things as possessions.

Following this Aristotelian distinction and expanding it in an original way Polo distinguishes the organic faculties, which he calls “complete faculties” or “actual faculties”, from the “potential faculties” which are spiritual. He further explains that the organic faculties

¹²² “Habits are higher than the human presence [objective knowledge] and show their connection with the personal being”. “Los hábitos son más altos que la presencia humana y marcan su conexión con el ser personal”. Polo, L., *La Persona Humana* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2015), 69.

¹²³ Thomas Aquinas, *De Virtutibus Cardinalibus, Disputed Questions on Virtue* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's), q. 1, a. 1, c.

¹²⁴ “El hombre no podría tener corpóreamente o tendría de un modo muy precario – como los homínidos– si no conociera ideas. Tomás de Aquino (Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus cardinalibus*, op.cit., q. 1, a. 1, c). lo dice taxativamente. “Al que actúa –actuar es el ejercicio de actividades en orden a la constitución del mundo habitable– lo primero que hay que pedirle es que sepa”; porque a ciegas no se puede hacer nada. Si no poseyéramos ideas, tampoco podríamos poseer cosas. En rigor, para que la posesión de un traje, o de una habitación, sea una verdadera posesión, hace falta que se conozca; si no, sería una posesión inconsciente, no podría ser incrementada o transmitida”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 106.

cannot have habits in the strict sense of the word: “There are faculties that completely fulfil the notion of faculty: they receive information and they are activated by it... Because of this, complete faculties cannot support habits because they are already actualised. Their organic character makes habits impossible”¹²⁵.

For Polo possessing external things is, properly speaking, a predicamental-categorical habit to distinguish it with the intellectual and moral habits which are transcendental habits. While the categorical habits are accidental, they belong to the substance, the transcendentals, because they belong to the spirit, are above and beyond the categories. The immateriality of trascendental habits sets them above the limitations of matter and of the material possessions: “Habits as predicamentals are attachments, which is a different way of having: because you have a dress, you have a house, you have culture, because of this the dress, the house, culture... are habits as possessions”¹²⁶.

6. Anthropology is above Metaphysics

The distinction and priority of Transcendental Anthropology from Metaphysics is a kind of corollary to Leonardo Polo’s philosophy. It gives a better idea of his method and of the distinction between the personal act of being, the human essence and the act of being of the world: “The monopoly of metaphysics: the study of being is not exclusive to metaphysics –because as it is understood and it should continue being understood– metaphysics studies the being as principle. But we should study a different act of being than being as principle: the person. Being, as being of the human person, is also radical, but –as I suggest– such radicality should not be reduced to the notion of principle”¹²⁷.

That Polo does not despise or neglect metaphysics is clear in this text where he explains how he devotes an entire book to find the basic principles –or axioms– of metaphysics: “I have tried to formulate an axiomatic formulation of metaphysics, in a book named *El Ser, I.* In it, I proposed that metaphysics can be founded on three first principles:

¹²⁵ “Hay facultades que realizan enteramente la noción de facultad: reciben información y a partir de ella pueden pasar al acto... Por eso, las facultades enteras no pueden ser sujetos de hábitos en cuanto que ya están hechas. Su carácter orgánico hace imposible el hábito”. Polo, L., “Sobre los Hábitos”, op. cit., p. 4.

¹²⁶ “El hábito como predicamento es una adscripción, es otro modo de tener porque el vestido se tiene y la casa se tiene y la cultura se tiene, por eso la casa, el vestido, la cultura, la técnica... son hábitos”. *Ibid.* p.4.

¹²⁷ “El monopolio de la metafísica: el estudio del ser no le incumbe sólo a ella, porque –tal como ha sido planteada y ha de seguir siéndolo– estudia el ser como principio. Pero conviene estudiar un acto de ser distinto de ese: la persona. El ser como persona humana es también radical, pero –según propongo– dicha radicalidad no se debe asimilar a la noción de principio”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 98.

the principle of identity, the principle of no-contradiction and the principle of causality in its transcendental meaning”¹²⁸.

But the axioms of Metaphysics are insufficient to understand the radical difference between the being of the things and the being of the persons¹²⁹. Leonardo Polo understands that the object of metaphysics is the ‘being’ and ‘essence’ of the ‘world’ also referred to as ‘extra-metrical being’. This comprises all beings that do not have spirit or, in his terminology, beings that are no-personal: “Today one cannot be realist if anthropology is just a second philosophy; that is, if one does not do transcendental anthropology. Metaphysics studies transcendentals; anthropology should also be a study of transcendentals, but human transcendentals are not metaphysical transcendentals. ‘Human being’ is not the being that metaphysics studies: it is different, it is ‘another’ being. There is a radical difference: it is absolutely necessary to distinguish anthropology from metaphysics and correlatively distinguish the essence of man from the nature of the substances; of what is real in the universe; of what is dealt with in physics”¹³⁰.

The incapacity of modern philosophy to properly penetrate the realm of the person is caused by using classic philosophical concepts of Metaphysics, inherited from the Greek in trying to understand the person. This is what Polo calls the symmetry of modern philosophy. The simmetry between classic philosophy and modern philosophy is a parallelism of the method. They both coincide in the method but one tries to give foundation to the subject from the object (classic philosophy), and in contraposition to it, modern philosophy tries to found the

¹²⁸ “He intentado una formulación axiomática de la metafísica, en un libro que se llama *El ser*, tomo I. En él, simplemente, he propuesto que la temática de la metafísica se puede trasladar a tres axiomas, que son los llamados primeros principios: el principio de identidad, el principio de nocontradicción y el principio de causalidad en sentido trascendental”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, I, op. cit., 25.

¹²⁹ Polo is not alone in saying that the metaphysical classic concepts cannot explain properly the specific human characteristics. Even Ratzinger, whom we have cited as averse to the term synderesis voices it. “Benedict has been trying to do the same thing with regard to the Church and is using this surprising and scandalizing assertion about condoms to get our attention. What is he saying? And what is he not saying? He is saying – I submit – that the human person is not adequately described by a Greek metaphysic, nor is morality adequately established on the metaphysical anthropology of substance, nor is its rational dynamic adequately accounted for by the intellectualist interplay of reason and will within the horizon of that anthropology”. Connor, R.A., “From-Synderesis-To-Anamnesis” in the *Blog The Truth makes you free Post* on December 2, 2010. Accessed 14 February 2015. <http://robtaconnor.blogspot.co.ke/2010/12/from-synderesis-to-anamnesis.html>.

¹³⁰ “Hoy no se puede ser realista si la antropología sólo es una filosofía segunda, es decir, si no se hace una antropología trascendental. La metafísica estudia lo trascendental; la antropología también debe ser un estudio de lo trascendental, pero los trascendentales humanos no son los trascendentales metafísicos. El ser humano no es el ser de que se ocupa la metafísica: es distinto, es ‘otro’ ser. Hay una diferencia muy radical: es imprescindible distinguir la antropología de la metafísica y correlativamente distinguir la esencia del hombre de la naturaleza, de las sustancias, de lo real en el universo, de lo que se ocupa la física”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

object starting from the subject. The first can develop metaphysics, and reach the ontological transcendentals but it is a constraint to do anthropology as a mere branch of metaphysics a type of “special metaphysics” as some authors call them especially after Christian Wolff¹³¹. “Trying to understand man from metaphysics brings the characteristic error of modern philosophy. Modern philosophy discovers human subjectivity, what I prefer to call ‘person’, in a philosophical way for the first time. But it discovers it in a diminished way: and this is why it collapses and brings the precarious situation in which the philosophy is now. It is good to recognise that modern philosophy has a broader thematic; but in order to study it, modern philosophy uses the categories that were already discovered by the Greek”¹³².

This approach compromises one of the most important characteristics of human beings, which is freedom: “Without freedom there is no creation, and without freedom there is no person: the person is the created free being. Subject and freedom are the two great topics of modern philosophy (though there are blackouts and the last one is rather serious). I call this the symmetric metaphysics: to try to expand the themes using the categories made by the Greek; the subject and freedom cannot be understood with those categories! The Greeks discovered that being is the foundation; the modern thinkers think that freedom is the foundation. But because freedom is not the being of the Greeks, it has to be different from the foundation. The symmetric interpretation, speculative, circular, is the mistake of modern philosophy because the new thematic cannot fit within the models taken from the classic philosophy. This mistake has to be rectified”¹³³.

¹³¹ For example, Christian Wolf: “In *Metaphysica primum locum tuetur Ontologia seu philosophia prima, secundum Cosmologia Generalis, tertium Psychologia and ultimum denique Theologia naturalis*”. Wolff, C., *Philosophia Rationalis sive Logica* (Verona: Dionysii Ramanzini, 1735), 30. For example Lois de Poissy: “Special Metaphysics treats of the world, of man, and of God; it is therefore divided into Cosmology, Psychology, and Natural Theology”. Poissy, L., *Christian Philosophy* (New York: 1898). Accessed December 17, 2014. <https://www3.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/cp.htm>.

¹³² “Tratar de entender al hombre desde la metafísica da lugar al error característico de la filosofía moderna. La filosofía moderna detecta por primera vez, filosóficamente, el tema de la subjetividad humana, que prefiero llamar persona. Pero lo detecta de una manera insuficiente: de ahí su desplome y, como consecuencia, la situación un tanto precaria en que hoy se encuentra la filosofía. Conviene reconocer que la intención de la filosofía moderna mira a una amplia temática; pero para lograrla acude a categorías que ya descubrieron los griegos”. Polo, L., in Cruz, J., “Filosofar Hoy. Entrevista con Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 40.

¹³³ “Sin libertad no hay creación, y sin libertad no hay persona: la persona es el ser creado libre. El sujeto y la libertad son los grandes temas de la filosofía moderna (aunque hay apagones, y el último es bastante serio). Su equivocación suelo llamarla la metafísica simétrica: intentar la ampliación temática sirviéndose de las categorías elaboradas por los griegos ¡con las cuales no cabe entender el sujeto y la libertad! Los griegos descubrieron que el ser es el fundamento; los modernos han pretendido que la libertad es el fundamento. Pero como la libertad no es el ser de los griegos, se distingue del fundamento. La interpretación simétrica, especulativa, circular, para la cual el modelo en que se encaja la nueva temática se toma de

For Leonardo Polo, Metaphysics is limited to the knowledge of non-spiritual, non-personal beings, for which the classic model works; while anthropology, more specifically transcendental anthropology, can give the tools to understand the spiritual beings, the persons and their freedom. This is why Polo says that Anthropology has more ‘en-titative weight’ and therefore is more important than metaphysics. According to Polo the way forward requires two steps, the first is to find a method that allows the discovery of the personal act of being and the second, to find new transcendentals that accompany the personal act of being, which he calls “personal transcendentals” or “personal radicals”, which we already discussed in the previous section.

Anthropology studies the being and essence of human beings. The distinction between the act of being and its essence is based on the real distinction between esse and essence of Aquinas and on the Aristotelic distinction between nature and essence. Leonardo Polo contends that not all essences have nature and not all natures have essence. Nature is the principle of operations. There are essences –those merely thought– that are not principle of operations. Only the existing essences are principles of operation i.e. those which are actualized by the act of being. Up to here Polo follows Aquinas. Leonardo Polo’s novelty is that he proposes that the act of being of persons has its own essence which is actualized by the act of being. This means that human beings have a double composition; firstly a hylomorphic composition of matter and form; and over it a composition of ‘morphe-esse’ (form and act of being) that together is the one that actualizes the matter to form the human nature. This means that the human soul is a spiritual form (the essence) actualised (by the act of being or person), and that this soul is the form of the body, the one that actualises the human matter, what Polo calls the human nature.

The act of the extramental being (non free realities or world) is different from the personal act of each person. In the same way as the extramental beings are distinguished by the individuation of their nature, persons are distinguished by their specific act of being, not by their essence which is common to all human beings, nor by the matter.

The act of being, the “existing” is not just conceptual; it is the more real because it is the more active and is the root of the radical individuality, originality, and freedom of each person. “The personal being is the ‘who’ or ‘each who’. On the contrary, human nature is common. All human beings ‘have’ the same nature. Because of this, if the notion of person is applied in a common way it ceases to properly designate the human being. If one understands ‘person’ as a common term, then we are all ‘that thing’ that is called a person: I am a person, you are a person, he is a person; but if person is predicated one loses sight of the ‘who’, this is, the impossibility to reduce it to a “what”

la filosofía clásica, es el fallo de la filosofía moderna. Ese fallo hay que corregirlo”.
Ibid.

that is common (general, universal). The person as ‘each who’ is distinct from every other by his irreducibility. To speak of person as a common name, or in a general sense, is reductive. No one is person of ‘somebody else’, because if it were the case, persons would not co-exist in intimate coherence with their distinction. The personal being is convertible with a plurality of transcendentals, but primarily it means irreducibility, it is a “who”. Who is equivalent to irreducible co-exist? One can speak of ‘who’ in universal terms but it is very incorrect”¹³⁴.

This radical difference between the being of the world and the being of the person requires a new approach which goes beyond metaphysics. As metaphysics is trans-physics, the philosophical study of man has to be trans-metaphysics, and Polo calls it Transcendental Anthropology to distinguish it from all other ways of studying the human being. Here he applies the hierarchical approach, that what is inferior cannot give account of what is superior, while what is superior can explain what is inferior. So to try to explain the spirit by the matter is a type of reductionism¹³⁵.

The need to find a new method that can break the boundaries posed by thought was felt also by Levinas though he did not find an ontological method to achieve it.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ “El ser personal es el ‘quién’ o ‘cada quién’. En cambio, la naturaleza del hombre es, por así decirlo, común. Todos los hombres ‘tenemos’ la misma naturaleza. Por tanto, si la noción de persona se aplica de modo común, no es verdaderamente designativa del ser humano. Si se toma ‘persona’ como un término común, entonces todos somos ‘eso’ que se llama persona: yo soy persona, tú eres persona, él es persona; pero si la persona se predica, se pierde de vista el ‘quién’, es decir, la irreducibilidad a lo común (a lo general o a lo universal). La persona como ‘cada quién’ se distingue de las demás por irreducible. Hablar de persona de modo común, o en sentido general, es una reducción. Nadie es la persona de ‘otro’, porque de ser así las personas no co-existirían: las personas co-existen en íntima coherencia con su distinción. El ser personal humano se convierte con una pluralidad de trascendentales, pero ante todo significa irreducibilidad, es decir, quién. Quién equivale a co-existir irreducible. Se puede hablar de ‘quién’ en universal; pero esa consideración es sumamente incorrecta”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 98.

¹³⁵ The distinction between the person and the levels inferior to it, is also a characteristic of the existentialists and well described by Guardini. Cfr. López Quintás, A., “La Antropología Relacional Dialógica de Romano Guardini”. *Propuestas Antropológicas del Siglo XX, II* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2007), 156. While Guardini’s approach is highly motivating, it seems to need to highlight the ontological depth and, as we shall see, he does not mention synderesis, and does not indicate that it is the source of the ethical desires.

¹³⁶ “A radical and stubborn reflection, on itself a *cogito* that soughts itself and describes itself without being duped by any spontaneity, by any presence made and finished, in a greater distrust to what naturally appears to knowledge, made world and object, but whose objectivity actually clogs and clutters the gaze that fixes it, must always go up from this objectivity towards the horizon of thoughts and intentions that aim at it and that she hides”. “Una reflexión radical, obstinada, sobre sí, un *cogito* que se busca y se describe sin dejarse embauchar por ninguna espontaneidad, por ninguna presencia hecha y acabada, en una desconfianza mayor hacia lo que se impone de modo natural al saber, hecho mundo y objeto, pero cuya objetividad en realidad tapona y estorba la mirada que la fija. Hay siempre que

7. Ways of overcoming the mental boundary

How do we overcome the mental boundary and reach the being? We have seen above that in order to overcome the mental boundary we have to be aware that it exists and then find the borders that mark it, to go beyond them through all possible openings.

Leonardo Polo has shown that the boundary is the ‘object’ and its ‘presence’ or ‘actuality’ which is constitutive of intellectual knowledge. He has also shown that habits are the key to this method. Polo says that there are two ways to overcome the mental boundary; one based on the limitations of the object, the other on the limitations of the operation that presents the object: “For the time being let us point out that the mental boundary can be overcome at least in two ways, because it is detected in what is known and in the operation of knowing”¹³⁷.

The object does not have any other entity than being thought. Take the operation of abstracting, to pass from a sensitive image to a concept. We can distinguish two facets: the activity of abstracting and what is already abstracted. This is the operation and its product which is coexistent with the operation: the activity of thinking and the object thought. It is good to remind the text already quoted. “The knowledge operation commensurates with what is known –which is called the object. If one considers the limitation of the object, by abandoning the mental boundary one discovers the trans-objective topics; and if one considers the limitation of the operation, one reaches the trans-operational topics. The first corresponds to metaphysics, the second to anthropology (transcendental)”¹³⁸. The first method discovers that the object is not the reality as such and the second that the operation or activity of the intelligence as faculty is an operation of somebody who exists beyond that particular operation.

The trans-objective will take us to the essence and being of the world, the extra-mental (non-spiritual realities), the trans-operative to the essence and act of being of the spiritual creatures (human beings and God): “I maintain that the operational knowledge is not knowledge of reality *qua* reality, or better said, of the act *qua* act, and this whether

remontar desde esta objetividad hacia todo el horizonte de los pensamientos y de las intenciones que a ella apuntan y que ella ofusca”. Levinas, E., *Ética e Infinito*, op. cit., 31.

¹³⁷ “De momento, señalemos que el límite mental se abandona al menos de dos modos, puesto que se detecta en lo conocido y en la operación”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 117.

¹³⁸ “Ahora bien, la operación cognoscitiva se describe como commensurada con lo que conoce –a lo que se llama objeto–. Si se atiende a la limitación del objeto, al abandonar el límite mental se advierte la temática trans-objetiva; y si se detecta la limitación de la operación, se alcanza la temática trans-operativa. Lo primero corresponde a la metafísica y lo segundo a la antropología”. *Ibid.*, 32.

it is the act of being of the universe, the act of being of the human being or the act of being God”¹³⁹.

In table 6 we summarise the habits that make possible to know

Act	Method	Science	Reality	Reaching
Object	Trans-Objective	Metaphysics	World	1.Being of the Universe
				2.Essence of the Universe
Operation	Trans-Operational	Anthropology	Humans	3.Personal Existence
				4.Human Essence

Table 6: Acts, Methods, Science, Reality, Reaching

beyond objective knowledge. The first two allow knowing the non-spiritual creatures. What Leonardo Polo calls the habit of the first principles makes it possible to know the existence of the universe while the habit of science shows us the essence of the reality. The other two allow us to know the existence and essence of the spiritual creatures. Wisdom is the habit that gives us the knowledge of the existence of spiritual beings –persons– and synderesis is the habit that gives us the knowledge of the essence of spiritual beings.

The knowledge acquired through habits is not “conceptual” (objective) and is different for each habit. This is why Leonardo Polo gives each a different name that tries to reflect the peculiarity of each type of knowledge. The same happens with the method to make each type of knowledge appear to our consciousness. Our purpose in emphasizing this is to have a framework to understand the habit of synderesis by comparing it with similar trans-objective and trans-operational habits.

	REALITY	HABIT	KNOWING	METHOD	SCIENCE
1	Being of Universe	First Principles	Notices	Exclusion	Metaphysics
2	Essence of Universe	Science	Finds	Tension	Philosophy of Nature
3	Personal Being	Wisdom	Attains	Detachment	Transcendental Anthropology
4	Human Esence	Synderesis	Gets into	Increased Lingering	Anthropology of Human Es-sence

Table 7 Innate Habits and Corresponding Sciences

It is important to note that the habits related to the essence of man are at the essential level and that the habits that relate to the existence are at the personal level. This is because the cognitive methods have to be adequate to the objects they measure, especially when the

¹³⁹ “Sostengo, asimismo, que el conocimiento operativo no es el conocimiento de la realidad *qua* realidad o, mejor, del acto en tanto que acto, y eso tanto si se trata del acto de ser del universo material, del acto de ser humano o del acto de ser divino”. *Ibid.*, 127.

knowledge is connatural. As the themes are different, so are the methods. It is not enough to overcome the mental limit in a general way because the connaturality is different in each case. Leonardo Polo uses different verbs for each method to express the radical difference each has, not only with objective knowledge but also among each other. The first principles are ‘noticed’ (*advertidos*), science is ‘found’ (*encuentra*), wisdom is ‘attained’ (*alcanza*), and synderesis is ‘gets into’ (*se accede*). To be able to reach each knowledge the activity of knowing is also different: the first principles of reality require the knower to ‘exclude’ (*exclusión*); to find science one has to ‘struggle’ (*pugna*); to reach wisdom one has to ‘detach’ (*desaferramiento*) and to achieve the habit of the synderesis one needs an ‘increased lingering’ (*demora creciente*)¹⁴⁰. (Cfr. Table 7)

The first method allows us to reach existentially the existence of the world, which he calls ‘extra-mental’ reality or ‘principal being’: “With the habit of the first principles one ‘notices’ the originated being. The first principles are axioms, when one is aware that they are extra-mental then metaphysics is axiomatically formulated, which is a clear advantage of the realistic philosophy”¹⁴¹.

The second method is the habit of science, which progressively shows us the essence of the world: “The second method of overcoming the mental limit is the finding or encounter with the extra-mental essence. I call this method the explanation of the predicamental order. Finding the extra-mental essence is to explain the physical causes as co-causes. In the explanation of the co-causality the mental presence struggles with the predicamental principles dependant from the first principle, which I call persistence”¹⁴².

The third and fourth method deal with the ‘intimacy’ of the person and of his ‘essence’, respectively: “In accordance with the third dimension of overcoming the mental limit we reach human co-existence. Co-existence is neither ‘noticed’, nor ‘found’ and does not allow one to ‘linger’ on it, but it is ‘reached’. This ‘reaching’ is implicit to the characteristic I call the ‘more’. In other words: reaching the co-existence methodically means the character of ‘more’. Co-existence, the extension of the transcendental order, is the person, the irreducible

¹⁴⁰ Cfr. For a more detailed explanation: Sellés, J. F., “Claves del pensamiento de Leonardo Polo”, in José Luis Caballero (ed.), *Ocho filósofos Españoles Contemporáneos* (Madrid: Diálogo Filosófico, 2008).

¹⁴¹ “Con el hábito de los primeros principios se advierte el ser principal. Como los primeros principios son axiomas, al advertir que son extra-mentales se formula axiomáticamente la metafísica, lo que comporta una clara ventaja para la filosofía realista”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 126.

¹⁴² “La segunda dimensión del abandono del límite mental es el hallazgo o encuentro de la esencia extra-mental. También lo llamo explicitación del orden predicamental. Hallar la esencia extra-mental es explicitar las causas físicas en tanto que concausas. En la explicitación de la concausalidad la presencia mental pugna con los principios predicamentales dependientes del primer principio al que llamo persistencia”. *Ibid.*, 127

intimacy, inasmuch as it is reached: this reaching is inseparable from its being”¹⁴³.

Regarding the fourth way to overcome the mental limit: “On its part, the extra-mental essence is distinct from the physical nature because natural essences consist of the quadruple co-causality and natural beings are triple co-causalities. In this way the extra-mental essence adds to the physical natures the unity of order. This is why the extra-mental essence is described as the perfection of those natures. This perfection is the cosmos, the physical universe. (The physical universe is distinguished from its act of being which is persistence). In contrast, the essence of man is the perfection of his nature; but this perfection is growing —is habitual—and not the final cause”¹⁴⁴.

This is a dense text because it is rich in suggestions that should be understood more easily when dealing with the nature of synderesis. For the time being we only want to place synderesis in the context of the four ways of overcoming the mental limit and the corresponding different types of habitual knowledge each requires.

a) Personal knowledge

We have seen that Leonardo Polo distinguishes two types of human extra-objective knowledge, habitual and personal knowledge. We have seen in detail the epistemological and ontological character of the habitual knowledge; now we have the elements to speak about the highest form of human natural knowledge, which is personal knowledge.

Polo identifies the Aristotelic agent intellect with the act of being: “Habitual knowledge is an illumination from the active intellect – which can be considered as the human *actus essendi*”¹⁴⁵. Personal knowledge is the origin of all human knowledge and by being identified with the *actus essendi*, this consideration should be done on the level of being, more than in the level of knowing: “the active intellect

¹⁴³ “De acuerdo con la tercera dimensión del abandono del límite mental se alcanza la co-existencia humana. La co-existencia humana ni se advierte, ni se halla, ni permite demorarse en ella, sino que se alcanza. A ese alcanzar es inherente lo que llamo carácter de además. Con otras palabras: alcanzar la co-existencia significa metódicamente carácter de además. La co-existencia, la ampliación del orden de los trascendentales, es la persona, la intimidad irreducible en la medida en que se alcanza: ese alcanzar es indisociable de su ser”. *Ibid.*, 128

¹⁴⁴ “Por su parte, la esencia extra-mental se distingue de las naturalezas físicas porque ella es la con-causalidad cuádruple y aquéllas son con-causalidades triples. Así pues, la esencia extra-mental añade a las naturalezas físicas la unidad de orden. Por eso, la esencia extra mental se describe como la perfección de esas naturalezas. Dicha perfección es el universo físico. (Como esencia, el universo físico se distingue de su acto de ser que es la persistencia; un primer principio, como ya se indicó). En cambio, la esencia del hombre es la perfección de su naturaleza; pero esta perfección es creciente –habitual–, y no la causa final”. *Ibid.*, 131

¹⁴⁵ “El conocimiento habitual es una iluminación debida al intelecto agente –el cual es asimilable al *actus essendi* humano”. Polo, L., *Nominalismo, Idealismo y Realismo* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1997), 187.

as previous actualization, but not co-actual, of the human intelligence, should be understood more as an ontological level, rather than as actual activity of the intelligence already accomplished”¹⁴⁶. Sellés puts it more clearly: “Saying it in a different way, what is proper of the human *actus essendi* is to be a knowing being”¹⁴⁷.

The reality of the agent intelligent can be known by one of its habits, the highest of which is the habit of wisdom. Sellés clarifies it as “with the wisdom habit one reaches the active intellect”, which Polo also calls intellect co-actus to highlight that it is part of the personal level which is co-existent, both personal and transcendental¹⁴⁸.

The knowledge the being gives or human-being-knowledge cannot be understood by the operations nor by the habits, nor by the agent-intellect itself because of the inherent duality within man. Complete self-knowledge is a privilege that only God has, being the pure identity: “The *intellectus ut co-actus* is the core of knowing, from which – radically – operations and habits are activated, but by itself, it cannot be any of them, because it is superior to them. That the person be the superior intellectual act does not imply intellectual identity, because the identity is exclusive to God”¹⁴⁹.

It is natural that the topic of personal knowledge be the most difficult to deal with because it is beyond intellectual knowledge. Polo uses, as the classics, the metaphor of light. While the intellectual knowledge can be considered as light that illuminates, the agent intellect is the transparent light, light that is not seen until it illuminates, but the illumination is not itself seen, only what the intellect illuminates can be seen. So it can be illuminating and in spite of its light, neither the illuminated object nor the collection of all illuminated objects, will exhaust its power¹⁵⁰. This is the reason why it cannot be known in full ever. This is the root of the mystery surrounding all and each human being that no science can solve as the French existentialist Gabriel

¹⁴⁶ “El intelecto agente, como actualización antecedente, pero no co-actual, de la inteligencia humana, debe entenderse, en todo caso, como un cierto nivel ontológico y no como actividad intelectual originariamente culminada”. Polo, L., *El Acceso al Ser*, op. cit., 121.

¹⁴⁷ “De otro modo, la índole del *actus essendi* humano es ser cognoscente”. Sellés, J. F., *El Conocer Personal: Estudio del Entendimiento Agente según Leonardo Polo*, (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2003), 15.

¹⁴⁸ “Con el hábito de sabiduría se alcanza el intelecto agente”. *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁹ “El *intellectus ut co-actus* es el núcleo del saber, desde el cual –radicalmente– se ejercen las operaciones y los hábitos; pero él no es estrictamente ninguno de ellos, por ser el acto intelectual superior. Que la persona sea el acto intelectual superior no comporta la identidad intelectual, pues la identidad es exclusiva de Dios”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 224.

¹⁵⁰ “According to this, the illuminating lights and the transparency of the personal intellect can be distinguished, which is the one farthest because it looks for the theme that is beyond its reach”. “Según esto, se distinguen las luces iluminantes y la transparencia del intelecto personal, que es la más separada, puesto que busca el tema que la transciende”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 25.

Marcel stressed in his book *Being and Having* by highlighting the difference between solving problems and approaching mysteries¹⁵¹.

This will suffice for our purpose. Synderesis, which is our topic is one of the person's innate habits, and it is, according to Polo below the habits of wisdom and the habit of the first principles. The consideration of these habits will allow us to refer to the personal radicals that are the source of each of the three habits and compare them with their sources and among themselves.

b) On the dualities and the method

The consideration of dualities is another important point to understand Polo's thought. The dualities can be approached in an ontological or epistemological way which, in Polo terminology, will be to approach it as a theme or as a method. The ontological –thematic– considers that a human being's most defining ontological trait is dual —esse and essence— and in all its aspects, as opposed to God, who is simplicity, and therefore unity. When talking about humans we should not seek unity because that can only be applied to God: "Man's complexity cannot be solved with simple elements but with dualities"¹⁵². Piá summarises the ontological aspect of the ontological duality as follows: "Duality is not an external characteristic of man because it penetrates each of its parts. Duality is found in the deepest core of the human being, this is, in his act of being, that because of this is called co-act or co-existing. Because of being radical it spreads to all the transcendental and essential aspects, therefore it is fitting to define human being as a dual being"¹⁵³.

The internal all penetrating duality is not just at random but it has an internal order, it is a hierarchy: "When discussing knowledge or other aspects of what is immaterial and created, the most proper distinction or more correct is the distinction of degree, hierarchy and not the simple numeric distinction. It is a distinction between what is

¹⁵¹ "Distinguish between the Mysterious and the Problematic. A problem is something met with, which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety. It is as though in this province the distinction between 'in-me' and 'before-me' loses its meaning". Marcel, G., *Being and Having* (Glasgow: The University Press, 1949), 100.

¹⁵² "La complejidad del hombre no se resuelve en elementos simples sino en dualidades". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 165.

¹⁵³ "La dualidad no es una característica extrínseca al hombre, sino que penetra cada una de sus dimensiones. La dualidad se encuentra en lo más profundo del hombre, a saber, en su acto de ser, que por esa razón se define como co-acto de ser o co-existencia. Y al ser la dualidad del hombre radical, se extienda al resto de sus dimensiones trascendentales y esenciales, por tanto, es acertado definir el hombre como ser dual". Piá Tarazona, S., *El Hombre Como Ser Dual: Estudio de las Dualidades Radicales según «La Antropología Trascendental» De Leonardo Polo*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2001), 146.

superior and inferior”¹⁵⁴. This has clear resemblances to the neoplatonic descendant path of participation from the One, the dialectic method of Hegel’s ascent to the Absolute and to the analogical method in the Scholastics, but it is more than a method, it is that reality has an internal link and internal order in which some beings exist in function of others.

The reality is what determines the method. This means that the way of knowing adapts itself to the reality at hand. As Piá explains, “the study of the lower member of a duality can be fully explained by its superior member and in the last extent, each human duality will be explained by the dual character of the human act of being, or what is the same, each human quality is dual –even the essential ones– because they depend on the dual character of the human radicals”¹⁵⁵.

Piá explains in his book *El hombre como ser dual*¹⁵⁶ how an axiomatization of this method allows to treat any aspect of anthropology as a duality. This is relevant to our study because it means that each element can be related to the immediate superior or inferior duality in a kind of chain of relationships. This may be confusing and the logic of it, not very linear, nevertheless it gives a new way to penetrate into a reality which in itself is very relational because it is organic. (Cf. Figure 3)

We insert two quotations of Piá regarding the dualities at the transcendental and essential levels in order to have an overall view on

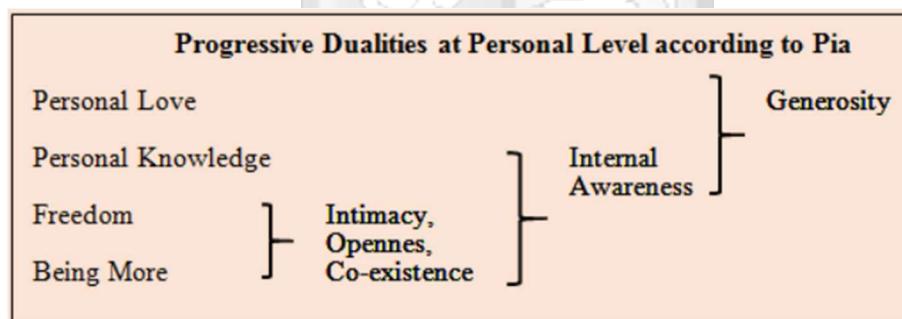


Figure 3: Pia's Progressive Dualities.

the different dualities synderesis will have to relate with.

¹⁵⁴ “Cuando se trata del conocimiento o de otras dimensiones de lo inmaterial creado, la distinción más propia o más correcta es la distinción de grado, jerárquica, y no la simple distinción numérica. Se trata de distinciones entre lo superior y lo inferior”. Polo, L., *Presente y Futuro del Hombre* (Madrid: Rialp, 2012), 142.

¹⁵⁵ “El estudio del miembro inferior de una dualidad es explicado de manera plena desde su miembro superior, y en último extremo, cada dualidad humana deberá tender siempre al carácter dual del acto de ser humano, o lo que es igual, cada dualidad humana es dual -incluidas las esenciales- porque depende en última instancia del carácter dual de los radicales humanos”. Piá Tarazona, S., *El Hombre como Ser Dual*, op.cit., 123.

¹⁵⁶ The book, Piá Tarazona, S., *El Hombre como Ser Dual: Estudio de las Dualidades Radicales según «La Antropología Trascendental» De Leonardo Polo*, op. cit. incorporates discussions with Polo during the years 1992 and 2001 at the University of Navarra as the author says in p. 18, note 7. It is a must-read for those who want to get a quick glimpse of Polo’s duality method.

The dualities at the transcendental, personal level are related as follows: “According to the dualities formed among the different radicals of the human person their distinction, conversion and ordering is established as follows: 1) ‘being more’ is distinguished, converted and ordered to transcendental freedom forming a duality called intimacy, openness and inner co-existence; 2) the ‘interior openness’ is distinguished, converted and ordered to intellection forming a duality called “internal awareness of the innate habit of first principles”. This is the way in which the ‘being more’ and ‘freedom’ are cognitively enhanced in their opening to the cosmic creature; and 3) the ‘innate awareness’ is distinguished, converted and ordered to personal love forming the duality called ‘generosity’. This is the way in which ‘being more’, ‘freedom’ and ‘intellection’ lovingly extend the opening to the cosmic creature”¹⁵⁷.

At the essential level they are classified whether they relate to the world or to other human beings as follows: “Human action becomes dual with ‘work’ and ‘culture’ when relating it with the essence of the world, and because doing is the characteristic of the essential level neither work nor culture are dualities that belong to the act of being. The dualities when considering the relation to other human beings are ‘history’ and ‘society’, which similarly are not transcendental dualities, but dualities between different human essences; this is why these dualities are called inter-essential dualities”¹⁵⁸. (Cfr. Figure 4) We leave it as Piá suggests, though we tend to think the inter-essential du-

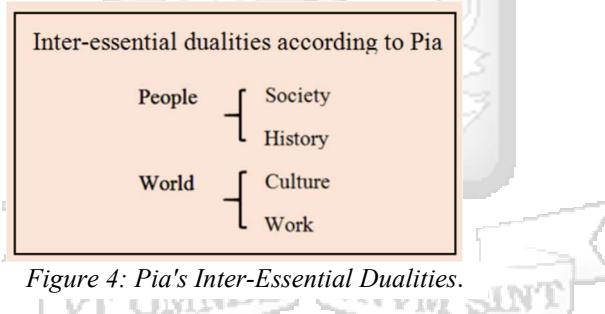


Figure 4: Piá's Inter-Essential Dualities.

alities are better related by Sellés in his *Anthropology for rebels*. Sellés

¹⁵⁷ “Según las dualidades formadas entre los distintos radicales de la persona humana se establece su distinción, conversión y ordenación de la siguiente manera: 1º) el además se distingue, convierte y ordena a la libertad transcendental formando la dualidad denominada intimidad, apertura o co-existencia interior; 2º) la apertura interior se distingue, convierte y ordena a la intelección formando la dualidad llamada advertencia innata del hábito de los primeros principios –ése es el modo en que el además y la libertad se prolongan cognoscitivamente en la apertura hacia la criatura cósmica; y 3º) la advertencia innata se distingue, convierte y ordena al amar personal formando la dualidad denominada generosidad –ése es el modo en el que el además, la libertad y la intelección se prolongan amorosamente en la apertura hacia la criatura cósmica”. *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁵⁸ “En la dualidad del hombre con la esencia cósmica el hacer humano se concreta en trabajo y cultura: por tanto como el hacer equivale a la dimensión característica de la esencia humana, ni el trabajo son dualidades del acto de ser. A su vez, la historia y la sociedad, que son los modos concretos en que el hacer humano se dualiza con el hacer de los demás hombres, tampoco son dualidades transcen- tales, sino dualidades entre diversas esencias humanas; por eso este tipo de dualidades se han denominado dualidades inter-esenciales”. *Ibid.*, 204.

places them in the following order: ethics, society, language and work¹⁵⁹. What is relevant to our topic is that ethics is the first manifestation which then affects all other manifestations of the person, rather than being a consequence of any other manifestation, which means that ethics depends on the personal level more than on the essential level¹⁶⁰.

We shall see how synderesis dualises itself with relation to the transcendental and other essential levels when we deal with it directly in the following sections.

8. Summary of achievements

Have we achieved what we intended in this section? Do we have a rough sketch of Leonardo Polo's philosophical world? We know that his main motive is anthropological, that his starting point is the real distinction between *esse* and *essentia*, that he wants this radical distinction to be applied in full, that he discovered that in six hundred years this was not achieved, and that it was because thinkers were using the metaphysical methods to explain higher, anthropological topics with the metaphysical transcendentals used by the classics to explain the foundation of the world. That a new method to deal with the *esse* was needed. That Polo had his 'eureka moment' in 1950 and it was the "discovery of the mental limit, in a way that it can be overcome". This can be done thanks to the primacy of the habitual knowledge over the objective—operational—knowledge. The mental boundary can be overcome in four different ways, which are consistent with the knowledge habits of science, synderesis, first principles and wisdom, which are the habits that make four different sciences possible: philosophy of nature, metaphysics, essential anthropology and transcendental anthropology. This new method allowed Polo to expand the traditional metaphysical transcendentals with the personal transcendentals (co-existence-with, freedom, personal knowledge and personal love), and to develop them with the complementary 'dualities method'. He then had a new world type of philosophy where the top level is the new Transcendental Anthropology, which deals with the human act of being, and Metaphysics which deals with the act of being of the universe, leaving the treatment of the essence to the traditional sciences of man and of the universe. In this philosophy the structure of man becomes triadic, having three levels, the level of the body, the level of the soul and the level of the act of being, which are referred to as the natural, essential and personal level. How the most active is the

¹⁵⁹ Cfr. Sellés, J.F., *Anthropology for rebels*, op. cit., 147.

¹⁶⁰ Dualities can be considered at different levels; for example, Sellés has just published an article on the internal dualities within ethics. In it he applies this relational method to the personal and essential levels. We shall cite it in the relevant sections. Cfr. Sellés, J. F., "The Anthropological Foundation of Ethics and its Dualities", op. cit.

personal which is the human act of being, which constitutes the essence with its two faculties, and how both of them constitute the soul which informs the natural level¹⁶¹.

With this we have now a good base to position synderesis within this structure, and ways of knowing it.



¹⁶¹ The triadic structure of the person has some previous intuitons in classic thinkers, like Paul who speaks of body, soul, and spirit in *1 Thessalonians* 5:23, Augustin, who speaks of intelligence, will and memory within the soul, and Kant when talking about the three predispositions to good, or human inclinations in Kant, I., *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason and other writings*, op. cit., 50. Guardini's 3 levels of relationship are a phenomenological approach to the same reality (the 4th level is religious, supernatural, not natural) cfr. López Quintás, A., “La Antropología Relacional Dialógica de Romano Guardini”, op. cit. Ricoeur also has also a kind of trilogy in his relational constitution of the human being, the ‘I’ the you and the he. Cfr. Moratalla, T.D., “P. Ricoeur, Una Antropología Hermenéutica”, op. cit., 274.



SISTEMATICAL APPROACH



CHAPTER I

SYNDERESIS, “AN SIT?”

1. Historical perspective

It may be a surprising fact that most thinkers who have dealt with synderesis –including Leonardo Polo– did not find it necessary to give a detailed proof of its existence. It is true that they have differentiated it from the reason and the will. They have also discussed whether it is a faculty or a habit; disputed whether it was innate or not, but they have not seemed to feel the need to directly prove its existence. It may be interesting to find out why this question was not dealt with. It is important to note that we specifically limit ourselves to the concept of ‘synderesis’ not to the reality which lies behind it¹, which was treated indirectly under related topics such as natural law, will to power, or ‘elan vital’ among others. Though we have dealt with the history of synderesis in Chapter IV, here we specifically summarise what was the general trend per period on synderesis’ existence, before dealing directly on the topic itself.

a) *Greco-Roman Philosophy*. In Greek and Roman times the term ‘synderesis’ was not used. Greek and Roman philosophers did not discuss the topic. For them the top of human structure was reason and its habits. Man was a rational creature, a natural being who integrated himself in the order of the cosmos through the *polis*. It was Jerome in the fourth Century the first to use it in the *Commentary to Ezequiel*².

Why, in one thousand years of philosophical activity, no one thought about synderesis? As far as we know, only Albert the Great asked himself this question. That Albert was the only one asking this question is also surprising, taking into account that synderesis was a regular topic of discussion for Christian philosophers during at least 200 years. Albert deals on this topic in the 71st question of his *Summa de Creaturis* right at the end of the first article. He states that classic philosophers considered things just on natural terms while the ‘*theologi*’ –Catholic Medieval authors– considered issues from the perspective of the eternal law, which is based in God’s justice, and that it is done with the ‘superior reason’, which is the one that considers the things related to God, or better, from God’s perspective. It is also

¹ As Levinas says, these are pre-filosofical experiences, which later are philosophically considered, and are the base of its reasonings: “todo pensamiento filosófico reposa sobre unas experiencias pre-filosóficas”. Levinas, E., *Ética e Infinito*, op. cit., 26.

² “It is clear that the Bible must have had some considerable influence on the formulation of the synderesis principle, since it does not seem to occur in the ethical writings of thinkers unfamiliar with the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures”. Bourke, V. J., “The Background of Aquinas’ Synderesis Principle”, op. cit., 352.

interesting to note that while Albert links synderesis with the agent intellect³, he does not link it to the act of being⁴. This observation, that the exclusively natural consideration of the law by the classic philosophers as the reason not to discover synderesis, matches with Polo's observation; he explains that the classic philosophers did not discover the act of being, and therefore not the personal level, due to their lack of the notion of creation, which is a revealed and therefore a Judeo-Christian basic concept.

b) Medieval Philosophy. The medieval Christian philosophers were the only ones who did discuss synderesis and they did not feel they had to prove its existence. The origin of the topic was theological, it was based on the interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Therefore all they needed was the authority of the fathers of the Church and the Bible. Their purpose was more to understand it, than to explain its existence. We present question LXXI 'De Synderesi'⁵ of the *Liber De Creaturis* of Albert the Great as a sample of this. Albert was one of the XIII Century authors closer to reality. His studies in astronomy, biology, alchemy are a good testimony of his closeness to science. The three articles of this question start discussing 'synderesis' definition. There is no previous question about its existence. Albert bases his arguments entirely on the Church Fathers' authority. With his habitual clarity Albert starts defining synderesis attributing it to St. Basil, in spite of Basil not using the actual word. He defines it as "the power of the mind which has within it the seeds of judgment by which we separate evil from good"⁶. In a similar way, he links natural law with synderesis, this time under the authority of S. Agustine, who did not use the term either: "The universal law is written by nature in the natural judgement: and he called natural judgement synderesis"⁷. The third authority he uses is St. Jerome's passage on Ezekiel, which he quotes extensively. It is interesting that he concludes that synderesis is the only of the four faculties Ezekiel mentions, which is spiritual, the other three 'being linked to the body (irascible is linked to the gall, the concupiscible with the liver and reason to the brain, but synderesis is

³ Albertus Magnus, *De bono*, in *Opera Omnia*, 28, op.cit., tr. V, q. 1, a. 1), 265, ll. 58–67.

⁴ Leonardo Polo asserts that the act of being was Albert's discovery which his disciple Aquinas inherited. Cfr. Polo, L., *El Yo*, op. cit., 63.

⁵ "De synderesi. Consequenter etiam quaeritur de synderesi. Primo, Quid sit secundum sui substantiam et diffinitionem? Secundo, Utrum ipsam contingat peccare aliquando, vel numquam. Et tertio, Utrum ipsam contingat extingui?". Albertus Magnus, *Summa de Creaturis*, q. 71, in *Opera Omnia*, op.cit., 590.

⁶ "Definitio synderesis, scilicet quod ipsa est virtus animi habens in se naturaliter sibi insita et inserta semina judicandi, per quam mala segregamus a bonis". Albertus Magnus, *De Homo* q. 71 a 1, in *Opera Omnia*, op.cit., vol. 35 p. 590.

⁷ "Quod ipsa sit virtus animae habetur a beato Augustino (S. Augustinus, Lib. II De Libero arbitrio, cap. 10) qui dicit quod universalia juris scripta sunt naturaliter in naturali judicatorio: appellans naturale judicatorium synderesim". *Ibid.*

above them)⁸. Following Jerome's text he also quotes St. Paul reference to the 'spirit' which he links to synderesis as both being above reason: "synderesis is the *spiritus* that intercedes for us with indescribable cries"⁹. We have seen then that there is no questioning about synderesis' existence and that the discussion is supported mainly by arguments of authority.

c) *Post-medieval philosophy*. Already in the XIII Century the discussion of synderesis followed divergent paths: 1) those who continue the scholastic discussion, mainly Aquinas' commentators, who still use it as it was defined by him, without questioning its existence¹⁰; 2) those who followed the nominalist path of Ockham¹¹, who without denying it had little room for it; 3) those who followed Meister Eckhart's interpretation and used it in a mystical way as a special direct knowledge of God; and finally 4) those who later denied any connection with the philosophy of the past, e.g. Jeremy Bentham. Jeremy Bentham's criticism is still active in present day's culture: "Faculties, powers of the mind, dispositions: all these are unreal; all these are but so many fictitious entities"¹².

After this short review it is time to tackle it directly. Does synderesis exist? How can we prove it?

2. Does synderesis exist?

How can we show that synderesis is not a "fictitious entity"? The fact that most medieval thinkers believed it and that many authors still find it reasonable, only proves that they believed in its existence, but not that it actually existed. They were convinced that the sun moved

⁸ "Tertium est, quod ipsa sola inter quatuor est sine organo per omnem modum, ex eo quod ratio ponitur in arce cerebri, irascibilis vero in felle, concupiscibilis autem in jecore, ista vero extra, hoc est, supra haec". Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis*, q. 71, a. 1, 3, in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., vol., 35, p.591.

⁹ "Synderesis is spiritus qui interpelat pro nobis gemitus inenarrabilibus". Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis*, q. 71, a. 1, 4; *Ibid.*, vol. 35), 591.

¹⁰ As an example synderesis is still being taught at secondary and university levels in Spain and other Hispanic countries. Among the well used university level manuals edition we can quote: Millán-Puelles, A., *Fundamentos de filosofía* (Madrid: Rialp, 1967), 631. "También existe un hábito de los primeros principios prácticos, al que se llama sindéresis. La diferencia entre la ley natural y la sindéresis consiste en que la primera es acto cognoscitivo e imperativo de lo conveniente según nuestra inclinación natural al fin último, mientras que la sindéresis es, como ya se ha dicho, hábito y no acto". *Ibid.*

¹¹ "It is consequently surprising that these topics receive little direct attention from either Duns Scotus or William of Ockham. This two great thinkers' failure to treat conscience and synderesis, however, is an indication that the focus of the discussion of these issues has changed to issues about the virtues". Langston, D. C., *Conscience and other Virtues from Bonaventure to MacIntyre*, op.cit., 54.

¹² Bentham, J., *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, (Edinburgh: Bowring, William Tait, 1838), vol. 8, 196, on <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/bentham-the-works-of-jeremy-bentham-vol-11-memoirs-of-bentham-part-ii-and-analytical-index>.

around the earth but this did not mean that they were right; we no longer trust our direct experience on the sun's movements in spite of seeing the sun go around us each day.

Synderesis' existence is more difficult to prove than the movement of planets, because not astronomical records nor any of our senses, microscope, mechanical artefact, brain scan will ever detect it. We can only prove its existence by finding a number of experiences that cannot be explained in a different and better way.

Synderesis can only be experienced in the intimacy of our conscience. It is good to distinguish direct experiences from their rationalization. One thing is an experience which is just declarative from the objectivation of that particular experience. Another thing is to feel that something is not good and yet another to objectivise it; synderesis for example, can be objectivized as natural law, but synderesis is the instrument that allows us to know natural law in an experiential way¹³.

For most of us the discovery of synderesis could be an experience similar to the character in Molière's *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, Monsieur Jourdain, who discovered he had been talking all his life in 'prose' rather than in verse¹⁴. We may discover that we have 'synderesis' without being aware of its importance. Philosophy helps us to deepen and distinguish better our being, and therefore discover synderesis and be able to spread its knowledge faster. In our time the spread and depth of knowledge is faster because we have easier and better access to more resources, more people than ever are doing research, we have better means of communication, and we have acquired new abilities. This means that we have new ways of knowing which allows us to go deeper on the knowledge inherited from our predecessors.

Coming back to the distinction between direct experiences and their objectivation, we list and later discuss the following facts:

¹³ While it is obvious that the moral experience is internal it is good to quote one of the most outstanding defenders of the singularity of human Sciences against those who reduce science to empirical Sciences; Dilthey: "The interior experience contains in it responsibility, obligation, consciousness of freedom, forgetting-of-onself as a symbol of the ethical, and the sacrifice-for-itself as the most beautiful fruit". Dilthey, W., *El sistema de la ética*, (Buenos Aires: Nova, 1973), 54.

¹⁴ "Good heavens! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing it". "Par ma foi, il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose, sans que j'en susse rien". Molière, J. B., *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, (Paris: Nicolas Sceaux), 2014, Act II, sc. IV, 32.

a) Internal experiences that can lead to the knowledge of synderesis:

We perceive that we are one, that is, that we are the same who understands, decides and feels.

We are not conscious while we sleep, but when we wake up we are the same person.

When we are awake we notice we are awake, not so when we are dreaming.

We notice that we are in control when we are sober, not so when we are intoxicated.

We notice that we are inclined to do what we feel is right and we feel like avoiding what we feel is bad.

We perceive that we are the one who thinks and the one who wants.

We have a permanent impulse to do good; to act in a positive manner and we also have the opposite impulse, to do bad.

The fact that we can correct our behaviour and others' behaviour, as well.

We feel remorse for things we feel we could have done well and did wrong, or did not do them at all.

b) The reasoned, objectivized topics could be as follows:

The existence of natural law.

The universal moral experience.

Parallelism between synderesis and the instinct.

Parallelism between synderesis and the first principles of the intellect.

The link between understanding and willing.

b) Let us analyze each independently.

1) Internal Direct Experiences

1.1) We feel we are one, i.e. that we are the same who understands, decides and feels. There is a unity of perception that is felt as 'mine', as 'what I am'. This is expressed in normal terms as 'me', 'I', 'myself'. There is a unity of perception. This is one of Kant's basics

principles¹⁵. Hume considers it just as a sum of sensations, just “a bundle of perceptions”¹⁶. Is this synderesis? Not for previous thinkers but it is for Leonardo Polo. For him, ‘the spirit is equivalent to the person; the soul, however, is equivalent to the ‘I’, and the ‘I’ is not the same as the person’: “What is traditionally called soul is understood here as human essential manifestation, that encompasses synderesis (I) up to the immaterial powers (intelligence and will)”¹⁷.

1.2) We are not conscious while we sleep, but when we wake up we are conscious and feel we are the same person as before. Polo wrote a short article, “Phenomenology of Awakening”, which was a commentary to Millán-Puelles book *La Estructura de la Subjetividad*. On it he says: “The difference between vigil and sleep is precisely what allows us to discover conscience; to understand it as something different from the subject that constitutes conscience, and that allows to speak of the subject himself as being constituted”¹⁸. The disappearance of our consciousness and its reappearance is an indication that we are more than consciousness. We can distinguish two levels of this awakening, the one which is pure consciousness, this is the fact of knowing ourselves as different from the world and all other persons and secondly the fact of recognizing our accumulated experience as this singular person. One can be seen as the realization of being a person, and the second the realization of our historical baggage. There is continuity in our experience. One can object that those who lose memory lose their sense of identity. While not getting into discussion with psychological and medical facts, Polo distinguishes, as the classics did, sensitive memory from intellectual memory. He considers that sensitive memory is linked to the senses and kept organically, while the intellectual memory, being spiritual, is not. Sensitive, historical memory is fundamental for our sense of growth and of belonging and its absence is a clear sign of mental degeneration. What is not clear is how the spiritual intellectual memory works without the sensitive

¹⁵ “The ‘I think’ must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say theatre representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me”. Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 246. Cf. Pereboom, D., “Kant’s Transcendental Arguments” Edward N. Zalta ed., in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, updated on Fall 2014. Accessed February 10, 2015. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/kant-transcendental>.

¹⁶ “I am of willing to affirm of the rest mankind that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions”. Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 2009), 396.

¹⁷ “El espíritu equivale a la persona; el alma, en cambio, equivale al yo, y el yo no se identifica con la persona”: “Lo que tradicionalmente se llama alma se entiende aquí como la manifestación esencial humana, que va desde la sindéresis (yo) hasta las potencias inmateriales (inteligencia y voluntad)”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental, II* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010), 15. Cf. Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, op.cit. I, q. 78, a. 1, c.

¹⁸ “Es justamente la diferencia entre dormido y despierto lo que permite hablar de conciencia, entendiendo la conciencia como distinta del sujeto constituyente de ella, y permite a su vez también, hablar del carácter constituido del mismo sujeto”. Polo, L., “Fenomenología del Despertar”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 27, (1994), 679.

memory, because our experience is always unified. Those who suffer total loss of sensible memory cannot communicate the difference because they cannot compare the two situations. This topic is beyond the scope of our work; it is a matter of psychological and the medical studies of self-identity, so we leave this task to others more conversant with this line of research.

1.3) When we are awake we notice that we are awake; not so when we are dreaming. There is a sense of reality which comes with the full functioning of our brain when we have full access to the faculties that are linked to the brain, nevertheless there is something common to the alert and semi-alert states of consciousness which is the sense of identity, which is directly related to synderesis: ‘Before fixing the *cogito-sum*, sleep and wakefulness are indiscernible’¹⁹.

1.4) We notice that we are in control when we are sober, not so when we are intoxicated. This point is similar to the previous one. Furthermore, it indicates that we have the feeling of lack of control of our powers, the intelligence, and the will in that situation. We are not able to think as straight as we want; we are not able to do what we want with our body. We feel lack of control of both powers, but we are the same person who before had full control.

1.5) We perceive that we are above our thinking and our wanting. We want to want; we intend to understand. We are the ones who are in control of wanting and thinking. So there is something above wanting and thinking and it cannot be either of them. Wanting and thinking are instruments of something superior who, is ‘me’, ‘I’, ‘myself’.

1.6) We notice that we are inclined to do what we feel is right and we feel like avoiding what we feel is bad. The universal moral experience based most of the discussions about synderesis in the medieval times. It is the feeling that whatever is good or evil is not dependent on our will, nor on our intelligence, but on something superior, something beyond us, and our society. Our society says something is good because they have the same kind of feeling; ‘it should be done because it is good for all’. Leonardo Polo mentions this experience which also Plato and Augustine felt: “Anyway, when you note that acts intrinsically affect man, it is discovered that man is rewarding or punishing himself internally with his moral behaviour. Plato argues that sense of guilt arises from the evil deeds. Hence, according to St. Augustine centuries later, the punishment of a disordered mind is its own disorder. Thus it is obvious, as I say, that man knows himself accountable for his actions, and that he judges them. If external judgments cannot be made by which certain actions

¹⁹ “Antes de la fijación del *cogito-sum*, sueño y vigilia son indiscernibles. Cfr. Descartes, R., *Recherche de la vérité*, 511”. Cited in Polo, L., *Evidencia y Realidad en Descartes*, op. cit., 138.

are attributed to an agent, with the ensuing punishments then there will be an internal trial in which one is the judge of his own behaviour”²⁰.

1.7) It is noticeable as an impulse to do good, to act in a positive manner and the opposite sensation of not having done anything of worth, of omission or failure to act, to contribute. Unless one is sick he feels like acting. We are active by nature; not only active but also innovative. We want to do something new, something different. We want to improve on whatever we find. This is why we are never satisfied; no matter where we reach, we want to go further. No matter how much we have, we want more. What we want is good; it is something that improves our situation, our life, our personality. This impulse, according to Polo, comes from the synderesis: “Sometimes it is said that the principle known as synderesis is ‘do good and avoid evil’. I prefer to express this principle in a simpler way: ‘do good, act’; do as much as you can and improve your performance. Jump into life, contribute, put in your part, do not fall short”²¹.

1.8) The fact that we can correct our behaviour and others’ as well. It is clear that we are able to rectify when we are corrected or that we can help others to be better. Polo gives it as a sign of real friendship. “To correct is to appeal to the friend’s synderesis, the light of which is incompatible with the serious mistake, above all in the realm of willing”²². Correction does not mean necessarily to avoid evil, it can be to choose something better as Augustin indicates, even if he does not link this to synderesis. “For in all these good things, whether those which I have mentioned, or any others that are to be discerned or thought, we could not say that one was better than another, when we judge truly, unless a conception of the good itself had been impressed upon us, such that according to it we might both approve some things as good, and prefer one good to another”²³.

1.9) We have remorse for deeds we realise we could have done well and did wrong or did not do them at all. This experience indicates

²⁰ “De todas maneras, cuando se nota que los actos afectan intrínsecamente al hombre, se descubre a la par que con su actuar moral él se premia o se castiga internamente. Platón sostiene que de los actos malos surge el sentido de la culpa. De donde, según afirma San Agustín siglos más tarde, el castigo de un ánimo desordenado es su propio desorden. De ese modo salta a la vista, como digo, que el hombre se sabe responsable de sus actos, y que los juzga. Si no cabe emitir juicios externos por los que se imputan ciertos actos a un agente, con los consiguientes castigos, tampoco existe un juicio interno en el que uno es el propio juez de su actuar”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2014), 123.

²¹ “A veces se dice que el principio que se conoce por la sindéresis es ‘haz el bien y evita el mal’”. Prefiero formular ese principio simplemente así: ‘haz el bien, actúa’; actúa todo lo que puedas y mejora tu actuación... Lánzate a la vida, aporta, pon de tu parte, no te quedes corto”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op.cit. 161.

²² “La corrección es una apelación a la sindéresis del amigo, cuya luz es incompatible con los errores graves, sobre todo en el orden del querer”. Polo, L., “La Amistad en Aristóteles”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 32, (1999), 485.

²³ Augustin, *De Trinitate*, ed. op. cit., vol. 3, 181.

that we feel bad when we are not up to what we feel we should have done. The feeling depends on the matter and on the person. This applies to our moral feelings of guilt, but also of success when we do achieve our best at any particular moment. This depends mainly of an internal perception, because it happens even when we are alone, and when we know, no one will ever know about what we are thinking or doing. This is objectivized as the moral universal feeling we discuss below. This is well explained by René Simon in his phenomenological analysis of remorse as contrasted with repentance²⁴.

2) The reasoned topics could be as follows

2.1) *The existence of natural law.* The better known objectivation of synderesis, has been the topic of natural law already well developed in classic times by the stoics, Marcus Tullius Cicero being the most outstanding and cited author²⁵. Natural law appeals to something within the nature of man that tells him what is good and what is evil. The link between synderesis and natural law is amply documented in medieval times, and by those scholars who follow them²⁶. According to Ronheimer, “the natural law is, in fact, the intrinsic principle of truth of practical reason and”²⁷; it is “written in the heart of man” not only because it is ‘something known’ but specifically because the very intellectual opening of the human subject to moral good constitutes a ‘law’ for human acts, since this opening takes place in a natural way²⁸.

In our days natural law is seen as the defence from the absolutism of the State and the whimsical desires of tyrants, formulated and defended as human rights²⁹. Leonardo Polo is well aware of this, because after he finished his degree in Law he obtained a grant to study

²⁴ Cfr. Simon, R., *Moral* (Barcelona: Herder, , 1984), 15-29.

²⁵ While Cicero is mainly quoted regarding natural law, the most quoted properly stoic author is Seneca. “The single most important Roman Stoic on conscience is Seneca”. Colish, M., “Synderesis and Conscience: Stoicism and its Medieval Transformations”, in *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University Notre Dame, 2012), 231.

²⁶ Regarding the relationship between the cognitive, and normative aspect of the Natural Law and its relation with synderesis: “Knowledge of the nature of a being and the inclinations of that nature is knowledge of its dynamic (purposeful) aspect. This bears with it a certain axiological message (what helps man achieve a natural end is valuable for man), and it bears a normative aspect (one should act in a specific way to achieve the *optimum potentiae*). Reflections on nature and the natural lead to the question of the function of synderesis in apprehending the natural law”. Stepien, K., “Synderesis and the Natural Law”, *Studia Gilsoniana*, 3 (2014), 391.

²⁷ Rhonheimer, M., “The Cognitive Structure of the Natural Law and the Truth of Subjectivity”, *The Thomist*, 67 (2013), 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹ “De hecho, pueden establecerse los principios legales de toda sociedad por tres diferentes caminos: a) siguiendo las costumbres tradicionales de la tribu o de la comunidad; b) obedeciendo la voluntad arbitraria y *ad hoc* de quienes dirigen el

the philosophical foundations of natural law³⁰. For Polo natural law is not the same as synderesis but one of its activities: “As presiding cognitively human nature, it can be said that synderesis is the source of natural law knowledge. In this sense it can be understood as the attentive surveillance to of reality and the ability to judge”³¹.

2.2) *The universal moral experience.* Related to the natural law as its foundation is the acceptance of common moral basic experiences in the world. They indicate that there is something in the human nature –one’s DNA, as people say these days– that makes us feel in a particular way regarding our moral duties. From the much quoted texts of Antigone³², and Cicero³³, and the *Commentaries* and *Summas* of Medieval Times to all the many defenders of the existence of Natural Law, it is clear that there is some common universal moral experience³⁴. Kant’s practical philosophy is based on this experience as he writes in the first lines of his conclusion to the *Critic of the Practical Reason*: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within”³⁵. Even the empiricists believe in the universality of moral experience. We just point to Hume (their greatest representative): “I am apt to suspect that reason and sentiment concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions. The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters as amiable or odious, praise-worthy or blamable; that which stamps on them the mark of honour or infamy, approbation or censure; that which renders morality an active principle and constitutes virtue

aparato del Estado; o c) utilizando la razón humana para descubrir la ley natural —resumidamente: por conformismo servil a la costumbre, por arbitrio caprichoso o por el uso de la razón humana. Éstas son, en esencia, las únicas vías”. Rothbard, M. N., *La Ética de la Libertad*, (Madrid: Unión Editorial, 1995), 43.

³⁰ “En 1952, terminados los dos años de cursos comunes en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, se presenta la oportunidad de encauzar las consideraciones sobre el carácter existencial del derecho natural con ocasión de una beca de investigación en Roma, concedida por el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, pues en dicha ciudad se acababa de abrir una Delegación (el Istituto Iurídico Spagnolo), cuyo director era entonces el Prof. Alvaro D’Ors”. Franquet, M. J., “La Trayectoria Intellectual de Leonardo Polo”, op. cit., 306.

³¹ “Como preside cognoscitivamente la naturaleza humana, se puede decir que la sindéresis es la fuente del conocimiento de la ley natural. En este sentido se puede entender como vigilancia atenta a la realidad y como capacidad de juzgar”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 123.

³² “The unwritten laws of God that know not change. They are not of to-day nor yesterday. But live for ever, nor can man assign when first they sprang to being”. Sofocles, *Antigone*, (New York: Collier & Sons, 1909). Accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.bartleby.com/8/6/antigone.pdf> Lines 498-501. Lines 498-501

³³ Cfr. text already quoted in Chapter IV, note 66.

³⁴ “Every human being who attains self-awareness and responsibility experiences an interior call to do good. He discovers that he is fundamentally a moral being, capable of perceiving and of expressing the call that, as we have seen, is found within all cultures: “One must do good and avoid evil”. *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2012), #39.

³⁵ Kant, I., *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, (London: Longmans & Co., 1889), 173.

and happiness, and vice our misery: it is probable, I say, that this final sentence depends on some internal sense of feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species. For what else can have an influence of this nature? But in order to pave the way for such a sentiment, and give proper discernment of its object, it is often necessary, we find, that much reasoning should precede, that nice distinctions be made, just conclusions drawn, distant comparisons formed, complicated relations examined, and general facts fixed and ascertained”³⁶.

2.3) Parallelism with common sense. I personally prefer to call common sense the *integrating sense*, which expresses better its function and avoids the popular use of ‘common sense’ which tends to refer either to prudence or synderesis. In the same way that there is a power superior to the external senses that distinguishes their acts, the *integrating sense*, in a way that it knows when each sense is acting and the type of act it gives and then forms a unified internal sensation called perception, there should be a similar power at the superior level, and this could be synderesis that coordinates the will and the intellect.

Polo explains common sense as follows: “Internal senses, of which common sense is the first, are integrating. What does it integrate above all? It has to naturally mean the common sensibles. This looks clear. But this integration of the common sensibles by the common sense presupposes, and this is why it is learning that the common sensibles already are present at the external senses level, and that each of those common sensibles is not yet integrated, because it is felt through the sensible proper to each of the external senses”³⁷. “Because the external senses are not reflexive, and nevertheless their actualization is felt, there should be a new faculty that is called, the common sense”³⁸.

³⁶ Hume, D., *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902), 172. The fact that Hume defended this position is also commented by Erwin: “Hence, on Hume’s account, legitimate moral judgments, like legitimate color judgments, are intersubjective judgments of fact established from a privileged perspective that imposes a particular set of conditions. In the moral case, these conditions involve the activity of particular sentiments engaged from within the ‘general (moral) view’. Again, in much the way color distinctions arguably ultimately rest upon universal or nearly universal color experience (under standard conditions), Hume argues that moral distinctions ultimately rest upon universal or nearly universal moral experience (under standard conditions)”. Erwin, E., *Morality with Humean Foundation* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008), 14.

³⁷ “Los sentidos internos, el primero de todos ellos, que es el sensorio común, es una integración. Pues bien, esta integración, ¿a qué se referirá ante todo? Tendrá que referirse evidentemente a los sensibles comunes. Esto parece claro. Pero esta integración de los sensibles comunes en el sensorio común presupone, y por eso es un aprendizaje, que existen ya los sensibles comunes en el plano de la sensibilidad externa, y que cada uno de estos sensibles comunes no está todavía integrado, puesto que es sentido a través del sensible propio de cada uno de los sentidos”. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Psicología Clásica* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009), 98.

³⁸ “Como los sentidos externos no son reflexivos y, no obstante, se siente su actualización, resulta que ha de existir una nueva facultad a la que se ha llamado sensorio común”. *Ibid.*, 114.

“The function of the common sense is fundamentally integrating; however, this is not a synthesizing function, but discriminatory: the integration is precisely its distinction”³⁹. We could see that at the superior level we may need another integrating faculty that will integrate the will and the intelligence, because they are not reflexive either⁴⁰.

2.4) The link between understanding and willing. Willing and thinking are well integrated, one knows about the other, but it is not proper of the will to know, nor of the intelligence to want, so there should be a power or something that is able to understand both and link them. The integration of the intelligence and the will is very intense. The intellect activity is directed by the will, not as its proper function but in its activation. It is a fact that if we do not want to consider something we have to put an effort to do so. We also have experienced to prevent ourselves from thinking of the matters we do not want to consider. Conversely if the intelligence does not present the will all possible options, the will is blind. If the will does not understand and the mind cannot decide, there should be some way of getting them to work together in a very tight integration. This point is not exactly like the previous one, because although, it reaches a similar conclusion, it is founded on different experiences. The previous one is a parallelism between the two integrating powers; this one is based on the nature of the intellectual and volitive operations. It is interesting to see how this integration is seen as part of the decision process by Aristotle but he does not think of a habit which coordinates both when he says: “Hence choice is either desiderative thought or intellectual desire, and such an origin of action is a man”⁴¹.

2.5) Parallelism with the first principles of the intellect. This is a classical argument used by many medieval authors. If there are first speculative principles for the intellect that are the base of all reasoning there should be some first practical principles as well for the practical intellect, and these first principles are contained in the habit of the synderesis. This is a classic argument which was used for the first time by

³⁹ “Al sensorio común le corresponde una función fundamentalmente integradora, pero esta función que no es sintetizante, sino discriminante: la integración consiste en la distinción”. *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ “The thesis presiding the essential insight thesis is not too complicated: no human act knows itself. Iluminating is always dual, so that self-illumination is impossible. In this sense it has been said that the method and the theme are dual”. “La tesis que preside la exposición de la intelección esencial no es demasiado complicada: ningún acto humano se conoce a sí mismo. La iluminación es siempre dual, de tal modo que es imposible la autoiluminación. En este sentido se ha dicho que el método y el tema son duales”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 22.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1133 b 3, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, op. cit., 87. It is interesting to note that a colleague and good friend of Polo does not mention synderesis in his article when quoting this text. Cfr. Llano, A., “Accidentes Morales”, in *Ética sin Religión?* op.cit., 87.

William of Auxerre in his *Summa Aurea* (c. 1220)⁴² that later became a standard explanation of synderesis⁴³.

c) Summary

In the first section we went through the history of lack of interest of proving the existence of synderesis by those who dealt with the topic. In the second we tried to give some experiences that can help to show its existence and then –more for those acquainted with philosophical topics– some rational proofs based on already established concepts. The proofs are not conclusive for those who only trust their senses, but then they will not be able to understand themselves, nor understand others, nor any proper manifestation of human beings, even if they think they do by reducing the explanations to a lower level of knowledge.

The next step is somehow linked with this one. If synderesis exists, how can we know, or better, discover, its existence? The arguments given above can clarify this a little, but what type of knowledge is this? Is it objective, habitual, mystical? Let us try to clarify this matter.

3. Knowledge of synderesis

One thing is to-know and another to-know-how-we-know that we know. This is clearly stated by Sellés with regards to personal knowledge: “We are persons and we know it, though we have to show philosophically how we know it, i.e. what is the method of knowing that reaches the person as a theme?”⁴⁴. In our case the question can be formulated: what is the method that reaches synderesis as a theme?

⁴² Cfr. Farrell, D., *The Ends of the Moral Virtues and the First Principles of Practical Reason in Thomas Aquinas* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012), 37.

⁴³ “The intelligence can be understood in two ways with reference to the ways the principles are known as Aristotle says that it is proper of the intelligence to immediately receive the propositions and in this acception it is always right. The other way the synderesis is always true regarding the first principles in doing, because in the same way that there are some things immediately known in speculation, there are others that are immediately known in acting in which the natural strength consists”. “Intellectus duabus modis accipitur: quandoque dicitur intellectus cognitionis principiorum in unaquaque facultate, secundum quod dicit Aristoteles, quod intellectus est acceptio immediate propositiones: et secundum hoc intellectus semper est verus in speculativis. Eodem modo synderesis semper est vera quantum ad primam viam in faciendis. quia sicut in speculativis sunt quaedam que per se sunt nota, quae sunt principia speculandi ita in agendis sunt quaedam principia agendi per se nota. in quibus vis nature consistit”. Guillelmus Autissiodorensis, *Summa Aurea*, (Paris: Durand Gerlier, 1501), 118-129.

⁴⁴ “Somos personas y sabemos que lo somos, tenemos que dar razón filosóficamente de cómo lo sabemos, es decir, de cuál es el método cognoscitivo humano que alcanza como tema al ser personal”. Sellés, J. F., “La Amistad y el Saber Personal”, *Sapientia*, vol. 60/ 218 (2005) p. 381.

While we cannot speak on how synderesis is known without knowing properly what synderesis is, which is the topic of the following chapter, we shall try to see how habits are distinguished from their faculties in this section; later, once the nature of synderesis is properly discussed, we can be more precise regarding the type of knowledge that knows it and the type of knowledge it gives, since, like all innate habits, synderesis is actually a type of knowledge.

One of the most frequent topics of discussion regarding synderesis is whether it is a faculty, a habit or an impulse. Albert and Aquinas suggested it was a mixture of both, “*potentia cum habitu*”⁴⁵, power with habit, perhaps to combine the impulse to do good, and its content. The impulse is the actual inclination to do good, the content of the principles that help to discover what is good⁴⁶.

a) *Distinguishing faculties among themselves*

To discuss this, we have firstly to see how to distinguish different faculties. We distinguish them by the different actions a person performs, which are incompatible one from the other. In this way we distinguish the will from the intelligence in that the will takes decisions while the intellect presents many possibilities that may not be acted upon; so acting is different from knowing. Though they need each other, each approaches reality in a different way. The intelligence’s object is intentional in that it refers to the reality outside it while in the activity of the intellect, its product, the object remains in the knower as an alteration, an enrichment of the intelligence⁴⁷. The will’s intentionality is properly intentionality of other being; it tries to reach what is real outside the person. Polo refers usually to this as ‘intentionality of other’, to mean that what it looks for is something different ‘other’ than the person⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ “Licet enim potentia de se non juvet potentiam vel inclinet ad bonum, tamen potentia cum habitu juvat et inclinat”. Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis* q. 72, a. 1, sol., in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., vol. 35, 599.

⁴⁶ Regarding synderesis, Collado seems to share the opinion that Aquinas did not give too much importance to the distinction between habit and faculty. “Thomas Aquinas says that it does not matter to say that the intellect (here he is making a parallel reference to synderesis) be a habit or a power perfected by a habit”. “Tomás de Aquino dice que es indiferente afirmar que el intelecto (en realidad aquí está haciendo tambien un paralelismo con la sindéresis) sea un hábito o bien la potencia perfeccionada por el hábito”. Collado, S., *Noción de Hábito en la Teoría del Conocimiento de Polo* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2000), 63.

⁴⁷ The intentionality of the intellect and its relation with freedom is well explained in Di Blasi, F., “Love, Intellect and Will in Thomas Aquinas”, in *Willing the good* ed. Gabriele De Anna, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012). His explanation could be more complete by including the intention of the will to the good which he does not mention.

⁴⁸ López Quintas based the entire ethics in this capacity of growing and expresses this increased capacity of growing in a general manner rather than referring it to the habits. “Quiero mostrar en este libro las inmensas posibilidades de que disponemos para crecer y alcanzar altas cotas de plenitud y felicidad”. p. xix and “el

b) Distinguishing faculties from their habits

Once the faculties are distinguished by the objects of their specific actions, the second step is to know how to distinguish each faculty from the habits belonging to it. The difficulty consists in that a habit is not something that the faculty has⁴⁹, but a way of acting of the faculty, so the faculty can hardly be distinguished from its act because it is always acting through its habits⁵⁰. We can distinguish the faculty from its habits if the faculty has several habits. We have to see how each faculty acts and then find in their activities what is common to all of them and what is different to distinguish what is specific of each habit and how it modulates the faculty. For example, what is common to all intellectual habits is that they provide abstract knowledge, and that what is common to all habits of the will is the desire to get something specific, to do or accept something.

An objection to seeing habits as modulations of the faculties, increased powers of the faculty to act in a different way, is Polo's insistence in that habits are a way of having. It is clear that the faculty has a new power but it will not be proper to understand this new power as something different from the faculty, as an addition to it. It is more a categorical type, a quality. Having mathematical or linguistic habits are modifications of the intelligence –probably accompanied by some neurological change– so, because the intelligence has new powers, we can say that something has changed, has acquired something that before it did not have. We can also say that it has it as a seed, a potency, which has been activated. I personally prefer to express this change as an activation, an improvement of the intelligence, which is a habit, rather than saying that it 'has' which sounds more as a reification of a spiritual quality, or can easily be confused with the categorical habit, e.g. 'having a dress on', or 'having malaria'. This does not contradict what Polo and previous thinkers say about the habits, but simply tries to make more clear the radical difference between the category of habits –a dress– and the spiritual habits of the intelligence and will –being able to solve equations or being just.

c) Distinguishing habits from acts

Once we have distinguished the faculty from the habits, a third step is to distinguish between the habit and the actions performed.

mismo proceso de crecimiento nos irá descubriendo nuevos y más altos horizontes". López Quintás, A., *La ética o es Transfiguración o no es Nada* (Madrid: BAC, 2014), XX.

⁴⁹ Habit comes from have, *habere*. It could be clearer if they are spelled as "havits" in English so as to show their meaning in a clearer way.

⁵⁰ "The habits of the will are intrinsic perfections following the exercise of their acts; therefore, as acquired perfections, are held by the power in a most intimate way: they are, as faculty's own perfections, their own growth or strengthening". "Los hábitos de la voluntad... son perfecciones intrínsecas que siguen al ejercicio de sus actos; por tanto, como perfecciones adquiridas, son poseídas por la facultad del modo más íntimo: constituyen, como perfecciones suyas, su propio crecimiento o fortalecimiento". Polo, L., *Introducción a la filosofía*, op. cit., 164.

From the outside we see only the actions coming from the decisions of the will, and the objects known by the intelligence. The acting person, the one who takes the decision or comes to know something, not only knows the content of the specific decision taken or knowledge acquired, he also knows that he has done the action (conscience), that the action is good or bad (moral conscience), that it is properly done or not (prudence), that it gives him pleasure or not (moderation) and whether it has been difficult to take or not (fortitude). Saying it in a different way, the object is known by the act and is exhausted by the act; what is specific of the habit is to know that the act has taken place, and how it has taken place. In the will, similarly, I know that I like some particular thing or things (simple desire), that I rank them according to a criteria and choose one in particular (decision) and that I do the necessary to acquire it (active use) which are the habits of the will preceded by habits of the practical reason.

The distinction between the knowledge given by the habit and by the act is easy to distinguish in the case of intellectual knowledge. The objective knowledge belongs to the act, the habit is the knowledge that the act, the activity of the power, that has taken place. This second knowledge cannot be objective, otherwise it will be confused with the object. This means that the habit is different, not only from the faculty but from the object acquired by the intelligence and from the action performed through the will.

Let us try to see it in a different way. How does the intelligence know that it is knowing? At the sensitive level the one that knows that the sight is seeing cannot be the eye, because seeing is not visible; the act of seeing has no colour, nor shape, and it is not outside one's eyes. There is need for a sense which knows that the eye is seeing and similarly that it knows that the other senses are also being impressed simultaneously by the same object, i.e., that knows the acts of all the senses. It should know that they are active, and know what is common to them, and what is different. This is the integrating/coordinating sense, as already mentioned. At the intellectual level, because of its spirituality, many authors have claimed that there is no need for such a distinction because the intelligence, being spiritual, is reflexive: it knows and at the same time knows that it knows. For Polo this is not to understand what knowledge is about. Polo is very clear in affirming that there is no reflexivity at any level of knowledge. In knowledge the object exhausts the capacity of the act⁵¹, so the knowledge of the act

⁵¹ If the object will include the thinking, in such a way that one will think when thinking the object, this is, if what is thought would be the thinking, the pair knowing-known would be a reflexive self-clarification. This never happens: the thinking is never thought as the object". "Si el pensamiento estuviera en el objeto de manera que se pensara cuando se piensa el objeto, esto es, si lo pensado fuese el pensar, el par conocer-conocido sería una auto-aclaración reflexiva. Eso no ocurre nunca: nunca se piensa el pensar como lo pensado.". Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría de Conocimiento, II*, op.cit. p.93. Sellés expresses this as follows: "The habit shows the act of thinking. We think ideas, but to manifest thinking cannot be an act because the act is exhausted in presenting the ideas". "El hábito manifiesta el pensar. Pensamos ideas, pero manifestar el pensar no puede correr a cargo de un acto, porque el acto se agota presentando ideas". Sellés, J. F., *Hábitos*

itself belongs to other types of knowledge, not to objective knowledge, and Polo says the knowledge of the act as act belongs to habitual knowledge. The act of knowing is a reality which is different from the reality known, and the ‘object’ that refers to that external reality. Whenever I know something I know that I know. This knowledge of knowing is common to all my acts of knowledge, but the objects are different each time. The knowledge of ‘the knowing’ is the habit. An interesting issue will be to find out if there is only need for one habit that knows when I know with the intelligence, or whether each type of intellectual knowledge can be just known by one habit, which could be synderesis, a kind of integrating sense at the spiritual level, as the common sense is the integrating sense at the sensitive level. Polo suggests that each different type of intellectual act has a proper habit, and that each habit penetrates more in the initial abstract presented by the lower of the intellectual operations and that, nevertheless, that synderesis knows of all those habits, being above them in the hierarchy of knowledge.

d) What type of knowledge do habits give?

Polo distinguishes three types of intellectual knowledge: objective (which he also calls operational), habitual and personal knowledge. We have already discussed them, but here we shall try to distinguish briefly what type of knowledge they give.

Objective knowledge is the knowledge in act, given by the intelligence; habitual knowledge is knowledge of our actions, of the activity of knowing or willing; and personal knowledge is knowledge of our being, which is neither objective nor habitual but purely actual because it is the act of being⁵².

Leonardo Polo highlights an important characteristic of habitual knowledge, that it is not intentional. Intentionality is a characteristic of the objective knowledge, which is always referential. Habitual

y *Virtud II*, ed. op. cit., 43. Cfr. also: Collado, S., *Noción de Hábito en la Teoría del Conocimiento de Polo*, op. cit.

⁵² “When one deals with knowledge or with other dimensions of what is immaterial and created, the proper distinction or the most correct is the distinction between degrees, hierarchical, and not the simple numeric distinctions. These are distinctions between what is superior and inferior. I insist, therefore, that operational knowledge is inferior knowledge. Above it are other levels of knowledge, other types of acts of knowledge, from which we can highlight two: habitual knowledge –I consider it being knowledge in act, but not actual, superior to the operational knowledge–, and the knowledge as act of being: as ‘*esse hominis*’” “Cuando se trata del conocimiento o de otras dimensiones de lo inmaterial creado, la distinción más propia o más correcta es la distinción de grado, jerárquica, y no la simple distinción numérica. Se trata de distinciones entre lo superior y lo inferior. Pues bien, insisto, el conocimiento operativo es el conocimiento inferior. Por encima de él existen otros niveles o modos de conocer: otros tipos de actos cognoscitivos, de los cuales podemos destacar dos: el conocimiento habitual –considero que es un conocimiento en acto, aunque no actual, superior al conocimiento operativo–, y el conocimiento como acto de ser: como *esse hominis*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 21.

knowledge is not referential; so, what is it? As said before, it is common to understand all knowledge as actual knowledge and regard habitual and personal knowledge as ‘feelings’ because: habits are not intentional; they are not referential; they do not ‘present’ objects: “The habit is the ontological perfection that corresponds to a non-organic faculty. It is the strict noetic reality of a faculty. Consequently habits are not intentional and therefore they are not objective”⁵³.

Polo does not defend that habits are feelings; he wants just to point out is that they are strictly different from objective knowledge and therefore cannot be reduced, identified with this type of knowledge. By saying that it is a “strictly noetic reality” Polo is making an ontological claim, which is that the habit is really part of the faculty, not something added to it, but a change in the faculty, that is what the classics will call a mental distinction based on reality. The reality is the same but it is seen as changed. He calls the type of knowledge the habits give as “manifestative”: “Habitual knowledge is manifestation (manifestative knowledge, not objective knowledge)”⁵⁴.

We shall not enter into the different habits of the intellect and of the will which are already well explained by Polo in his *Curso de teoría del conocimiento* and amply commented by his disciples⁵⁵. We are only interested in the habit of synderesis. We will use the distinction he makes between the method of knowledge and the theme of the habits to show how the habit gives knowledge⁵⁶.

⁵³ “El hábito es la perfección ontológica que corresponde a una facultad no orgánica. Es la realidad estrechamente noética de una facultad. En consecuencia el hábito no es intencional, por consiguiente no es objetivo”. Polo, L., “Sobre los Hábitos”, op. cit., 2.

⁵⁴ “El saber habitual es manifestación (conocimiento manifestativo, no conocimiento objetivo)”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento III*, op. cit., 14. “El conocimiento habitual no guarda commensuración: no es arbitrario, pero tampoco es objetivo. El conocimiento habitual es manifestativo”. *Ibid.*, 24. “Por consiguiente, hay que admitir otro acto de conocer, que he llamado manifestativo de la operación intelectual; ese acto es el hábito”. *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento IV/II* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2004), 156. “Dicha jerarquía sólo es posible si existe el conocimiento habitual adquirido, que es manifestativo de la operación y perfectivo de la potencia intelectual”. *Ibid.*, 157

⁵⁵ In the ample bibliography we can highlight the studies of Juan A. García González, Urbano Ferrer and Juan Fernando Sellés. For more detailed references cf. García González, J. A., *Obra de y sobre Leonardo Polo*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ We have already seen that synderesis has been considered as habitual knowledge in the historical Chapters III and IV. Most authors have seen that habitual knowledge is somehow noticed, but few can explain it and integrate it through synderesis. An example for the need for a better explanation of habitual knowledge can be perceived in MacIntyre: “For that too would be an order whose underlying principle would need to be identified and itself put in question, but a movement towards the preconceptual, the presystematic, and the prediscursive which itself necessarily cannot but be comprehended in terms that are conceptual, systematic, and discursive.” MacIntyre, A. C., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, op. cit., 53.

e) *Are there habits at the sensitive level?*

While personal knowledge is above the knowledge given by synderesis, we have to explicitly distinguish both; personal knowledge being the supreme act of the person, and synderesis which should be a habit below it⁵⁷. Below the knowledge of synderesis and the other two innate acts we have the knowledge of the intellect as faculty, with its corresponding acquired habits, and the sensitive knowledge. Not to confuse each level is a matter of importance so as not to reduce higher realities to lower ones as, for example, the empiricists do.

Knowledge is not a piece-meal collection of knowledge, a king of collection of bits and pieces, as if our knowledge was just a jigsaw puzzle. The contrary is more akin to reality; one distinguishes specific bits of knowledge from a global perspective. In psychology this was highlighted by the Gestalt theory and in philosophy by the personalist theories of Scheler⁵⁸. We have a global picture from which we, later, stopping to think about it, analyse our knowledge searching for the different elements that compose the whole. We have first a global picture that includes all what we have seen, heard, tasted, smelled, felt the heat, humidity, pressure, memory of similar situations, according to what we had in the imagination, and the intention we have to act or not on a particular direction. We go from what is complex to the elements that constitute it but without forgetting that knowledge is a plexus where most things are interrelated, because the way we see and know is influenced by our memories, fantasies, desires and intentions.

To analyze our perceptions we have to stop and look deeply into them. See how can distinguish one sensation from the others, by trying to see which one remains when other sensations disappear. Individualizing external sensations is not very difficult; when we close our eyes, we do not see, when we take something out of our mouth, we stop tasting it, when we close our nose we stop smelling, when we close our ears we stop hearing, when we stop touching something we do not feel the pressure, heat, cold or pain. More difficult to notice is

⁵⁷ Leonardo Polo insists that synderesis is at the esential level, rather than at the personal level, in spite of it being innate. The natural way will be to place it at the personal level as Sellés did in Sellés, J. F., *Hábitos y Virtud II*, op. cit., 49. “The voice that internally speaks of knowledge and willing can be neither of the reason, nor of the will, but has to be superior to both. It has to be at the personal level”. “La voz que interiormente habla del conocer y del querer no puede ser ni de la razón, ni de la voluntad, sino que tiene que ser superior a ambas. Tiene que estar a nivel de la persona”.

⁵⁸ “Aquel acto contiene, pues, siempre percepción externa e interna, conciencia del cuerpo, un amar y odiar, un percibir sentimental y preferir, un querer y un no querer, un juzgar, un recordar, un representar, etc. Todas estas distinciones, por necesarias que sean, sin embargo, reproducen tan sólo —si miramos a la persona— rasgos abstractos del acto concreto de la persona. Así como la persona no se ha de comprender como una mera conexión de sus actos, así tampoco se puede comprender un acto concreto de la persona como la mera suma o estructuración de tales esencias abstractas de actos. Más bien es la persona misma la que, viviendo en cada uno de sus actos, empapa por completo cada uno de ellos con su peculiaridad”. Scheler, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 516.

the sense of equilibrium which is also a sensation, the kinetic sense when we move muscles, or the feelings of tiredness, thirst, sleep, which are more diffuse, but whose origin is mainly organic. Imagination and memory are the easiest internal faculties to distinguish. The integrating sense requires already a fairly developed theory of knowledge, and it is even more complex to isolate the estimative. Both, integrating sense and estimative are normally not distinguished by common people. All these comprise the senses of mammals closer to humans, but in humans, the imagination, memory and estimative sense are deeply influenced by the intellect, making them radically different from the same faculties in animals. Polo does a fairly good analysis of these senses in some of his books⁵⁹.

The distinction between the intelligence and the fantasy's highest levels is more difficult to establish. This difficulty can explain the animism of earlier humans who, unaware of the anthropomorphism tendency we have, attributed feelings and decisions to animals, vegetals, stars and other natural forces⁶⁰. Another hint of this difficulty can be seen in the dispute to establish a net difference between human and animal intelligence. Without getting the actual proofs, explained in the above-quoted Polo's works and others from his disciples⁶¹, we accept that the estimative and imagination are the highest form of sensitive knowledge, while the intelligence and will are superior by being spiritual and that this spirituality, or total immateriality, is the radical difference between humans and animals.

As we already quoted, Polo defends that there are no proper habits in the sensitive faculties because they are linked to organs. The so-called organic faculties do not grow as such⁶². Nevertheless, he acknowledges some type of growing or learning mainly in the memory and imagination. It is something well known that skills can be acquired and that physical activities can even modify the organs; the hand of a pianist do not look like the hands of a boxer or a mason; the eyes of a painter distinguish more colours than of a computer coder; the ears of a musician distinguish many more sounds than a heavy machine operator. Similarly, the memory of an advocate usually is higher than that of a watchman, and the imagination of a novelist than that of a carpenter. Skills are acquired also in animals, but in humans they are much more developed thanks to the power of the intelligence and will, so the habit can be more on the source, the intelligence and will, rather than on the imagination or memory. Similarly, humans can domesticate animals and make them acquire skills they naturally will not have in the

⁵⁹ Cfr. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Psicología Clásica* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009); *Curso de psicología general* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009); *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006).

⁶⁰ This anthropomorphic tendency is still alive as can be seen in the popularity of cartoons, where animals, vegetals, and even toys, share our feelings.

⁶¹ Cfr. Sellés, J. F., *Antropología para Inconformes*, op. cit.; Yepes, R. and Aranguren, J., *Fundamentos de Antropología: un Ideal de la Excelencia Humana*, 6^a ed. (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009).

⁶² Cfr. text already cited in note 103.

will. One just has to go to a circus to see how chimpanzees, dogs, elephants, can do things they do not do in their natural environment.

We can conclude that there are no proper habits at the sensitive level but that some organic changes and skills are acquired by the influence of the intelligence and will in humans and that some training can be done to animals to acquire skills not proper to them in the wild.

f) Relationship of synderesis with the habits and acts of objective knowledge

How is synderesis known? Synderesis is a habit and habits are known, neither objectively nor through images but directly. Habits are felt but this special type of feeling cannot be transferred properly to words, and even if we try, the words are not the feelings. The words make the habit look like an object, when it is neither an object nor an image. They are a kind of happenings which can somehow be sensed but not properly declared. The knowledge of habits has some similitude with the feelings of pain, hunger or warmth but they cannot be easily located to a specific sense, they are diffusive. For example, we know the position and movement of the hands in pitch darkness but we do not see them. Normally we do not reflect how we can do this, what type of knowledge makes this possible we just know it. Later we may discover that we have sensors in the muscles that give us the movement of the muscles and we can establish the relative position of each. Similarly, with habits, we use them but have to stop to think to distinguish how we know them. The habitual knowledge was noted as different from the objective knowledge but assimilated to other types of knowledge, normally to feelings in general or to a more specific rational type of knowledge, such as feelings of beauty, moral feelings (Plato, Hutchenson, F., Butler, J., Shopenhauer, A.), even to simple passions, among them mainly pleasure (Hobbes, T., Locke J., Price, R., Hume, D.⁶³, Baron de Montesquieu, Benthan, J., Stuart Mill, J.)⁶⁴. MacIntyre's words already quoted above can explain this better: "the preconceptual, the pre-systematic, and the prediscursive which itself necessarily cannot but be comprehended in terms that are conceptual, systematic, and discursive"⁶⁵.

Polo compares the difference between habits and feelings in detail by explaining that 'feelings' are a response of the good or bad working of faculties: "Feeling is a passion because it is consequent to the operation of the faculty, and it reports on the status of the faculty regarding the operation"⁶⁶. Though they give some information of

⁶³ "Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of". Hume, D., *A treatise of human nature*, op. cit., 716.

⁶⁴ Cfr. MacIntyre, A. C., *A Short History of Ethics*, op. cit.

⁶⁵ MacIntyre, A. C., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, op. cit., 53.

⁶⁶ "El sentimiento es una pasión en tanto que consecuencia de la operación en la potencia, e informa acerca de la situación de la facultad respecto de la operación. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 276. Also "A feeling is information on whether the object conforms with the faculty". "Un sentimiento es

agreement or disagreement they cannot be considered acts of knowledge because they are not acts, but, so to speak, only by-products. As Polo states, “feelings, somehow resemble knowledge, but improperly because they are not acts. They give indications about the faculty”⁶⁷. Furthermore, the little bit of befitting does not refer to reality but to the working of the operation, though the operation is also some type of reality of the subject who knows: “The feeling is not about the adequacy of what I know with reality, but what I know with the same faculty. Therefore, feelings’ function is to report on capacity”⁶⁸. The little knowledge given by feelings is mainly about themselves, and somehow about the faculties’ functioning. So they depend more on the state of the faculties of the subjects than on reality. The same external reality can give opposite reactions depending on the state of health of the person. We all have experienced that the same greeting to a friend can produce either joy or anger, depending on his situation. Polo explains this as follows: “What type of knowledge does the feeling give? It is mostly about itself though it also is a deliberate allusion to something else. For example, a toothache does only report about itself; although there is a reference to something else. And joy? Joy is within its own joy; the informative nature of joy is the joy itself. The feeling remains in itself, so to speak”⁶⁹.

Habits are special types of feelings, because they are knowledge acts, but not objective⁷⁰. Nevertheless, the difference is subtle and requires diligent contrast. “The feelings that are cognitive acts are the

una información sobre la conveniencia del objeto con la facultad”. *Ibid.*, 272. We tend to agree with Polo rather than with Ricoeur in spite of his fine analysis of sentiments. We agree they are a way of knowing, therefore an affection of conscience, but not that there are intentional in the sense of giving a direct knowledge of reality. Ricoeur does not seem to distinguish the four levels of knowledge: sensitive, objective, habitual and personal. “Sentiments are affections of conscience that give testimony (of what is felt). The sentiment is intentional; has an intentional object: what is felt”. “El sentimiento es un modo de conciencia que sirve de testimonio (de aquello sentido). El sentimiento es intencional; tiene un objeto intencional: lo sentido”. Cited by Sellés, J. F., “Los Sentimientos en Ricoeur”, (unpublished manuscript), 4.

⁶⁷ “Los sentimientos, en cierto modo, se parecen al conocer, pero impropriamente porque no son actos. Son indicaciones acerca de la facultad”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 275.

⁶⁸ “El sentimiento no es una información acerca de la adecuación de lo que conozco con la realidad, sino de lo que conozco con la facultad misma. Por tanto, función del sentimiento es informar acerca de la capacidad”. *Ibid.*, 269.

⁶⁹ “El recurso al sentimiento no es ninguna simpleza, porque en cuanto hay discernimiento, eso que tengo ante mí no soy yo. Solamente si el conocimiento de mí mismo no se separa de mí mismo, no se diferencia de mí, no se desdobra; eso puede ser el conocimiento como no distinto de la existencia. Pero ¿de qué da noticia el sentimiento? También es una alusión intencional a otra cosa, pero sobre todo de sí. Por ejemplo, en el dolor de muelas el dolor no informa más que de sí mismo, aunque haya una alusión a otra cosa. ¿Y la alegría? La alegría está en sus propios entresijos, el carácter informativo de la alegría es la alegría misma. El sentimiento está en sí mismo, por así decirlo. Polo, L., *La Esencia del Hombre*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006), 246.

⁷⁰ “See straight through is peculiar to the habitual experience, neither of the feelings nor of the fundamental question as intended by Heidegger. Bergson’s suggestion:

habits. But the intelligence is the only faculty capable of habits. Habits are something like hyper-feelings”⁷¹.

Among the feelings, Leonardo Polo reserves the term ‘affection’ to the spiritual feelings that innate habits give⁷² and in other texts he suggests the reality they point at: “Affections can be called the spirit’s feelings, they point to what transcends us: wisdom to God; the habit of first principles to being; synderesis, to the goods”⁷³. In the same paragraph he also identifies these affections with what the medieval authors called ‘connatural knowledge’ and that the three innate habits show the spiritual characteristic of looking for ‘more’. This ambition for more is a feeling innate habits give of their limitation which can be described as an ever unfulfilled desire to seek completion. This explains one of the characteristics that distinguish human beings from animals; humans are never satisfied: “It can also be said that the affections of connatural knowledge are also dual. Firstly because they inform of the innate habit, secondly, they reveal the ontological limitation accompanying such habits and, therefore, the honourable step of bringing them to completion”⁷⁴. In some occasions he describes the specific affection of connatural knowledge, as “noticia” not meaning ‘news’ but ‘noticing’: “Another higher form of human knowledge is connatural knowledge, also called notice, which is notably of affective nature”⁷⁵.

‘the highest form of instinct is ilumination’, would be acceptable”. “Ver directamente a través es peculiar de la experiencia habitual y no de los sentimientos ni de la pregunta fundamental como pretende Heidegger. Cabe aceptar la sugerencia de Bergson: la forma superior de instinto es la iluminación habitual”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 80.

⁷¹ “Los sentimientos que son actos cognoscitivos son los hábitos. Pero la inteligencia es la única facultad capaz de hábitos. El hábito es algo así como el hipersentimiento”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 275. Clearly Polo defends the existence of habits in the will and of innate habits but his affirmation that ‘only intelligence has habits’ has to be taken within the context of his lecture, in which he was comparing the intelligence with sensitive knowledge.

⁷² “Spiritual acts, both of intelligence as of the will, are accompanied by *affections*. Acts of sentient life are accompanied by *feelings*. But at present I will not develop this topic; it should be noted that the affections increase with the habits, to which, in a way, are assimilated”. “Los actos espirituales, tanto los de la inteligencia como los de la voluntad, son acompañados por los afectos. Los actos de la vida sensible son acompañados por los sentimientos. Aunque ahora no desarrollaré el tema, conviene indicar que los afectos se incrementan con los hábitos, a los cuales, en cierto modo, se asimilan”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 171.

⁷³ “Los afectos se pueden denominar sentimientos del espíritu, y apuntan a lo que nos trasciende: la sabiduría, a Dios; el hábito de los primeros principios, al ser; la sindéresis, al bien”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2005), 231.

⁷⁴ “Cabe decir también que los afectos en que consiste el conocimiento por connaturalidad son duales. Por una parte, informan de la existencia de los hábitos innatos, y por otra, de la limitación ontológica que acompaña a dichos hábitos y, por lo tanto, del paso honroso de llevarlos a la culminación”. *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “Otra alta forma del conocimiento humano el *conocimiento por connaturalidad o por noticia*, que es señaladamente de índole afectiva”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 250.

In Polo's latest works there is a tendency to reserve the name notice to the affections of the innate habits: "Notices can be considered in the same order of the abandonment of the mental limit. It is also correct to call knowledge by connaturality to the innate habits as affections' knowledge"⁷⁶. This will give room to differentiate the feelings of the innate habits from those of the acquired habits, i.e. the habits of the intellect and of the will⁷⁷.

At this level, the essential level, one has to distinguish the superior habit, synderesis, which is constitutive of the will, and illuminates the imagination to make possible the specific acts of the intelligence⁷⁸, and of the will, which are acquired⁷⁹. So synderesis is a superior habit in that it is innate and that it activates the acquired habits of the intelligence and of the will. "However, if synderesis' theme is the will by a higher reason synderesis must also illuminate the intellectual faculty. To start with, the intellectual power does not know itself, nor its operations –which just know objects–, nor even with the acquired habits – which just manifest the operations. In this regard, synderesis enshrines the impossibility of knowing reflexively"⁸⁰.

g) Relationship of synderesis with the habits and acts of personal knowledge

The distinction between feelings and affections is helpful and we can go further trying to see the particular way synderesis can be known

⁷⁶ "Las noticias pueden ser integradas en la línea del abandono del límite mental. A la captación de los hábitos innatos según la afectividad es también correcto llamarla *connaturalidad*". Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 227.

⁷⁷ It is interesting to note the difference between the detailed and ontological approach of Polo as compared with Ricoeur's approach where the sentiments are somehow just consciousness, and therefore there is no good distinction between sensible knowledge, intellectual, appetitive at the sensible level, affections of the will and of the person, and the distinction between objective, habitual and personal habits. Ricoeur's phenomenological approach may end in a voluntarism based on feelings and a sentimental ethics, mainly subjective. Cfr. for a more detailed assessment: Sellés, J. F., "Los Sentimientos en Ricoeur", op. cit.

⁷⁸ "Moreover, the first intellectual operation is abstraction. The dependence of the intellectual potency to synderesis should be understood as what in traditional philosophy, is called enlightenment of the phantasma, which is prior to the activation of the intellectual operations". "Por otra parte, la primera operación intelectual es la abstracción. La dependencia de la potencia intelectual respecto de la sindéresis ha de entenderse según lo que, en la filosofía tradicional, se llama iluminación de los fantasmas, la cual es previa a la suscitación de las operaciones intelectuales". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 22.

⁷⁹ "Por su parte, la sindéresis es una iluminación superior a la de los hábitos adquiridos y a la iluminación intencional; asimismo, la sindéresis ilumina la verdad de la voluntad". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 148.

⁸⁰ "Ahora bien, si el tema de la sindéresis es la voluntad, por mayores motivos ha de iluminar también la potencia intelectual. Por lo pronto, la potencia intelectual no se conoce a sí misma, ni tampoco con sus operaciones –las cuales simplemente conocen objetos–, ni siquiera con los hábitos adquiridos –los cuales manifiestan las operaciones-. En este sentido, cabe decir que la sindéresis consagra la imposibilidad de conocer reflexivamente". *Ibid.*, 149.

by looking at how the other two innate habits, wisdom and the habits of the first principles, are known. Polo places these two habits at the personal level because they give knowledge of acts of being, as the likeness of being is needed to know other beings as beings⁸¹.

Through wisdom one knows one's intimacy, one's personal act of being⁸². One also feels each of the personal transcendentals in different ways, e.g. the need to socialise, the inherent freedom one has when making decisions, the personal non-transferable knowledge and the irreplaceable personal love, wisdom is a feeling of the most inner spiritual intimacy. No other person has access to it, and one is aware that it cannot be grasped in its entirety ever, neither directly nor using the intelligence or synderesis, because the person is above them in the ontological hierarchy.

The first principles are noticed earlier than wisdom. While wisdom gives knowledge of my existence as a person, this habit gives knowledge of the existence outside myself. One feels the world outside, one is immersed in it, and one feels its resistance, sometimes painfully. It is clear that it exists independently from one's wishes and control. One feels its order, its necessity, its causality, and the need to look for its origin.

How is synderesis noticed as different from wisdom and the first principles? It can be felt as the innate information one has of the things within oneself that one can have control of: thoughts, desires, imagination and some functions of the body. One knows the impulses, passions, virtues, health, strength, capabilities and skills, corporeal feelings, and senses them as belonging to oneself; they are somehow constitutive, and not external. One also notices that some aspects of our body and mind cannot be controlled well by factors that are more external than internal. Synderesis gives a global knowledge of what is at one's disposal within oneself. It does not give notice of what I am as a person –that is, wisdom– and what the world offers –that is the habit of the first principles. This is why Polo calls it the 'I', or the 'self'. The fact that one is still the same person when one loses control because of sleep, drugs or serious illness is the key distinction between the 'I' which is conscious and global, and the person, who 'is', even

⁸¹ While Max Scheler had a clear distinction between objective and knowledge of actions as shown in the following quote, he confuses it with the sentiments claiming that they were a direct intuition of objective values, which make them ideal, and therefore his ethic at the end becomes voluntarist. "Mas si un acto no es nunca objeto, con mayor motivo no lo será la persona que vive en su realización de actos". Scheler, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 517.

⁸² "As I mentioned, the act of being of the person is not capable of symbolizing. The human person can be somehow susceptible to be known by notice, through the habit of wisdom, which is closely linked to the personal level". "Como ya he indicado, el acto de ser de la persona no es susceptible de simbolización. La persona humana es en cierto modo susceptible de conocimiento por noticia, en cuanto que lo es el hábito de sabiduría, que está estrechamente unido a ella". Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 225.

when one is not conscious. One cannot identify the ‘I’ with the person, which is what Descartes did, without serious distortions.

Synderesis is therefore known as the other two innate habits are known, by direct experience: “Notices have a dense emotional content (no sense to talk about deciphering affections, because affections are not decoded, but experienced)”⁸³.

Polo, nevertheless, does not want to fall into ‘sentimentalism’, which is to give inordinate attention to ‘feelings’: “The feeling is an addition, an aesthetic-useful appendage to the act. Therefore, important as it is for man, it is secondary. Accordingly, sentimentalism is an error that can kill the theory of knowledge”⁸⁴. He also refers to the limited knowledge they contribute to any ethical discourse: “Feelings are not an axiological-ethical criteria, but an indication that can be used, but with caution. In addition, higher feelings are the sequel of the highest forms of knowledge. Feelings are not reduced to the level of sensitive knowledge. Nevertheless, it must be excluded that feelings rule objectivity”⁸⁵. And referring more specifically to the affections he indicates that they somehow hide the realities they give notice of, by using a simile with the sense of smell: “One can also say that affections do not manifest the habits, but rather they hide or conceal them –similarly as one who feels a scent does not see what the scent gives notice of”⁸⁶. Due to this he even gives some practical and wise advice on how to use them based on his own experience: “The more one loves acts, the more one become more theoretical and less sentimental: one gives less importance to feelings... Putting time on the introspective analysis of ones’ own sentiments is meaningless. My advice is this: never do it. Being healthy with regards to feelings is to give them the minimum necessary attention (they already take care of being noticed)”⁸⁷.

⁸³ “Las noticias tienen un denso contenido afectivo (no tiene sentido hablar de des- cifrar afectos, pues los afectos no se descifran, sino que se experimentan)”. *Ibid.*, 228.

⁸⁴ “El sentimiento es un añadido, una ampliación estético-útil, del acto. Por eso, por importante que sea para el hombre, es secundario. Por tanto, el sentimentalismo es un error: puede matar la teoría del conocimiento”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, I, op. cit., 277.

⁸⁵ El sentimiento no es un criterio axiológico-ético, sino un indicio que puede usarse, pero con cautela. Además, los sentimientos más altos son los corolarios de las formas de conocimiento más altas. Los sentimientos no se reducen al nivel del conocimiento sensible. Ahora bien, ha de excluirse que los sentimientos rijan la objetividad”. *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸⁶ “Puede decirse también que los afectos no presentan dichos hábitos, sino que más bien los ocultan o encubren –lo mismo que podría decirse que quien siente un aroma no por eso ve aquello de lo que el aroma da noticia–”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 228.

⁸⁷ “Cuanto más se ama el acto, se es más teórico, y menos sentimental: se hace menos caso de los sentimientos. ... Demorarse en el análisis introspectivo de los propios sentimientos no tiene sentido. Mi consejo es éste: no hacerlo nunca. Ser sano respecto de los sentimientos es hacerles caso lo imprescindible (ellos ya se encargan de informar)”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 276.

Because the ‘affections’ and ‘notices’ that habits give are easily confused with ‘feelings’ people may believe that Polo’s Trascendental Anthropology is purely poetical⁸⁸ because the method of overcoming the mental boundary and therefore the most original elements of his philosophical proposal is based on the innate habits ‘affections’. It will be interesting to find a method to show in a clearer way the difference between ‘sentiments’ and ‘affections’ to overcome this perception, but this is beyond our reach for the moment.



⁸⁸ “When one does not understand what Polo tries to convey, his proposals may look inspiring, but more in a poetic or uplifting literature way than coming from philosophical science or philosophical wisdom”. “Cuando no se capta aquello que Polo se esfuerza por transmitir, las formulaciones pueden parecer sugerentes, pero más en la línea de la poesía o de la literatura edificante que en la de la ciencia o el saber filosófico”. Murillo, J. I., “Conocimiento Personal y Conocimiento Racional en la Antropología Trascendental de L. Polo”, op. cit., 71.



CHAPTER II

SYNDERESIS, “QUID EST?”

1. Introduction

We have seen how synderesis was born as the guarantee of a universal code of conduct in the historical section¹. Synderesis was considered the final guarantor of common moral principles. These principles are meant to be universal, unchangeable², indestructible, and are the ultimate appeal when seeking moral guidance. It is, therefore, the source of natural human law, which is the base of all human rights. These norms are universal because the capacity to know them is inborn as part of human nature, and because of this they never fade, and are beyond sensitive tendencies and moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is ultimately based on these principles but the conclusions can be wrong because practical reason can be diverted by the sensitive appetites or by bad intentions. As the first principles of ethical science their task is a foundational one³.

In medieval times there were two versions of the ontological nature of synderesis: an intellectual one whose maximum and most influential representative was Aquinas, for whom synderesis was an intellectual innate habit, and the voluntary represented by Bonaventure for whom conscience is the intellectual side of moral foundations

¹ “Synderesis is ordinarily taken to be the moral conscience, which even today enjoys esteem, although some see it as a simple process of social adaptation. The origin of the concept is very old, and even popular; this is why it has been reflected in many metaphors and poetic comparisons. [...] When the spiritual character of moral conscience is accentuated the term ‘synderesis’ is used. Democritus already used the word ‘syneidesis’ as equivalent to knowing referred to moral content. Aristotle also uses the term”. “Ordinariamente la sindéresis se asimila a la conciencia moral, la cual también hoy goza de estima, aunque algunos la entienden como un simple proceso de adaptación social. El origen de la noción es muy antiguo, e incluso popular; por eso ha quedado plasmada en muchas metáforas y comparaciones poéticas. [...] Cuando se acentúa el carácter espiritual de la conciencia moral se usa el término ‘syndéresis’. Ya Demócrata utilizó la palabra ‘syneidesis’ como equivalente al saber referido a contenidos morales. También Aristóteles usa el término”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 136.

² “Synderesis does not change”. “La sinderesis no es mudable”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 167.

³ “Admitted that we all have ethical awareness and that the direct knowledge of reality helps to shape it (which is a traditional philosophical thesis, which includes the discernment of the first cognitive principles governing human action, often called synderesis)”. “Admitido que todos nosotros tenemos conciencia ética y que el conocimiento directo de la realidad contribuye a formarla (lo cual es una tesis filosófica tradicional, que incluye el discernimiento del primer principio cognitivo que rige la acción humana, que suele llamarse sindéresis)”. *Ibid.* p. 24.

while synderesis is an impulse to do them. Nevertheless, both postures are not extreme because for Albert —as for his disciple Aquinas— synderesis is a power with habit, “For although it does not as power, of itself assist the power or incline to the good, nevertheless, the power together with a habit it both illuminates and impulses”⁴, and for Bonaventure the distinction between faculties, as Polo mentions, is not strict: “Here I take side with St. Bonaventure that identifies the soul with the potencies”⁵, so even if Bonaventure places the intellectual content of morals in conscience and the impulsive one in synderesis both are powers of the same soul.

In some texts Polo seems to be more inclined to follow Bonaventure’s explanation than Aquinas, stressing the impulsive function of synderesis and giving a more conceptual role to conscience. For example: “synderesis says you can get tired, but your duty is to carry on. Morality deals with goods, virtues and norms based on principles”⁶. “Synderesis says that one cannot stop. Then, in each case one has to see what is proper based on the specific circumstances, considering the environment; and then comes judgment: I do or do not do that. So, moral judgment is not the same as moral principles, i.e. moral knowledge has two levels: the knowledge of the principles and knowledge of the concrete from the point of view of what needs to be done. So freedom in synderesis impulses, whereas conscience elucidates and selects: I do this or that”⁷. Or more clearly: “synderesis does not say what you have to do, but that you have to do. Synderesis has the form of an impulse. Being true to yourself is not maintained in the order of one’s own will, is not that, but that you have to give, that is

⁴ “licet enim potentia de se non juvet potentiam vel inclinet ad bonum, tamen potentia cum habitu juvat et inclinat”. Albertus Magnus, *De Creaturis* q. 72, a. 1, sol, in *Opera Omnia*, op. cit., Vol 35, 99.

⁵ “Y a mi modo de ver me parece que el alma no es distinta de esas potencias. Aquí me apunto a San Buenaventura que identifica el alma con las potencias”. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 182.

⁶ Polo’s visión of Ethics is based on the three elements, goods, virtues and norms. Any ethics that highlights an element neglecting other is a faulty ethics. This matches with the three questions Audi says any normative ethics should answer; character (virtues in Polo), what to do (norms in Polo) and values (goods in Polo). “Normative ethics –the kind I mainly want to discuss– has traditionally considered chiefly three related questions. First, the character question: what is a morally good person? More specifically, what character traits are moral virtues? Second, the conduct question: What ought we to do [...]? Third, the value question: What things in life are good as ends”. Audi, R., *Moral Value and Human Diversity*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

⁷ “Pues bien, la sindéresis dice: te puedes cansar, pero tu deber es seguir. La moral se ocupa de bienes, de virtudes y de normas, desde principios. La sindéresis señala que no se puede uno parar. Luego, en cada caso uno tiene que ver qué hace situado en la realidad concreta, atendiendo al entorno; y entonces viene el juicio: hago o no hago tal cosa. Así pues, no es lo mismo el juicio moral que los principios morales, es decir, el conocimiento moral tiene dos niveles: el conocimiento de los principios y el conocimiento de lo concreto desde el punto de vista de lo que hay que hacer decidiendo. Por eso, la libertad en la sindéresis impulsa y en la conciencia dilucida y elige: hago esto o lo otro”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 163.

synderesis”⁸. And finally: “ahead of norms men have moral principles that in fact they are reduced to this: Want! Do! This is known by synderesis”⁹.

Nevertheless, other texts give the impression that the content is more important, or as important, as the impulse, as in the previously quoted passage: “By presiding cognitively the human nature, it can be said that synderesis is the source of knowledge of natural law. In this sense we can understand it as attentive surveillance of reality and as ability to judge. Also, it can be said to be equivalent to the habit of the first theoretical principles with regards to morals”¹⁰.

This ambiguity, both in the classics and in Leonardo Polo, has to do with the constitution of this particular habit which somehow integrates both the intelligence and the will. Aquinas is clear in this interdependence¹¹. Polo in his latest works –*Antropología trascendental* and *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*– tries to solve this oscillation by placing the root of both faculties within synderesis as the unifying factor. Doing this allows him also to identify synderesis with the ‘I’, which takes the place, in a way, of the ‘subject’ as used in modern philosophy. Polo’s progress in this topic is pointed out by one of his closest assistants: “at this time Polo did not distinguish between the appropriate method to know the personal level and the ‘I’. Later,

⁸ Leonardo Polo gave two conferences on the same topic in 1994 which were transcribed. Then they were collated and published as “Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana”, *Anuario Filosófico*, 40/3 (2007) 549-570. We had access to the original transcription of the one he gave in Sevilla in 1994 and because it keeps the original verbal style of Polo and very relevant texts on our topic I translated it and include it as Appendix 1. I will refer to it as *Polo, Sevilla, 1994*, and the paragraph number.

“La sindéresis no dice lo que uno tiene que hacer, sino que uno tiene que hacer. La sindéresis tiene un carácter de impulso. Ser fiel a uno mismo no es mantenerse en el orden de la propia voluntad, no es eso, sino da de ti, eso es la sindéresis”. *Polo, Sevilla, 1994, Annex 1*.

⁹ “Antes que normas el hombre tiene principios morales que en definitiva se reducen a esto: quiere, haz. Esto es conocido por sindéresis”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 162.

¹⁰ “Como preside cognoscitivamente la naturaleza humana, se puede decir que la sindéresis es la fuente del conocimiento de la *ley natural*. En este sentido se puede entender como vigilancia atenta a la realidad y como capacidad de juzgar. Asimismo, se ha de decir que es el equivalente al hábito de los primeros principios teóricos en el orden moral. Al apuntar a Dios como último fin, la sindéresis es acompañada por la alegría, afecto positivo que alcanza en ella gran intensidad”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 137.

¹¹ “Ad cuius evidentiam, considerandum est quod quia actus voluntatis et rationis supra se invicem possunt ferri, prout scilicet ratio ratiocinatur de volendo et voluntas vult ratiocinari contingit actum voluntatis praeveniri ab actu rationis, et e converso. Et quia virtus prioris actus remanet in actu sequenti, contingit quandoque quod est aliquis actus voluntatis, secundum quod manet virtute in ipso aliquid de actu rationis, ut dictum est de usu et de electione; et e converso aliquis est actus rationis, secundum quod virtute manet in ipso aliquid de actu voluntatis”. The “acts of the will and acts of reason can be directed toward one another—for reason reasons about willing and the will wills to reason—it is possible for an act of the will to be preceded by an act of reason, and vice versa”. Thomas Aquinas., *Summa Theologiae*, op.cit. I-II, q.1, a. 7, co.

in *Antropología trascendental*, he says that the knowledge of the personal act of being corresponds to wisdom, while ‘I’ is known by synderesis”¹².

2. Synderesis as link between the personal level and the natural level

The brief description of the three levels of the human person’s structure —natural, essential and personal levels— was a necessary introduction to explain how for Polo synderesis is the unique link between the personal level —pure spirit— and the other levels of the person’s structure. Polo clearly distinguishes the ‘I’ from the personal level. “The personal act of being, really distinguishes itself from the ‘I’”¹³. This means that it is not just a distinction of reason or as it is said in sociology, a ‘construct’.

As the connection between the powers at natural level and those at the essential level —intelligence and will— is done through the internal senses; the imagination is the normal way to reach the intelligence while the estimative is the one relating to the will, the connection between the essential level and the personal level is done through this unifying link that is the innate habit of synderesis. Synderesis is therefore the link between the essential level and the personal act of being with its double function of ‘I-see’ and ‘I-want’. This is the bottom-up approach which is to start from the less perfect to the more perfect. If we follow the opposite approach, top-down, which is the order of perfection, of activity, we should start from the top, where the one that commands and rules is the act of being, the personal level, and then its activity cascades down to the essential level and from it to the natural level. The personal level is the one that, through synderesis, constitutes the intelligence and the will in their acts and consequently in their habits, and through them directs the natural level activities which are under the will’s command.

The way down from the act of being to the essence has different lines according to the specific personal transcendentals considered. Polo uses a different term for each of these lines which is good to take into account to understand his proposal in a deeper way, especially regarding synderesis. While the essence depends on the personal transcendentals, the term ‘manifesting’ indicates its dependence on the co-existence, and is equivalent to ‘lighting’, that express the essence’s dependence on the personal intellect; ‘to contribute’ points to its dependence regarding the personal love and donating acceptance; and ‘to

¹² In a conversation with Juan Fernando Sellés in Pamplona on 21st August 2015 he mentioned that Leonardo Polo did not have the method to distinguish between the personal level and the ‘I’. It is only *Antropología trascendental* when he starts distinguishing wisdom, that is the knowledge of the personal level, from synderesis as the knowledge of the ‘I’.

¹³ “El acto de ser personal se distingue realmente del yo”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 59.

dispose' a word that expresses the extension of transcendental freedom to the essence"¹⁴. Placing this on a chart can simplify its understanding and it will look as shown in table 8.

Personal transcendentals	Acts on the Essence by
Co-existence	Manifesting
Transcendental freedom	Disposing
Personal intellect	Lighting
Personal love	Contributing

Table 8: Personal Transcendentals

At the personal level there are two habits that activate synderesis, because the action of the spirit cascades through habits. These habits are also innate. These are the habit of wisdom and the habit of the first principles¹⁵.

As discussed before, innate habits are different from acquired habits. The faculties always act in dependence on the innate habits, so it is difficult to notice these habits because they can easily be confused with the acquired habits of these faculties. The acquired habits are developed by the natural exercise of the potencies and growth from childhood and, therefore, can be easily distinguished. That a child learns to speak, write, etc. is observable because they are new acquisitions. One needs to pause and make a conscious effort to distinguish the innate habits. A way to discover innate habits is to look for those that are always present –those that accompany all our activities¹⁶– by contrasting them with those exercised occasionally. The permanent ones are the innate. The second way that could be used to distinguish them is by their objects. A third way could be by the faculties they perfect because only the acquired habits modify faculties.

The habit of wisdom is the one that gives notice of the relationship with personal intimacies: firstly, with our own intimacy that is the

¹⁴ “En tanto que la esencia depende de los trascendentales personales, la palabra *manifestar* indica su depender de la co-existencia, y equivale a iluminar, que significa su depender del intelecto personal; a aportar, que señala la dependencia respecto del amar y del aceptar donal; y a disponer, palabra que expresa la extensión a la esencia de la libertad trascendental”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 11.

¹⁵ “Tradition accepts three innate habits: the habit of the first principles or *intellectus principiorum* –the best studied-, the habit of wisdom and synderesis”. “En la tradición se admiten tres hábitos innatos: el hábito de los primeros principios o *intellectus principiorum* –que es el más estudiado–, el hábito de sabiduría y la sindéresis”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 148.

¹⁶ “Because the person is what is radical in man, all the proper human aspects will be marked by personal being”. “Como la persona es lo decisivo en el hombre, todos los diversos aspectos de lo humano vendrán marcados por el ser personal”. Polo, L., *Sobre la Existencia Cristiana* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996), 259.

only one of which we have direct, intimate experience and by transposition, it allows an intimate relationship to other persons and to God. It is, in fact, the one that gives us the deepest knowledge of our dependence and intimate relationships with God. This habit explains the innate feeling of God, root of all religions and religious acts, common in all cultures, as far as human records are kept. It is not objective knowledge but inner experiential knowledge¹⁷.

The habit of the first principles, that sometimes Polo calls *intellectus ut habitus*, is the one which allows knowing the act of being of the extra-mental reality; this is all non-personal beings, what we normally call the act of universe, God as origin of the act of universe, and the transcendental dependence of the one respect to the other. These three themes can be expressed in three axioms or principles, and this is why the principle refers to them in plural. Polo explains these principles in detail in his *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*: “What are called first principles: the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of causality in its transcendental meaning”¹⁸. The identity is related to God because in him we cannot distinguish between the act of being and the essence; the non-contradiction is referred to the act of being of the universe, because if it exists, nothingness has no chance; the transcendental causality marks the dependence between the second and the first.

Finally the habit of synderesis which Polo describes as follows: “Synderesis is the knowledge of the first principles of reality in view of practical action”¹⁹.

These three innate habits give us a knowledge that cannot be acquired objectively because their topics —themes in Polo’s terminology— are beyond the objective capacity of the intelligence. They are beyond the intelligence capacity because the intelligence is a faculty and is just below synderesis in the structure of the person. Polo

¹⁷ “The habit of wisdom, whose subject is beyond the metaphysical order. In my view, through this habit the co-existence of the human being with the world and, radically, with God is known. Therefore, the knowledge of God is also sapiential”. “El hábito de sabiduría, cuya temática trasciende el orden metafísico. A mi modo de ver, con este hábito se conoce la coexistencia del ser personal humano con el ser del universo y, en definitiva, con Dios. Por consiguiente, el conocimiento de Dios también es sapiencial”. “The habit of wisdom allows the knowledge of the person. One end is higher than the other and the habit of the first principles is dual with wisdom, and with it, we do not know what is extra-mental, but the intimacy of the person”. “El hábito de sabiduría permite el conocimiento de la persona. En definitiva, un término es superior a otro y el hábito de los primeros principios entra en dualidad con la sabiduría y ya no conocemos lo extramental sino lo íntimo de la persona”. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 185.

¹⁸ “Son los llamados primeros principios: el principio de identidad, el principio de nocontradicción y el principio de causalidad en sentido trascendental”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, I, op. cit., 11.

¹⁹ “La sindéresis es el conocimiento de los primeros principios de la realidad en tanto que en ella se sitúa la acción práctica”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 160.

summarises the topics each innate habits deals with as follows: “their theme point to realities that transcend us: wisdom to God, the habit of the first principles to being, and synderesis to what is good”²⁰.

While we are not going to go into detail on the habits of wisdom and of the first principles, in the next sections we shall try to explain synderesis in detail, to see whether it will be able to support a personalist view of ethics.

3. *Synderesis, 'I', self, subject, soul*

Before proceeding it will be good to clarify the different ways Polo refers to synderesis in his works. Polo uses different words to stress the different characteristics of subtle matters, and spiritual innate habits are rather subtle. He uses some of the words, at times, to bring out some implicits that were hidden in the terms previous thinkers used. This is the case of ‘subject’, which was used in modern philosophy from Descartes to our days, also of ‘substance’ and ‘soul’ used since classic philosophy and the ‘I’ or ‘self’ ²¹favoured by the existentialist and personalist thinkers²².

“Synderesis is an inborn habit of the personal being and equals the ‘I’. The ‘I’ is really different from the personal being. This distinction allows discarding the modern idea of the subject”²³. Polo clarifies that modern philosophy does not understand the subject as the personal act of being: “The person is neither the classic substance nor the subject of modern philosophy”²⁴. There is no need to say more about the use of ‘subject’ which he hardly uses in dealing with synderesis, or ‘self’ which is equated to the ‘I’.

Of all these terms the one most used is the ‘I’ (yo) because it is the one that better conveys the unrepeatable character of each person and because it represents the manifestation of the self-consciousness

²⁰ “Apuntan a lo que nos trasciende: la sabiduría a Dios, el hábito de los primeros principios al ser y la sindéresis al bien”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 231.

²¹ “I call the ‘I’ that enlightens the other-I, and not you, as usually personalist philosophers do, because although this term is not incorrect, for the purposes of self-knowledge it is weak”. “Llamo al yo que ilumina al propio yo otro-yo, y no un tú, como acostumbran a decir los personalistas, pues, aunque esa expresión no sea incorrecta, para los efectos del conocimiento del yo es débil”. *Ibid.*, 215.

²² “Synderesis is therefore what modern philosophy understands by *subject* and the classical by the *soul*”. “La sindéresis es, pues, lo que la filosofía moderna entiende por *sujeto* y la clásica por *alma*”. Corazón, R., “Sobre la Esencia”, in *Studia Poliana*, 6 (2004) p. 213

²³ “La sindéresis es un hábito innato al ser personal y equivale al yo. El yo se distingue realmente del ser personal. Dicha distinción permite desechar la idea moderna de sujeto”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 40.

²⁴ “La persona no es la sustancia clásica ni el sujeto de la filosofía moderna”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 234.

each one has: “Synderesis is an inborn habit of the personal being equivalent to the ‘I’. The ‘I’ is really different from the personal act of being”²⁵. Nevertheless, one has to be careful when reading Polo since the meaning of the ‘I’ evolved as pointed out above²⁶.

Polo used the term ‘I’ to signify indistinctively the person, or act of being, at least up to the end of 1994. In the conference he gave in the University of Málaga in November 1994 one can notice some ambiguity in the use of both terms in that while he expressly says that the ‘I’ is existence, he also differentiates it from the ‘person’. In the following texts we see how in the positive and negative he identified the ‘I’ with the act of being, whereas in later works he reserves the act of being for the person and the ‘I’ for synderesis. In the positive, i.e. as affirmation: “The journey we have made in respect to the interpretation of the ‘I’ in philosophy has allowed us to conclude that the ‘I’ is the act of being, and the act of being is the character of ‘more’ seen in its integration to the essence”²⁷. Now in the negative i.e. as the negation of being at the essential level: “There is an intentional knowledge of the ‘I’; to exist is therefore the characteristic of the ‘I’ which, if removed, the ‘I’ ceases to be. Saying it in a different way: the self is not an essence, it is existence. Therefore, an essential knowledge of self is nothing”²⁸.

Within the same article we can find simultaneously the affirmations that seem to both identify and separate the person and the ‘I’: “In the case of man act of being means person, but we will see that there is a distinction between self and person, even though you cannot separate the self of the person. It’s the same with the word “person”. Person is a common name, but as common name it does not mean being. For person we must understand each *who*. And the same happens with the ‘I’: I is each ‘I’. ‘I’ is strictly real, but it happens that we can speak of the thought ‘I’, but we cannot say that such thought ‘I’ is real”²⁹. And even of a body ‘I’: “corporeal-I is that human unit that sits and is made possible by the organized human body. The animal does

²⁵ “La sindéresis es un hábito innato al ser personal y equivale al yo. El yo se distingue realmente del ser personal”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 40.

²⁶ Cfr. note 12.

²⁷ “El viaje que hemos hecho en torno a la interpretación del yo en la filosofía nos ha permitido concluir que el yo es el acto de ser, y el acto de ser es el carácter de además visto en su entronque con la esencia”. Polo, L., *La Esencia Humana*, op. cit., 279.

²⁸ “No cabe un conocimiento intencional del yo, porque al yo le es tan característico el existir que si se le quita deja de ser yo. Dicho de otra manera: el yo no es una esencia, sino que es existencia. Por lo tanto, un conocimiento esencial del yo no es nada”. *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁹ “En el caso del hombre *acto de ser* significa persona, aunque ya veremos que hay una distinción entre yo y persona, a pesar de que no se puede separar el yo de la persona. Pasa lo mismo con la palabra “persona”. Persona es un nombre común, pero como nombre común no significa lo que significa ser. Por persona hay que entender aquí *cada quien*. Y lo mismo pasa con el yo: yo es cada yo. El yo es estrictamente real, pero ocurre que podemos hablar del yo pensado, pero no podemos decir que el yo pensado sea real”. *Ibid.*, 240.

not have ‘I’, because it does not have an organised body as the human body has. The corporeal-I is a psychic self, let’s say a soul-I, and that means that it is capable of organizing³⁰. And more clearly: “The “I” is in between the spirit and the body”³¹. It seems that what Polo tries to convey is the cascading activity of the act of being which regulates all what pertains to the person, understood as the ‘suppositum’, and the unity, the whole that each person is, which later he will find better ways to express, by reserving the term person for the act of being and the term ‘I’ for the apex of the essential level, i.e. for synderesis³².

We use the ‘I’ in the way Polo uses it in his latest works, so it is equated to synderesis and it is the ‘apex of the essential level’, and within the essential level as the communication door with the personal level, or act of being, as we shall see in the next two sections starting with the latter. It seems as if the difference between the ‘I’ at the essential level and the person is ‘consciousness’ but this will require further development, which may distract us from our main purpose.

4. Synderesis as the door from the personal level to the essential level

Synderesis does not belong to the personal level, because synderesis does not deal with the ‘esse’, the being, as such. This is why it is placed at the essential level, just below the personal level. Leonardo Polo refers to the personal level as the ‘además’³³ –which we translate

³⁰ “Yo corpóreo es aquella unidad humana que se asienta y es posibilitada por el orden corpóreo humano. El animal no tiene yo, porque no tiene un cuerpo ordenado de esa peculiar manera como está ordenado el cuerpo humano. El yo corpóreo es un yo psíquico, digamos, un yo anímico, y eso quiere decir que es capaz de ordenar”. *Ibid.*, 229.

³¹ “El yo está a caballo entre el espíritu y el cuerpo”. *Ibid.*, 228.

³² It will be interesting to see how Polo’s essential ‘I’ differs from the ‘I’ of Ingarden’s phenomenology for whom the ‘I’ “is something that appears through the conscience’s structure act; and it appears as a necessary being belonging to the act of conscience and to the flow of vital experiences”. Ingarden, R., *Spor o istnie-nie swiata*, vol II, p.170 as cited in. Bak, A. “La Conciencia, El Yo y el Cuerpo en Roman Ingarden”, *Thémata*, 46 (2012) p. 110.

³³ “It should be noted now that the personal act of being is a surplus with respect to the acts of the will. I usually call this surplus the character of ‘more’. That the person is ‘more’ than thinking is clear, since it is not part of what is thought”. “Es preciso señalar ahora que el acto de ser personal es sobrante respecto de los actos de la voluntad. Suelo llamar dicho *carácter de además*. Que la persona es además del pensar es claro, puesto que no forma parte de él”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos* II, op. cit., 59. The connection between the essential level and the personal level is done through a unifying link that is the innate habit of synderesis. The synderesis has a dual role or dual power, which makes it be able to ‘see’ and to ‘want’, as we shall expand later. For the time being we wish just to show how Polo sees the links among the three levels of the triadic structure of the person.

as ‘more’³⁴—because it is more than having, more than thinking, more than feeling. The ‘more’ is the first finding of Polo’s original method, ‘the overcoming of the mental limit’, already explained in chapter six of the first part. Similarly, the personal level, the ‘more’, is more than wanting. Wanting is proper of the will which is at the essential level. Nevertheless, the actions are of the ‘suppositum’, of the whole, because the human being is not an aggregate of parts but a living being, an organic whole³⁵. This is well expressed by Polo: “The essential level is always a manifestation and it is at the disposition of the personal level. These two characteristics can be seen both in the will and in the ‘nous’, both can be attributed to the personal being. The personal being can say ‘my’ will, this ‘wanting’ is mine. Speaking with precision what I call growth in the essence is growth in the ‘esse’, and this is the character of ‘more’ that cannot stop growing, because otherwise it will accomplish according to ‘presence’”³⁶.

The essence is at the disposition of the personal level. The personal level activates the essential capabilities through synderesis using the synderesis with the superior habits; which belong to the personal level. The spiritual activity is not a movement of physical parts where one can be moved without the others having knowledge of it, but as an organic action whereby the superior is in charge and therefore involved in the action of the lower ones. Polo expresses this integration as follows: “the upper habit naturally has to go down to the ones below. The lower ones are like a coming down of the upper one. This is mulling over why the ‘I’ and the extra-mental knowledge are possible from the ‘more’. The upper habit somehow has to be a condition of possibility of the inferior. The lower habits are not possible without the upper ones and therefore the ‘conversio’ of neither synderesis nor the habit of first principles would be possible. What needs to be seen is how the character of ‘more’ is somehow potential so as to, simultaneously really be different from the essence and, at the same, time give reason of the essence, which is looking towards what is inferior”³⁷.

³⁴ Though it can be translated as ‘besides’ we feel that besides can be understood as ‘being by’, loosing the sense of going beyond, and never being satisfied which is what the term ‘more’ conveys, which is closer to Polo’s intended meaning.

³⁵ Polo expresses this same idea as follows: “Unity does not mean unicity, but integrity”. “Unidad no significa unicidad, sino integridad”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento IV*, op. cit., 201.

³⁶ “La esencia humana siempre es una manifestación y una disposición, y estos dos caracteres se ven en la voluntad y en el *nous*, pero eso es del ser personal. El ser personal puede decir “mi” querer, el querer es mío. En rigor, lo que llamo crecimiento en la esencia es crecimiento en el *esse*, y eso es el carácter de además, que no puede dejar de crecer, pues de otro modo se consumaría según la actualidad”. Polo, L., *La libertad Trascendental* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2005), 132.

³⁷ “El hábito superior naturalmente tiene que bajar a los inferiores. Los inferiores son como una bajada suya. Eso es ir dándole vueltas a por qué el yo y el conocimiento extramental es posible desde el además. El superior de alguna manera tiene que ser condición de posibilidad del inferior. Sin el hábito superior no son posibles los inferiores y por lo tanto la *conversio* no sólo está en la sindéresis sino también en el hábito de los primeros principios. Lo que hay que ver es como el carácter de

Polo uses a simile of a door to refer to the connection between the personal level and the essential level and the door is the habit of synderesis. With this he wants to express that synderesis is the only way to reach the personal level from below and the only way the person can manifest itself, this is to come down to the essential and corporeal levels³⁸. If the door is closed or does not work well then the human person shows less its personality, and, as shown in the text above, he grows less, he remains less a person that who it can be, and this is an ethical issue that we should deal with in the following chapters. Some other thinkers prefer to use the simile of a window rather than a door because of the way Polo uses the light as example with reference to the agent intellect and synderesis. It is easier to explain how a window allows more or less light in depending on the cleanliness of the window panes³⁹ to illuminate the intelligence and warm the will⁴⁰.

5. Apex of the essence

The characteristic of being the link between the personal and essential levels means that synderesis is the highest dimension of the essential level. Polo refers to it as the “apex of the essential level”.⁴¹ To be the apex means that there are some other elements at the essential level that will depend on it. These elements are the intellect and the will which are not only subsidiary to it but also initially constituted

además se potencializa de alguna manera para que se distinga realmente de la esencia y al mismo tiempo de razón de la esencia y eso es hacia abajo”. Polo, L., “Conversaciones en Torreblanca”, (unpublished transcription, Colombia, 1997), 100.

³⁸ “The subjectivist interpretation will be set straight if one accepts that the ‘I’ is not the personal act of being, the human person, but the open door of the personal level to its essence”. “La interpretación subjetivista se corrige si se acepta que el yo no es el acto de ser personal, la persona humana, sino la puerta abierta de ésta hacia su esencia”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 137.

³⁹ “In this way synderesis can have more light to progressively reveal the essence and human nature, and this is its growth”. “De esta suerte, la sindéresis puede disponer de más luz para desvelar progresivamente la esencia y la naturaleza humanas, y eso es su crecer”. Sellés, J. F., *El Conocer Personal: Estudio del Entendimiento Agente según Leonardo Polo*, ed. cit., 135.

⁴⁰ “Most of the negative emotions affect synderesis, which being the enlightening habit of the human essence, when it is deprived of good it loses the clarity of the light”. “La mayor parte de los afectos negativos afectan a la sindéresis, que por ser el hábito iluminante de la esencia humana, al sufrir la privación del bien, pierde la limpidez de la iluminación”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 231.

⁴¹ “As already mentioned, the apex of the essence of man is synderesis”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 164. Also, in another book wrote: “I must say that the summit of the human essence is an inborn habit;... synderesis...In Medieval Philosophy the esceptical forgetfulness was avoided with the concept of synderesis, which is the apex of the human soul”. “hay que decir que la cumbre de la esencia humana es un hábito innato... la sindéresis... En la filosofía medieval el olvido escéptico es evitado con la noción de sindéresis, que es la cumbre del alma humana”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 226.

by synderesis. These two faculties are mere potencies by themselves and are constituted by the synderesis that gives them the first act. So, in some way we can say that synderesis is the one that initially is and immediately constitutes the essential level. Polo uses a comparison with angels to make this point clearer⁴². If the angels have a spiritual act of being they have also a spiritual essence. This composition distinguishes them from their Creator who has no distinction between the act of being and the essence. Similarly in humans we have the composition of the spiritual act of being and the spiritual essence. The difference is that in humans, while alive, the essence is linked to its constituted body, but the essence will remain without the body after death, when the person (act of being) will remain together with its spiritual essence.

In order to have some directing and unifying control on the intelligence and will, synderesis has to be able to understand both: the intelligence and the will. This is why Polo, in his latest works, speaks of the inner duality of synderesis, as we discuss in the next section.

6. Synderesis' duality

Polo expresses the duality of synderesis in a way that the same habit has two sides or functions, one which understands the will, which he calls ‘I-want’ and another of the intelligence, the ‘I-see’. “It should be borne in mind that the human ‘I’ is somehow dual. To put it quickly, the human essence is not like a cyclops, but has two eyes: one that I call I-see and another that I call I-want”⁴³. The ‘I’ is active, conscious, and this is why the union of the words tries to show the activity of the being, to avoid considering synderesis as a mere static recipient.

The habit of synderesis is therefore dual. It activates the faculties, intellect and will, and because of this it has to ‘understand’ both; the universal knowledge and the universal capacity of wanting⁴⁴. Polo speaks of these two facets of synderesis: the ‘I-see’, the facet related

⁴² “The angel is a created spirit, without body, which is correspondingly an essence in itself: every angel is an angelic essence, they do not share the essence among many”. “El ángel es un ser creado espiritual, sin cuerpo, que correlativamente es una esencia él mismo: no hay muchos de la misma esencia, sino que cada ángel es una esencia angélica”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 160.

⁴³ “Ha de tenerse en cuenta que el yo humano también es en cierto modo dual. Por decirlo rápidamente, la esencia humana no es un círculo, sino que tiene dos ojos: aquel que he llamado ver-yo y otro al que llamo querer-yo”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 215.

⁴⁴ “Synderesis is I-think and I-want. Or I-see seeing and I-want. Therefore it is dual. The higher element is I-want, that as the will looks towards the outside”. “La sindéresis es yo pienso, yo quiero. O yo-veo-ver y yo-quiero-querer. Por lo tanto es dual. El elemento superior es el yo quiero que, como ya la voluntad mira hacia afuera”. Polo, L., *Conversaciones en Bogotá*, op.cit., 99.

to the intelligence, and ‘I-want’, the one related to action⁴⁵. Nevertheless, he does not confuse the faculties with each other, nor with synderesis itself: “An intellectual operation can only be known by a superior intellectual act, i.e. a habit. Therefore, I-see is dual with I-want; as I-want it is constitutive but as I-see it is not”⁴⁶. Furthermore we cannot forget that synderesis is a knowledge habit; so, even when activating the will, it is a type of knowledge: habitual knowledge not objective knowledge, a kind of experiential notice⁴⁷.

For Polo it is clear that this is a novelty which is based on the acceptance of the pre-eminence of the habitual knowledge over the objective knowledge (mental presence, operational knowledge), because objective knowledge cannot reach what is above it: “One must abandon the mental presence. Habitual knowledge is not in itself objective knowledge. If it is not objective, it is neither presential knowledge nor a formal expansion of it. Instead, it allows detection of the presence as mental limit. This is decisive”⁴⁸.

Polo explains this in a slightly different way in another text: “What depends exclusively on the personal act of being is the essence

⁴⁵ “First, because it depends on the person, synderesis is also a dual habit. It is being equated to the ‘I’. The duality of the ‘I’ relates to the two immaterial faculties: ‘I’ means seeing (I-see) and wanting (I-want). The view derives from *intellectus ut co-actus*, and wanting for the donal love, i.e. from the personal transcendentals. However, neither I-see nor I-want are transcendentals. As happens in all human dualities, one of its members is superior. In synderesis, the upper member is the I-want”. “En primer lugar, por depender de la persona, la sindéresis es un hábito, asimismo, dual. Se ha dicho también que equivale al yo. La dualidad del yo es, por lo pronto, su respecto a las dos potencias inmateriales: yo significa ver (ver-yo) y querer (querer-yo). El ver deriva del *intellectus ut co-actus*, y el querer deriva del amar donal, es decir, de trascendentales personales. Ahora bien, ni ver-yo ni querer-yo son trascendentales. Como acontece en todas las dualidades humanas, uno de sus miembros es superior al otro. En la sindéresis, el miembro superior es el querer-yo”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 151.

⁴⁶ “Una operación intelectual sólo es conocida por un acto intelectual superior, es decir, por un hábito. Por eso, conocer-yo es dual con querer-yo, pues éste es constituyente y aquél no lo es”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 56.

⁴⁷ “It is correct to call connatural knowledge the ‘awareness’ given by the innate habits”. “A la captación de los hábitos innatos según la afectividad es también correcto llamarla connaturalidad”. “When dealing with symbols I indicated that it is important to distinguish their knowledge from their decipherment. For ‘awareness’ that distinction is not needed. This is because ‘awareness’ has a dense affective content (it makes no sense to be affections, for the affections are not decoded, but experienced)”. “Al tratar de los símbolos indiqué que es importante distinguir su conocimiento de su desciframiento. En el caso de las noticias esa distinción no se da. Ello se debe a que las noticias tienen un denso contenido afectivo (no tiene sentido hablar de descifrar afectos, pues los afectos no se descifran, sino que se experimentan)”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 228. Guardini speaks of a “kind of vibration within the being” Cfr. Guardini, R., *Etica*, op. cit., 87.

⁴⁸ “Hay que abandonar la presencia. Pues bien, el conocimiento habitual no es de suyo un conocimiento objetivo. Si no es objetivo, no es un conocimiento en presencia, ni tampoco una amplificación de la presencia en términos formales. Pero, en cambio, permite detectar a la presencia como límite mental. Esto es lo decisivo”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento IV/I* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2004), 674.

of man. The essence is really distinct from the act of being. In sum, we describe the essence of man as the unification of knowledge dimensions (and of the will) which depends exclusively of the personal act of being. This unification must extend to voluntary acts. In parallel, the person is not only the core of knowledge, but also the core of the voluntary, and, accordingly, the essence of man is the unification of a plurality”⁴⁹.

With what we have explained, the following text can be fully understood, even if all its implications need to be developed further: “The person considered down towards the essence, is designated as ‘I’ because the essence depends on the person. The ‘I’ is a duality: on the one hand, ‘I-see’; on the other, ‘I-want’. The distinction is that in the ‘I-see’ the self is not constituent, while the ‘I-want’ is. According to this distinction the ‘I’ is not a transcendental (“towards” the essence equivalent to the apex of the essence, and the essence of man is not transcendental). The word "know" linked to ‘I’ means nothing other than self; ‘I’ amounts to see. ‘See’ equals the *intellectus ut co-actus* considered in order to the essence of man, i.e., while its theme is what is understood —any cognitive acts of the essential level. Also the will is understood whenever established as a voluntary act, in which case we say ‘I-want’ instead of ‘I-see’⁵⁰. The last sentence is a bit more complex. It means that the ultimate power of understanding is at the personal level through the agent intellect (*intellectus ut actus*), while the actual operational-objective understanding is done by the intellect (*intellect ut habitus*) which is at the essential level, and it is under synderesis as ‘I-see’.

Now that we have seen how synderesis is dual it is good to discuss each of its aspects separately. We consider first the ‘I-want’ because it is higher in the duality.

⁴⁹ “Lo que depende exclusivamente del acto de ser personal es la esencia del hombre. La esencia es realmente distinta del acto de ser. En suma, describimos la esencia del hombre como la unificación de las dimensiones del conocimiento (y de la voluntad) que depende exclusivamente del ser personal. Esa unificación ha de extenderse a los actos voluntarios. Paralelamente, la persona no es sólo el núcleo del saber, sino también el núcleo de lo voluntario, y, de acuerdo con esto, la esencia del hombre es la unificación de una pluralidad”. *Ibid.*, 548.

⁵⁰ “La persona considerada hacia la esencia, es decir, en tanto que la esencia depende de ella, se designa como *yo*. El *yo* es una dualidad: por una parte, *ver-yo*; por otra parte, *querer-yo*. La distinción estriba en que en el primer caso el *yo* no es constituyente, y en el segundo sí. Según dicha distinción el *yo* no es un trascendental (“hacia” la esencia equivale al ápice de la esencia, y la esencia del hombre no es trascendental). La palabra “conocer” vinculada al *yo* no significa nada distinto de él; *yo* se cifra en *ver*. *Ver* equivale al *intellectus ut co-actus* considerado en orden a la esencia del hombre, es decir, en tanto que su temática es *lo inteligido* –cualquier tema de los actos cognoscitivos de orden esencial–. También la voluntad es inteligida siempre que se constituya como *lo voluntario*, en cuyo caso no se habla de *conocer-yo* sino de *querer-yo*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 177.

a) The I-want side of synderesis

Synderesis is the only way by which the will can be known by the person. Polo clearly states this; “synderesis illuminates what is not possible to know through operations (objective knowledge) namely the immaterial faculty called the will. The will cannot be known objectively, among other things, because all operations of the intellect begin with abstraction, which is the intellectual knowledge of the sensible. But the will is a dimension of the human soul that cannot be accessed by shining on the sensible, and it does not seem to receive printed species. Therefore the will can only be known by a habit that must be innate, which precedes what is usually called practical reason, and has to do with the habits of the will, i.e. with moral virtues”⁵¹.

Of synderesis’ two slopes the higher of the duality is the I-want. According to Polo this is because all and every one of its actions requires to be constituted by the act of being, by the person himself, and therefore it is closer to the act of being, i.e. to the personal level. This constitutive need of each and every act of the will is what Polo calls ‘the curvature of the will’: “In Thomas Aquinas this is mentioned briefly in what he calls the curvature of the will. The curvature of the will can be described mainly in two different ways; the will is curved because it commits our subjectivity since, unlike what occurs with knowledge the ‘I’ has to support the wanting for it to be real... But it also notices that the will’s capacity of improvement is not exhausted... That it is necessary to improve the will by wanting more. Therefore in the voluntary act there are two facets: what is loved –what is wanted– and the ‘I’, that at the same time that it wants the thing it also wants to want more”⁵². Saying it simply, in every act of wanting, the person commits himself to the object wanted. As Polo mentions often: “Nietzsche says I do not despise if I do not accept myself as the one who despises. I cannot perform the act of contempt if I do not accept myself as the one who despises, [or more clearly this time placing Socrates as

⁵¹ “La sindéresis ilumina aquello que no es posible conocer operativamente, a saber, la potencia inmaterial llamada voluntad. La voluntad no se conoce objetivamente, entre otras cosas, porque las operaciones intelectuales comienzan con la abstracción, que es el conocimiento intelectual de lo sensible. Pero la voluntad es una dimensión del alma humana a la que no se puede acceder desde la iluminación de lo sensible, y tampoco parece que reciba especies impresas. Por tanto, la voluntad sólo se puede conocer con un hábito que ha de ser innato, el cual precede a lo que se suele llamar razón práctica y tiene que ver con los hábitos de la voluntad, es decir, con las virtudes morales”. *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵² “En Tomás de Aquino esta actitud se expresa de una manera breve según lo que él llama la curvatura de la voluntad. Esta se puede describir según dos líneas: ante todo, la voluntad es curva porque compromete a nuestra subjetividad, pues, a distinción de lo que ocurre en el conocimiento, el yo tiene que apoyar el querer para que éste exista. Pero también advierte que la mejora de la voluntad no lo realiza exhaustivamente. Es necesario querer mejor queriendo más. Por tanto, en la intención del acto voluntario hay dos instancias: lo amado, lo querido, y el yo, que al comprometerse al querer lo amado mira también a querer más”. Polo, L., “Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana”, *Anuario Filosófico*, vol. 40/ 3 (2007) p. 567.

authority:] what Socrates said, the one who commits a murder becomes a murderer”⁵³. The person is the agent of any act of the will, through the ‘I-want’ side of synderesis.

Because the will is the faculty in which the personal act of being is more involved, as it has to be constituted in each act⁵⁴, it is the one that represents best the person and its responsibilities, which is what links the person to ethics. Furthermore, because by themselves the acts of willing are blind by themselves, they need to be directed by knowledge and this requirement is achieved through the unitary root of synderesis, which the will shares with the intelligence. The task is not easy, though, because as Polo points out the topic of the will is a very hazy topic⁵⁵. This is only natural because it is not the will’s task to understand but to want, unlike the intelligence, so the intelligence has a difficult time to make sense of anything related to the will; actually, since synderesis and the will are above the intelligence in the hierarchical order, it may mean that it actually cannot ever fully understand them. In the same way that synderesis cannot understand what is above it i.e. the first principles, wisdom and the personal transcendentals. This is why when Polo refers to them he uses the verb ‘advertir’, to notice, rather than ‘conocer’, to know.

In his work *La voluntad y sus actos* Polo takes up the traditional distinction of the three aspects of the will: the will as nature –*voluntas ut natura*–, the will as rational –*voluntas ut ratio*– and the will as habit –*voluntas ut habitus*–. He further assigns the role of synderesis as ‘I-want’ to the *voluntas ut natura* while the *voluntas ut ratio* is activated by the practical reason, and the *voluntas ut habitus* by prudence. “The intellection taken as assistance to the *voluntas ut natura* is called synderesis, and as assistance to the *voluntas ut ratio* is called practical reason. The reason as it captures the notion of good and submits to the will, moves towards it”⁵⁶. We can, perhaps, add a fourth way of understanding the will, *voluntas ut actus*, which represents what Polo and

⁵³ “Nietzsche dice que yo no desprecio si no me acepto como el que desprecia. El acto de despreciar no lo puedo llevar a cabo si no me acepto como el que desprecia... lo que decía Sócrates, quien comete uno se convierte en un asesino”. Polo, L., *Polo, Sevilla, 1994*, paragraph 44.

⁵⁴ “As imperative, do! can be simplified to an internal intellectual precedent that classical philosophy called sindéresis, without which the specific voluntary acts cannot be explained. Synderesis is specific for each human being”. “Como imperativo, ¡haz! se reduce a un precedente intelectual interno que la filosofía clásica llama sindéresis, sin el cual los actos voluntarios concretos no se explican. La sindéresis es propia de cada ser humano”. Polo, L. and Llano, C., *Antropología de la Acción Directiva*, (Madrid: Aedos, 1997), 125.

⁵⁵ “Thomas Aquinas makes two key observations [...] First, he points out that the will is an unclear theme: it has not been studied in all its dimensions, and has been less studied than the intelligence by all previous philosophers”. “Tomás de Aquino hace dos observaciones centrales sobre el estado de la cuestión. Ante todo, advierte que la voluntad es un tema oscuro: no se han averiguado todas sus dimensiones, y ha sido menos estudiada que la inteligencia en la filosofía anterior a él”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 7.

⁵⁶ “La intelección tomada como coadyuvante de la *voluntas ut natura* se llama sindéresis, y como coadyuvante de la *voluntas ut ratio* razón práctica. La razón en

traditional philosophy call ‘active use’, or the will commanding other powers. Let us see each of the different uses of the will in turn.

a.1. *Voluntas ut natura*

The first act of synderesis constitutes the first voluntary which was called by Aquinas ‘*simplex velle*’. According to Polo it is an impulse to do good, an imperative that accompanies all willing. This is why he says that it ‘constitutes’ the willing. “The voluntary as exercised can be distinguished from the voluntary as constituted which is the ‘*simplex velle*’⁵⁷. This distinction corresponds to the difference between practical reason and synderesis. No act of the will can be performed without the practical reason (what belongs to the *voluntas ut ratio*). Instead, synderesis is an inborn habit. The innate and regular knowing of the will is not exactly knowing the good, but some kind of imperative. The imperative is the simple wish: want! Because it is proper to you, and at the same time, the way you are constituted by the ‘I’, because, in fact, wanting means ‘I-want’⁵⁸.

It is important though to keep in mind that “although the will and synderesis are different, they are not two different parts; the simple will is the natural will in act as ‘I-want’”⁵⁹. The will is a faculty, synderesis is the habit that knows and activates the will as faculty, it knows that the will is willing and what it wills, and synderesis is the impulse which penetrates all willing⁶⁰. Polo does not identify the *simplex velle* with synderesis since the will as a faculty is different from

cuanto capta la noción de bien y la presenta a la voluntad, mueve a tender a él”. *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁷ “To the will corresponds like an awakening as *simplex velle*, and not because of the practical reason, but of synderesis. To will is neither an imposed nor autonomous (nothing to do with the categorical imperative); it is not a spontaneous imperative, but an essential agreement. Synderesis is the truth of the will. A la voluntad le corresponde como despertar en acto el *simplex velle*, y no en virtud de la razón práctica, sino de la sindéresis. Querer es un deber no impuesto ni autónomo (no tiene nada que ver con el imperativo categórico); no es un imperativo espontáneo, sino un acuerdo esencial. La sindéresis constituye la verdad de la voluntad”. *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁸ “Cabe distinguir lo voluntario ejercido y constituido, y lo voluntario simplemente constituido: el *simplex velle*. Con esta distinción se corresponden la razón práctica y la sindéresis. Sin la razón práctica no se ejercen los actos de la voluntad (*voluntas ut ratio*). En cambio, la sindéresis es un hábito innato. La intelección habitual e innata de la voluntad no es exactamente el conocimiento del bien, sino cierto imperativo. El imperativo es el simple querer: quiere porque es lo tuyo y, a la vez, el modo como eres constituida en acto por el yo, pues, en rigor, querer significa querer-yo”. *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁹ “Aunque la voluntad y la sindéresis sean distintas, no son dos piezas sueltas; el simple querer es la voluntad natural en acto en tanto que quiero-yo”. *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁰ “The first voluntary act is described as the knowledge of the will according to its nature. Such knowledge is different from practical reason, which deals with means and ends. Instead, the first voluntary act is knowledge of the will as transcendental relationship. Aquinas calls this first act *simplex velle*”. “El primer acto voluntario se describe como el conocimiento de la voluntad según su índole propia. Dicho conocimiento se distingue de la razón práctica, que versa sobre los medios o sobre el fin. En cambio, el primer acto voluntario es el conocimiento de la voluntad como

synderesis as a natural habit: “Only considered in its duality with synderesis, the natural will ascends to the level of *velle*”⁶¹. This constitution of the will as natural will (*voluntas ut natura* or *simplex velle*) is what constitutes the will’s truth, what makes it be what it should be, by shining its transcendental orientation to the good: “It is sometimes said that synderesis communicates to the will the command: do good and avoid evil. I believe that is not exactly true, but that synderesis starts encouraging wanting. The truth is established in the will in order to the good, which is what corresponds to the will as transcendental relationship”⁶².

The transcendental relation to the truth is what the *voluntas ut natura* actually is. This relationship is awakened by synderesis, therefore constituting it, and it is the one that will feed each of the acts of the will as reasoned acts (*voluntas ut ratio*): “However, the oscillation of the will does not take place in its first awakening by synderesis. The constitutive truth of *simplex velle* is the awakening to the good. The will cannot resist this awakening because it is its own truth”⁶³.

Finally, the constitutive act of synderesis not only gives the object to the will —the good— but does it as moved by the personal level of transcendental love, which is the highest of the personal radicals: “As I indicated, I argue that the natural will is not a spiritual power, but a peculiar power which, by its affinity with nature, is unable to exercise voluntary acts, which are spiritual themselves. Now it should be added that synderesis —the innate, not-acquired habit— by relating to the *voluntas ut natura*, establishes it as the first voluntary act. Thus *voluntas ut ratio* is a potency that in exercising its actions is susceptible to obtain acquired habits. Synderesis is an inborn habit through which the personal transcendentals connect with the so called relative

relación trascendental. A ese primer acto Tomás de Aquino lo llama *simplex velle*”. *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶¹ “Sólo considerada en su dualidad con la sindéresis, la voluntad natural asciende al nivel del *velle*”. *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶² “A veces se dice que la sindéresis comunica a la voluntad el imperativo: haz el bien y evita el mal. Estimo que no es exactamente así, sino que la sindéresis comienza animando a querer. La verdad se establece en la voluntad en orden al bien, que es lo que le corresponde como relación trascendental”. *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶³ “Sin embargo, la oscilación de la voluntad no tiene lugar en su primario ser despertada por la sindéresis. La verdad constitutiva del *simplex velle* es el despertar al bien. La voluntad no puede oponerse a ese despertar porque es su propia verdad”. *Ibid.*, 65.

And also “I insist, the first voluntary act constituted by sinderesis is not orectic (wanting). The first voluntary act is the lighting of the will as transcendental relationship. So I understand the voluntary act that Aquinas called *simplex velle*. The simple I-want is a pure passive power elevated to the status of act at the essential level”. “Insisto, el primer acto voluntario constituido por la sindéresis no es oréctico” Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 125. “El primer acto voluntario es la iluminación de la voluntad como relación trascendental. Así entiendo el acto voluntario que Tomás de Aquino llama *simplex velle*. El simple querer-*yo* es la pura potencia pasiva elevada a la condición de acto esencial”. *Ibid.*, 132.

transcendentals”⁶⁴. This is what we referred above as the constituent function of synderesis which somehow starts the essential level through the faculty of the will. Something similar will be explained when talking about the ‘I-see’ side of synderesis.

This constitution of the *voluntas ut natura* is not seen by most authors⁶⁵. This makes some who recognise synderesis as the origin of morals speak of two different principles moving the person to do good, synderesis and the *voluntas ut natura*, which is not correct: “Synderesis presents the good an attraction that requires a response from the person, and this is the start of all moral life (that has also other instances like the natural tendency of the will to the good, *voluntas ut natura*)”⁶⁶.

These distinctions are somehow procedural distinctions because the will only acts through its habits, which are a modulation of the willing. This means that in any act of willing, in any decision taken, synderesis, practical reason and prudence are all equally involved. They are inseparable but three different levels that made up any decision. Synderesis gives the voluntas the impulse to do good, that permeates, as part of the habitual role of synderesis in all acts of volition, which are done through the virtues because “the will acts though its habits”⁶⁷.

These conception of the *voluntas ut natura* is important because otherwise the will would be understood as simple desire⁶⁸ as –*orexis*–

⁶⁴ “Como ya he indicado, sostengo que la voluntad natural no es una potencia espiritual, sino una potencia peculiar que, por su afinidad con la naturaleza, es incapaz de ejercer actos voluntarios, los cuales sí son espirituales. Ahora conviene añadir que la sindéresis -hábito innato, no adquirido-, al versar sobre la *voluntas ut natura* la constituye como acto voluntario primario. De esta manera la *voluntas ut ratio* es una potencia, que al ejercer sus actos es susceptible de hábitos adquiridos. La sindéresis es un hábito innato a través del cual los trascendentales personales conectan con los llamados trascendentales relativos”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 42.

⁶⁵ Many traditional authors normally see the relation of *voluntas ut natura* and the norms, but its constitution by synderesis is not normally seen. Duplá, in his well researched book puts it as follows: “Specifically in the will were not naturally inclined to the good, the moral norms would be totally indifferent to the will, would slip over its surface without wetting it”. “En particular, si la voluntad no estuviera nativamente inclinada al bien, las normas morales le serían perfectamente indiferentes, resbalarían sobre su superficie sin llegar a commoverla”. Rodríguez Duplá, L. R. D., “¿Por qué Sostiene Kant que el Hombre es Malo?”, op. cit., 20.

⁶⁶ “La sindéresis presenta el bien como algo que interpela a la persona exigiéndole una respuesta personal, y de este modo constituye el arranque de toda la vida moral (que tiene también otros supuestos, como la tendencia natural de la voluntad al bien o *voluntas ut natura*)”. Trigo, T., “La Sindéresis, Comienzo y Guía de la Vida Moral”, in “Curso de Ética”, Arvo .net. Accessed June 13, 2015.
<http://arvo.net/uploads/file/ETICA/cursoreticatt/Cap%C3%ADtulo%204.pdf>. Accessed June 13, 2015.

⁶⁷ “La voluntad se mueve desde los hábitos”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 51.

⁶⁸ “Inasmuch as the development of the will depends on synderesis, the Greek interpretation of the will is corrected according to which, by being just desire, the will

in Classical Greek philosophy, or as pure spontaneity, which is the modern version of the will. The classic view constrains the will be under the substance and therefore limits its power because it cannot grow more, cannot develop without limits; its end is already established by the substance, the nature. It then inherits the necessity of nature, and therefore support a type of ethics like the one developed by Spinoza as *Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata*. If it is understood as pure spontaneity, the will is somehow lost, it has no direction, and anything goes⁶⁹. Naturally to grasp correctly how the will works has momentous importance for ethics. In the first case ethics can be understood as a series of inflexible norms, in the second as moral indifference where each one decides ones' rules which in fact is the negation of morals.

The transcendental relationship now has to become desire – *orexis* – and this can only be done when the intelligence presents to the will something as good, because only the character of goodness moves the will. It is interesting to note that the intelligence's object is the truth, not the good. So it has to be under synderesis to discover what is good, at this is what properly constitutes the practical-reason as we shall see in the next section.

a.2. *Voluntas ut ratio*

In the previous section we have seen that for Polo synderesis is mainly an impulse to act, to do good, an impulse that is habitual, in the double sense that it is always present and that it accompanies all the acts of the will. This involves the person, who in each and every decision has to give the energy, so to speak, to carry out the action, and consequently benefitting from it due to the curvature of the will. This is done at the level of the *voluntas ut natura*: “The *voluntas ut ratio* receives the notice of the things provided by the practical reason. Without such notice the voluntary acts, regarding the present good, cannot be exercised. The intelligence knows the truth, it makes objective what is intelligible, but it also has to capture the reason of good to present it to the will. *Nihil volitum quin praecognitum*: the *voluntas ut ratio* cannot be moved by anything that is not previously known. So, although the relationship with the good is constitutive of the will this does not mean that the will knows goods”⁷⁰. The will *ut nature* knows

is subordinated to the intelligence”. “En tanto que el desarrollo de la voluntad depende de la sindéresis, se corrige la interpretación griega de la voluntad según la cual, por ser netamente desiderativa la voluntad es inferior a la inteligencia”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 138.

⁶⁹ “Thus, the notion of natural will is preferable to the spontaneity. Firstly, because it is not identified with the personal act of being. Secondly, because it is pursuable in voluntary acts in which the ‘I’ is constituent and not constituted. Synderesis’ task is the passage from the passive power (*voluntas ut natura*) to the voluntary (*voluntas ut ratio*)”. “Así pues, la noción de voluntad natural es preferible a la de espontaneidad. En primer lugar, porque no se identifica con el ser personal. En segundo lugar, porque es proseguible en actos voluntarios en los que el yo es constituyente y no constituido. El cometido de la sindéresis es el paso de la potencia pasiva pura a lo voluntario”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 40.

⁷⁰ “La *voluntas ut ratio* recibe la noticia de los bienes que la razón práctica le proporciona. Sin esa noticia no se pueden ejercer los actos voluntarios respecto del

that anything good is desirable, so once something good appears, it likes it and tends towards it. But it has to be presented as good to the will.

It is important though, to note that the will is only one, as Polo notes: “The natural-will and the rational-will are not two different powers. It is the same faculty seen in two stages, because the consideration of the will has to be procedural, precisely because it is a tendency power whose deployment must be studied. That deployment begins with its confluence with the intelligence”⁷¹.

It is the task of synderesis as ‘I-see’ to assist in the specification of the will, of the *voluntas ut ratio*. The intelligence, being a knowledge power, gives knowledge because the will is blind since it is not a knowledge power. The will by itself is blind, its task is to move, to decide, to have things done, so it needs another power to guarantee that what the intelligence presents is really good: “As the will is not a cognitive power, such communication must also be borne through synderesis”⁷².

This is what traditionally is called practical reason; ‘reason’ in that it knows the universals, ‘practical’ in that it presents them as goods, and goods attainable and desirable for the specific person at a particular situation and time. The *voluntas ut ratio*, is not a new power but a phase of the act of willing which terminates in the *voluntas ut habitus* as Polo clearly explains: “The *voluntas ut ratio* is not a power distinct from the natural will, but its continuation. It is characterized, firstly, by being enlightened with the knowledge of the goods, knowledge provided by the so-called practical reason and, secondly, by the exercise of the acts by which active virtues are acquired”⁷³.

In the following text it looks as if Polo identifies the second member of synderesis, the ‘I-want’, with practical reason, or at least as the habit that makes it possible to know the good. It is pertinent to

bien presente. La inteligencia conoce la verdad, objetiva lo inteligible, pero también le corresponde captar la razón de bien en tanto que la presenta a la voluntad. *Nihil volitum quin praecognitum*: la *voluntas ut ratio* no puede querer nada si antes no ha sido conocido. De manera que, aunque la relación con el bien sea constitutiva de la voluntad, eso no significa que la voluntad conozca bienes”. *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷¹ “La voluntad nativa y la voluntad racional no son dos facultades. Es la misma entendida en dos momentos, pues la consideración de la voluntad tiene que ser procesual, precisamente porque se trata de una potencia tendencial cuyo despliegue hay que estudiar. Ese despliegue comienza por la confluencia de la inteligencia”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 147.

⁷² “Como la voluntad no es una potencia cognoscitiva, dicha comunicación también ha de correr a cargo de la sindéresis. Por eso puede decirse que la sindéresis armoniza la razón práctica con los actos de la *voluntas ut ratio*”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 10.

⁷³ “La *voluntas ut ratio* no es una potencia distinta de la voluntad natural, sino su continuación. Se caracteriza, en primer lugar, por ser ilustrada con el conocimiento de los bienes, el cual corre a cargo de la llamada razón práctica y, en segundo lugar, por el ejercicio de actos con los que se adquieren las virtudes activas”. *Ibid.*, 7.

remember that the innate habits are ways of knowing, as we explained before, not to be surprised that the will as part of the appetitive powers is moved by a special type of knowledge: “The second member of the duality of good judgment, ‘I-want’, is also an illuminating light”⁷⁴. “If the duality of synderesis is accepted, it is then possible to understand the difference between the theoretical and practical reasons. The explanation of the theoretical reason is the ‘I-see’; on the other hand the practical reason derives from synderesis. If, as said before, the rational will is a continuation of the natural will, and not a different power, then practical reason should also be understood as derived from the second member of synderesis. If this is not taken into account, it is difficult to accept that there is a rational knowledge of the goods”⁷⁵.

The *voluntas ut ratio* because it is open to many goods, is not a simple act, but a complex one that requires a successive interaction of the intelligence and the will until the action is done and the intended good achieved. The absolute good that can fill up the infinite capacity of the spirit is not presentable by the senses, nor by the intelligence that depends on the senses for its activation as Polo remarks: “The first act of practical reason is to conceive goods. As such, this conception is plural and it generally increases with age. But in any case, the first goods are conceived as means. Moreover, while the goods are conceived as plural, they are not yet compared to each other according to their relative importance. Because of this, the mere conception of goods, is followed by other acts of practical reason, namely, enquiry or counsel, which are part of the process called deliberation”⁷⁶.

Because of the importance to morals, since the actual moral responsibility depends on the acts of the *voluntas ut ratio*, we shall study them in the next chapter, where we discuss the importance to morals, so that we can succinctly explain the *voluntas ut habitus* and complete the types of will.



⁷⁴ “El segundo miembro de la dualidad de la sindéresis, el querer-yo, es, asimismo, una luz iluminante”. *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁵ Si se admite la dualidad de la sindéresis, es posible entender la distinción entre la razón teórica y la razón práctica. La explicación de la razón teórica es el ver-yo; en cambio, la razón práctica deriva de la sindéresis. Si, como se decía, la voluntad racional es una continuación de la voluntad natural, y no una potencia distinta de ella, la razón práctica también ha de entenderse como derivada del segundo miembro de la sindéresis. Si esto no se tiene en cuenta, es difícil admitir que existe un conocimiento racional de los bienes. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁷⁶ “El primer acto de la razón práctica es el concebir bienes. Como se ha dicho, esa concepción es plural y suele aumentar con la edad. Pero, en cualquier caso, los primeros bienes que se conciben tienen carácter de medios. Por otra parte, en tanto que los bienes se conciben como plurales, todavía no se comparan entre sí de acuerdo con su importancia relativa. Por eso, a la mera concepción de los bienes, siguen otros actos de la razón práctica, a saber, la inquisición o el consejo, que forman parte de un proceso llamado deliberación”. *Ibid.*, 10.

a.3. *Voluntas ut habitus*

As already cited above the “the will acts through its habits” which makes Polo distinguish a third level of the will which is the ‘will as a habit’, what in common language is called ‘will power’: “The *voluntas ut ratio* is to be regarded as a development [of the *voluntas ut natura*]; to study this development another dimension must be added: the *voluntas ut habitus*. The acts of the *voluntas ut ratio*, spoken of Thomas Aquinas, cannot be exercised without habits”⁷⁷.

The *voluntas ut habitus* is the root of the different moral virtues. The virtues help the will to strengthen but they are not different from the person, who through the ‘I’, —the synderesis— has to reinforce the will each time: “In principle, voluntary acts should not be abandoned. The virtues strengthen the acts, i.e. the involvement of the self in them. Good deeds should not be left unassisted”⁷⁸. But in some cases the ‘I’ has to change the course of action because through synderesis the person realises that the action is evil: “Of course, synderesis can always suggest that it is possible not to assist a specific decision. And that sometimes, it is an obligation to do so if the act is wrong. In that case, the ‘I’ is obliged to ‘turn back’”⁷⁹.

For Polo the difference between the virtues is a difference of the intensity of the activation of the will. He also proposes a different rank of virtues from the concupiscent to the irascible and then to justice and friendship, all under the umbrella of prudence which is an intellectual virtue of the practical reason. We do not need to get into the detailed explanation of this, suffice it to point out how the virtues link with the practical-reason, and the ‘I-want’ as part of synderesis⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ “La ‘voluntas ut ratio’ se ha de considerar como un desarrollo; para estudiar ese desarrollo hay que añadir otra dimensión: la ‘voluntas ut habitus’. Los actos propios de la ‘voluntas ut ratio’, de que habla Tomás de Aquino, no se pueden ejercer sin hábitos. El primer hábito es la prudencia, y el *consensus* una parte de la prudencia”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 73.

⁷⁸ “En principio, los actos voluntarios no se deben anular. Las virtudes fortalecen los actos, es decir, la adhesión a ellos del yo. Los actos buenos no deben ser desasistidos”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 58.

⁷⁹ “Desde luego, la sindéresis siempre puede advertir que es posible desasistir un acto voluntario concreto. Y que, a veces, es obligado hacerlo si el acto es malo. En ese caso, el yo está obligado a “echarse atrás”. *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁰ While Polo’s proposal on the virtues is very interesting and he considers the virtues the central topic of ethics we cannot deal with them in this dissertation. For a clear explanation of his proposal. cfr. Sellés, J. F., *Los Hábitos Adquiridos: las Virtudes de la Inteligencia y la Voluntad según Tomás de Aquino* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2000. Accessed 12 December 2014. <http://dspace.unav.es/dspace/handle/10171/5587>. For an interesting and easy to follow description of virtues for managers Polo, L., “La Ética y las Virtudes del Empresario”, *Atlántida*, 14 (1993) 80-92.

a.4. *Voluntas ut actio*

Polo does not use the term *voluntas ut actio* to speak about what traditionally is called active use of the will, as mentioned above⁸¹. We choose to use it to highlight how the activity of the will reaches the action, which is, according to Polo, through the will's intention. The intention of the will is 'intention of other', as well clarified by Polo following the classic authors. The will's intentionality is a movement towards something external, the good to be acquired. The intentionality of the intelligence, by contrast, is intention of likeness: "In my view, the distinction between the faculties of the spirit corresponds to different intentions: the intentionality, of similarity, that is specific character of the object thought, and intentionality of other that characterizes the voluntary acts"⁸².

The active use, is the purpose of the will, the action intended, and as such it is intrinsically related to our topic because it is the core of ethics as practical science. If there are no actions there is no ethics, and to try to study ethics without giving to actions their due importance will be misplaced. Polo is conscious of its importance and gives the reasons for it: "the topic of action, as I mentioned, is the basic theme of ethics because thanks to it ethics starts, virtues are acquired through actions, and goods are obtained through actions"⁸³.

While Polo highlights the importance of the active use of the will he would like to improve its explanation, because "the notion of active use presents some difficulties. It is unclear how the will influences the locomotor faculties. For example, what is the relationship between wanting to move the hand and actually moving it? And whether this has to be a relationship between the hand and the brain? Neither biologists nor philosophers know how the will and brain are connected"⁸⁴.

⁸¹ "The scholastics called active use the connection of the will and action. The will is in the doing; just like the idea, because otherwise things would not be done according to the thought, as one wants to do according to the idea". "Los escolásticos llaman uso activo de la voluntad a la conexión del querer con el hacer. El querer está en el hacer; lo mismo que la idea, porque en otro caso no saldría la cosa tal como se piensa, tal como se quiere hacer de acuerdo con la idea". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 186.

⁸² "A mi modo de ver, la distinción de las facultades del espíritu se corresponde con sus distintas intencionalidades: la intencionalidad de semejanza, propia del carácter del objeto pensado, y la intencionalidad de alteridad, que caracteriza a los actos voluntarios". Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 69.

⁸³ "El tema de la acción que ya dije que era el tema básico de la ética porque con él se inicia la ética, se adquieren las virtudes a través de la acción y con la acción se consiguen bienes. Polo, L., *Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral* (unpublished transcription as translated in Appendix 1, Seville, July 1994) paragraph 25.

⁸⁴ "La noción de uso activo ofrece algunas dificultades. No es claro cómo influye la voluntad en la llamada facultad locomotriz. Por ejemplo, ¿cuál es la relación entre el querer mover la mano y el efectivo moverla, si esto último corre a cargo de la relación de la mano con el cerebro? Ni los biólogos ni los filósofos saben de qué modo la voluntad y el cerebro se conectan". Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 16.

Leonardo Polo is conscious that his proposal is different from the classics. He somehow identifies the action as an act of the will (not the physical action), but the intention, which an act of the will: “For example, the phrase ‘I write with a pen’, or ‘I plough with the plow’; the activity done is the written letter or the ploughed field. The action is the verb—I write, I plough—and it is constituted by the ‘I’. If the intention of the action would stop in the work then it would be integrated in the plexus. But if action traverses through the work the action amounts to what traditional philosophy called *intentio*. In other words, I argue that the action and the intention are not different acts. What I call traversing the work is equivalent to decrypt or reveal its meaning”⁸⁵. He also says it more emphatically: “The term ‘active use’ is unacceptable. This voluntary act should be called action: it is the voluntary praxis whose intention is the piece of work at hand. In the piece of work the knowledge is passed to the motor powers, especially to the hands. In this communication, the form known by the immanent operation becomes configurational of what is done. In this sense, we speak of ‘putting legs to ideas’. ‘Legs’ is the execution of the piece of work, but without ideas there is nothing to ‘put legs’ to. The communication of the ideas to the motor powers through the imagination is quite understandable from a neurological point of view. It is the relationship between the activating and inhibiting nerve functions that start from the ideas. But, we do not know how the active use of the will could use the motor powers making them passive”⁸⁶.

This proposal is new and requires some development. As a first impression it explains better the conjunct implication of the intelligence, the will, and the senses in any action that requires the use of the body or the sensitive faculties e.g. the imagination or the memory. It can also explain better the continuous care of the action needed while the piece of work is being done that normally requires adjustments and rectifications. Nevertheless, it is not clear what the status of the intentions is before actualizing them and as they are being actualized. Furthermore, how one can reject intentions midway; that the intention

⁸⁵ “Por ejemplo, la expresión “yo escribo con la pluma”, o “yo aro con el arado”; la obra es la carta escrita o el campo roturado. La acción es el verbo —escribo, aro—, y es constituida por el yo. Si la intención de la acción se detuviera en la obra, ésta sería un medio integrado en el plexo. En cambio, si la acción atraviesa la obra, la acción equivale al acto que la filosofía tradicional llama *intentio*. Con otras palabras, sostengo que la acción y la intención no son actos distintos. Lo que llamo atravesar la obra equivale a descifrar o desvelar su sentido”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 19.

⁸⁶ “La expresión ‘uso activo’ es inaceptable. A este acto voluntario conviene llamarle acción: es la praxis voluntaria cuya intención es la obra. En la obra el conocimiento se comunica a las facultades motoras, sobre todo, a las manos. En esa comunicación, la forma conocida por la operación immanente, pasa a ser configurante de lo que se hace. En este sentido, se habla de ‘ponerle patas a las ideas’. ‘Las patas’ son la ejecución de la obra, pero sin ideas no hay nada a lo que ‘ponerle patas’. La comunicación de las ideas a las facultades motoras a través de la imaginación es bastante comprensible desde el punto de vista neurológico. Es la relación entre las funciones nerviosas inhibidoras y las funciones excitadoras que arrancan de ellas. En cambio, no sabemos cómo el uso activo de la voluntad podría usar las facultades motoras haciéndolas pasivas”. *Ibid.*, 18.

accompanies the active use is clear, but it looks different from the intention which can be there in waiting until the appropriate moment comes, and if it does not come it is rejected or changed. We shall see the steps of the practical intelligence and the will when we discuss synderesis' dynamics in the next chapter.

a.5 Summary

We have seen so far that synderesis is a natural habit at the essential level that has two facets within it: the ‘I-see’ and the ‘I-want’. We have seen how through the ‘I-want’ synderesis constitutes the will as natural will, and how through the practical reason it activates the rational will, which, with use, becomes the habitual will, which is the normal way of acting; and how the active use of the will is not properly an active use of the will itself but a way of putting the intention of the will in practice through the intelligence and sensitive potencies. We now complete the duality of the synderesis by briefly seeing the ‘I-see’ side of synderesis.

7. The ‘I-see’ side of the synderesis

The I-want and I-see always work together, they cannot work alone, since they are the two sides of the same habit and root of the equally inseparable faculties of the will and the intelligence. The inseparability of the will and the intelligence in any human action is clearly stated by Polo: “Thomas Aquinas notes that the first thing that is demanded of the one who has to do something is to know. Acting blindly is ineffective”⁸⁷.

The classic philosophy view of synderesis is amply covered by the discussion on the ‘I-want’ side of synderesis, which was the only one attributed to synderesis and in a more reduced way than Polo proposes. Polo introduces another novelty by placing all intellectual knowledge under this innate habit: “now if the theme of synderesis is the will, by higher motives it should also be able to illuminate the intellectual faculty. To start with, the intellectual power does not know itself, neither through its operations –through which it simply knows objects– nor with the acquired habits which manifest the operations”⁸⁸. This means that the intelligence is only known in its depth by the innate habit of synderesis because the intelligence by itself only knows objects⁸⁹.

⁸⁷ “Tomás de Aquino advierte que lo primero que se ha de pedir al que actúa es que sepa. Actuar a ciegas es ineficaz”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 15.

⁸⁸ “Ahora bien, si el tema de la sindéresis es la voluntad, por mayores motivos ha de iluminar también la potencia intelectual. Por lo pronto, la potencia intelectual no se conoce a sí misma, ni tampoco con sus operaciones –las cuales simplemente conocen objetos–, ni siquiera con los hábitos adquiridos –los cuales manifiestan las operaciones–”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 149.

⁸⁹ The intellectual character of synderesis has been seen well in Medieval Philosophy and that means, as in this citation, that it is essential for man’s rationality and for

The ‘I-see’ is the side of synderesis that can help to discover the mental limit in a more direct way than the will. If we start by analysing our knowledge process we eventually reach what Polo calls its ‘limit’; the boundary of objective knowledge. We discover that the one who knows exists in a different way than the thoughts he thinks. Thinking cannot be thought, or saying it from the source of thinking: the thinker is not a thought while he thinks. His thinking is different from his thought, even when he thinks about himself; the thought of a thinker does not think. In the same way that a photographer normally does not appear in the photograph, the thinker does not appear in the known. Therefore, because the thinker knows that he knows and that he is not his thinking, there should be a different way by which the thinker knows himself, and this is achieved through habitual knowledge according to Polo⁹⁰, i.e. a knowledge of acts, not a knowledge of objects. The act of thinking and the thought are simultaneous and corresponding each to the other; there is no object without act of knowledge and there is no act of knowledge without a known object. So the operation knows objects and the operation is known by the habit. The habit knows the act; the act (operation) knows the object. Using the example of sight, the eye does not know that it is seeing, it just sees; seeing does not have colour. The same happens with the intelligence, it knows the object by abstraction, and its knowing that knows is not sensible, so it cannot be abstracted.

There are two ways to give attention to the fact of knowing; either placing the attention on the act, or to focus it on the object. If we focus on the act we reach the knowledge of existences –of acts of being– thanks to specific habits as follows: the existence of the universe is done through the habit of the first principles, and the existence of the persons –the personal act of being– through the habit of wisdom. By focusing the attention on the content rather than on the act we reach the essential knowledge as follows: of the world –through the habit of science– and the knowledge of the essence of human beings –through the habit of synderesis–. These are the four ways of overcoming the mental boundary that Polo proposes, as mentioned before. We have already explained this in more detail in chapter five of the first section.

social development: “Humans have innate habits without which they could never be rational, one of these being synderesis, which regulates human activity and is a solid base on which a society of peace can be built”. Sequeira, J. A., “Synderesis and the magisterium”, *Cuestiones Teológicas*, vol. 40/93, (2013), 47.

⁹⁰ “Without denying that it is acquired, habitual knowledge is the only hope to overcome the mental boundary. This is why I defend that the habitual knowledge is superior to the operational presential knowledge, that is normally called, objective knowledge”. “Sin negar que sea adquirido, en el conocimiento habitual aparece la única esperanza de superar el límite. Por eso sostengo que este modo de conocimiento es superior al conocimiento operativo presencial, que suele llamarse objetivo”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 48.

8. Ways of overcoming the mental boundary

Nevertheless, the discovery of these upper levels of knowledge –the innate habits and the personal knowledge– is not something that belongs to synderesis, because synderesis is below the personal level, while wisdom and the first principles are at the personal level. Synderesis can see what is below itself but cannot see what is above it, not even itself⁹¹. Synderesis can be seen from above, because it is the door of the personal knowledge, and through it one can know the acts that synderesis controls⁹². Synderesis itself is to be known through the superior habits of wisdom and first principles.

From the innate habit of synderesis as the ‘I-see’ all and every act of knowledge cascades down⁹³. Each act of knowledge has a subsequent acquired habit which highlights that particular type of knowledge, the activity, rather than the content: habit which is normally hidden and passes unnoticed⁹⁴. Polo has written four volumes⁹⁵ explaining in detail the operations of knowledge and their corresponding habits. Suffice here to know that they are all dependent of the habit of synderesis as ‘I-see’. So the ‘I-see’ integrates human knowledge coming from the rational powers and consequently of sensitivity. Synderesis itself is ultimately activated by the personal act of being and more specifically by the *agent intellect* or *intellect of actus*: “The first member of that habit (synderesis) ‘I-see’ encapsulates or comprises what it illuminates, primarily the mental limit, i.e. the intellectual operations”⁹⁶. It is good to remember that the mental limit is all objective knowledge which are operations and habits of the intelligence which is below synderesis.

As with the will there is a distinction between the ultimate power of understanding which is the intellect *ut actus* –also called by Polo

⁹¹ "According to their hierarchy, one can distinguish two symbolic levels. The bottom is one that is deciphered by the sindéresis, and the upper one that is not, precisely cover issues of one of the upper innate habits". "De acuerdo con su jerarquía, pueden distinguirse dos niveles simbólicos. El inferior es aquél que es descifrado por la sindéresis, y el superior aquél que no lo es, precisamente por versar sobre temas de uno de los hábitos innatos superiores". Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 217.

⁹² "The character of ‘more’ is also able to return to the starting point. Without such return the essence of man would not be possible. The return of the character of ‘more’ to the mental presence is done by the synderesis". "El carácter de *además* es capaz de volver a su punto de partida. Sin dicha vuelta no sería posible la esencia del hombre. La vuelta del carácter de *además* a la presencia mental corre a cargo de la sindéresis". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 176.

⁹³ "Specifically, first, synderesis sheds light on the intermediate species of the internal sensitivity, and on the acts and habits acquired by the intelligence. So, in the progress research, Polo reserved to synderesis the abstractive role, he and tradition attributed, to the agent intellect. In addition, he has also assigned to this native habit that necessity which he had discovered extending the classical doctrine". "En concreto, por una parte, la sindéresis arroja luz sobre las especies de la sensibilidad intermedia, sobre los actos y los hábitos adquiridos de la inteligencia. De modo que, con el avance de su investigación, Polo ha reservado para la sindéresis ese papel abstractivo que él mismo y la tradición atribuía antes al intelecto agente".

the core of knowledge⁹⁷, and at times simply intellectus. He describes the different levels of the intelligence as follows: "We distinguish three aspects of the intellect: *intellectus ut potentia*, which is often called intellectual ability or intelligence; *intellectus ut habitus*: the habit of first principles; *intellectus ut actus*: which is called agent intellect that in my proposal is a personal transcendental. Of course, the *intellectus ut potentia* and *intellectus ut actus* are innate, but not in the same sense: the first is at the essential level the second is at the personal act of being level. We have proved that the intellectual habits are due to the illumination of the agent intellect, which does not limit itself to provide the impressed species to the intelligence. We can then say that the *intellectus ut habitus* comes simpliciter from the *intellectus ut actus*, and, because it is not a perfection of the intellectual faculty, then only the agent intellect can be properly called innate"⁹⁸. These distinctions, which are very relevant for theory of knowledge, are not

Sellés, J. F., *El Conocer Personal: Estudio del Entendimiento Agente según Leonardo Polo*, op. cit., 106.

⁹⁴ "An intellectual operation is not an inner light, but it hides itself; this is why the operation has only methodical value in its object, thus said, intentional. The objective intentionality is also a transparency, albeit minimal by immediately pointing to a term (*in-tentio-in*). It is an aspectual light. On their part, the acquired habits have inner light inasmuch as they manifest the operation rather than the object. It is a light that, more than "bathe", it permeates, "soaks" the operation, which is then manifested by it. The operations are discontinued; the habits are not, since they are not lost". "La operación intelectual no es una luz interior, sino que se oculta; por eso la operación sólo tiene valor metódico en su objeto, que se dice intencional. La intencionalidad objetiva es también una transparencia, aunque sea mínima por apuntar inmediatamente a un término (*in-tentio-in*). Es una luz aspectual. Por su parte, los hábitos adquiridos poseen luz interior en tanto que no objetivan la operación, sino que la manifiestan. Es una luz que más que "bañar", interioriza, "empapa" la operación, la cual es por eso desocultada por ella. Las operaciones son discontinuas; los hábitos no lo son, puesto que no se pierden". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 176.

⁹⁵ Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, vols. I-IV, the fourth one in two different books, I y II, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1984-2004).

⁹⁶ "La manifestación de la persona humana es el proseguir del hábito innato llamado sindéresis; pues ese proseguir se realiza de acuerdo con lo que llamo *ver-yo y querer-yo*. El primer miembro de ese hábito —*ver-yo*— abarca o engloba lo que ilumina, ante todo, el límite mental, o sea, las operaciones intelectuales". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 18.

⁹⁷ "If no one knows, it would make no sense to speak about intellectual knowledge. Because of this dependence I call the person, i.e., the knower, the core of knowledge". Si no conoce alguien, no tiene sentido hablar de conocimiento intelectual. En atención a esta dependencia llamo a la persona, es decir, al cognoscente, el núcleo del saber. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, IV, op. cit., 548.

⁹⁸ "Distinguimos tres sentidos del intelecto: *intellectus ut potentia*, que se suele llamar facultad intelectual o inteligencia; *intellectus ut habitus*: es el hábito de los primeros principios; y *intellectus ut actus*: es el llamado intelecto agente, que en el planteamiento propuesto se entiende como un trascendental personal humano. Desde luego, el *intellectus ut potentia* y el *intellectus ut actus* son innatos, pero no en el mismo sentido: el primero lo es esencialmente, y el segundo en el orden del acto de ser humano. Hemos sentado que los hábitos intelectuales son debidos a la iluminación del intelecto agente, que no se limita a proporcionar especies impresas

essential for the discussion on ethics. They nevertheless show how the ‘I-see’ side of the synderesis is also constitutive of the intellectual faculty.

The constitution of the first act of the habitual intelligence is done by the first abstraction which enables or constitutes the habit of conscience: “The corresponding habit to the abstraction of the circle illuminates it as the symbol of the ‘I-see’ habit. ‘I’ means the human person as being poured into the essence. The immateriality or spirituality of the soul is shown in this notion. So the ‘I’ is entirely inseparable from the two lines of deployment of the human essence manifestation. This is why I speak always of the ‘I-see’ and the ‘I-want’ and not in isolation of the ‘I’, because that would be to consider it a reality in itself. An important difference between the two sides is that ‘I-see’, whose symbolic continuation I describe as cascade of events, only preserves the ‘I’ in its culmination. Only because of this fact is why other symbols are possible, whom I call vicarious symbols, i.e. the symbol that we are now considering is relieved by them”⁹⁹. This text is particularly important to show: 1) the reason of not speaking of the ‘I’ in isolation; 2) the inseparability of the two sides of synderesis as the ‘I’; 3) the circle being the symbol of the ‘I-see’; 4) why in the intellectual operations the ‘I’ does not appear as it is hidden under the object but it appears only in the first habit ‘the conscience’; 5) the reason for the ‘I’ appearing as ‘conscience’ in all acts of knowledge. We prefer to discuss this point later because at this stage it will be more difficult to see the moral side of it since it appears as ‘consciousness’ rather than as moral conscience.

Finally, and to set the base for the discussion on the moral experience in the next chapter, it is good we refer to the intellectual experience, which sums up the habitual knowledge at the synderesis level.¹⁰⁰ Polo understands the knowledge of the habits of the intelligence by the ‘I-see’ side of synderesis as ‘intellectual experience’.

a la inteligencia. Pues bien, el *intellectus ut habitus* se debe *simpliciter* al *intellectus ut actus*, y, al no ser una perfección de la potencia intelectual, sólo puede decirse innato al intelecto agente”. *Ibid.*, 679.

⁹⁹ “El hábito correspondiente a la abstracción de la circunferencia la ilumina como símbolo de ver-yo. Yo significa persona humana vertida hacia la esencia. En esta noción se cifra la inmaterialidad o espiritualidad del alma. Por eso el yo es enteramente inseparable de las dos líneas de despliegue de manifestación de la esencia humana. También por eso hablo siempre de ver-yo o de querer-yo y no aisladamente del yo, porque sería una realidad en sí. Una diferencia importante entre las dos vertientes es que ver-yo, cuya prosecución simbólica describo como cascada de actos, sólo conserva el yo en su culmen. Sólo por esto son posibles otros símbolos, a los que por esta razón llamaré vicarios, es decir que toman el relevo al símbolo que estamos ahora considerando”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 219.

¹⁰⁰ The view of synderesis as a special intuition is also seen by other authors, e.g. Jaroszynski, P., Anderson, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 67. “The intuition of the first principles is called synderesis that could also be described as the first and original level of human conscience”. “La intuición de estos primeros principios se llama *sindéresis*, que también puede ser descrita como el nivel primario y original de la conciencia humana”.

Which is different from ‘moral experience’ which is given by the habits of the will to the ‘I-want’: “I call intellectual experience the acquired habits as they are known by synderesis. While intellectual experience is superior to symbolic knowledge, includes symbols, but this does not imply that all are deciphered. It is very important to set these distinctions to avoid the mistake that is to understand the issues of intellectual experience as terminal intuitions, because human knowledge does not stop at this level”¹⁰¹. Polo is referring to the knowledge of the innate habits and the personal knowledge as superior levels of knowledge.

9. *Synderesis and the soul*

In order to relate better the classic concept of the soul to the triadic structure proposed by Polo, it is relevant to notice that Polo places the soul within the triadic structure of man equating it to the human essence, and that therefore is composed of synderesis, the intellect and the will. “I understand what is traditionally called —immortal— spiritual soul as human essential manifestation, ranging from synderesis to the immaterial powers and the psychosomatic expressions. Aquinas argues that the reality of the soul is known by a habit. Naturally, such habit is innate, and this is equated to synderesis”¹⁰². We can say that this means basically that Polo considers the soul to comprise the essential level, but we should not forget that it is hierarchically ordered, so synderesis can at times be used to mean the global essence and therefore the soul.

Polo’s ontological soul’s explanation modifies the classical view to adjust it to the triadic structure of the man, as he says: “The reality of the soul lies not only on the spiritual powers, but in their apex: the habit of synderesis. The reception of the body is an inborn habit, so that the reference of the soul to the body is not the first act, and still less its formal cause. Also, I do not believe that the disembodied human soul is an incomplete substance because an innate habit is actually superior to a substance”¹⁰³. So in this text it seems that synderesis will

¹⁰¹ “Llamo experiencia intelectual al tema de los hábitos adquiridos en tanto que manifiestos por la sindéresis. En tanto que la experiencia intelectual es superior al conocimiento simbólico, engloba a los símbolos, pero esto no implica que los descifre a todos. Es muy importante sentar estas distinciones para evitar el desliz que consiste en entender los temas de la experiencia intelectual como intuiciones terminales, porque el conocimiento humano no acaba en este nivel”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 226.

¹⁰² “Lo que tradicionalmente se llama alma espiritual —inmortal— se entiende aquí como la manifestación esencial humana, que va desde la sindéresis hasta las potencias inmateriales y la expresión psicosomática. Tomás de Aquino sostiene que la realidad del alma se conoce habitualmente. Como es claro, ese hábito es innato, y aquí es equiparado a la sindéresis. Desde la sindéresis se entiende el alma como refuerzo vital”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 15.

¹⁰³ “Por tanto, la realidad del alma estriba, no sólo en las potencias espirituales, sino en su ápice habitual: la sindéresis. La recepción del cuerpo es un hábito innato, de manera que la referencia del alma al cuerpo no es la de un acto primero, y menos

encompass the soul after death, in the state of the decomposition of the body. Simply said it will mean that what will remain after death will be the person –the personal level– and its essence, which will distinguish each person from any other person and from the angels, rather than a separated soul as a self-supporting substance. In a conversation with three of his disciples he asserted this more clearly: “Synderesis cannot disappear because then the soul would also disappear”¹⁰⁴.

10. Synderesis as adding life

When talking about the relationship between the personal transcendental co-existence and synderesis in the second volume of his *Antropología transcendental*, Polo uses the term ‘manifestation’. This is another way to express the difference between the natural and the essential levels of the man’s triadic structure. He suggests that the natural level is ‘received life’ while the essential level becomes the ‘added life’: “By depending on the co-existence, the essential manifestation is, so to speak, permeated by freedom. The activity of the essence is based on this penetration of freedom. So the essence is life, and this life is immortal. In this regard, two things should be noted: first, the distinction between living and life; and secondly, the distinction between added-life –vital reinforcement– and received-life”¹⁰⁵. The added life if what really constitutes one’s personal task and therefore a moral duty¹⁰⁶

The added life is built by the intelligence and the will under the instigation of the personal level through synderesis. The added life is the manifestation of the person. It is developed by using what has been received. The person can avail of what has been received to improve, neglect or even misuse and destroy himself. Polo calls inspiration to the activity of using the capacities available as received life, while he

aún la de una causa formal. Asimismo, no estimo acertado sostener que el alma humana separada del cuerpo sea una sustancia incompleta, pues un hábito innato es realmente superior a una sustancia”. *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ “La sindéresis no puede desaparecer porque entonces desaparecería el alma”. Polo, L., *Conversaciones en Bogotá*, op. cit. 6-7. “synderesis is enough to explain the soul; the soul belongs to the essential level and without the ‘I’ there is no soul, but the soul is not the person and soul emerges then and in fact what is created is the person and by implication also the soul”. “La sindéresis basta para explicar el alma, o sea que el alma pertenece al orden esencial y sin el yo no cabe alma, pero el alma no es la persona y el alma surge entonces y en rigor lo que es creado es la persona y por derivación también el alma”. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ “Al depender de la co-existencia, la manifestación esencial está, por así decirlo, ‘atravesada’ por la libertad. Esta extensión de la libertad es la actividad de la esencia. Por eso la esencia es vida, y su vivir es inmortal. Al respecto, conviene señalar dos distinciones: en primer lugar, la distinción entre *viviente* y *vida*; y en segundo lugar, la distinción entre *vida añadida* -o *refuerzo vital*- y *vida recibida*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 13.

¹⁰⁶ “So, life coming from parents [received life] should be reinforced [adding life] by the son in order to become one’s own life”. “Así pues, la vida que viene de los padres tiene que ser reforzada por el hijo para que sea vida propia”. *Ibid.*, 14.

calls reinforcement to what the person adds as shown in this text: “The vital reinforcement is able to take inspiration from the life received. That inspiration does not mean precisely encompassing the corporeal life, but strengthening it. Synderesis can then be described as global inspiration and therefore as manifestation and global reinforcement. There is no possibility of an inspiration to be unilateral, or without reinforcement. Therefore, it must be done by the involvement of the intelligence and the will on the body”¹⁰⁷.

The received life is received mainly from the parents, not only as inherited biological and psychological characteristics, but also all bits and pieces received through informal and formal education that the family and society interactions leave in the person, many times without oneself having control, and many times without even being aware. Polo, nevertheless, points out that the act of being does not come from the parents and this is why each person is independent and unrepeatable and can gradually take over his life through one’s intelligence and will to maturity¹⁰⁸.

As one matures one gradually takes command, gets inspiration on what one has available, and reinforces it, by directing one’s life, making increasingly manifest the person one is becoming. The person core also changes as we shall see: “Thus, the life received from the parents has to be reinforced by the son to be his own life: it is added to the life received from the sex cells. Reinforcement has to be added to the life that comes from parents and this depends on the person of the child. Such reinforcement is the manifestation of the person. If the life of a human being proceeded entirely from their parents, no one could speak of one’s life as the essence of the person of the son. However, we must not overlook that the human species is social, and life received places the person in history. If man is isolated, his essential freedom growth will be impossible”¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁷ “El refuerzo vital es capaz de inspirarse en la vida recibida. Esa inspiración no significa precisamente comprender la vida corpórea, sino reforzarla. La sindéresis se describe como inspiración global y, por tanto, como manifestación y refuerzo globales. No cabe que la inspiración sea unilateral, o sin refuerzo. Por tanto, debe cifrarse en la inclusión de la inteligencia y la voluntad en el cuerpo”. *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ “The reproductive cells come from the parents; however, the person of the child is created by God: even if different generations give birth to different children, the personal character of the children is not from their parents”. “Las células reproductoras proceden de los padres; en cambio, la persona del hijo es creada por Dios: por más que a generaciones distintas correspondan hijos distintos, el carácter personal del hijo no procede de sus padres” *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ “Así pues, la vida que viene de los padres tiene que ser reforzada por el hijo para que sea vida propia: se añade vida a las células sexuales, que están vivas. A la vida que procede de los padres se ha de añadir un refuerzo que depende de la persona del hijo. Dicho refuerzo es la manifestación de la persona. Si la vida de un ser humano procediera enteramente de sus padres, no se podría hablar de la vida como esencia de la persona del hijo. Sin embargo, es preciso no pasar por alto que la especie humana es social, y que la vida recibida emplaza a la persona en la historia. Si el ser humano se aísla, el crecimiento de su libertad esencial es imposible”. *Ibid.*

It is important to note how Polo recognises not only the importance of what is received from the parents but what has been received from society, which does not end at any particular time. Further to it we shall see that the manifestation of the person requires the attention of other people to be recognised and that one's happiness consists in contributing so that other people develop themselves as persons.

This distinction between the received life and the acquired life is very interesting for ethics, because it gives a series of tools to see what a person is responsible or not responsible for and of duties and rights, topics which will be discussed in Chapter Ten. We now have to see whether synderesis and the personal act of being do change; which is vital for ethics.

11. Changes in synderesis

It is good to notice that an inborn habit does not mean that it cannot change: as the bones are innate and they do grow, similarly happens with most of the physical, psychological and personal characteristics one is born with.

Medieval philosophers were almost unanimous in that synderesis, being the first principles of moral life, could not be lost, even in the worst criminals. Most also said that synderesis was the guarantee of a universal moral standard. This was practically synderesis' only function, and therefore it could not change. It was clear that it could be obscured, one may not pay attention to it, but its contents could never change. Evil judgements of criminals were due to the poor judgement done by their conscience in applying the principles badly to the specific laws and situations, or by the vices acquired. Leonardo Polo agrees to this, at least in some texts: "Synderesis is not changeable. Limit situations of difficult solution, human incoherent attitudes are not lacking"¹¹⁰.

Nevertheless, of the many activities synderesis controls in Polo's proposal there is either improvement or diminishing in the 'I-see' and 'I-want' depending on personal acceptance or rejection. One can speak of people who have better or worse synderesis, more or less clarity about the knowledge of human nature. As one can grow in wisdom and the use of the first principles, the other two innate habits, it will be surprising that the one under them will not change. This is clearly stated by Sellés: "together with what we have mentioned it should be added that all these innate habits can grow; development which is due to the activity of the agent intellect, and that also benefits

¹¹⁰ "La sindéresis no es mudable. Situaciones límites de difícil solución, incoherencia en las actitudes humanas, no faltan". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 167.

the agent intellect”¹¹¹ and more specifically regarding synderesis: “innate habits are also susceptible to growth. In this way, synderesis can have more light to progressively reveal the essence and human nature, and that is the way it grows”¹¹². Leonardo Polo’s affirmation that synderesis cannot change must then refer to the content or natural moral law, rather than to synderesis as an innate habit and the acts it performs¹¹³.

Leonardo Polo did not directly treat this issue, nevertheless he recognises its potential character, so its acts will somehow modify it: “By being the apex of the human essence, synderesis has a potential character (otherwise, the real distinction cannot be supported)”¹¹⁴. The cause of its worsening is evil, the deprivation of the good the person needs. “Most negative affections perturb synderesis, which being the illuminating habit of the human essence, loses clarity and its capacity to give light by being deprived of the good”¹¹⁵. It can also reflect those changes by the affections it shows, feeling either some smoothness when things go well or some grittiness when disturbed¹¹⁶. In a more informal way in a conversation in Bogotá he mentioned that in our

¹¹¹ “A la par, sobre los precedentes planteamientos cabe un añadido, y es que todos esos hábitos innatos son susceptibles de crecimiento; desarrollo debido al intelecto agente y en orden a él”. Sellés, J. F., *Antropología para Inconformes: Una Antropología Abierta al Futuro* (Madrid: Rialp, 2006), 406.

¹¹² “Los hábitos innatos son también susceptibles de crecimiento. De esta suerte, la sindéresis puede disponer de más luz para desvelar progresivamente la esencia y la naturaleza humanas, y eso es su crecer”. Sellés, J. F., *El Conocer Personal: Estudio del Entendimiento Agente según Leonardo Polo*, op. cit., 135.

¹¹³ We have seen that the medievals discussed at length whether synderesis could disappear, and that at the end the view that it always remains, but that it can be almost obnubilated by bad behaviour. In our days this has happened in totalitarian anti-human communist countries and in hedonist cultures as pointed out by Jaroszynski, P., Anderson, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 68. “En el Tercer Reich y bajo el comunismo, la gente, de hecho, llegó a perder la capacidad para distinguir el bien y el mal. Incluso en sistemas no totalitarios, ciertas fuerzas, como por ejemplo los medios de comunicación de masas, tienen poder para distorsionar o silenciar la conciencia. En muchas de las sociedades occidentales y también en otras partes del mundo, los jóvenes son formados e influidos por la cultura pop, que difumina las fronteras entre lo correcto y lo erróneo”.

¹¹⁴ “En cuanto que ápice de la esencia del hombre, la sindéresis tiene carácter potencial (en otro caso, la distinción real no se puede sentar)”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 155.

¹¹⁵ “La mayor parte de los afectos negativos afectan a la sindéresis, que por ser el hábito iluminante de la esencia humana, al sufrir la privación del bien, pierde la limpidez de la iluminación”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 231.

¹¹⁶ “Usually, the smooth feeling of synderesis is disturbed by moral issues; for example, it will be affected by the sense of guilt. Ailments of the received-life can also affect the ‘soft feelings’ of synderesis, which are largely narrated by patients in their symptoms”. “Por lo común, la turbación de la suavidad de la sindéresis es moral; por ejemplo, el ser afectada la voluntad por la culpa. También puede ser afectada la suavidad de la sindéresis por indisposiciones de la vida recibida, que estriban en buena parte en los síntomas narrados por los enfermos”. *Ibid.*, 230.

days synderesis is a bit spoilt, so this means it can improve and can worsen, so synderesis does change¹¹⁷.

We have to keep in mind that there is some type of ontological explanation needed regarding the immutability of the principles of synderesis and its growth or decrease. It looks as if there is a composition within synderesis on top of the ‘I-see’ and the ‘I-want’ of which Polo has not said much. He has nevertheless written on it when touching upon the first principles that synderesis keeps, so in the next section we deal with synderesis’ content.

12. Synderesis’ content

Leonardo Polo usually distinguishes between method and the theme in any type of knowledge, faculty or habit. Synderesis’ method is what corresponds to an innate habit at the apex of the essential level which is known by the affection it provokes in the person, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Its theme was also discussed, which are all activities that the person can control, starting with the spiritual ones directly under it: the intelligence and the will, and through them the sensitive and corporeal faculties. Nevertheless this control has a characteristic that should be taken into account: it is limited. In this section we shall see the characteristics of this limitation.

The theme of synderesis as seen mainly from the personal transcendental of personal freedom, is *to dispose*, which means to have the capacity to use. Polo stresses that to dispose is not the same as to be at one’s disposition. This means that the activity of synderesis –all habits are acts– is more an action of marshalling resources than having absolute power over them. To say it in Polo’s words first is to get inspiration and from it to reinforce the capacities one has been endowed with. As quoted before, “Synderesis can then be described as global inspiration and therefore as manifestation and global reinforcement”¹¹⁸. One thing is to use a tool, another to be the maker of the tool. One can drive a car, and that is marshalling a resource, which is different from being able to build the car. One cannot use the car as a submarine, a task for which it was not made, which will be ruinous for both the car and the driver. Polo applies this distinction of ‘disponer’ and ‘disponible’ to explain synderesis’ area of action: “The word *dispose* can be used in a similar way with the double meaning when used to explain the essential activities. The essence is to dispose about what is at one’s disposition, and to have that what is at one’s disposition;

¹¹⁷ “Yes, synderesis is a bit battered. But it is better not to talk much about it, because, as Saint Teresa says, it is best not to speak ill of the human soul because it is God’s creation”. “Sí, la sindéresis está estropeadilla. Pero es mejor no hablar mucho de eso, porque es lo de Santa Teresa, que es mejor no hablar mal del alma humana porque es creación divina”. Polo, L., *Conversaciones en Bogotá*, op.cit. 6.

¹¹⁸ La sindéresis se describe como inspiración global y, por tanto, como manifestación y refuerzo globales”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 15.

not only that, but there are modalities of disposing, because one does not dispose of them together or in blocks, but the way to dispose each depends on the different types of availability. In the case of man, it is evident that one can use the will, the intelligence and some faculties of the body. The person can dispose of what he knows, and according to the way one disposes it can be seen how much freedom penetrates the essence, i.e., how much one controls his intelligence, will and body faculties, rather than being controlled by them. The capacity to dispose is to look at the essence from the point of view of personal freedom, because the person is free and his essence is to dispose”¹¹⁹.

This means that synderesis has some knowledge of the way things should be used, that are some engraved rules in the realities that synderesis has to marshal. These can be called natural rules, in the sense that come with nature, that they are inborn. Traditionally these rules are encompassed in what was called “natural law”. Now the natural law has been ascribed to synderesis since the medieval times, and even identified with it as we have seen when discussing the history of the evolution of the concept of synderesis. For Leonardo Polo this is the case: “Natural law’s knowledge belongs to synderesis, to which is somehow equivalent”¹²⁰. So it is not only the knowledge of something external but it looks as if it synderesis knows something that is constitutive of one’s identity. This may mean that natural law is an activity, rather than an object to be known, a habitual activity, which is precisely what synderesis is, an innate habitual habit¹²¹.

¹¹⁹ “En ese doble sentido se puede emplear la palabra disponer cuando se trata de la esencia humana. La esencia es un disponer respecto de lo disponible, y es un disponer de lo disponible; no solamente eso, sino que el disponer tiene modalidades, pues no se dispone en bloque, sino que se dispone según las modalidades de disponer que pueden ser varias. En el caso del hombre es evidente que se puede disponer con la voluntad, también con el cuerpo. La persona dispone de lo que conoce, pero según ese disponer se ve cómo la libertad pasa a la esencia. Disponer es la esencia vista desde la libertad de la persona, porque la persona es libre, su esencia es disponer”. Polo, L., *La esencia humana*, op. cit., 163. The same idea is also expressed in the following text: “Acquired habits, the intelligence operations and the acts of the will are synderesis’ dispositive modalities”. “Los hábitos adquiridos, así como las operaciones de la inteligencia, y los actos de la voluntad son modalidades dispositivas de la sindéresis”. *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²⁰ “El conocimiento de la ley natural corre a cargo de la sindéresis a la que, en cierto modo, equivale”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 41.

¹²¹ “As it cognitively presides human nature, we can say that synderesis is the source of knowledge of natural law. In this sense it can be understood as surveillance attentive to reality and ability to judge. Also, it must be said that it is equivalent to the habit of the theoretical first principles in the moral realm. By pointing to God as the ultimate goal, synderesis is accompanied by joy, a positive affection that can be very intense”. “Como preside cognoscitivamente la naturaleza humana, se puede decir que la sindéresis es la fuente del conocimiento de la ley natural. En este sentido se puede entender como vigilancia atenta a la realidad y como capacidad de juzgar. Asimismo, se ha de decir que es el equivalente al hábito de los primeros principios teóricos en el orden moral. Al apuntar a Dios como último fin, la sindéresis es acompañada por la alegría, afecto positivo que alcanza en ella gran intensidad”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 137.

We come back to the consideration of synderesis' duality, either as an impulse or as a set of principles. We may conclude that it is both, one view highlights the act; the other the direction human nature specifies the direction of the action. These are the traditionally defended immovable first principles of morals which belonging to human essence are applicable to all human beings. As Polo remarks: "There are global-reach directive principles in the depths of the intelligence that are super-normative. The traditional term to name them is synderesis"¹²². These according to Leonardo Polo are 'not disposable'.

We have discussed what synderesis is and the elements that relate to it. The next step is to see how they work together, which we do in the next chapter.



¹²² "En lo más hondo de la inteligencia existen principios directivos de alcance global o supernormativo. Para nombrarlos, el término tradicional es *sindéresis*". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 160.

CHAPTER III

SYNDERESIS' DYNAMICS

1. Why this chapter?

“At the heart of Aquinas’s ethics lies the will. Moral acts are willed acts [...]. It comes as no surprise, then, that Thomas should devote an extended discussion to the will and willed action. Nor is it surprising to find the will appearing prominently in all the other major aspects of his moral theory”¹. It appears clear then that in order to discuss ethics we should discuss the stages of the will.

Polo agrees with Aquinas’ opinion. As he says the central issue of ethics is the action². So far we have described Polo’s Anthropology, which is the frame where synderesis finds its place, given the proofs of its existence, its structure and how it is known. All these can be considered as the structural or static consideration of synderesis, but the most important issues for ethics are not structures but operations, the dynamics of human acts. The structure is not static, it is there to make life possible, it is for action, and the root of human actions is personal love, and therefore highly important for ethics, as we shall see in this chapter.

We have described the three human levels of the person; now we need to see how they work together, how the top level transcendentals cascade down to daily actions. From the act of being, which is the source of all activity the cascading down is done in a chain of dualities, formed by the four constitutive transcendentals in their hierarchical order³. The personal love dualizes with personal knowledge (agent intellect), and then they both together do it with personal freedom and co-existence-with, which then is dual with the habits of wisdom and of the first principles. Then they dualize with the next level, the essential level. This cascading of activity is what Polo calls redundancy, or the influence that the upper habits have on the

¹ Gallagher, D. M., “The Will and Its Acts”, in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 69.

² “Here appears the subject of the action and I already said that it was the basic theme of ethics because through it ethics begins, virtues are acquired by acting and through action we acquire goods”. “Aquí aparece el tema de la acción que ya dije que era el tema básico de la ética porque con él se inicia la ética, se adquieren las virtudes a través de la acción y con la acción se consiguen bienes”. Polo, L., *Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral*, Seville, July 1994, Annex 1, paragraph, 25.

³ As quoted before, Polo established the hierarchy of personal transcendentals in Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 262.

lower ones. We could say that Polo uses the term dualities to express the structural relationship and the term redundancy to express their dynamics⁴. The cascading continues at the essential level between the duality of synderesis: the ‘I-want’ and ‘I-see’. The ‘I-want’ which is the highest dualizes with the will and the ‘I-see’ with the intelligence. Through them the activity initiated at the personal level finally reaches the natural level through the sensitive knowledge, the appetitive powers and finally it is translated into motions.

It is important to note that the activity process is only downwards. There is no cascading upwards. The person knows and wants because he is active. One is able to sense, understand, want, because one is active, is alive. A lower power cannot modify what is above it. It is what is above what can successively ‘sense’ at the natural level; ‘abstract’ at the essential level; ‘destine’ at the personal essential level. This is counter-intuitive because we normally feel we are wakened by the alarm clock, whereas the alarm clock can wake us up only if we have active senses. A corpse will not be woken up because it is not active, cannot hear. The same can be applied to the other two levels.

This already quoted text in the second chapter of thi section, can give some clues to understand the human action dynamics, and help to link the structural elements together through a cascading of acts that ends up in the action taken. Polo links the beginning with the completion of the action: “It should be emphasized, first of all, that the intention of other [the decision] is the piece of work to be done. However, the action’s intention of other does not stop in the piece of work produced, but runs through it. Hence the closeness of the link between the action and the piece of work allows describing the action as a verbal value; for example, in the phrases ‘I write with the pen’ or ‘with the plow’, the piece of work is the written letter or the plowed field. The action is the verb –I write, I plough– and is constituted by the I-want. While the intention of the action does not stop in the piece of work, the piece of work is a means within the plexus, and while it runs through, the action links to the *intentio*. In other words, I argue that while the action does not stop in the piece of work, the intention increases that specific voluntary act”⁵.

⁴ For the redundancy of the three innate habits cfr. García González, J. A., “El saber Procedente de la Libertad”, in Sellés, J.F., *El hombre como Solucionador de Problemas* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2015), 13-23.

⁵ “Conviene poner de relieve, ante todo, que la intención de otro de la acción es la obra. Sin embargo, la intención de otro peculiar de la acción no se detiene en la obra, sino que la atraviesa. De aquí la estrecha vinculación de la acción a la obra, que permite describir la acción como un valor verbal; por ejemplo, en la expresión ‘yo escribo con la pluma’ o ‘yo aro con el arado’ la obra es la carta escrita o el campo roturado. La acción es el verbo —escribo, aro—, y es constituida según querer-yo. En tanto que la intención de la acción no se detiene en la obra, ésta es un medio integrado en el plexo, y en tanto que la atraviesa, la acción desemboca en la *intentio*. Con otras palabras, sostengo que en tanto que la acción no se detiene en la obra, la intención incrementa dicho acto voluntario”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 168. Cfr. also a parallel text, already cited: Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 19.

This text establishes the beginning of an action which is the ‘*intentio*’, the intention, and its end, which is the piece of work. For Polo both things are inseparable, “I defend that the action and the intention are not two different acts”⁶. We understand that Polo does not mean this from the point of view of the intention, but from the side of the action once done —the piece of work— because there are many intentions that are never effected, either because one changes one’s mind, or because of the incapacity of bringing it into effect. Seen it from the completed action, the piece of work reflects the intention which was already active from the beginning. This is why Polo in the same text explains “what I call ‘to run through the piece of work’ is equivalent to decrypt or reveal its meaning”⁷.

What is directly relevant for our topic is that the *intentio* that runs through to the completion of the work starts with the ‘I-want’ which is the impulsive side of synderesis. This is confirmed in a parallel text in which Polo attributes the intention to the ‘I’ which is a more understandable name for synderesis: “The action is the verb —write, plough— and is constituted by the ‘I’⁸.

One may ask who actually decides the intention; is it the will, the I-want, the ‘I’ or the person? Using the classic saying that states that ‘all actions belong to the *suppositum*’, which in our case is the human being, it will mean that the subsequent cascading elements are distinctions needed to explain the organic complexity of the person, which is an integration of spirit and matter, an act of being actualizing an essence, that informs the body⁹. This is why, at times Polo refers a particular activity either to the higher or to any of the sub-elements that constitute the human being, and this may create some confusion among the interpreters.

We shall try to use Polo’s example ‘writing with a pen’ to illustrate the action dynamics when possible. To make it more specific we can consider a letter from one spouse to the other spouse who is staying away for an extended period of time. Even if the spouses may text each other daily, or speak once a week on the phone, a letter is longer lasting, can be read many times, has to be better thought, and conveys better one’s personality through the type of paper, envelope, handwriting and even its smell. It can also include some small mementos such

⁶ “Con otras palabras, sostengo que la acción y la intención no son actos distintos”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 19.

⁷ “Lo que llamo atravesar la obra equivale a descifrar o desvelar su sentido”. *Ibid.*

⁸ “La acción es el verbo —escribo, aro—, y es constituida por el yo”. *Ibid.*

⁹ “Spiritual life means life that reinforces the corporeal life —received. And this implies that the soul is not only the form of the body, but its end. The spirit is inspired by the body and organizes the body in a global way. This organization is very intense because the spirit is a higher end than the final physical cause”. “Vida espiritual significa vida que refuerza la vida corpórea —recibida—. Y esto comporta que el alma no es sólo forma del cuerpo, sino fin suyo. El espíritu se inspira en el cuerpo y lo organiza de modo global. Esta organización es muy intensa porque el espíritu es un fin superior a la causa final física”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 291.

as a dried flower, a ribbon, a child's drawing, which can add to the affection shown in the text.

2. Dynamics at the Personal level

As we have already commented, activity starts from the highest ontological level and cascades down. We are therefore starting at the personal level and see how the activity influences the essential level and how from the essential level it is transmitted finally to the natural level, to the body.

Any free action involves the personal transcendentals: personal love, personal knowledge, personal freedom and co-existence, in a hierarchical way.

a) Personal Love dynamics. What is guiding the spouses' decision to write the letter? Personal love; thinking what is best for the other person. This is to give, to donate, to do what the other person will easily accept and will inspire both spouses to become better, more united, more generous to each other and subsequently to their children.

To do this one has to know oneself and the spouse at the personal level, as much as the intimacies are being shared. Regarding oneself one has to see what one can donate, so one has to tailor the content of any communication to the intimate knowledge one has of the other person. This needs pause and reflection on oneself which is personal knowledge. The better one knows oneself, the more one is able to know others. The openness to oneself is openness to others. This openness necessarily includes acceptance of what one is, and what one can be, and that one is linked to the origin, which means to accept oneself as a creature, receiving being as a donation, to be one more of God's people, like any other person. Acceptance of what one has received, means acceptance of one's capacity, which means acceptance of a destination, a target to reach, a way of being that will get one there. This acceptance of God as creator¹⁰ —origin and somehow destination—

¹⁰ Other authors have reached similar conclusions based on Aquinas: "When someone reaches the age of reason, finds his freedom as a call and desired by the good. Discovers that such good -which appears as absolute and calls for the absolute of freedom- and cannot be done without him, but it is, above all, in a call to engage personally in the response. And, though the person may not know it, that absolute call is, in fact, a call from the Absolute, God's call. When that person answers yes to the call to the good, in fact he is responding yes to God". "Cuando alguien llega al uso de razón, descubre su libertad precisamente como llamada y esperada por el bien. Descubre que ese bien -que se presenta como absoluto y llama al absoluto de la libertad- no se hace sin él, sino que consiste, antes que nada, en una llamada a comprometerse personalmente en la respuesta. Y, aunque el interesado no lo sepa, esa llamada absoluta es, de hecho, la llamada del Absoluto, la llamada de Dios. Cuando esa persona responde que sí a esa llamada del bien, de hecho está respondiendo que sí a Dios". Gotzon Santamaría, M., "Otra vuelta de tuerca", in Trigo, T., (ed), *En busca de una ética universal*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2011), 201. "This is our reality, and of each person on earth". "Although we might not have the cultural parameters that allow us to identify the call as God's call, that

conveys the need to accept others as having their own capacities and need to destine themselves accordingly.

This destination is done in freedom¹¹ which is the next radical to consider.

The acceptance of a spouse is a serious matter, a deep acceptance, which requires a deep donation, because it means a co-destination, which is an acceptance of a mutual destination; this implies a mutual recognition and commitment of each one's relationship to God, and what each one should give the other to achieve it¹². While one can have many friends, in which the acceptance and donation can be very intense, only in marriage is the donation total, because it includes all natural powers: man gives his masculinity in full and the woman her femininity in full, which normally is procreative¹³. The use of personal freedom is at its best because it not only makes the spouses grow as persons, by accepting, donating, reaching the highest levels of human love, but pro-creates, that is, assist in the creation of new persons, new freedoms. Similarly the co-existence grows, as the most intimate human co-existence of intimacies, between the spouses, and between the spouses and their children and relatives¹⁴. It also requires a deeper co-existence with the world, because reality knocks harder

call –because we all feel it inside as it is the essence of our person– being is, in fact, God's call. What would be the personal knowledge of that reality depends firstly on education, then of each personal search for truth. And that knowledge establishes what is found in each as what calls him. If we want to understand the real freedoms of specific people living on this earth, we must take this fact into account". "Ésta es nuestra realidad, la de cada una de las personas sobre la tierra". "Aunque no tengamos los parámetros culturales que nos permiten identificar esa llamada como llamada de Dios, esa llamada que todos sentimos dentro -porque es la esencia de nuestro ser personal- es, de hecho, la llamada de Dios. Cuál sea el conocimiento personal de esa realidad depende primero de la educación, y luego de la búsqueda personal de la verdad. Y ese conocimiento establece qué se encuentra la persona concreta como bien que le llama. Si queremos entender las libertades reales de las personas concretas que viven en esta tierra, hemos de tener en cuenta este dato". *Ibidem*, p.215.

¹¹ "The superiority of the being that is not depleted in the situation of its essence is freedom of destination. This superiority is extended to man's essence: the essence that belongs to the free being is notoriously irreducible to any other, in such a way that *disposes* and is not limited to cause. Its essential richness is not simply attached, but it is to have at its disposal. The essence of man is 'have-as-available'. Such having is susceptible of degrees". "La superioridad del ser que no se agota en la situación de su esencia es la libertad de destinación. Esta superioridad se extiende a la esencia del hombre: la esencia que pertenece al ser libre es notoriamente irreducible a cualquier otra, de manera que *dispone* y no se limita a causar. Su riqueza esencial no le está simplemente adscrita, sino que se retrae al *tener en disposición*. La esencia del hombre es el tener como disponer. Tal tener es susceptible de estados". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 263.

¹² This point is clearly stated in the book by Fulton Sheen, "Three to get married", Sheen, F.J., *Three to get married*, (Princeton, N.J: Scepter Publishers, 2004).

¹³ Cfr. "The Humanizing role of sexuality", within Burke, C., *Man and Values: a Personalist Anthropology*, (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2007).

¹⁴ Cfr. "La Función Educativa de la Familia", within Polo, L., *Ayudar a Crecer: Cuestiones de Filosofía de la Educación*, op. cit.

once one has to take care of the physical needs of the spouse and the children.

b) Personal Knowledge dynamics. Personal knowledge is the second personal transcendental. One knows oneself deeply, beyond what the intelligence as a faculty can do because the intellectual knowledge is through abstracts, which are abstracted from what we perceive through the senses, and the person and its transcendentals and faculties, being immaterial, cannot be reached by the senses¹⁵. Polo identified personal knowledge with the classic philosophy acting intellect, as we already explained¹⁶. Polo characterizes the agent intellect as transparent light to distinguish it from synderesis and the faculty of intelligence which are characterized as illuminating agents of operations and objects respectively: “According to this, the illuminating lights are distinguished from the transparency of the personal intellect, which is the most separated, since it seeks a theme that transcends it”¹⁷. The theme that transcends personal knowledge is God as a person, not as uncaused cause which can be reached through metaphysics as a science based on the habit of the first principles.

Both personal knowledge and personal love seek: the intelligence is searching for unity, identity, that Polo calls ‘replica’,¹⁸ which is naturally personal, and personal love is looking for acceptance, total acceptance. Polo states that both can only be achieved by a person who is the Creator. In order to transcends the person God has to be the supreme person who will enable all other persons to know themselves as they are known by God —their real reality— and feel that they are totally accepted. “Suffice it to point out that the replica sought by the transparency [agent intellect], as the sought acceptance [personal love] transcends the human person. However, this transcendence is intimate, as it is Creator of the person”¹⁹.

¹⁵ “There is no abstract knowledge of the will, because the will cannot be lighten as sensible things are. We know that we are beings with will by an innate intellectual habit [synderesis], not in an objective way”. “No cabe un conocimiento abstracto de la voluntad, porque la voluntad no es iluminable como lo sensible. Sabemos que somos seres con voluntad por un hábito intelectual innato, no de modo objetivo”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 68.

¹⁶ “The equivalence between the agent intellect and the personal intellect irresolves the serious issue raised by the Aristotelians’ denial of the agent’s intellect capacity to know”. “Con la equiparación del intelecto agente al intelecto personal se resuelve la grave cuestión que plantean los aristotélicos al negar que el intelecto agente sea cognosciente”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 20.

¹⁷ “Según esto, se distinguen las luces iluminantes y la transparencia del intelecto personal, que es la más separada, puesto que busca el tema que la trasciende”. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “The identity in thinking would require that, when I think myself, my thought will at the same time think me, so that it will by my replica”. “La identidad del pensar exigiría que, cuando me pienso, mi yo pensado me pensara a su vez, y fuera así mi réplica”. García González, J.A., “El Saber Procedente de la Libertad”, op. cit., 15.

¹⁹ “Baste apuntar que la réplica que la transparencia busca, al igual que la aceptación buscada por el dar trasciende la persona humana. Con todo, esta trascendencia es

c) *Transcendental Freedom dynamics.* Personal acceptance requires freedom²⁰. The decision to freely accept oneself is not automatic; one can reject oneself totally by committing suicide, or partially by becoming a trans-sex for example, or reject God and live as if He did not have to do anything in ones' life. One can, though, accept one's constitutive filiation, which will include a special and unique relationship with God. To find one's destiny is not an easy task. It has to be done by interpreting the 'notices' of one's synderesis and other 'affections' at the essential and personal levels. To distinguish the meaning of the 'notices' and personal 'affections' requires care since they can be objectivized in many different ways. They are felt through the habit of wisdom, first principles and synderesis. Acceptance of one's endowments and freely choosing one's final end is what Polo calls 'to destine'. Proper destination increases *one's* freedom in two ways: one in that the personal path in life is made easier because it is in accordance with one's possibilities, and secondly because it makes all faculties at the essential level and the powers at the natural level grow to their full capacity²¹. The improved faculties allow to get more and new things done in a better and more satisfactory way.

Personal freedom is the transcendental that shows best the difference between the knowledge of the world's existence through the first principles (where necessity is the rule and causality is the final explanation) and the personal act of being where there is no such mechanistic explanation. The person's decisions do not have causes, they have freedom. This is why Polo says that freedom does not have a theme, that personal freedom is 'athematic'. It has, though, a relationship with the other personal transcendentals and especially with personal understanding and love²². It can also convert with its immediate lower transcendentals –the co-existence; "Freedom is the

intima, pues es creadora de la persona". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 12.

²⁰ "Transcendental freedom is an integral character of 'more' by which co-existence is reached"; "Freedom allows the distinction between the situation and being". "La libertad trascendental es integrante del carácter de además con el que se alcanza la co-existencia". *Ibid.*, 262. "La libertad permite la distinción entre la situación y el ser". *Ibid.*, 263.

²¹ It is important to distinguish fate from destiny. Fate is not chosen, it is chosen by the gods, by nature or by chance, instead destiny is chosen by oneself within the many possibilities one has, which are made possible by one's endowments, and the historical situation one is in, which has been made up by free decisions of other people, especially one's parents, family members, colleagues and social leaders. God may make special calls but one is free to answer and the succession of those answers may also modify the subsequent calls. That God already knows our responses, does not mean that He makes them. For those who have faith it is interesting to see this within the context of a simple life like the one of Francisca Javiera del Valle Cfr. del Valle, F.J., *About the Holy Spirit* (Princeton N.J.: Scepter, 1998).

²² "Transcendental freedom was described as a theme that does not refer to another theme except for conversion with seeking [agent intellect]. Hence its thematic value equals entirely the 'non-des-futurization' of the future: as theme freedom issue is not dual". "La libertad trascendental se describió como un tema que no remite a otro tema –salvo por conversión con el buscar-. De aquí que su valor

anthropological transcendental which converts more directly with co-existence, since it is the activity of the co-act of the personal act of being”²³ and cascades down to the essential level as ‘disposing’. “The essential capacity to dispose is articulated by freedom”²⁴.

d) Co-existence dynamics. The co-existence with God, other persons, and the world is constitutive of the human being. Co-existence-with as a personal transcendental is the deepest explanation of human’s social nature, since it is constitutive of the act of being. We are born to share our intimacy with others. Intimacy will not make sense if it cannot be shared. This is why Polo repeats frequently that an isolated person makes no sense, it is contradictory²⁵. Intimacy is always possible with God who is always available. Polo indicates that we unconsciously look for it through the acting intellect, by saying that God is the theme of the acting intellect. The person seeks *busca* a replica²⁶. The search for a replica intends to express the eagerness for total identity, which is total self-knowledge and total self-control. This total self-knowledge will only be achieved in knowing how one is known by the Creator. There is the feeling of co-existence with God as Creator and care-giver in a continuous way, and an everlasting way, that is characteristic of the innate habit of wisdom. Coexistence is habitual also with the external world, which resists our will and intelligence, and that one has to comply with the world peculiar characteristics, accommodate to its own being. This is a not as difficult task as accommodating to other people, who demand recognition and they keep changing; and of God, who is known objectively through His external works, and intimately through the notices left in our act of being and essence, or by his direct action in the intimacy of the person in extraordinary cases.

e) Dynamics of the personal level habits. The four personal transcedentals operate –so to speak– through two innate habits: the habit

temático equivalga por entero a la no desfuturización del futuro: como tema la libertad no es dual”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 13.

²³ “La libertad es el trascendental antropológico que se convierte más directamente con la co-existencia, puesto que es la actividad del co-acto de ser persona”. *Ibid.*

²⁴ “El disponer esencial es vertebrado por la libertad”. *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵ “As we think in universals, we can transpose the notion of person to a universal, i.e., understand it as a concept. But we have to realize that it is not so: the person is not a universal, because its co-exist unicity is not superior to it. A single person is absolutely impossible”. “Como pensamos en universal, podemos trasponer a universal la noción de persona, es decir, entenderla como un concepto. Pero tenemos que darnos cuenta de que no es así: la persona no es un universal, porque en virtud de su coexistir el uno no es superior a ella. Es absolutamente imposible una sola persona”. Polo, L., *Presente y Futuro del Hombre* (Madrid: Rialp, 1993), 167.

²⁶ “At the personal level, the intellect seeks the replica it lacks and personal love seeks acceptance. The essential love gets involved in this search. And that translates into an increased intention of other. The characteristic of voluntary love is that it abides by what is granted”. “En el nivel personal, el intelecto busca la réplica de que carece y el amar la aceptación. El amor esencial se asocia a esta búsqueda. Y eso se traduce en el incremento de la intención de otro. Lo característico del amor voluntario es que acata el otorgamiento”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 204.

of wisdom and the habit of the first principles; one looks to the inside the other to the outside. Wisdom looks to the inside, to the personal intimacy, the intimacy of God and those of other persons by empathy. The first principles' habit looks to the external world. Both beings, the persons and the world are higher, have more being than the individual person; this is why Polo says that the theme of these innate habits is greater than the method²⁷. Because of the themes being greater than the capacity to know them Polo uses the word 'advertir', which can be translated by 'to notice', while when the theme is lower than the faculty he uses the word 'inspirar' translated as inspiration.

In normal life, the innate habits tend to be assimilated to the acquired habits; as if they were also just actualizations of a faculty. The faculty works as potency and the habit will be its actualization, in the specific way of that particular habit. Can we consider the act of being as potency, and the habit of wisdom as its actualization? Not really, because the act of being is not potential, but purely actual, though it can grow. If we say that only the essence grows, then wisdom and the habit of the first principles cannot grow, which seems contrary to experience because one can see how one grows in these habits from childhood to maturity and how they grow differently in different people according to what they do in life, and because of this we know people who are wiser than others, who at the beginning were alike. How can the act of being grow? By being more actual, by being somehow stronger, and this is noticed in the way one is able to activate the acquired habits of the intelligence and will, which then work in a better and faster way. We can also apply this type of growth to synderesis, and then the term Albert the Great used for synderesis '*semina virtutum*' has full meaning. It means that synderesis has an innate capacity to grow through the virtues it activates, but unless it is properly watered and taken care of it will not produce the virtues or will produce them in a stunted way, because it has not developed its potentiality. So wisdom, the first principles and synderesis, being innate, are innate as initial endowments, and this initial endowment should be worked on to grow in strength by the right decisions and actions of the person.

e.1) The dynamics of the habit of wisdom. The knowledge of God as a person and of oneself increases, and this increase is the growth of the habit of wisdom. The habit of wisdom is the clear light that is transparent in Polo's words, to distinguish it from the illuminating light that

²⁷ "I insist: the theme of the habit of first principles and of the habit of wisdom is higher than them, but the first habit is illuminating light and the second transparent light, which in solidarity with its theme —devoid of replica— can be described as 'seeking-himself': "The illuminating light called habit of first principles distinguishes clearly itself from its themes, to which is less". "Insisto: la temática del hábito de los primeros principios y la del hábito de sabiduría es superior a ellos, pero el primer hábito es luz iluminante y el segundo luz transparente, que por solidaridad con su tema —carente de réplica— puede describirse como 'buscar-se'; "La luz iluminante llamada hábito de los primeros principios se distingue netamente de sus temas, a los que es inferior". *Ibid.*, 20.

illuminates objects and is proper of the first principles and of synderesis. Properly speaking the illuminating light is the acting intellect as transcendental but it acts through the habits, or at any rate one naturally knows it through the innate habits.

One is tempted to use the image of a projector, wisdom being the transparent light given by the lamp hidden on the inside, which is not seen, while synderesis will be the lens that allows the light to come out and illuminate or radiate it to objects of the intelligence and warm the will. And yet, this light is not seen unless it illuminates the screen or dust in its path. This habit knows the person as person. This is knowing the person as personally free. Similarly God and other persons as persons, not as abstract objects. It cannot be confused with the objective knowledge given by the intellect or by the habitual knowledge given by the first principles of God as origin and of the world (people are part of the world if they are considered at their natural level)²⁸.

The habit of wisdom is key to the development of the moral character of a person. While one's destination is decided by the act of being –love and personal freedom– the habit of wisdom is the way it is known. Being innate it gives the knowledge of one's most intimate direction towards God as person. As we said above God is the *identity* and total acceptance sought and felt as ‘notice’ whose ‘affection’ can be described as savouring, best of flavours, kept as in a sponge that one holds and can squeeze and manifest at the essential level²⁹.

e.2) *The habit of first principles.* The second innate habit, the habit of first principles, allows one to relate to the world by knowing its real existence. The first principles two or three, depending on

²⁸ “Freedom activates the methodical sense of wisdom’s habit, and therein lies the solidarity of method and theme according to the inexhaustibility of the character of ‘more’ [person]. Inexhaustible does not mean unfathomable. It is said that the habit of wisdom is in solidarity with the person because it reaches the character of ‘more’. As the innate habits are not subsistent, without solidarity with its theme such interpretation would not have been possible. Nevertheless, the distinction between method and theme is not cancelled”. “La libertad activa el sentido metódico del hábito sapiencial, y en ella estriba la solidaridad de método y tema de acuerdo con la inagotabilidad del carácter de además. Inagotable no significa insondable. Se dice que el hábito de sabiduría es solidario de la persona porque alcanza el carácter de además. Como los hábitos innatos no subsisten, sin la solidaridad con su tema dicho alcanzar no sería posible. De todos modos, la distinción entre método y tema no se anula”. *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁹ “The notice given by the habit of wisdom is savoury — like the word itself—, i.e., a spongy footprint; this sponge is soaked, steeped, with the intimacy of the person. I want to say that the notice as such is not methodical; However, while it is impossible without moral experience, it can be squeezed as is expressed by the motto *sapere aude*, an encouraging cry so much alive in Augustine of Hippo, that resonates in history: don’t go outside; inside man inhabits the truth —it is soaked—that has to be brought to light”. “La noticia del hábito de sabiduría es sabrosa —a ello obedece la palabra misma—, o sea, una huella esponjosa; en esa esponja está prendida, imbuida, la intimidad de la persona. Quiero decir que la noticia en cuanto tal no es metódica; sin embargo, en tanto que es imposible sin la experiencia moral, cabe expresarla como expresa el lema *sapere aude*, un grito de ánimo tan vivo en Agustín de Hipona, que resuena en la historia: no quieras salir fuera, en el interior del hombre habita —se esponja— la verdad que ha de sacarse a la luz”. *Ibid.*, 223.

whether the link between the first two is considered as an independent principle or not. These principles are identity, non-contradiction and causality. The principle of identity refers to the *Origin*, perfect *Identity*, and source of the second principle which is the principle of non-contradiction which is the existence of the world as persistence. The third one is the reference of the dependence of the world to its *Origin*, and is the principle of dependence, more commonly known as the principle of causality. Causality is not simple but quadruple, because Polo recognizes the importance of the four Aristotelian causes in metaphysics. Polo refers to it as the tretracausality. We do not need to explain this principle at present. We shall see more of it when dealing on its relationship with synderesis.

f) Coming back to the example. How can we distinguish the degree of wisdom and of the first principles the spouse has? To know intimate things, one has to open up and show one's intimacy in the written letter. One needs to be wise to notice wisdom. We can notice it naturally which is the common way, or, based on this natural knowledge, one can analyse it using the transcendental anthropological tools, procedure that is not very common at present. In the first way one will notice the four personal transcendentals through the innate habit of wisdom –because they are at the personal level and only wisdom looks into the inside of the person– but in an unconscious way. In the second way one may discover the cascading of the four transcendentals by reflecting on them and this will make the unconscious use of the personal transcendentals somehow conscious, though no philosopher before Polo did it explicitly, so it will be inaccurate to say that everyone notices them. One is able to know oneself, others and their relation with God in a real ‘daily’ way but, as Polo says, through notices, symbols and in an instinctive kind of way and this mainly through the innate habits, in a silent way³⁰. Later it can be reflected on, if one has a philosophical streak, and objectivize the reflections.

One can be aware of the personal transcendentals by noticing that personal love is the main impulse to write the letter, and that it is a free act by the spouse, where one is trying to convey the personal intimacy in a way that only the spouse will understand and that is a means to co-exist in the most intimate way. Regarding the innate habit of wisdom one may notice it in the spouse’s references to religion, their mutual betterment, the care for their children, relations and friends in seeking their total happiness, which necessarily relates to each personal self-knowledge and their relation to their ultimate end. One can see the growth or decrease of wisdom by seeing how these indices grow or decrease over time if the correspondence between the spouses lasts for a long time.

³⁰ The effort needed to discover wisdom can be said using the words of María de Agreda, “Raise your mind to consider and understand your intimate paths and the ways God has taught you to look for him in your secret place and find him without danger of deceit”. “Levanta tu mente a considerar y entender los caminos de tu interior y las sendas que Dios te ha enseñado para buscarle en tu secreto y hallarle sin peligro del engaño”. Agreda, M. de J. de, *Mística Ciudad de Dios*, (Madrid: Fareso, 1970), 333.

Though wisdom cascades down to the first principles³¹, the use of the first principles can be more difficult to notice in such an intimate letter. The references to this habit will be probably very few in this type of letter because the content will be mainly about personal relationships and not about the world. One would have to look for passages that show how one objectivizes the reality of God (as Origin and Identity)³². This knowledge of God, though, is not the knowledge of God as person, which belongs to the habit of wisdom³³. The use of the first principles can also be discovered by the accuracy on factual observations and the analysis of the cause-effect of the facts and events mentioned in the letter. One can object that such facts are proper of the habit of science or of the virtue of prudence, and therefore it will depict more the acquired habits of the intelligence than the first principles' habit. This is true, and it can confirm what we already mentioned; that the human person is an organic unity. Therefore, we can say that there is no possibility of writing without using all human innate habits and faculties simultaneously. The hand, the imagination, the intelligence, will and personal habits are all simultaneously involved in all the free actions needed to write the letter. We cannot know the intimacy of persons without them acting, manifesting their thoughts and feelings in a conversation, or us guessing sympathetically what they think and want from what they actually do.

We have seen the involvement of the four radicals and the two innate virtues at the personal level in this example. Now we proceed down to the essential level, the 'added life', starting with the innate habit of synderesis.

³¹ "Knowledge comes from the person: from what one knows about oneself, human wisdom expands; and continues enriching the lower knowledge by redundancy, in accordance with their own fertility and in accordance with free decisions". "El saber procede de la persona: desde lo que ella sabe de sí misma, la sabiduría humana se extiende; y va enriqueciendo los conocimientos inferiores por repercusión, conforme con su propia fecundidad y de acuerdo con un proceder libre". García González, J. A., "El saber Procedente de la Libertad", op. cit., 14.

³² "Wisdom's redundancy on the habit of first principles is required to notice the unfathomable Identity". "El redondar de la sabiduría habitual en el hábito de los primeros principios es requerido para advertir la Identidad insonable". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 211.

³³ "The human person is created and, therefore, not identical to itself. However, the person notices its relationship to the Identity. As such connection cannot be not noticed, it is habitual: an innate habit dual with synderesis. The Identity is the Origin: the usual notice of the Origin is the summit of metaphysics. The cognitive connection of intimacy to the Origin is not achieved operationally, because it is impossible that the Original identity be immanently possessed. Therefore, even if the person is capable of manifesting itself beyond the immanent possession, it is impossible for it to express the Origin". "La persona humana es creada y, por tanto, no idéntica consigo. Sin embargo, la persona advierte su respecto a la Identidad. Como ese respecto no puede dejar de ser advertido, es habitual: un hábito innato dual con la sindéresis. La Identidad es el Origen: la advertencia habitual del Origen es la cumbre de la metafísica. El respecto cognoscitivo de la intimidad al Origen no se logra operativamente, pues es imposible que la Identidad Originaria sea poseída inmanentemente. Por eso, aunque la persona es capaz de manifestación más allá de la posesión inmanente, es imposible que exprese el Origen". *Ibid.*, 268.

3. Essential level dynamics

Unlike the Identity (God) who has no duality, all creatures have duality *esse-essentia*. In the case of human beings it is what Polo calls the human essential level. The essence, in the case of human beings, is particularly important because the fruits of the persons' activity as properly human are mainly at this level. The *search for the replica* is the search for identity, which affects mainly the agent intellect and that, being impossible to achieve at the personal level, one tries to seek it at the essential level: “The search of replica is transcendental —at the personal level—, and because it is not found it is sought as its essential manifestation, but it is a vain attempt because the person cannot be reduced to its manifestations. Inasmuch as the lack of replica looks down, it splits: this is the origin of the I-see and I-want”³⁴.

A confused or rejected relationship with the Creator, felt through the habit of wisdom, can place the search of identity at the essential level, rather than accepting one being as a donation and bring the confrontation with God, which indicates lack of self-knowledge: “Self-awareness and self-realization are chimeric pretensions; attempts to identify the essence with the person”³⁵.

The search of one's identity belongs to the personal level, and only there can be found as acceptance and proper destination of all that the person has. To look for it at the essential level is what normally is called seeking one's self-identity, in the synderesis, which is done by inflating the importance of the 'I' or self. Synderesis is the innate habit that links with the personal transcendentals. “The essence is the manifestation of the person. The essence whose apex is the innate habit called synderesis, and depending on the anthropological transcendentals”³⁶. In this way one discovers that the essence is not the place to seek the transcendental Identity but it is just a manifestation of the personal radicals.

³⁴ “La busca de réplica es trascendental, y de su carencia surge la manifestación esencial, que no lo es. En tanto que la carencia de réplica se vuelve hacia abajo, se bifurca: de ella derivan el ver-yo y querer-yo”. *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁵ “La autoconciencia y la autorrealización son pretensiones químéricas, intentos de identificar la esencia con la persona” *Ibid.*, 76. Such attempt implies to be self-sufficient, which comes from the control synderesis has on the will and the intelligence. It is clear in Nietzsche and in Hegel and that it implies the death or at least the rejection of being created, of depending on God. This is why Polo says: “I-see is distinguished from the person because if it were radical like the person, it would confront God”. “Ver-yo se distingue de la persona porque si fuera radical como ella, se enfrentaría con Dios”. *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁶ “La esencia es la manifestación de la persona. La esencia cuyo ápice es el hábito innato llamado sindéresis, y que depende de los transcendentales antropológicos”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 11.

The transcendental closer to synderesis is the one that is next to the personal manifestation: “The word *manifest* suggests that the human essence depends on the transcendental co-existence”³⁷. The essential level opens one to understand other persons through their own manifestations and grow through contact with them in dialogue: “There is a plurality of human beings who encounter one another through their respective essences. In this sense the human essence is dialogic; it founds the human society and the linguistic communication”³⁸. Through this intersubjective communication there is more possibility of discovering one’s true being,³⁹ because there is always an appeal from others to be accepted (personal love) which in this text Polo calls ‘appeal’; an appeal is a call made to be recognized by others: “By being a manifestation, the human essence is to be understood as an appeal, i.e., as calling and giving attention. And as that appeal is not anonymous, it requires I-see and I-want”⁴⁰. All this is done through the innate habit of synderesis.

a) Synderesis’ dynamics. “Synderesis is a different habit from the habit of the first principles. Though they are two ways of searching; the first principles are not ‘a-seeing’, while synderesis ‘is-seeing’. To access the first principles does not mean to see, because by plying it to the different acts of being the focused attention is exhausted by them”⁴¹. In this text Polo explains the different ways of knowing of these innate habits, the first principles and synderesis. All innate habits give knowledge, and in this they are similar, but each knows in a different way. What is proper to the first principles is to mould themselves to reality, to the external beings discovered, and this exhausts its purpose, and its activity. It is so in our daily life. We do not really think about how we know, we are not worried about ourselves but about things: the air we breathe, the light we have, the floor that supports us; any reality we have around us. We know they exist and that they are different from us. This is direct, habitual knowledge; it does not need any reasoning. It is also different from what we dream or imagine –which can be just imaginary– precisely because through

³⁷ “La palabra manifestación indica que la esencia humana depende de la co-existencia”. *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁸ “Existe una pluralidad de personas humanas que se encuentran a través de sus respectivas esencias. En este sentido la esencia humana es dialógica; instaura la sociedad humana y la comunicación lingüística”. *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ “Human language should be placed at the essential level as a manifestation, i.e. reciprocal communication by which certain replica is possible”. “El lenguaje humano ha de colocarse en la esencia como manifestación, es decir, en la comunicación reciproca con que cierta replica es posible”. *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁰ “En tanto que manifestativa, la esencia humana se ha de entender como apelación, es decir como prestar y llamar la atención. Y como esa apelación no es anónima, comporta ver-yo y querer-yo”. *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹ “La distinción del hábito de los primeros principios con el ápice de la esencia. Tal distinción se centra en que son dos modos de encontrar; el primero no es un ver y el segundo sí. Acceder a los primeros principios no significa ver, porque al plegarse a los actos de ser la concentración de la atención es acaparada por ellos. *Ibid.*, 69.

the habit we know their existence and their intimate relationship as caused; as being interrelated and therefore having an Origin. The senses give us the specifics of reality and in this we may have in common with animals, but to know them as ‘reality’ is what is proper of humans, through these principles.

Synderesis sees. Unlike the first principles it makes us aware of the powers –faculties– we have when they act, we see whether we know or do not know something or that we want or do not want to do something, or that we are fresh or tired, that we are using our eyes or not, our hands or not, etc. Synderesis is the ‘I’⁴², the self, which means consciousness. It means that the personal level is a source, but a hidden source of all activities. It does not appear —not their habits— when we are unconscious; and when we are conscious the previous unconsciousness appears as lack of consciousness but not lack of identity, nor lack of activity. Synderesis notices the personal level as the unknown support of itself⁴³, this is, the support of consciousness and semi-consciousness. The ultimate source of activity is not only unknown, but unreachable, and uncontrollable from synderesis, because they are at a superior level, the personal level. This tells us that we are more than consciousness, that there is something greater than and above consciousness. So wisdom, the first principles and synderesis itself are hidden to consciousness. Consciousness includes more than ‘objective’ knowledge —i.e., as present, conceptual—, it includes the feelings of the body, the affections and notices of the spirit. Polo uses ‘manifestation’ to indicate that synderesis is the way that the personal level relates to the essential level, and more specifically through the personal transcendental ‘co-existence’⁴⁴ as we have seen in chapter two of the second section.

To distinguish the knowledge side from the appetitive side of consciousness, Polo speaks of the I-see and the I-want as constitutive

⁴² “As I propose, in man *person* means co-act of being, and should be taken in the sense that the person is really different from the ‘I’, because the ‘I’ is the apex of the human essence. Now, if the ‘I’ is essentially real it is impossible that it be identical to an object, because, on the one hand, nothing essential is identical and, secondly, because objects are not real but intentional”. “Según propongo, en el hombre *persona* significa *co-acto de ser*, y se debe admitir que la persona se distingue realmente del yo, porque el yo es el ápice de la esencia humana. Ahora bien, si el yo es esencialmente real es imposible que sea idéntico a un objeto, porque, por un lado, nada esencial es idéntico y, por otro, porque los objetos no son reales sino intencionales”. *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴³ “The idea of consciousness is pending explanation because its notice cries out for a deeper than the concomitant awareness”. “La idea de conciencia está pendiente de explicación porque la noticia clama por una conciencia más profunda que la concomitante”. *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁴ Polo, mainly in *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades* distinguishes between the different types of non-objective forms of knowledge at the essential level and below synderesis: symbols, clarities and notices. They are not relevant for our quest and they are well described in: García González, J. A., “Leonardo Polo: Dimensiones Inobjetivas del Saber (Primera Parte)”, *Límite*, vol. 2, (2007), 15; and García González, J. A., “Leonardo Polo: Dimensiones Inobjetivas del Saber (Segunda Parte)”, *Límite*, vol. 2 (2007), 16.

duality of synderesis. They are both constitutive of this innate habit because they appear together in the ‘I’. They appear as acting, not as something that is being acted upon. Unless the method of overcoming the limit is discovered the personal level acts silently, without being noticed. Both the I-see and the I-want appear together, there is no willing without understanding and vice-versa, though, at times, we can direct the attention more to the I-see or the I-want when reflecting on our consciousness. The habit is permanent and tells one whether the specific acts of the will (am I willing now?) or the intelligence (am I thinking now?) are actively being used. This means that somehow it constitutes them and knows their activities from above, integrating them. It is not synderesis the habit of abstraction or of the virtue of fortitude, which belongs to the intelligence and will respectively, but consciousness knows them as acting and the way they act. So the I-want is the way the will can be directed by the personal love, and the I-see is the way the intelligence can be directed by the agent intellect.

Consciousness can be called illumination, and is different in each of synderesis’ dualities, but this does not mean that synderesis is divided; there are not two ‘I’s’; it is the same person: “I-see and I-want are essential active lights that are distinguished by their intensity. The illumination of the media belongs by redundancy to the practical reason and is an extrapolated objectification in the actions, but lighting of the voluntary acts is provided by I-want, this is of their constitution. The question about the two I’s still remains: I already said that the person is not Polyphemus; neither is it cross-eyed. The duality of the apex’s essence does not entail two souls, but its redundancy from the co-existence, i.e., from the personal being always more. The theme can be understood as wealth or fertility of the essence”⁴⁵.

To speak about the elements that are above the intellect one has to use a non-objective language, which is practically impossible because human language is an intellectual habit, as Polo explains and we have already commented on, so it is no surprise that Polo uses the comparisons cited before⁴⁶ to make clearer how the dualities synderesis work. Placing them in a chart gives an idea of how subtly Polo’s thinking style is, and how confusing it could be if one is not aware of the exact meaning he gives to each word.

⁴⁵ “Ver-yo y querer-yo son iluminaciones esenciales que se distinguen por su intensidad. La iluminación de los medios pertenece por redundancia a la razón práctica y es una objetivación extrapolada en la acción, pero la iluminación de los actos voluntarios corre a cargo de querer-yo, esto es, de su constitución. ¿Queda todavía en pie la pregunta acerca de los dos yoes? Ya dije que la persona no es Polifemo; tampoco es bizea. La dualidad del ápice de la esencia no comporta dos almas, sino el proceder de la co-existencia, es decir, de la ademaseidad personal. El tema puede enfocarse como riqueza o fecundidad de la esencia”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 213.

⁴⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*, 209.

The I-want is higher in the duality than the I-see. The I-want is constitutive of the will, first of the will as nature (*voluntas ut natura*) and consequently of any act of the will through its habits (*voluntas ut*

I-SEE	I-WANT	VER-YO	QUERER-YO
rousing	constituting	suscitar	constituir
coincide	increasing	coincidir	aumentar
anima	animus	anima	animus
verbalism	power	verbalidad	poder
multilevel cascading	circular ascent	cascada de múltiples niveles	ascenso circular
discontinuous levels	balanced growing tendency	discontinuidad de niveles	tender equilibrado y creciente
conformity	effusion	conformidad	efusión
limiting	committing	acotar	comprometerse
devising	notifying	idear	notificar
presenting	clamoring	presentar	clamar
data	gifts	datos	dones
announcing	contributing	anunciar	aportar
including	extrapolating	englobar	extrapolar
receiving	us	acoger	nos
assent	taking care	asentir	encargarse
clarify	making true	clarificar	verdadear
play in favor	play for	jugar a favor	jugar por mor
looking	invigilating	mirar	vigilar
actualizing	acting	actualizar	actuación
begetting	fertilizing	engendrar	fecundar
happy	joy	contento	gozo

Table 9: Names used by Polo for I-see, I-want.

habit). Similarly the I-see is constitutive of the intelligence through the process of abstraction and of the subsequent intellectual acquired habits. Polo attributes the illumination of the images to the acting intellect but not directly, but through synderesis. Synderesis therefore, will be the one habitually illuminating our intellectual knowledge⁴⁷.

While it is relatively easy to distinguish between the acts of the intelligence and will in writing a letter, it is difficult to show how synderesis in its two aspects can be noticed. We have to interpret the notices and affections which are above the intelligence, and therefore, are not so clear. Polo utilizes many different names in order to express the duality of synderesis as shown in Table 9. Let's look at some possible topics that may be touched upon in the letter as a way to highlight some possible affection that can indicate the use of the I-want and I-see. The spouse wants to refer to a summer they spent together, and

⁴⁷ “The lighting of the phantasm is attributed to the agent intellect. But if the agent intellect is assimilated to the transparent light, which is superior to the illuminating lights, it is more proper to hold that lighting of the phantasms corresponds to synderesis, i.e. an illuminating light that is equivalent to inspiration towards added life”. “La iluminación de los fantasmas se atribuye al intelecto agente. Pero si el intelecto agente se asimila a la luz transparente, la cual es superior a las luces iluminantes, es más ajustado sostener que la iluminación de los fantasmas corresponde a la sindéresis, es decir, una luz iluminante a la que equivale el inspirarse en la vida añadida”. *Ibid.*, 17.

does not remember the hotels they stayed in. The will starts commanding the memory to recall the places while at the same time the intelligence is suggesting other approaches to find the data; look at the photos taken during the vacation or in the diary kept, search in the internet, ask a friend, etc., and at the same time one notices that it is getting too warm and that perhaps it will be good to open the window or perhaps use a fan; that it is getting late, and it maybe better to stop and continue writing the following day in order not to neglect other, more important, activities, which would be morally incorrect. Synderesis is the awareness that all this is happening but it does not appear to one as something one can control unless one stops and reflects the being aware of all these things at the same time.

We can ask ourselves: who takes the decision between pause or continue writing, to call a friend or to seek the data in the internet, and any other of the innumerable decisions that can be taken? Traditionally it is the will, based on the information given by the intelligence. In Polo's structure all activity comes and is attributed to the person via synderesis. If the will takes the decision, then it seems as if the personal level and synderesis are mere spectators of what the will decides. This seems not quite correct in that the inferior faculty will be somehow guiding and deciding for the higher levels.

Such a question shows that one may not understand Polo properly, which is only natural, since our tendency, the intelligence's tendency, is to 'reify', to understand distinctions as diversities. We distinguish characteristics of the same thing, so, for example, the personal transcendentals are distinctions, but not diversities of being; they are all the same act of being, analyzed from different angles. Similarly the intelligence and will are not diverse from the one who decides. One decides through the intelligence and will, one cannot be separated from them. This text explains it with reference to will as nature: "Giving and accepting are equivalent to the act of being of the human person. But the human person is not able to 'make personal' the personal love, which is then constituted in the person's essence as I-want"⁴⁸ and from the I-want to the will. This dependence of the will is stressed by Polo as follows: "whose darkness [of will] can fade taking into account the constitutive character of synderesis. Thus the essential dependence of the voluntary, with respect to the personal love, is stated"⁴⁹.

Utilizing Polo's well-loved term 'plexus' we can say that any decision requires the integrated intervention of each component of the personal structure, even the corporeal ones. Going to the extreme in order to exemplify this, if we are sleeping we cannot take decisions;

⁴⁸ "El dar y el aceptar se convierten con el acto de ser personal humano. Pero la persona humana no es capaz de 'personalizar' el amor, el cual es constituido en su esencia como querer-yo". *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁹ "Cuya oscuridad [de la voluntad] puede disiparse al tener en cuenta el carácter constitutivo de la sindéresis. De este modo se sienta la dependencia esencial de lo voluntario respecto del amar personal". *Ibid.*, 207.

for example, if we are sleepwalkers and commit a felony, we will not be accountable for it. Less extreme examples can be to notice that our willpower depletes itself during the day, so decisions taken in the evening are less thought out than decisions taken in the morning, or how a damaged brain can change one's temperament. This exemplifies that changes in the body can also reflect in changes in knowledge or that previous decisions influence how we see the world and influence present decisions. We are, nevertheless, going to analyse the integration of all elements in the best of cases, when everything works well, to see how each element of the essence fulfills its function.

a.1) I-want as higher synderesis' activity. Polo uses a special term to indicate the influence of higher innate habits on the lower ones: 'to redound', or to 'have impact on' (*redundar, repercutir*)⁵⁰. The higher habits activate the lower ones, but without taking over the specific tasks of the lower ones. In this way wisdom redounds on the first principles by, for example, seeing the connection of the Origin or Identity –which is proper of the first principles– with the personal relationship with God sought by the agent intellect at the personal level⁵¹, and to the body as having a finality beyond the external world. Similarly the first principles redound on synderesis and within synderesis, the I-want redounds into I-see.

The reverberation of the habit of the first principles with the upper side of synderesis, can be seen through the 'I-want'⁵². Through this reechoing the highest personal transcendental, love, cascades to synderesis as I-want. This enables the constitution of morals that tells conscience if what we are doing is consistent with the objective destination of personal freedom⁵³.

⁵⁰ "Empleo las palabras *redundar* (redound) o *repercutir* (impact on) sobre todo para designar el respecto de los hábitos innatos superiores a los otros, y del primer miembro de la sindéresis al segundo. La sabiduría repercute en el hábito de los primeros principios y los dos en la sindéresis –que también por eso es dual– es el hábito que procede de la persona y es apoyado por el redundar de los otros dos, y así el ápice de la esencia humana, desde el cual se desciende a los otros actos esenciales suscitándolos o constituyéndolos". *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵¹ "The superiority of the themes to the method requires attention to focus on the first principles; we cannot look even in the act of being created because its validity refers to the unfathomable Identity". "La superioridad de los temas al método exige que la atención se centre en los primeros principios; no cabe mirar ni siquiera al acto de ser creado porque su vigencia remite a la Identidad insondable". *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵² "*I-want*, as making the will's truth, marks the duality of synderesis with the habit of first principles". "*Querer-yo* como verdadear de la voluntad marca la dualidad de la sindéresis con el hábito de los primeros principios". *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵³ "Freedom is the priority activity regarding the essence and, therefore, the active flow of its behaviour. Only in this way the upper habits redound on synderesis. Also, without free linking I-want would not redound on I-see". "La libertad es la actividad prioritaria respecto de la esencia y, por tanto, el caudal activo de su proceder. Sólo así cabe que los hábitos superiores redunden en la sindéresis. Asimismo, sin vinculación libre querer-yo no redundaría en ver-yo". *Ibid.*, 86.

This reflow between the two personal innate habits to synderesis is expressed by Polo as follows: “Synderesis is distinguished from the habit of first principles, which is also an innate habit. The distinction lies in that first principles are noticed as acts of being external to the human person; on the other hand, synderesis, by constituting the voluntary acts, makes possible the intentional link to the other as good. The first principles are the other as being, and do not constitute them because they are habitually noticed; on the other hand, the voluntary intentionality regards the other as good, and has to be constituted in order to link with personal love”⁵⁴.

The reverberation of personal love to the I-want side of synderesis cascades down to the will, not only to the constituted natural will but as the actual constitution of the wanting and from it to the action: “It is important to distinguish synderesis, i.e. the constitution of the voluntary and acquired habits that perfect the faculty. The possession of the transcendental good [goods outside man that transcend the will] is not possible without such improvement. However, the constitution of wanting by synderesis is still higher because it stresses the connection of wanting with donating love, being a personal transcendental. Personal love co-exists with being accepted by the lover. But there is need for a third element, which is wanting. Because the human person is created, his love is I-want. Although human love [wanting] is essential, and therefore not transcendental, it is consistent with respect to the transcendental good”⁵⁵.

a.2) *I-see activity*. The first principles redound also on the second side of synderesis, the I-see, and it has a more direct relationship with synderesis’ name. In this text there is a clear reference to Heidegger’s view of man as shepherd of the being, which Polo uses to signify the care of the personal level of each person towards the lower essential level:

“The word synderesis is appropriate because it means vigilant attention”⁵⁶. “On the other hand, with the habit of first principles the

⁵⁴ “La sindéresis se distingue del hábito de los primeros principios, que también es un hábito innato. La distinción estriba en que los primeros principios se advierten como actos de ser externos a la persona humana; en cambio, la sindéresis, al constituir los actos voluntarios, hace posible el respecto intencional a lo otro como bien. Los primeros principios son lo otro como ser, y no se constituyen por ser habitualmente advertidos; en cambio, el respecto intencional voluntario versa sobre lo otro como bien, y tiene que ser constituido para enlazar con el amor”. *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁵ “Conviene distinguir la sindéresis, es decir, la constitución de lo voluntario, de los hábitos adquiridos que perfeccionan la potencia. Sin dicho perfeccionamiento no es posible la posesión del bien trascendental. Con todo, la constitución del querer por la sindéresis es todavía más alta en tanto que marca la conexión del querer con el amar donal, que es un trascendental personal. El amar personal co-existe con la aceptación del amante. Pero se precisa un tercer elemento, que es el amor. Por ser creada la persona humana, su amor es querer-yo. Aunque el amor humano sea esencial, y por eso no trascendental, es congruente con el respecto al bien trascendental”. *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁶ “La palabra sindéresis es apropiada porque significa atención vigilante”. *Ibid.*, 294.

being is not monitored: it is not correct to say that man is ‘being’s shepherd’. But, the human person does shepherd his essence. Because of this one can talk of the first practical principles. In sum, the vigilant attention involves the redounding of the attentional concentration; so the synderesis depends on the person through a filter, which is the habit of first principles. Insofar as the synderesis looks down it monitors and organizes. The faculties are required so that the arousing or the constitution [activities of the I-see and I-want] are not creations”⁵⁷. Nevertheless neither synderesis nor the personal level are creative, and this is because the action does not remain in the synderesis but is effected through the potencies, the intelligence and will, that are linked to nature through the senses and the cogitative.

There is a symbol that expresses this side of synderesis, manifested in an idea: “The idea of consciousness is silent, concomitant or coincident; non-linguistic, but verbally undoubted, and symbolizes the second member of synderesis [the I-see]”⁵⁸. It is interesting to see that Polo does not refer, in our understanding, to moral conscience, but to the concomitant conscience that is the first intellectual habit. Moral conscience is not a different type of conscience but because it accompanies all properly human acts it should be at the synderesis level. This gives way to the study of the intelligence, as faculty and its acquired habits.

b) The dynamics of intelligence. Synderesis is illuminated and illuminates, it is habitual knowledge that empowers other types of knowledge. While personal knowledge ‘acting intellect’ is transparent light, synderesis receives light from it through the other two innate habits and then illuminates the intelligence. This illumination is done by degrees. Polo distinguishes between the illumination of the operations done by the habits (he calls them manifestative lights) and the illumination by which the operations light their objects (that he calls intentional lights)⁵⁹. The habits manifest, show what is within, the operations, while the operations act like torches that light objects outside

⁵⁷ “En cambio, con el hábito de los primeros principios no se vigila el ser: no es correcto decir que el hombre es el pastor del ser. En cambio, la persona humana sí que ‘pastorea’ su esencia. Por eso se puede hablar de primeros principios prácticos. En suma, la atención vigilante comporta el redundar de la concentración atencional; de manera que la sindéresis depende de la persona a través de un filtro, que es el hábito de los primeros principios. En cuanto que la sindéresis va hacia abajo vigila y organiza. Las potencias son requeridas para que el suscitar o el constituir no sean creaciones”. *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “La idea de *conciencia* es muda, concomitante o consecutaria; no lingüística, pero verbalmente indudable, y simboliza el segundo miembro de la sindéresis”. *Ibid.*, 219.

⁵⁹ In the following text Polo explains the terminology he uses in other texts: «*See means directly understood*» is formulated now like it. *See*: illuminating act (illuminated by another illuminating act). *Directly understood*: act or current object illuminated, intact by being potentially different from the illuminating act (the illuminated act is as matching illuminating method downwards). The highest raised acts are extremely clear, but they do not light I-see. This means that raising upwards inevitably ends without saturating the faculty”. «*Ver* significa directamente

them. Polo defends that all intellectual acts are not constituted in a cascading way, that is, that each is not moved by the preceding one in a kind of ladder. This could mean that they, somehow, depend directly on synderesis: “The distinction between I-see and what it explains is a distinction according to degrees. They are levels of what I call illuminating light. I-see is a global illumination; acquired intellectual habits are manifestative illuminations; and the operations are intentional lightings according to objects with which the act of knowing commensurates. But, I repeat, none of those degrees of illumination is constituted by the others”⁶⁰.

The relationship of the intelligence with the personal level is primarily with the acting intellect (personal knowledge) but also with transcendental freedom. The habits are voluntary in their making, not only those of the will, but those of the intelligence. If we decide to study mathematics, or cooking, the resulting habits are a consequence of our decisions, and are intellectual. “Human intelligence, as the intellectual in potency, is of the order of the essence; thus understanding is perfectible by habits. Habits [acquired] are at the essential level dependence on freedom, which is also a personal transcendental”⁶¹.

The intelligence has to be “empty” so as to be capable ‘to become everything’, i.e. empty of content, which Aristotle expressed as being a “clean slate”. Polo prefers to use the expression “forgetting about oneself” because it shows better the freedom it requires in order not to exclude any reality and also to express how the intelligence refers directly to the object, hiding the person, and the innate habits, in order to interfere the least with reality: “Note that in the cascading of the illumination, both upward and downwards, the forgetfulness of itself is corroborated. In the intellectual potency, the forgetfulness of itself is the character of *tabula rasa*, in the mental presence is the concealment that hides itself, and in the acquired habits being manifestative of the mental operations. So, I insist, in the essential lighting of the intellectual acts play in favour of the lower ones, that they highlight, without which not any of them refers to themselves”⁶².

inteligido» se formula ahora así. *Ver*: acto iluminante (iluminado por otro acto iluminante). *Directamente inteligido*: acto u objeto actual iluminado, intacto por potencialmente distinto del acto iluminante (el acto iluminado es iluminante en tanto que método coincidente hacia abajo). Los actos suscitados más altos son sumamente claros, pero no iluminan *ver-yo*. Esto quiere decir que suscitar hacia arriba acaba sin saturar la potencia. *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶⁰ “La distinción entre ver-yo y lo que explica es una distinción según grados. Se trata de niveles de lo que he llamado luz iluminante. Ver-yo es una iluminación global; los hábitos intelectuales adquiridos son iluminaciones manifestativas; y las operaciones son iluminaciones intencionales de acuerdo con los objetos con los que se commensuran al poseerlos. Pero, repito, ninguno de esos grados de iluminación es constituido por los otros”. *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶¹ “La inteligencia humana, como lo intelectual en potencia, es del orden de la esencia; así entendida es perfeccionable por los hábitos. Los hábitos son la dependencia esencial respecto de la libertad, que es asimismo un trascendental personal”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento IV*, op. cit., 445.

⁶² “Nótese que en la cascada iluminante, tanto hacia arriba como hacia abajo, se comprueba el olvido de sí. En la potencia intelectual, el olvido de sí es el carácter

The first activity corresponds to synderesis, which is the illumination of the objects of the imagination –fantasy– to be able to be understood by the intelligence and form the abstract object⁶³. Notice that this is a radical correction to classic philosophy’s position in which the agent intellect (personal knowledge in Polo) is the one illuminating the ‘phantasm’. Ultimately all human knowing activity has its origin in the personal knowledge as act of being, but now Polo defends that the activity of making intelligible the sensible, is done through synderesis, through the I-see. This makes sense because synderesis is closer to the faculties and unifies the habits of the intelligence and will, which are interrelated⁶⁴. This is why Polo distinguishes the illumination of the objects of fantasy, which belongs to synderesis, and the illumination, now made possible, of the intellect, which is the one that actually abstracts (different illumination) the concepts. “Also lighting phantasm does not equate with the object of fantasy as term of the abstract intentionality: the abstract object does not light up the phantasm as the synderesis, it ‘does not’ make it intelligible, but it commensurates to it without being its lighting. From the point of view of intentionality, there is a strict difference of levels between the abstract object and the object of phantasm”⁶⁵. The distinction is subtle but important to distinguish synderesis from its faculties.

Polo’s theory of knowledge is very refined and is a great help to distinguish the different types of objective knowledge and their relationship. It is important to distinguish the different levels of intentionality: perceptive, imaginative, abstractive, and mathematical⁶⁶. Polo also distinguishes the different operations of the

de tabula rasa; en la presencia mental, el ocultamiento que se oculta, y en los hábitos adquiridos, el ser actos manifestativos de las operaciones mentales. Así pues, insisto, en la iluminación esencial los actos intelectuales juegan a favor de los inferiores, a los que destacan, sin que ninguno de ellos se refiera a sí mismo”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 80.

⁶³ “The lighting of the phantasm is attributed to the agent intellect. But if the agent intellect is assimilated to the transparent light, which is superior to the illuminating lights, it is more accurate to hold that lighting the phantasm corresponds to synderesis, i.e. an illuminating light that is inspired by the added life”. “La iluminación de los fantasmas se atribuye al intelecto agente. Pero si el intelecto agente se asimila a la luz transparente, la cual es superior a las luces iluminantes, es más ajustado sostener que la iluminación de los fantasmas corresponde a la sindéresis, es decir, una luz iluminante a la que equivale el inspirarse en la vida añadida”. *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁴ It seems that positioning the activity of illuminating the phantasm in the synderesis is a late formulation in Polo. For example, he states that it depends on the acting intelligence. Cfr. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 36. Cfr. also: *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento IV*, op. cit., 443.

⁶⁵ “Asimismo, la iluminación de los fantasmas no se equipara al objeto de la fantasía en tanto que término de la intencionalidad abstracta: el objeto abstracto no ilumina el fantasma como la sindéresis, no lo ‘hace’ inteligible, sino que se convierte a él sin detentar su iluminación. Desde el punto de vista de la intencionalidad, hay una estricta diferencia de nivel entre el objeto abstracto y el objeto de la fantasía”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 22.

⁶⁶ “Is not the same perceived than the imagined; not the imagined than the abstracted and is not the same the abstracted than the mathematical intentionality”. “No es lo

intelligence as faculty. Among the operations Polo distinguishes them by the aim they have as operations into: theoretical and those of practical reason. Then within the theoretical there are two ways of proceeding from the abstract: a) the universalising or conceptual (from concept, to judgment and finally to reasoning) or b) the generalizing which goes from less general to more general ideas, and can proceed without end because there is no absolute general). There is a third operation which is unifying all intellectual operations and in a way Polo places it as the source of the operations that constitute mathematics and logic which he calls *logos*, and should not be confused with the science of logic. By the way he describes it, it resembles the I-see, but we cannot commit ourselves to this interpretation. “Considered in its dependence of freedom, the essence of man is called to dispose... If disposing is taken as unifying unit –as really distinct from the core of knowledge [personal level]– it is called logos. The meaning of the logos looks not only to the unification of intellectual operations, but also to the union with the practical reason”⁶⁷. All these are the different types of objective knowledge and one should not forget that the objective knowledge, being so rich, is still less rich than the other two types of knowledge: habitual and personal knowledge⁶⁸.

Of all these intellectual activities what is more relevant to our topic is practical reason, but it needs to be developed after the initial consideration of the will, because the will is the one that transforms or impels the intellect to look for something new, the good, within the intelligence’s direct object, that is truth. The practical reason is the one that actualises the general impulse to the good of the *voluntas ut natura*, and then —the same will in a different use— is considered as *voluntas ut ratio*. “The notion of *voluntas ut ratio*. It expresses the will’s union with practical reason. The *voluntas ut ratio* receives information of the goods provided by the practical reason”⁶⁹ This is because the will is blind, and is only moved by the good, it has to see the goodness of whatever is known to act, and for this it needs the intellect. “The intelligence knows the truth, objectivizes what is intelligible, but also corresponds to it capturing the reason of good to present it to the will. *Nihil volitum quin praecognitum*: the *voluntas ut ratio* cannot want anything if it has not been known before”⁷⁰.

mismo lo percibido que lo imaginado; no es lo mismo lo imaginado que lo abstracto y no es lo mismo lo abstracto que lo intencional matemático”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento, IV*, op. cit., 437.

⁶⁷ “Considerada en dependencia de la libertad, la esencia del hombre se denomina disponer... Si se toma el disponer como unidad unificante —distinto realmente del núcleo del saber— se denomina logos. Esa acepción del logos mira no sólo a la unificación de las operaciones intelectuales, sino también a la unión con la razón práctica”. *Ibid.*, 445.

⁶⁸ For the distinction between the generalization and universalization ways of the intelligence cfr. the same *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento, IV*.

⁶⁹ “La noción de voluntas ut ratio. Con ella se expresa la unión de la voluntad con la razón práctica. La voluntas ut ratio recibe la noticia de los bienes que la razón práctica le proporciona”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 27.

⁷⁰ “La inteligencia conoce la verdad, objetiva lo inteligible, pero también le corresponde captar la razón de bien en tanto que la presenta a la voluntad. *Nihil volitum*

A key topic for ethics is that the practical reason cannot present the absolute good⁷¹, which will have the character of total good because no abstracted reality has such quality. So all what it presents has the character of means towards it⁷², and since reality is complex in its relationships, a plexus, it never presents only one mean but several, so it is up to the will to accept them as proper means, and then choose the one it considers best among them, or the least bad, depending on the circumstances. “Strictly speaking, the distinction between good and evil is proper to acts that are means. The bad means do not link with acts referred to the end; this constitutes the middle act as evil. If this act is exercised, a moral error occurs. Also this error occurs if the connection of that act to the end is overlooked, because that act, which is medium, is wrongly taken as the end, and therefore wanting stops in it. Therefore, ethics has to want with the will, i.e., with the tendency in proportion with intelligence, which is able to capture the formality of means and can decide the choice of a mean, which requires that the mean is highlighted as such [reason of being a mean]”⁷³.

The means presented by the practical reason have to be chosen, and that is the ultimate task of the will, as we see in the next sections, and morality belongs properly to the will, not to the reason, though they cannot be isolated one from the other.

c) *The will's dynamic.* There is a brilliant passage in which Polo describes the relations among the will, personal love, first principles and synderesis' I-want. The love referred to in this passage is the voluntary love, which is the gift, third stage of human love. The two first phases of love, acceptance and donation, are at the personal level but the third, the gift, cannot be at the personal level because humans cannot grant the *esse*, only the Creator can give the *esse*. “The similarity of I-want with the habit of first principles is the otherness of the good, and its dependence on the person is that love [wanting] is the third element of the donating structure. The voluntary designates the confluence between its dependence on the personal level and the habit of

quin praecognitum: la voluntas ut ratio no puede querer nada si antes no ha sido conocido”. *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “Practical reason presents, primarily, a plurality of goods, not only one nor the supreme good”. “La razón práctica presenta, ante todo, una pluralidad de bienes, no uno solo ni tampoco el bien supremo”. *Ibid.*

⁷² “Knowing the reason of medium is proper of the practical reason”. “Conocer la razón de medio es propio de la razón práctica”. *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷³ “En rigor, la distinción entre bueno y malo se da en los actos que son medios. El medio malo no enlaza con los actos referidos al fin; eso constituye la maldad del acto medio. Si se ejerce dicho acto, tiene lugar el error moral. También se da este error si se prescinde de la conexión de ese acto con el fin, porque ese acto que es medio se confunde con el fin, y el querer se detiene en él. Por tanto, la ética tiene querer con la voluntad, es decir, con la tendencia proporcionada con la inteligencia, que es capaz de captar la formalidad de medio y puede decidir la elección de un medio, lo cual requiere que el medio se destaque como tal”. *Ibid.*, 29.

first principles. (Inasmuch as the voluntary is love [wanting] it depends on the person, and while it is intention of another it depends on the habit of first principles)”⁷⁴.

The relationship with the highest personal transcendental, personal love is what gives the I-want preeminence over the I-see, together with the fact that each act of the will requires a direct relationship with the personal act of being. This is why Polo calls the operations depending on the I-want as constitutive (constituir), while the ones depending on the I-see as just arousing (suscitar). “In such a way that I-see and I-want are only potentially distinguished. The potency is the fissure introduced by the pronoun us: a mutual play in favor of each member to the extent of their ability. They are two lights that accompany each other without diffractions, because one arises and the other constitutes, in a way that the object thought is extrapolated in the action, ‘is made true in the action’. Such extrapolation is not illuminated by I-see”⁷⁵.

As we already mentioned, the first act of the I-want is to constitute the natural will (*voluntas ut natura*), which makes it discover its unique and unshakeable aim; that is, to look for the good. Nevertheless the will does not know where the good is, neither in general, nor in particular. Everything has to be presented to it, as good for the will to choose⁷⁶. And this is the trickiest part of the human dynamics to explain⁷⁷. The intellect has to present the good to the will. In principle the intellect’s proper task is to see the correspondence of the thoughts

⁷⁴ The text does not refer to the habit of wisdom, which is the way to know the personal intimacy, probably because what Polo wants to highlight is the relationship between the wanting and the transcendental personal love. “La semejanza del querer-yo con el hábito de los primeros principios es la alteridad del bien, y su dependencia de la persona estriba en que el amor es el tercer elemento de la estructura donal. Lo voluntario señala la confluencia del depender de la persona y del hábito de los primeros principios. (En tanto que lo voluntario es amor depende de la persona y en tanto que es intención de otro depende del hábito de los primeros principios)”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 294.

⁷⁵ “Hasta tal punto que ver-yo y querer-yo sólo se distinguen potencialmente. La potencia es la fisura del pronombre nos: mutuo jugar a favor de cada miembro en la medida de su capacidad. Se trata de dos luces que se acompañan sin difracciones, porque una suscita y la otra constituye, de manera que el objeto pensado se extraña en la acción, ‘verdadea en la acción’. Dicha extrapolación no es iluminada por ver-yo”. *Ibid.*, 214.

⁷⁶ “Another issue is the notion of *voluntas ut ratio*. It expresses the will’s union with practical reason. The *voluntas ut ratio* receives news of the goods provided by the practical reason”. “Otro asunto es la noción de *voluntas ut ratio*. Con ella se expresa la unión de la voluntad con la razón práctica. La *voluntas ut ratio* recibe la noticia de los bienes que la razón práctica le proporciona”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 27.

⁷⁷ “Tomás de Aquino made two key observations about the state of the question. First and foremost, he warns that the will is an obscure theme: all its dimensions have not been figured out, and that Aquinas’ previous philosophers devoted less attention”. “Tomás de Aquino hace dos observaciones centrales sobre el estado de la cuestión. Ante todo, advierte que la voluntad es un tema oscuro: no se han averiguado todas sus dimensiones, y ha sido menos estudiada que la inteligencia en la filosofía anterior a él”. *Ibid.*, 7.

to reality, to discover reality, to discover the truth. This is the theoretical intellect or the intellect acting as such. Knowledge, nevertheless, is not the most important action of the human being; it is the person, which is the most active part of the human ontological structure, and he is stubbornly and indefatigably seeking his identity as personal knowledge and even more, he seeks to be accepted in personal love. This looking for identity is, we repeat, what Polo calls ‘looking for the replica’. The person wants to know who he is, and to whom one can donate oneself in full. In other ways the aim of the person is to achieve the knowledge and acceptance that is personal and in full. This makes synderesis move the intelligence to look for the means that can help to fulfil those intimate desires. But how does the intelligence distinguish what is good? What is the criteria of good, and how does it know it? This is the key to our quest.

So synderesis has two tasks regarding this:

- a) to set the criteria of goodness, whatever will fulfill the personal level desires, and
- b) to ask the intelligence to check where to find it.

According to Polo *voluntas ut natura* is directly constituted by synderesis, and this is somehow part of human nature and therefore it is not free, it is, consequently, *natura*. Everyone looks for the good, whatever it consists of. This will as nature, then, is the one rightly constituted as the principle of practical action: do good⁷⁸. *Voluntas ut ratio*, this is after it has been presented a particular good by the practical intelligence, is the will that has to choose the means to achieve the good. “Intellection taken as an adjunct of the *voluntas ut natura* is called synderesis, and as an adjunct of the *voluntas ut ratio*;[is called] practical reason”⁷⁹. One should take into account that in this text when using the word ‘intellection’ Polo refers to intellectual knowledge in general and not to the intelligence as faculty.

According to this, synderesis states the final end, and it has to do with the proper end of human beings, and the practical reason with the means. One is habitual, the second is operational and deals with the

⁷⁸ “The *voluntas ut ratio* exercises medial acts: instead, the exclusive ordination to the end belongs to the *voluntas ut natura*. And this is the primordial status of the will before relating with to the practical reason”. “La *voluntas ut ratio* ejerce actos mediales: en cambio, la ordenación exclusiva al fin es propia de la *voluntas ut natura*. Y éste es el estatuto primordial de la voluntad, anterior a su proporción con la razón práctica”. *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁹ “La intelección tomada como coadyuvante de la *voluntas ut natura* se llama sin-déresis, y como coadyuvante de la *voluntas ut ratio* razón práctica. La razón en cuanto capta la noción de bien y la presenta a la voluntad, mueve a tender a él. Por eso, la voluntad no es potencia pasiva como la materia prima, la cual es relativa a la causa formal; en cambio, la tendencia es relativa al bien: requiere su presentación”. *Ibid.*, 33.

means to achieve the end, which then are presented to the will (*voluntas ut ratio*) and subsequently the will chooses. There are some precisions that should be taken into account:

a) The will is one, not two, though it acts differently:” The *voluntas ut natura* is not a faculty other than the *voluntas ut ratio*, but just its first stage”⁸⁰.

b) That it is proper of the essential level, not of the natural level. Animals cannot distinguish means as means, which requires the universal notion of mean, and this belongs to the intelligence: “To understand a means as means is beyond sensitive knowledge. Therefore the tendencies arising from sensitive knowledge, although they use means, do not capture them under the reason of means, because they do not capture the end as such, but, let’s say, go for it by their own impulses. Knowing means as means belongs to practical reason”⁸¹.

c) The interaction between the will and the intelligence cannot be compared with the hylomorphic composition between the substantial form and the prime matter, since the intelligence is not conforming the will: “Reason insofar as it captures the notion of good and presents it to the will, moves to tend to it. For this reason, the will is not a passive power as the prime matter, which is relative to the formal cause; on the other hand, the tendency is relative to the good: it requires its presentation”⁸².

d) The will is not moved in a physical way as an efficient cause, but it has its end beforehand, it is a free decision that cannot be understood by the categorical causes, the tetracausality: “The will is not a potency due to the efficient cause, but because of the end”⁸³.

e) The reason of the goodness of the means is in their participation in achieving the end, the purpose of the action, and ultimately the final end: “Firstly the means appears as good; in principle it is, and in

⁸⁰ “La *voluntas ut natura* no es una facultad distinta de la *voluntas ut ratio*, sino un estadio precedente”. *Ibid.*, 26. Check also: “The rational will is not another faculty, but a phase of the development of the will: where intelligence has operated and known good, the will exercises correlative acts”. “La voluntad racional no es otra facultad, sino una fase del desarrollo de la voluntad: en tanto que la inteligencia ha operado y conocido el bien, la voluntad ejerce actos correlativos”. *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸¹ “Entender un medio como medio rebasa el conocimiento sensible. Por eso, las tendencias que se proporcionan con el conocimiento sensible, aunque utilicen medios, no los captan bajo la razón de tales, porque tampoco captan el fin como tal, sino que, digámoslo así, se dirigen a él por su propio impulso. Conocer la razón de medio es propio de la razón práctica”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 28.

⁸² “La razón en cuanto capta la noción de bien y la presenta a la voluntad, mueve a tender a él. Por eso, la voluntad no es potencia pasiva como la materia prima, la cual es relativa a la causa formal; en cambio, la tendencia es relativa al bien: requiere su presentación”. *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸³ “La voluntad no es una potencia según la causa eficiente sino según el fin”. *Ibid.*, 32.

a way, is a purpose, because it is indispensable, and therefore participates in the reason of end [purpose]”⁸⁴.

f) To discover the reason of means implies that there are many possible means, so in choosing, the person can make mistakes; the practical knowledge is not as exact as the theoretical knowledge: “In sum, considering the will as spiritual tendency in its relation with the reason, it appears the notion of means and the possibility of choosing between means; man as a *causa sui* controls his own life to a certain extent, because one can go wrong. To capture the notion of means is not strictly a knowledge of the invariable”⁸⁵.

The arousing of the I-see and the constitution of the I-want has a purpose, which is the action, as Polo indicates in this text, but the action cannot be accomplished without the faculties, the intelligence and will. The intelligence as involved in the action under the synderesis is what we shall see in the next subsection on the practical reason: “Another distinction is between to create or to constitute, and to exercise. While the first two refer to the two members of the synderesis, the third, exercise, is borne by the potencies, which is a redundancy of the greatest interest, as without it language is impossible —for example, writing this book”⁸⁶.

“To arise and to constitute are terms describing the apex of the human essence; their distinction lies in power. Power means to satiate the potency. Only the will is a saturable passive power. Raise is distinguished from power; hence the mental limit and the unreality of the object thought”⁸⁷.

c.1) *Voluntas ut ratio and practical reason dynamics*. Following Aquinas, Polo distinguishes six operations of the will, three related to the end and three related to the means towards the end: “Thomas Aquinas distinguishes three acts of the will with respect to the end and three

⁸⁴ “El medio tiene de entrada razón de bien; en principio lo es, y a su modo, es un fin, porque es imprescindible y, por tanto, participa del fin”. *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁵ “En suma, al considerar la voluntad como tendencia espiritual en su proporción con la razón, aparece la noción de medio y la posibilidad de elegir entre medios; el hombre como *causa sui* controla su propio vivir hasta cierto punto, porque se puede equivocar. Captar la noción de medio no es un saber estrictamente necesario”. *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁶ “Otra distinción es la que media entre suscitar o constituir y ejercer. Mientras que los primeros corren a cargo de los dos miembros de la sindéresis, el ejercicio corre a cargo de las potencias, una redundancia del mayor interés, pues sin ella es imposible el lenguaje —por ejemplo, escribir este libro—”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 215.

⁸⁷ “Suscitar y constituir son términos que describen el ápice de la esencia humana; su distinción estriba en poder. Poder significa saturar la potencia. Sólo la voluntad es potencia pasiva saturable. Suscitar se distingue de poder. De ahí el límite mental y la irreabilidad del objeto pensado”. *Ibid.*, 209.

acts with regard to the media. The first are the *velle*, the *intentio* and the *fruitio*. The latter are the *electio*, the *consensus* and the *usus*⁸⁸.

Polo also explains the acts regarding the end, which are the directive ones. “According to the Thomists, voluntary acts that have to

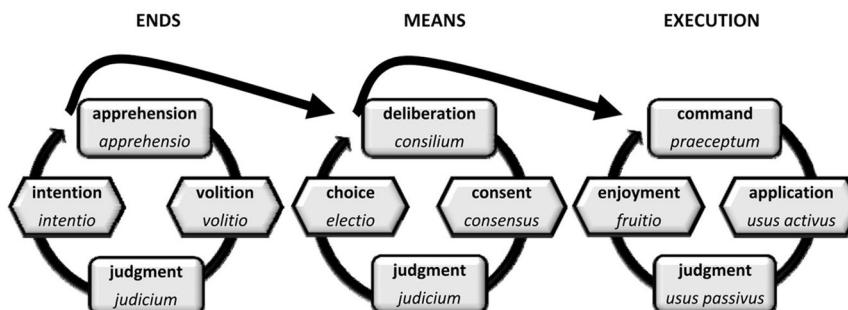


Figure 5: Grassl's acts of the will.

do with the end are three: simple love, intention and fruition. The three relate to the final end, but not in the same way. Fruition refers to the ultimate good where it is present, and one enjoys it. If this property is present the will culminates. The intention refers to the ultimate good as absent, i.e., is the act which puts the means in relation to the end and is considered the ultimate good as not yet reached”⁸⁹.

It is interesting to note that Polo hardly mentions the acts of the practical reason when dealing with the will⁹⁰, though he mentions

⁸⁸ “Tomás de Aquino distingue tres actos de la voluntad con respecto al fin y tres actos con respecto a los medios. Los primeros son el *velle*, la *intentio* y la *fruitio*. Los segundos son la *electio*, el *consensus* y el *usus*”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 11.

⁸⁹ “Según los tomistas, los actos voluntarios que tienen que ver con el fin son tres: el simple querer, la intención y la fruición. Los tres se refieren bien último, pero no de la misma manera. La fruición se refiere al bien último en tanto que está presente y se goza en él; si ese bien está presente la voluntad culmina. La intención se refiere al bien último en tanto que ausente, es decir, es el acto que pone los medios en relación con el fin y considera el bien último como todavía no alcanzado”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 68.

⁹⁰ “Here we must remember the voluntary acts that precede the practical action. The *consilium* is an act of the practical reason that presents a set of middle goods without attending to their relationship. This set is variable and not organized. The *gnome* is the corresponding voluntary act, and contributes to the formation of prudence. These acts are developed with deliberation, followed by the election, the command, which is an act of reason, and the practical action. Therefore, the organization of the means is gradual and progressive”. “Aquí tenemos que recordar los actos voluntarios que preceden a la acción práctica. El *consilium* es un acto de la razón práctica que presenta un conjunto de bienes mediados sin atender a su relación. Ese conjunto es variable y no organizado. La *gnome* es el acto voluntario correspondiente, y contribuye a la formación de la prudencia. Estos actos se desarrollan con la deliberación, a la que sigue la elección, el imperio, que es un acto de la razón, y la acción práctica. Por tanto, la organización de los medios es gradual y progresiva”. *Ibid.*, 82.

them when dealing with prudence⁹¹. As term of comparison one can cross-check some other authors like Grassl⁹², from whom we have taken the chart above (figure 5), where the different stages of the practical reason are shown in rounded squares and the acts of the will as irregular hexagons; or Gallagher⁹³ which reflects the 12 traditional steps of the voluntary act and a table below (table 10) that includes references to Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.

We shall refer to each act of the will and comment on it whenever Polo's approach differs with the traditional one.

Simple Volition. Traditionally simple volition is the appreciation of good things, but without desiring them, just a simple seeing them as goods, just appreciating their goodness, similar to when one browses through a commercial catalogue just out of curiosity without any intention of buying. For Aquinas the *simplex velle*, or simple will, is different from the *voluntas ut natura*, being the latter the natural intention to the ultimate good. Instead, the *simplex velle* for Aquinas is the appeal any good as presented by the practical reason has on man,

Practical Reason	Rational Will
1) Simple Aprehension (I-II, q. 9, a. 1)	2) Simple Volition (I-II, q. 8, a. 2)
3) Possibility Judgment (I-II, q. 12, a. 1, ad 1, 3)	4) Intencion (I-II, q. 12; q. 19, a. 7-8)
5) Deliberation (I-II, q. 14)	6) Consent (I-II, q. 15)
7) Elective Judgement (I-II, q. 13, a. 3; q. 14, a. 6)	8) Election (I-II, q. 13)
9) Command (I-II, q. 17)	10) Active Use (I-II, q. 16)
11) Passive Use (I-II, q. 16, a. 1)	12) Enjoyment (I-II, q. 11)

Table 10: Aquinas Texts on Acts of the Will.

without any intention or desire. We can translate it as liking⁹⁴. One can like safari trips, boat rides, ice cream, playing well the piano, and any other good things that are good in themselves, but they are not moving the person at that particular moment.

Polo, on the contrary, seems to understand the first step of the will as the natural will: "Simplex velle is not an act of the rational will,

⁹¹ "According to Thomas Aquinas, in addition to the simple practical apprehension, the acts of practical reason are counsel, judgment, and the command". "Según Tomás de Aquino, además de la simple aprehensión práctica, los actos de la razón práctica son el consejo, el juicio y el imperio". Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 32.

⁹² Cfr. Grassl, W., "Aquinas on management and its development", *Journal of Management Development*, 29, 7/8 (2010) 706-715.

⁹³ D. M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts", in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

⁹⁴ "En la cuestión sexta del *De Malo* XXII se sostiene que el objeto, para mover a la voluntad, debe presentarse al sujeto no sólo como *bonum*, sino también como *conveniens*, porque si así no sucede la voluntad permanecerá inerte. Y agrega De Finance: 'Más aún: no basta, para ponerla en acción, que el objeto sea captado como *conveniens in universalis*: el obrar se desarrolla siempre en el orden de la existencia y sólo lo singular existe: es necesario que el objeto aparezca *hic et nunc* deseable, conveniente para el sujeto tal como existe *hic et nunc*. Santo Tomás tiene aquí en vista la moción del querer que coincide con el acto mismo de la elección'". Ballesteros, J. C. P., "Valor, Razón y Subjetividad en Joseph de Finance", *Sapiencia*, 58 (2003) p. 307.

but of the native will”⁹⁵. Polo’s considers it as the general impulse to the good, as if it were the *voluntas ut natura*⁹⁶ or even synderesis. The following passage can also be interpreted as if the simplex velle is the impulse given by the *voluntas ut natura*, rather than an operation of the voluntas ut ratio. The simplex velle seems to be constituted directly by the I-want even before the activity of the practical reason, needed to activate the voluntas ut ratio⁹⁷.

“The exercised and constituted voluntary can be distinguished from the simply constituted voluntary: the *simplex velle*. Practical reason and synderesis correspond to this distinction. Without the practical reason the acts of the will cannot be exerted (*voluntas ut ratio*). Instead synderesis is an innate habit. The common and innate insight of the will is not exactly the knowledge of what is good, but certain imperative. The imperative is the simple love: want because it is what is proper to you and, at the same time, the way you are constituted in act by the ‘I’, strictly speaking, love means I-want. Such imperative involves an agreement, because if I do not want, the will be just pure passive potency. Although the will and synderesis are different, they are not two unrelated things; the simple love is the natural will in act as I-want”⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ “El *simplex velle*, que no es un acto de la voluntad *ut ratio*, sino de la voluntad nativa”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 17.

⁹⁶ “The *simplex-velle* as awakening in act corresponds to the will, and not by the practical reason, nor by acquired virtues, but by synderesis. Wanting is an imposed, not an autonomous duty; It is not a spontaneous imperative, but an essential agreement. Synderesis is the truth of the will. (There is no abstract knowledge of the will, because the will cannot be enlightened because it is not physical. Each one knows that one’s essence includes the faculty of the will by an innate habit, not in an objective way)”. “A la voluntad le corresponde como despertar en acto el *simplex velle*, y no en virtud de la razón práctica, ni de las virtudes adquiridas, sino de la sindéresis. Querer es un deber no impuesto ni autónomo; no es un imperativo espontáneo, sino un acuerdo esencial. La sindéresis constituye la verdad de la voluntad. (No cabe un conocimiento abstracto de la voluntad, porque la voluntad no es iluminable como lo físico. Cada quién conoce según un hábito innato —no de modo objetivo— que su esencia engloba la potencia voluntaria)”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 145.

⁹⁷ Cfr. “The *simplex-velle* as awakening in act corresponds to the will, and not by the practical reason, but by synderesis”. “A la voluntad le corresponde como despertar en acto el *simplex velle*, y no en virtud de la razón práctica, sino de la sindéresis”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 68.

⁹⁸ “Cabe distinguir lo voluntario ejercido y constituido, y lo voluntario simplemente constituido: el simplex velle. Con esta distinción se corresponden la razón práctica y la sindéresis. Sin la razón práctica no se ejercen los actos de la voluntad (*voluntas ut ratio*). En cambio, la sindéresis es un hábito innato. La intelección habitual e innata de la voluntad no es exactamente el conocimiento del bien, sino cierto imperativo. El imperativo es el simple querer: quiere porque es lo tuyo y, a la vez, el modo como eres constituida en acto por el yo, pues, en rigor, querer significa querer-yo. Dicho imperativo comporta un acuerdo, porque si yo no quiero, la voluntad no pasa de ser la pura potencia pasiva. Aunque la voluntad y la sindéresis sean distintas, no son dos piezas sueltas; el simple querer es la voluntad natural en acto en tanto que quiero-yo”. *Ibid.*, 51.

Coming back to Aquinas the *simplex velle* is the first step of any action, the discovery of the character of good in anything; later if one sees it as good for oneself, one has to see it as desirable and achievable, then one may decide to go for it and that is the intention⁹⁹. Both activities are preceded by the corresponding acts of the practical reason that present the different known objects as goods. No decision though, has been taken yet, but are the preliminary steps to the first actual decision, which is the intention, which for us is the first commitment of the will as such —constituted and exercised if we use Polo's terminology—. The next act of the will after the *simplex velle* is the *intentio* according to Aquinas.

Intention. It seems that Polo does not explain properly the intention as the second step of the will's stages. He seems to jump from the *simplex velle* to the consent, at least in the two volumes of *La Voluntad y sus Actos* which we cite repeatedly. “The voluntary act which corresponds to the conception of the goods is the consent. This voluntary act is the first of the *voluntas ut ratio*”¹⁰⁰.

In Aquinas, first comes the intention, which is the decision to act, after which the means to achieve it are looked for¹⁰¹. Properly speaking the consent is the act by which the will assents to the different means presented by the practical reason, all of them as possible. To these the will consents, then the practical reason evaluates and ranks them proposing the best one, which if the will assents, is what is called election.

Consent. As quoted above the consent is the agreement to the multiple means the practical intelligence presents via the deliberation of the means to the will. Nevertheless, there seems to be what Polo says, that deliberation should follow consent rather than the other way round. It seems as if Polo uses deliberation as the act of the practical reason immediately previous to the election. It looks as if he uses the term deliberation, as what Aquinas calls ‘practical judgement’ which is the act of the practical reason that recommends the best mean available, while deliberation for Aquinas is simply the consideration of all

⁹⁹ “In intending an end a person is committed to actually carrying out the actions needed to achieve that end. Simple willing, on the other hand, is simply the willing of some good as perfective of me (or those united to me by love) without any necessary reference to whether or not I intend actually to acquire that good. To take an example, for years I may want —taken as something that would be good for me— to go see Paris. During those years, I never do anything about actually going there. This is simple willing. But suppose that I finally decide actually to go; I am now *ipso facto* committed to employing all the means necessary for this trip. At this point, I intend to go to Paris”. Gallagher, D. M., “The Will and Its Acts”, op. cit., 81.

¹⁰⁰ “El acto voluntario que se corresponde con la concepción de los bienes es el consentimiento. Este acto voluntario es el primero de la *voluntas ut ratio*”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 11.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae* op.cit., I-II, q. 12; q. 19, a. 7-8.

available means without recommending any in particular¹⁰². Nevertheless he uses Aquinas' practical judgement term later in the traditional way: "Thomas of Aquinas studied three virtues that correspond with deliberation or with the practical judgement by which deliberation ends"¹⁰³. Whatever the reason may be, it seems as if Polo is not very consistent in the use of the terminology regarding the acts of the will which makes it more difficult to follow his discourse.

Election, (choice). Taking into account what we have mentioned above regarding Polo's use of the term deliberation the following text refers to what is considered the central act of the will, which is the election of the most adequate¹⁰⁴ means to carry on the intention. "In effect, deliberation precedes another act of the will that is the election [choice]. The means chosen are those which are within the ability and capacity to perform them, which is variable in every man and in the various circumstances of one's life"¹⁰⁵.

That it is the central act of the will is partially because the consideration of the means can take a long time, since there is no necessity in the election, it is free, and the interrelations of the means among them and the possibilities to achieve the end in different ways are multiple. As is a well-known topic in management sciences, excessive "analysis leads to paralysis". This is a classic sickness of the will; indecisiveness. "Deliberation cannot be carried to infinity, because in that case election would not take place. Therefore, it seems correct to hold that ending the deliberation process corresponds to the will, according to the will's act which is to choose... As it is clear, the choice is not done just once, because man has to choose many times"¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰² "Considering consent as prior to deliberation, and not only in correspondence with her, is because the means form a plexus. (Inquisition, deliberation and advice are used as synonyms by Thomas of Aquinas). To Thomas of Aquinas consensus always follows the advice. This is because for him the means do not constitute a plexus, but different particular things". "Considerar el consentimiento como anterior a la deliberación, y no sólo en correspondencia con ella, está en que los medios constituyen un plexo. (Inquisición, deliberación y consejo son sinónimos para Tomás de Aquino). Para Tomás de Aquino el consenso sigue siempre al consejo. Ello es debido a que para él los medios no constituyen un plexo, sino cosas particulares distintas". *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰³ "Tomás de Aquino estudia tres virtudes que se corresponden con la deliberación o con el juicio práctico con que ésta termina". *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ "The end is what you want, but when the appetite is contrasted with the practical reason the characteristic of being a mean is highlighted as well as the issue of its suitability. Precisely there appears the election; to consider the advantage of one medium over another". "El fin es lo que se apetece, pero cuando el apetito se proporciona con la razón práctica se destaca el acto medial y la cuestión de su adecuación. Precisamente ahí aparece la elección, el ponderar la ventaja de un medio sobre otro". Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 30.

¹⁰⁵ "En efecto, la deliberación antecede a otro acto de la voluntad, que es la elección. El medio, o los medios, elegidos son los que están al alcance de la capacidad de realizarlos, la cual es variable en cada hombre y en las diversas coyunturas de su vida". Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 11.

¹⁰⁶ "La deliberación no puede prolongarse al infinito, porque en ese caso la elección no tendría lugar. Por tanto, parece acertado sostener que terminar la deliberación

This act should not only consider the intention, but also the interrelation of the means. Polo distinguishes two types of relationship between the different means presented, the horizontal one which is the relationship between the means among them, and the vertical which is the relationship of the means with the intention¹⁰⁷.

The election is also linked to the main habit of the practical reason, which is prudence. One can say that the election properly belongs to the practical judgement as final recommendation. It can also be attributed to the previous act of the practical reason, to the deliberation that considers all possible means. To consider the possibilities as means requires confronting them with the intention and follow the chain of intentions up to the final end, and this requires close contact with synderesis. “To choose a habit is needed; therefore, the thesis that freedom gets in contact with the will through habits should be maintained, albeit they may be weakly acquired habits (for this reason, the choice can be more or less trivial). Ultimately, all acts of the *voluntas ut ratio* require habits because they are not the first act, if one admits the simple love (and its constitution by synderesis)”,¹⁰⁸.

Polo places properly the first habit before the consensus, this being prudence. “The first habit is prudence and the consensus part of prudence”¹⁰⁹.

For the purpose of this dissertation there is no need to go into more details regarding virtues, since what we are interested in is what makes the habits, virtues and not vices, which is the formal reason of goodness. What makes them have the reason of goodness is given by synderesis¹¹⁰: “If voluntary actions do not take place, the moral habits

corresponde a la voluntad, según ese acto suyo que es elegir... Como es claro, la elección no es un acto único, pues el hombre ha de elegir muchas veces”. *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ “The means maintain a dual respect: one in the same order of the means, which is called horizontal, or connection means-means; and another to the end, which might be called vertical. The latter takes into account the *intentio*, but without forgetting the previous one. Practical action warns that means always refers to another means”. “Los medios mantienen un doble respecto: uno en el orden mismo de los medios, que cabe llamar horizontal, o conexión medio-medio, y otro con el fin, que se podría llamar vertical. Este último respecto lo tiene en cuenta la *intentio*, pero sin prescindir del otro. En la acción práctica se advierte que un medio siempre se refiere a otro”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 80.

¹⁰⁸ “Para elegir hace falta hábito; por tanto, la tesis de que la libertad toma contacto con la voluntad a través de los hábitos se debe mantener, aunque sean hábitos débilmente adquiridos (por eso, la elección puede ser más o menos trivial). En definitiva, todos los actos de la *voluntas ut ratio* exigen hábitos porque no son el primero, si se admite el simple querer (y su constitución por la sindéresis)”. *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰⁹ “El primer hábito es la prudencia, y el *consensus* una parte de la prudencia”. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Prudence directs all other virtues by directing them properly to the final end, which is received from synderesis, so synderesis is the key for morality as is well seen by Trigo: “De todas formas, la prudencia no es la única condición para que se dé la virtud moral. Previamente, se requiere conocer el fin al que se dirige la misma prudencia y las demás virtudes, y este conocimiento previo y superior es propio de la sindéresis o hábito de los primeros principios prácticos”. Trigo, T. (ed), *En Busca de una Ética Universal*, op.cit., 128.

are not acquired or become weak. According to this, moral habits are derived from synderesis, i.e., of I-want and its continuation”¹¹¹. From prudence¹¹² the other virtues emanate as a kind of similar voluntary strength applied to the body in order to direct it to the end: “As you cannot replace those appetites or transform into them, the will sorts them seeking its own perfection which consists of virtue. Virtue is communicable to the lower tendencies, even if they are not exactly their subjects. The irascible appetite is controlled with fortitude and the concupiscent appetite with temperance”¹¹³.

It may be interesting to show how the election process can also be election of a life style. We can train our character, try to acquire some virtues we lack, what Spaemann calls a hierarchy of likings¹¹⁴.

Once the election has been made one has to effect it and this is the task of the act of the will called active use.



¹¹¹ “Si los actos voluntarios no tienen lugar, los hábitos morales no se adquieren o se debilitan. Según esto, los hábitos morales derivan de la sindéresis, es decir, del querer-yo y de su continuación”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 52.

¹¹² “The first acquired virtue, expressing the will, linked with intelligence, is prudence. For this reason, prudence is *virtutum genetrix*, and without it no other virtue is possible”. “La primera virtud adquirida, que expresa el enlace de la voluntad con la inteligencia, es la prudencia. Por eso, la prudencia es *genetrix virtutum*, y sin ella no se puede adquirir ninguna otra virtud”. *Ibid.*

¹¹³ “Como no puede sustituir a esos apetitos ni convertirse en ellos, la voluntad los ordena de acuerdo con su propio perfeccionamiento, que consiste en la virtud. La virtud es comunicable a las tendencias inferiores, sin que sean exactamente sus sujetos. El apetito irascible se controla con la fortaleza, y el apetito concupiscente con la templanza”. *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁴ “Living rightly, living well, above all means establishing a hierarchy of preferences”. Spaemann, R., *Ética: Cuestiones fundamentales* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1987), 29.

Active Use. Polo rejects the term ‘use’ when referring either to the active-use of the will¹¹⁵ or the passive-use¹¹⁶ of the practical reason, even if the term was used by Aquinas¹¹⁷. He does so mainly based on the non-reflexivity of the will. There are no explicit acts of the will on itself. To want, to will, does not refer to the will wanting itself, but to synderesis wanting the wanting to will¹¹⁸. ‘The curvature of the will’, an expression that Polo uses frequently, is the relationship of dependence of the will from synderesis. This is, that any act of the will has to be referred as its activating instance to the person via synderesis. “The expression ‘active use’ is unacceptable. This voluntary act should be called action: it is the voluntary praxis whose intention is the piece of work. In the piece of work knowledge is communicated to the motor faculties, especially the hands. In that communication, the form known by the immanent operation becomes the shape of what is done. In this sense, this is to ‘put legs to the ideas’. The ‘legs’ are the execution of

¹¹⁵ “Thomas Aquinas faced the problem. He calls active use, the relationship between the wanting and doing and says it is the act of will that controls other faculties”. “Tomás de Aquino afrontó el problema. A la relación entre el querer y el hacer la llama uso activo, y estima que es un acto de la voluntad que dispone de otras facultades”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 16. “No act of wanting should be called active use, because use is equivalent to dispose, and as I argue elsewhere, none of the dimensions of the essence of man are modifiable. What is modifiable is what is being modified. But one can only modify what is external to the essence of the man. Voluntary acts are ways of modifying inasmuch as they are curved, and their relationship regarding what is modifiable is the intention of other”. “Ningún acto de querer conviene denominarlo uso activo, porque usar equivale a disponer, y como sostengo en otros lugares, ninguna de las dimensiones de la esencia del hombre son disponibles. Lo disponible es aquello sobre lo que versa el disponer. Pero sólo se dispone de lo externo a la esencia del hombre. Los actos voluntarios son modos de disponer en tanto que son curvos, y su respecto a lo disponible reside en la intención de otro”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 17.

¹¹⁶ “The notion of passive use is invalid when applied to human cognitive or motor activities, dimensions which are different ways of dispose and in no way modifiable”. “La noción de uso pasivo es inválida si se aplica a las dimensiones humanas cognoscitivas o motoras, que también son modos de disponer y en modo alguno disponibles”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 17.

¹¹⁷ “Thomas Aquinas calls it the active use practical action”. “El uso activo, como lo llama Tomás de Aquino, es la acción práctica”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 79. “Volitum autem non solum est finis, sed id quod est ad finem. Ultimum autem quod pertinet ad primam habitudinem voluntatis, respectu eius quod est ad finem, est electio, ibi enim completur proportio voluntatis, ut complete velit id quod est ad finem. Sed usus iam pertinet ad secundam habitudinem voluntatis, qua tendit ad consequendum rem volitam. Unde manifestum est quod usus sequitur electionem, si tamen accipiatur usus, secundum quod voluntas utitur executiva potentia movendo ipsam. Sed quia voluntas etiam quodammodo rationem movet, et utitur ea, potest intelligi usus eius quod est ad finem, secundum quod est in consideratione rationis referentis ipsum in finem. Et hoc modo usus praecedat electionem”. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, op.cit. I-II, q.16, a.4, co.

¹¹⁸ “To choose some good it is required to want to choose (better: I-want choose). To enjoy the good, it is also needed to want. Wanting is an irreducible, although in humans it belongs to its essence and not to the act of being”. “Para elegir un bien se requiere querer elegir (mejor: querer-yo elegir). Para disfrutar el bien también hace falta querer. Querer es un irreducible, aunque en el hombre pertenece a su esencia y no al acto de ser”. *Ibid.*, 67.

the work, but without ideas there is nothing to ‘put legs on’. Communication of ideas to the motor powers through the imagination is quite understandable from the neurological point of view”¹¹⁹.

In our opinion ‘action’ will be confused with the actual work done, when sometimes, even if the will has decided to put something into practice, it does not come out, either because the body is not capable at that moment to put it into action or it is just an internal decision which has no external repercussion at that moment, for example, to make an internal act of repentance. Praxis is not a good term either because, it is usually used to refer to the external actions, due to the influence of Marxism in political life, rather than to the internal acts which is its original Greek meaning. Perhaps a better term could be undertaking or processing which conveys also the meaning of continuity until the piece of work is finished¹²⁰. Another confusing term is ‘command’ which can be applied both to the action of the practical reason or to the will indistinctively; perhaps it will be better to leave command as an act of the practical reason and *imperium* to the will, following Enriquez’s suggestion: “Commanding, then, is an act of reason, of will and of the appetites, but in various senses, depending on whether we emphasise the ordering, the end or movement”¹²¹.

The action finishes the volition, so to speak, and therefore is related with the intention and in fact is the purpose of the intention¹²², unless it is a vain intention, not a real one, which will be lack of sincerity of the will. This makes one realize that all other activities were means to achieve this particular end, so that one can say that the aim of the intention was the use¹²³.

¹¹⁹ “La expresión ‘uso activo’ es inaceptable. A este acto voluntario conviene llamarle acción: es la praxis voluntaria cuya intención es la obra. En la obra el conocimiento se comunica a las facultades motoras, sobre todo, a las manos. En esa comunicación, la forma conocida por la operación inmanente, pasa a ser configurante de lo que se hace. En este sentido, se habla de ‘ponerle patas a las ideas’. ‘Las patas’ son la ejecución de la obra, pero sin ideas no hay nada a lo que ‘ponerle patas’. La comunicación de las ideas a las facultades motoras a través de la imaginación es bastante comprensible desde el punto de vista neurológico”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 18.

¹²⁰ For the two different meanings of use in Aquinas, internal as elicited act of the will and as action cfr. Brock, S. L., “What is the Use of Usus in Aquinas’ Psychology of Action?”, in *Moral and Political Philosophies in the Middle Ages* (Ottawa: Legas, 1995), 654-664.

¹²¹ Enriquez, T., “«Imperium», Instinct and Natural Law”, in A. N Garcia (ed.), *Natural Law: Historical, Systematic and Juridical Approaches* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008), 340. Accessed August 27, 2015. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1106970>.

¹²² “If the action is the last act of the regarding the means, it has to link with the intention, i.e., with the formal relationship between means and end, which man understands and the animal does not”. “Si la acción es el último acto respectivo a los medios, ha de conectar con la intención, es decir, con la relación formal entre medio y fin, que el hombre entiende y el animal no”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 79.

¹²³ Although sometimes this is forgotten, the *intentio* is globalizing; this is why it should be added immediately to the active use. The integration of means can only

Nevertheless, there is one step more, which is related to the success in the use or undertaking; and this is the joy of having completed the intention.

Fruition. There is always a risk of not accomplishing what one has wanted to achieve. Then one has a feeling of despondency, and either has to choose different means to achieve it or give up the original intention. The achievement gives a different affection of the will, which is the joy (*fruitio*) of achievement. “Practical reason can be wrong because the knowledge of the formal reason of means is not foolproof: when projecting a series of means trying to achieve an end there is a risk of failure, or cause counter-productive side effects. Therefore, the proportionality between practical reason and will is insufficient, since the ordination of the means to the end is intrinsic and practical reason knows slightly such order”¹²⁴.

There are some interesting aspects regarding the different outcomes of the act of willing.

a) One is the creation of virtues, which come out of repetition of acts of the will to the point that contrary actions to virtues, decreases the will capacity for further good actions, so they can be lost, and even synderesis can be obscured. The intelligence works more autonomously than the will with respect to the synderesis, and therefore does not need to repeat actions to acquire its habits.

b) Another one, related to the previous one, is what Polo calls moral experience, which is different from the intellectual experience, and refers to the global habits that one has at a particular moment, based naturally on the acts exercised previously¹²⁵. The growth both

be by the end”. Aunque a veces esto se olvida, la *intentio* es globalizante; por eso se ha de añadir enseguida al uso activo. La totalización de los medios solamente se puede hacer por el fin”. *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁴ “La razón práctica se puede equivocar porque la captación de la razón formal de medio no es infalible: al proyectar una serie de medios se intenta alcanzar un fin, pero se corre el riesgo de fracasar, o de provocar efectos secundarios contraproducentes. Por tanto, la proporcionalidad entre razón práctica y voluntad es insuficiente, puesto que la ordenación del medio al fin es intrínseca y la razón práctica conoce débilmente dicha ordenación”. *Ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁵ “So to say, I-see is a guide that falls short and is entrusted to the voluntary without accompanying it to the end. At the same time, the intellectual experience —the highest raised light— is distinguished from moral experience. According to my proposal, the sentence means that the voluntary retains better the non-futurization, so it comes after intellectual acts, because it is a more intense act. Unless the vice ruins the moral experience, entrusting the voluntary-after is safe, and in no way irrational because it is a surrender to the monitoring of synderesis that provides —constitutes— the relay. The election cuts the deliberation in this sense”. “Por así decir, ver-yo es un guía que se queda corto y se encomienda a lo voluntario sin acompañarlo hasta el final. Paralelamente, la experiencia intelectual —la luz suscitada más alta— se distingue de la experiencia moral. Según mi propuesta, la sentencia significa que lo voluntario conserva mejor la no desfuturización, por lo que viene después de lo intelectual, porque es un acto más intenso. A no ser que el vicio arruine la experiencia moral, la encomienda al después voluntario es segura, y en modo alguno irracional porque es una entrega a la vigilancia de la sindéresis

of intellectual and moral experience assists in making the successive decisions more successful. "As the election is a voluntary act followed by the so-called active use, a new decision may be due to the increase of knowledge of goods that provides the active use. Among those goods some have a marked character of end, because use has a close relation with the intentio, which is another voluntary act which refers at the end"¹²⁶.

c) A third one is that neither in Polo nor in the classical account is there a description of the continuous rectification that any decision has while it is being implemented. This may be because they use an analytical method and any alteration to the course is considered a different voluntary act¹²⁷, but perhaps it can be explained in a better way by giving a bit more leeway to the active use, and the corresponding act of the practical reason, which can be considered a continuous check-rectification-countercheck of the actions being undertaken with respect to the intention. This is like ship pilots who continuously correct the course according to the place they intend to reach. Polo uses the cybernetic approach to virtues, but mainly to express the redundancy that they have in increasing the capacity of the respective faculties, but he has not brought the same approach to the stages of the will. The pragmatist Pierce, seems to have done it as self-control according to Boero¹²⁸.

Summary

We have seen how from the personal level (which decides about where to destine one's love), the action has to cascade down through

que aporta —constituye— el relevo. La decisión corta la deliberación en este sentido". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 214.

¹²⁶ "Como la elección es un acto voluntario al que sigue otro llamado uso activo la nueva decisión puede ser debida al aumento del conocimiento de bienes que proporciona el uso. Entre esos bienes descubiertos se encuentran algunos que tienen un marcado carácter de fin, pues el uso guarda una estrecha relación con la intentio, que es otro acto voluntario que se refiere a fines". Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 14.

¹²⁷ "But in spite of being several the elections are not isolated. According to the classical approach, the connection between elections is understood according to various criteria. First, a choice can be altered again". Also "The plurality of choices is sorted by the virtue of prudence. This virtue also belongs to the act of commanding [*imperium*], which moves election to use. Prudential coordination is extremely important, because without this virtue, the correction of the wrong election cannot be maintained". "Pero no por ser plurales las elecciones están aisladas. Según el planteamiento clásico, la conexión entre las elecciones se entiende según varios criterios. En primer lugar, con una elección se puede corregir otra, *Ibid.* "La pluralidad de elecciones está ordenada por la virtud de la prudencia. A esta virtud pertenece también el acto de imperio, con el que se pasa de la elección al uso. La coordinación prudencial es sumamente importante, pues, sin esta virtud, la corrección de las elecciones equivocadas no se puede mantener". *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁸ Boero, H., "Tomás de Aquino y C. S. Peirce", (blog) Seminario del Grupo de Estudios Peirceanos, University of Navarre, January 17, 2008. Accessed December, 12 2014. <http://www.unav.es/gep/SeminarioBoero.html>.

synderesis to the will helped by the practical intelligence to finally be effected at the natural level by the sensitive and physical faculties of the person. The destination marks the general orientation, which then helps the innate habits to work on the direction it gives. This makes the first text quoted in this section more understandable.

The lack of a systematic description of the relationship between the operations of the will and of the practical reason, and the lack of clarity regarding the simple willing and perhaps the ambiguity in the distinction and use of deliberation and practical judgement may indicate that Polo was not too interested in such distinctions. What was important for him, probably, was to point out the role that freedom through synderesis has in ethics. Polo explains that traditional philosophy placed freedom on the will and specifically in one of the moment of choosing¹²⁹, while for him, freedom is not in the will but it is a personal transcendental. As such it acts through synderesis that activates the will –and intelligence. Synderesis constitutes the will, giving it the natural final end, and permeates all the will stages, regarding both the intermediate ends and the means to achieve them.

Regarding the practical reason, what is interesting for Polo is the dependence it has from synderesis through the I-want and not directly from the I-see. Being the same faculty as the theoretical intelligence, its use is commanded by synderesis to find the aspect of goodness in the realities the will discover, or also to find out the good the person is craving for, and does not know, because synderesis is an impulse to do good, but the specific good has to be found and presented by the intelligence, because the will is ‘blind’.

Another issue to highlight regarding the stages of the will is that Polo would like to improve how the passive use of the faculties by the will is done. He believes that it is done mainly through the sensitive faculties, mainly the cogitative regarding the affections and the imagination regarding the content.

Polo showed interest in bringing down the strict separation between the *agere*, the elicit acts of the will (*praxis, agere*) and the use of the other faculties (*poeisis, facere*)¹³⁰. He bases his arguments on the preeminence of work and culture as part of the constitutive social nature of man. Both have strong moral connotations because they both

¹²⁹ “From the moral point of view, the most significant acts are those in which the will, taken as free-will, exercises dominion over its own act. Such acts are proper to the will as will (q. 10, a. 1, ad 1). Thomas also says that what one wills in the mode of free-will one wills *simpliciter* (IIIa, q. 2 1, a. 4). Choice, as the act of free-will, is the most significant act from the moral point of view, and, as such, it is the first act to consider”. Gallagher, D. M., “The Will and Its Acts”, op. cit., 79.

¹³⁰ An example of the radical separation between *facere* and *agere* can be seen in García Junceda, J. A., “La Sindéresis en el Pensamiento de Santo Tomás”, op. cit., 43: “Para hacer una mesa un carpintero, tiene que vivir, e, incluso, la mesa hecha puede representarle un gran beneficio para su. vida, puede ayudarle a vivir; mas el hacer la mesa no es un acto vital. Por el contrario, odiar, amar, sufrir, son acciones vitales, como acción vital es contemplar la verdad, y esta la más representativa de la vida humana”.

improve man –a person who does not work is not following synderesis' command ‘do’, ‘do good’. An idle person does not improve, does not perfect himself, and does not help others, does not improve the culture either.

After seeing synderesis dynamics, its activation from the personal level, and the constitutive and directive actions at the essential level through the intelligence and the will, we have all the elements to discuss whether synderesis as understood by Leonardo Polo could be a good foundation for a personalist ethics.



CHAPTER IV

ETHICS AND SYNDERESIS

1. Introduction

In this section we should be able to discuss at length the initial question posed at the beginning: whether Polo's proposal regarding synderesis is accurate and whether it can be a good approach for a personalistic view of ethics. We now have all the elements that can allow us analyse whether Polo's *Transcendental Anthropology* can be a good base for a personalist ethics. We have seen the different historical views of synderesis and Polo's expanded role of synderesis within his philosophical proposal as compared to the traditional view of synderesis. In order to proceed with some order we have chosen first to see how Polo understands morals and ethics, then the criteria of goodness, followed by how Polo relates ethics to three areas: goods, norms and virtues, that according to him constitute the study of ethics, and then we shall study each in particular¹.

Polo affirmed that anthropology was the main interest of his philosophical endeavour. He never stopped developing his thoughts, even after retirement. Gifted with a great memory, which was noticed in the way he taught without papers and starting wherever he left the previous class, and in the similar expressions, almost textual, in different texts, he nevertheless found it difficult to express himself in writing. This is why he tended to use older writings –both published and unpublished– in his later ones as he acknowledges in several places. In spite of this he used to correct each new edition with his latest discoveries. His book, *Epistemología, creación y divinidad*, reflects the ultimate development of his thought, because it was the last one he wrote and was posthumously published. There he uses the transcendental way of doing anthropology to see whether it can help to understand better some topics of supernatural anthropology based on

¹ The triple structure of an integral ethics has been well seen by J.F. Sellés. Cfr. Sellés, J.F., *Antropología para inconformes*, op. cit., 366. and by Liliana B. Irizar in her introduction to Dewan, L. O., *Fundamentos metafísicos de la ética*, op. cit., 10. Dewan does not mention synderesis offering an alternative view to Polo's understanding of the ontological foundation of morals.

Christology². Christ is, for Polo, the “perfect God and perfect man”³, and he refers to Him not as God but as perfect man, because Polo’s main philosophical interest, as we noted before, is anthropological. Polo was a practicing Catholic and he took Revelation as an inspiration for his philosophy, but without confusing theology or faith with philosophy. The figure of Christ and other religious topics appear frequently in his works, mainly as examples, or as a way to clarify a point knowing that his audience mostly shared his faith, except on this posthumous work where he uses the philosophical tools to try to see how it may assist the understanding of Christian theology. Ethics also had special resonance in his works, since from his youth he was trying to understand freedom –and therefore responsibility– which led to his discovery that freedom cannot be discussed with the same mental tools used for the non-personal world, as we indicated in the Introduction.

2. Ethics according to Polo

“The study of human action cannot be complete if it is not done in moral terms”⁴. Polo’s wholesome affirmation gives an idea of the importance he gives to the study of ethics. Ethics is what allows each human being to grow in one’s humanity and therefore what allows for the progress or regression of one’s biography, which actually is the development of one’s personal life: “Ethics, from the temporal point of view, is the organization of human life, i.e., what allows man live one’s time without yielding to the discontinuities of fashion, etc.; what allows one to grow”⁵.

In our postmodern society a great number of people have a sociological view of ethics, as it was in Greek and Roman times, etched in the words they used to speak about it. ‘Ethos’ in Greek and ‘mores’ in Latin originally meant the accepted good behaviour in a particular society; later, mainly through Stoic philosophers, it was applied to the universal society. Polo was aware of this modern misconception of ethics: “Ordinarily synderesis is assimilated to moral conscience, which even today enjoys esteem, although some see it as a simple process of social adaptation. The origin of the concept is very old, and even popular; in fact, it has been reflected in many metaphors and poetic comparisons... When the spiritual character of moral conscience

² “This book is somehow a summary of my philosophy steered towards Christology”. “Este libro es, en cierto modo, una recapitulación de mi filosofía orientada hacia la cristología”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 17.

³ This formula is taken from the ‘Athanasian Creed’. Cfr. Denzinger, E., *El Magisterio de la Iglesia*, Herder, Barcelona, 1963), 12.

⁴ “No cabe un estudio completo de la acción humana si no es en términos morales”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 18.

⁵ “La ética desde el punto de vista temporal es la organización de la biografía humana, es decir, lo que permite al hombre vivir en el tiempo sin ceder a las discontinuidades de la moda, etc.: lo que le permite crecer”. *Ibid.*, 152.

is accentuated the term ‘synderesis’ is used”⁶. He was also aware that the cause of the negative view of ethics was partly that it was used mainly to punish misbehaviour; this is in a negative view of ethics, as already pointed out in the Introduction.

Polo’s conception of ethics is radically different; it is primarily a personal matter rather than social and it is eminently positive rather than negative: “It can be argued that, thus understood, ethics is overwhelming. On the contrary, ethics is concerned with happiness and pointing its inexcusable conditions”⁷. Its aim is the personal perfection of each unique, unrepeatable human being⁸. We can say that from the morals of the don’ts Polo suggests a moral of the do’s, of doing, of a moral of increased perfection, a moral of personal and social happiness.

3. Historical differentiations

Polo sees the discovery of philosophy, and of ethics, as part of philosophy, as an historical fact; as a step forward from the mythical and magic thinking⁹. A breaking away from obscure forces of the past or the present to open oneself to personal responsibility of the present in view of the future: “It must be said, in short, that the practical knowledge is freed from the obsessions of myth and magic by the Aristotelian prudential ethics”¹⁰.

⁶ “Ordinariamente la sindéresis se asimila a la conciencia moral, la cual también hoy goza de estima, aunque algunos la entienden como un simple proceso de adaptación social. El origen de la noción es muy antiguo, e incluso popular; por eso ha quedado plasmada en muchas metáforas y comparaciones poéticas. [...] Cuando se acentúa el carácter espiritual de la conciencia moral se usa el término ‘syndéresis’. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 136.

⁷ “Cabe alegar que, así entendida, la ética es abrumadora. Todo lo contrario: la ética se ocupa de la felicidad y señala sus condiciones inexcusables”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 108.

⁸ “It is not only that moral does not disagree with nature, more important, it is that morality is the improvement of nature. But not just in a quantitative way or just by use, no, it is the improvement of nature. The people who have improved their nature are good people and morals can be learned from them”. “No es que la moral no esté de acuerdo con la naturaleza, es mucho más, es que la moral es el desarrollo de la naturaleza. Pero no el despliegue en un sentido extensivo o en un sentido de puro ejercicio, no, es la intensificación de la naturaleza. Los seres humanos que tienen intensificada su naturaleza son los hombres buenos y en ellos se puede aprender la moral”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral”, Unpublished manuscript, paragraph 12, Seville, July 1994.

⁹ Polo explains these steps in the first chapter of *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*.

¹⁰ “Cabe decir, en suma, que el saber operativo es liberado de las obsesiones del mito y de la magia en el modo de la ética prudencial aristotélica”. Polo, L., *El hombre en la Historia* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2008), 20.

Polo finds the key to understand ethics in Socrates' discovery that any action a person does, not only changes the world, but more important, it changes the person who acts¹¹. The agent is changed by his action. He either grows or diminishes as a person. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle a bad person is less person than a good person¹². No free action is indifferent to personal development and therefore to ethics¹³.

With Christianity a personal God is the key to ethics, not just *logos*, the cosmos or an intellect who understands itself. And “to improve oneself means to be more like God, to highlight in oneself the image of God”¹⁴. The opposite is also true; to do bad actions means to be less image of God, which is to betray one’s own true being, which is to be “an image of God”¹⁵. To make this clearer God incarnates himself in Christ, who is the perfect man, the perfect image of the Father,

¹¹ “The first who raised this issue in a clear manner was Socrates, who is the founder of Western ethical philosophy, when he asked a question that Plato stated in the *Gorgias*, 527 b: ‘what must be guarded more: to suffer an injustice or commit it?’ Who comes out worse, the victim or the one who commits the injustice? This question is very deep. If we do not answer it properly, we must recognise the partiality of our ethical knowledge”. “El primero que planteó este asunto de una manera clara fue Sócrates, que es el fundador de la filosofía ética occidental, al plantear una pregunta que Platón recoge en el *Gorgias*, 527 b.: ‘¿de qué hay que guardarse más: de sufrir una injusticia o de cometerla?’ ¿Quién sale más perjudicado, el que es víctima de la injusticia o el que la comete? Esta pregunta es muy profunda. Si no acertamos a responderla correctamente, habrá que confesar la parcialidad de nuestro saber ético”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 82.

¹² “Plato assumes the topic in a great way, he says that clearly this is the origin of the sense of guilt. What does it mean to be responsible for an act? Notice, above all, that the sense of responsibility of one’s acts is found here: that the act is attributed to the one who did it. From the point of view of the judge, there is an external judgment that imputes the act, but there is an internal trial, a trial in the ontological sense: one is to judge oneself, one punishes himself by becoming evil. Evil is not a vague term, to be evil is to be less, to be less real”. “Platón retoma el asunto hasta puntos enormes, dice que, claro y aquí surge el sentido de culpa. Fijaos que todo el sentido de la responsabilidad de los actos está aquí: ¿qué quiere decir ser responsable de un acto? Que el acto se le achaca a uno. Desde el punto de vista del juez, hay un juicio externo que le imputa el acto, pero hay un juicio interno, un juicio en sentido ontológico: uno es juez de sí mismo, uno se castiga a sí mismo haciéndose malo. Malo no es una denominación vaga, malo es ser menos, desrealizarse”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral”, Annex 1, op. cit., paragraph 25.

¹³ “In these pages I have tried to show that no dimension of human action is alien to ethics. If this were not so, grace would not be able to reach and fully inform the conduct of men in this world”. “En estas páginas he procurado mostrar que ninguna dimensión del actuar humano es ajena a la ética. Si no fuera así, la gracia no alcanzaría a informar enteramente la conducta del hombre en este mundo”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 12.

¹⁴ “Por lo pronto, a partir de la Biblia se averigua que hacerse mejor comporta parecerse más a Dios, destacar el propio carácter de imagen divina”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 141.

¹⁵ “However, by becoming wicked, man incurs in a lie about his being, and deserves the damning judgment of God, which says, as we read in the Gospel: ‘I do not know you’. This divine declaration is only possible if the man has violated the

so it is easier for men to have the right model, the moral pattern of decision, which basically is love, because God is love¹⁶. This is partially natural theology as part of philosophy and theological knowledge inasmuch as it refers to Christ, but the lived theology influences philosophy, in the search for the truth that as reality, truth is one.

In the Bible man finds also the relationship with the world around him, not only with the rest of the people, which is to rule it, as a good governor, which means to take care of it, to improve it, to bring it to full fruition, enjoying of its fruits as well, because man is the only creature willed by himself, not for any other purpose, due to his spirituality. The world, the matter of which man is also part of it —by being made out of clay— was made good, so the task is to embellish it, to ornate it. Unfortunately using freedom badly, man is not being faithful to his image and mission and rather than ruling properly started killing others and destroying the world rather than embellishing it. All this is realated to morals and Polo gives account of it philosophically: “The doctrine of the Bible is consistent with the Socratic approach because from its very first book, Genesis¹⁷, where we read that in creating the universe God said that it is good, and that man is even better: he is very good. Also it states that man is made to dominate the earth. Wherefore the relationship that man has with the universe is active, being that of the very good [man] with the good [the world]: this implies that the very good should improve the good”¹⁸.

Because of this task man is “perfective”, he should perfect all he does, he is good but can make things better; this is his perfective task, and perfecting others and the world he perfects himself. This is why Polo likes to define man as the perfectible perfecter (‘perfeccionador perfectible’)¹⁹. Unfortunately, the first couple was induced to take morals to themselves and to declare what was good or evil by themselves. From there on ethics rather than be the progression from good to better, became a task of avoiding evil: “Perhaps the biggest mistake man has committed is to admit the knowledge of good and evil as his

divine image in his being”. “En cambio, al hacerse el hombre malvado, incurre en mentira respecto de su ser, y merece el juicio condenatorio de Dios, que declara, como se lee en el Evangelio: «no te conozco». Esta declaración divina sólo es posible si el hombre ha vulnerado la imagen divina en su ser”. *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love”. *1 John 4:8, The Holy Bible: New International Version: NIV.* N.p.: n.p., n.d.

¹⁷ Cf. *Génesis*, 1:26; *Ibid.*, 2:15.

¹⁸ “La doctrina de la Biblia resulta compatible con el planteamiento socrático ya desde el primer libro, el Génesis, donde se lee que al crear el universo Dios declara que es bueno, y que el hombre lo es aún más: que es muy bueno. Igualmente se afirma que el hombre está hecho para dominar la tierra. De donde la relación que el hombre ha de guardar con el universo es activa, por ser la de lo muy bueno con lo bueno: comporta el mejoramiento de lo bueno por lo muy bueno”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 142.

¹⁹ “The following practical definition of man: perfective perfectible”. “La siguiente definición práctica del hombre: *el perfeccionador perfectible*”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 181.

own²⁰, a task which is not man's but God's. Man has not enough cognitive endowment to declare what is good and what is bad. The characteristic of being perfective and perfectional is not compatible with the knowledge of good and evil, but with the knowledge of good and better”²¹. This decision distorted their vision of reality becoming more negative than positive, which is an inaccurate vision of the world. “Indeed, when man admits the idea of evil, which happens only because it seeks to seize the knowledge of good and evil, he appears primarily to accept the untruth thought that there is something wrong, which is false: because nothing God made is bad”²².

This attitude distorted also the image one has of God which is at the base of many vital and subsequently philosophical errors: “Is typical of all Gnosis the idea that there is a creator god whose clumsiness, would be noticed in the existence of evil that has to be remedied by a saviour god. Because had God created a being who can pervert radically himself then God the creator made a mistake. The redemption then becomes the correction of a divine error and only extrinsically, justification of man. This man will be even perverted in heaven, because God does not correct man's sin, He simply hides it”²³.

This latest vision of ethics as taking the task of avoiding evil or more to rectify the morals inherited from religion has influenced most relevant modern philosophers as Polo refers in his works. Polo often quotes the testimony of a surprising witness, the one who takes the modern approach to its limits: “As noted by Nietzsche, the great boldness of German idealism is to put evil in God”²⁴. One of them, who

²⁰ Cf. *Génesis*, 2: 9.

²¹ “Quizá la equivocación más grande que se ha cometido es admitir como propia, del hombre, la ciencia del bien y del mal, que no compete al hombre sino sólo a Dios. El hombre no se basta para declarar desde su dotación cognoscitiva qué es lo bueno y qué es lo malo. El carácter suyo de ser perfectivo y perfectible no es compatible con la ciencia del bien y del mal, sino con la ciencia del bien y de lo mejor”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 146.

²² “En efecto, cuando el hombre admite la idea de mal, lo que sólo sobreviene porque pretende apoderarse de la ciencia del bien y del mal, en él aparece ante todo la mentira de estimar que existe algo malo, lo cual es falso: nada de lo que Dios ha hecho es malo”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 146.

²³ “Es propia de toda gnosis la idea de que existe un dios creador cuya torpeza, que se notaría en la existencia del mal, ha de ser remediada por un dios salvador. Porque si Dios ha creado un ser que se puede pervertir radicalmente, Dios creador se ha equivocado. La redención sería entonces la subsanación de un error divino y, sólo extrínsecamente, la justificación del hombre. Éste sigue, incluso en el cielo, siendo pecador, pues Dios no elimina el pecado humano, sino que se limita a ocultarlo”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 146.

²⁴ “Según apunta Nietzsche, la gran osadía del idealismo alemán es poner el mal en Dios”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral” Unpublished manuscript as translated in Appendix 1, op.cit. paragraph 34.

shares somehow Polo's vision of God as origin, and man's sin as rejecting and subsequently looking for its replica is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, though there is no reference to him in any of Polo's works²⁵.

After this quick vision on Polo's view on the evolution of morals up to our days, we can deal on how he believes ethics should be.

4. Ethics as the science of moral life

We said that Polo uses indifferently the terms ethics and moral to refer both to the moral actions and to its study as science, though he is aware of their difference²⁶. In this section we want to see how he considers ethics as a science, and more specifically its method and theme.

The metaphors regarding the duty of self-betterment are numerous along history, from agricultural, (developing one farm), academic (writing the book of life), architectural (building one's house), naval (taking the boat to the adequate port, or swimming to shore). There are also numerous quotations from notable authors who indicate the personal effort needed to live ethically like Seneca 'strong men who climb over their own shoulders', Bonaventura, '*nisi supra semetipsum ascendant*', Nietzsche, 'now I see myself under me'²⁷. Some even state that it is constitutive of ethics to demand serious sacrifices²⁸.

Polo agrees with this vision: "The seriousness of ethics is that man makes himself good or evil. Therefore, whatever improves man; that is ethical: what worsens man; that's unethical"²⁹. This quotation

²⁵ The following passage can show the similarities we mentioned; "But man cannot be rid of his origin. Instead of knowing himself in the origin of God, he must now know himself as an origin. He interprets himself according to his possibilities, his possibilities of being good or evil, and he therefore conceives himself to be the origin of good and evil. *Eritis sicut Deum*. "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil", says God (*Gen.*, III, 22). Originally man was made in the image of God, but now his likeness to God is a stolen one. As the image of God man draws his life entirely from his origin in God, but the man who has become like God has forgotten how he was at his origin and has made himself his own creator and judge". Bonhoeffer, D., *Ethics*, (New York: 1st Touchstone ed, Simon & Schuster, 1995), 17.

²⁶ "Ethics comes from 'ethos' as moral comes from 'mos' (mos and ethos mean practically the same in Greek and Latin)". "Etica viene de ethos, como moral de mos (mos y ethos significan prácticamente lo mismo en griego y en latín)". Polo, L., "Los Sentimientos Humanos", op.cit. 4.

²⁷ Marina, J. A., *Etica para Náufragos*, op. cit., 15.

²⁸ "It is an outstanding characteristic of morality that it demands substantial sacrifices". Baier, K., *The Moral Point of View* (Pittsburg: Cornell University, 1958), 1.

²⁹ "La seriedad de la ética reside en que el hombre se puede hacer bueno o malo. Por tanto, lo que mejora al hombre, eso es ético: lo que empeora al hombre, eso es antiético". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 83.

expresses well both the importance of ethics for any human being as its inescapable link to anthropology. There is no ethics if there is no model of what one should be and this cannot be known unless one knows what it is to be human. The study of what is human corresponds to the highest forms of anthropology, an anthropology which is all inclusive and for Polo that is achieved with his transcendental anthropology as already discussed. Without a proper anthropology one cannot do proper ethics. We have seen the epistemological status of transcendental anthropology; now we have to see ethics' status.

For Polo ethics has its own realm and therefore it should not be subjected to sciences below it. Because it deals with human perfection, it cannot be subordinated to sciences that limit their scope to what is empirical, formal or any other specialization: “To expose the relationship between ethics and other sciences that deal with the human world, we must start from ethics itself, i.e. studying ethics simply as ethics. We must show what I just said: that ethics is not an addition to a human dynamism sufficiently established by other factors. Human dynamism cannot be considered strictly without proper regard to what is intrinsic to it. Therefore, the study of human action is to identify what is ethical in its start and its finish”³⁰.

Polo is aware that the reduction of the field of philosophy to the empirical cannot reach what is properly human and those who try to do it risk much, because it means to lose what is properly human, what is really important and worth living for: “The result of any human action is something outside him, but also some inner change, i.e., a change in one's nature, which is called virtue. The will as it gets in touch with the intelligence becomes capable of virtues. This is the classic approach. An empiricist can pose difficulties: how can one support a passive spiritual power, a spiritual capacity which is an unrestricted opening, but that alone is unable to be activated? If the intelligence is involved, then it acts; but if not, it remains quiet. It is previous, pre-rational, and possibly un-used. It is an ontological thesis to say that it is possible that a person incapable of thinking can have his spirit open to happiness. What proof can we give? We cannot give empirical evidence; but what is at play is the respect for the human being. The only evidence we have is that man is a rational being and acts as such; but what if it does not act in this way? How to know that his spirit is unreservedly open, that there is *voluntas ut natura*? If the question is still asked, it will be improper, because what is at stake is the respect for human beings. If we do not admit this, it will be indifferent to kill a

³⁰ “Para exponer la relación de la ética con las otras ciencias que se ocupan del mundo humano, debemos arrancar de la ética misma, es decir, estudiar la ética simplemente como ética. Debemos mostrar lo que acabo de decir: que la ética no es un añadido a un dinamismo humano suficientemente constituido por otros factores. No cabe considerar con rigor el dinamismo humano sin atender a lo que le es intrínseco. Por eso, el estudio de la acción humana ha de detectar lo ético en su arranque y en su acabamiento”. *Ibid.*, 23.

man when he does not fulfil his role or when he is no longer useful, as we do with animals”³¹.

Not only empirical sciences but most sciences other than ethics, as part of philosophy, cannot have the last say of what is good or evil for men. Polo is clear about this: “Human behaviour can be studied in many ways: private, individual or organizational behaviour. The plurality of sciences on these issues: psychology, sociology, etc. is not in vain. But none of them is all-embracing and teaches us all about the human action; only ethics is able to do so”³². Also “everything that man does has to do with ethics. There is no comprehensive study of human action if it is not done in moral terms”³³. This does not mean that ethics deals on everything or that it is a finished science but the one that, as part of wisdom, is the guiding science, the one that orders human actions, and the other sciences, which are also human activities: “One cannot think that ethics is already completed –*in actu signato*–, as if we knew all about it, or as if it enjoyed a separate objective status”³⁴. As ordering all other sciences and regulating all human behaviour ethics is more wisdom than science. It is good to remember the difference between the lived ethics, that any human being does, from its study, which is proper to philosophy, but it is also good that the philosopher does not forget that ethics is primarily life, living wisdom: “The real science of action is ethics. In another sense, ethics is not science, but something more: it is a type of wisdom”³⁵.

³¹ “Del actuar humano se sigue un resultado exterior, pero también un resultado interior, es decir, una modificación de su propia naturaleza, a la que se llama virtud. La voluntad en cuanto toma contacto con la inteligencia se hace susceptible de virtudes. Este es el planteamiento clásico. Un empirista puede oponer dificultades: ¿cómo admitir una potencia pasiva espiritual, una capacidad espiritual que es apertura irrestricta, pero que ella sola es incapaz de pasar a actuar? Si la inteligencia interviene, sí actúa; pero si no, queda inédita. Es una apertura preracional, previa, eventualmente inédita. Que una persona incapaz de pensar tenga su espíritu abierto a la felicidad es una tesis ontológica. ¿Qué prueba se puede dar? Prueba empírica, ninguna; pero nos jugamos el respeto al ser humano. La única prueba que tenemos de que el hombre sea una persona racional es que actúe como tal; pero ¿y si no actúa? ¿Cómo saber que su espíritu está irrestrictamente abierto, que existe la *volutas ut natura*? Si la pregunta pide una verificación, es impertinente, porque lo que está en juego es el respeto al ser humano. Si no lo admitimos, sería indiferente matar a un hombre en cuanto no cumpla sus roles o deja de ser útil, como a un animal”. *Ibid.*, 145.

³² “Esto es claro. Hay muchas formas de estudiar la conducta humana; la conducta privada, individual, y la conducta en las organizaciones. No es ociosa la pluralidad de ciencias acerca de estos asuntos: psicología, sociología, etc. Pero ninguna de ellas es abarcante o nos lo enseña todo acerca del actuar humano; sólo la ética es capaz de lograrlo”. *Ibid.*, 18.

³³ “Todo lo que el hombre hace tiene que ver con la ética. No cabe un estudio completo de la acción humana si no es en términos morales”. *Ibid.*

³⁴ “No hay que ver la ética *in actu signato*, como si ya supiéramos todo acerca de ella, o como si gozara de un estatuto objetivo separado”. *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ “La verdadera ciencia de la acción es la ética. En otro sentido, la ética no es ciencia, sino algo más: una forma de sabiduría”. *Ibid.*, 189.

Nevertheless, human acts are not studied in general terms because ethics' specific angle of study is the goodness or evilness of these acts, and goodness and evilness is an intimate affair that requires knowing the intimacy of people. Scheler was also aware of this³⁶. Polo quotes Aristotle as his source: “as Aristotle warns, morality is not learned in books, but through good men. You learn it in good men because moral reality is actually the good men and reality should be known where it is. Books are neither moral nor immoral... they are a few pieces of paper where there are some few expressions of experiences which one can assimilate by empathy or insight. But the block, the reality in bulk of morality, is the human being”³⁷.

Because of this we should try to find out which actions make men good or bad by studying the behaviour of good people and, by doing this, find the specific method and object of morals: “How does man become good or bad? Through one's actions; this is how the classics see it. That is important because the origin of morality is in the acts, and the acts are determined by their objects, therefore the moral object must be studied”³⁸.

The classics classified sciences using two types of objects: the material and the formal. The material considers the reality studied; the formal, is the angle or the aspect under which the material object is considered. Polo uses this distinction though he prefers to speak of method and theme; the method resembles the formal object, and the

³⁶ “Clearly, therefore, Ethics as philosophical discipline can not ever, due to an essential law, exhaust moral values; it has only to do with values and preferential connections that have general validity. But it has also to explicitly show and make understandable the undoubtable facts, this is, it can explain that there is an ethical knowledge by wisdom far beyond Ethics, without which the immediate ethical knowledge of the generally valid values (not to mention the scientific explanation of what is already known) is essentially incomplete. Ethics, therefore, cannot and should never replace the individual conscience”. “Es evidente que, por tanto, la Ética como disciplina filosófica no puede jamás, por ley esencial, agotar los valores morales; únicamente tiene que ver con los valores y las conexiones de preferencia que poseen validez general. Mas tócale también mostrar expresamente y hacer comprensibles los hechos indudables, es decir, puede explicar que hay un conocimiento ético por sapiencia muy por encima de ella misma, sin el cual el conocimiento ético inmediato de los valores generalmente válidos (por no hablar de la exposición científica de lo ya conocido) es, por esencia, incompleto. La Ética, por consiguiente, no puede ni debe nunca sustituir a la conciencia moral del individuo”. Scheler, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 642.

³⁷ “Como advierte Aristóteles la moral no se aprende en los libros, sino en los hombres buenos. Se aprende en los hombres buenos porque la realidad moral es el hombre bueno y la realidad se conoce ahí donde está. Los libros no son morales ni inmorales ni nada, son unos trozos de papel donde hay expresión de algunas experiencias y por empatía o comprensión lo puede uno asimilar. Pero el bloque, la realidad en bloque de la moral, está en el ser humano”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral”, Unpublished manuscript as translated in Appendix 1, op. cit., paragraph 1.

³⁸ “¿Cómo se hace bueno o se hace malo? A través de sus actos; así lo ven los clásicos. Por eso es importantísimo puesto que el origen de la moralidad está en los actos y como los actos se determinan por los objetos, pues hay que estudiar el objeto moral”. Polo, L., Appendix 1, op. cit., paragraph 4.

theme the material object. We discuss first ethics' material object in the next section.

a) *Ethics' Material object*. What ethics studies are human actions, not actions of man³⁹. This is a traditional distinction found in classic ethics and moral manuals that indicates that only those actions that are free can be imputable to men and that therefore only those can be considered either good or evil. Free actions are the ones that constitute the material object of ethics. One has to be aware that for Polo action means any act, that is, not only those that conclude in an external transformation which classic Greeks called '*poiesis*' and Latin translated as '*agere*', but include also those that are purely internal which are called '*praxis*' in Greek and '*facere*' in Latin. Polo reminds of this distinction in his *Lecciones de Ética*: "The material object of ethics are human actions insofar as they are beyond what animals do. Ethics deals on our pragmatics. If we were not pragmatic we would not be ethical, but ethics cannot be confused with pragmatics (this is only its material object)"⁴⁰. And as part of the material object whatever influences human free decisions can be included: "All this is important from the point of view of the material object. Since the will is not independent of history, culture and society, it is necessary to consider them"⁴¹.

The object of ethics are the human acts; not any act but only those that are free, or as Polo likes to say, ethics is to study the human actions coming from a 'free system': "We must always bear in mind that man is extremely complex. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate ethics as a science of man, which in principle is philosophical. Expressed in aphorisms, then intuitively started by Socrates and organised systematically by Aristotle, ethics is the science which considers man as a free system"⁴². Freedom is not a small thing, an attachment to man, but the root of his specific way of being which distinguishes him from all other animals, and because of this requires specific philosophical attention and a new anthropology: "Not that ethics, again, considers everything in order to become a complete

³⁹ "This serves to distinguish the human acts from man's actions. Human acts are performed in response to an end, or not performed". "Esto sirve para distinguir los actos humanos de los actos del hombre. Los actos humanos se realizan en atención al fin, o no se realizan". Polo, L., *Lecciones de Ética*, op. cit., 32.

⁴⁰ "El objeto material de la ética son las acciones humanas en cuanto que el hombre las ejerce más allá de cómo lo hacen los animales. La ética versa sobre nuestra pragmática. Si no fuéramos pragmáticos no seríamos éticos, aunque la ética no se confunde con la pragmática (ésta es su objeto material)". *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴¹ "Todo esto tiene importancia desde el punto de vista del objeto material. Puesto que la voluntad no se independiza de la historia, de la cultura y de la sociedad, es necesario considerarlo". *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴² "Siempre se ha de tener en cuenta que el hombre es sumamente complejo. Por eso, es necesario formular la ética como una ciencia acerca del hombre, que en principio es filosófica. Expresada en aforismos, elaborada a partir de Sócrates de manera intuitiva, y de modo sistemático por Aristóteles, la ética es la ciencia que considera el hombre como sistema libre". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 109.

anthropology. But its approach is consistent with a complete anthropology, because it takes into account radical factors, even if it is indirectly; among others, freedom, which is the most important and most characteristic human dimension”⁴³. And this is yet another reason it cannot be replaced by any other science⁴⁴.

The consideration of freedom is then basic for ethics. One has to be able to understand it in depth to see when an action is done with full, partial or no freedom at all. By applying the triadic level structure of the man to freedom we can distinguish three levels of freedom, in Polo’s texts and in reality: physical, essential and transcendental freedom. Not distinguishing these levels brings confusions that mar human relationships. At the natural level physical freedom is easy to see, it is the lack of physical limitations to implement what a person may decide to do, for example this freedom is removed by chaining or locking people. These people can think and want whatever they feel like but they cannot exercise those desires that require physical movement. This level of freedom is attributed to animals and even to material things by analogy and this is why we speak of caged or free animals, of an attached or free standing statue, free or obstructed flow of water, for example.

The essential level freedom is exclusive to human beings. This level of freedom has been traditionally recognised and associated to the will. Polo accepts this but defends that actual radical freedom does not belong to the will as its origin but to what is above it in the ontological hierarchy, that it belongs to the personal level. For Leonardo Polo the will has freedom, but the will is not the root of freedom. Freedom is given to the will by the act of being by the radical, transcendental freedom.

The proper freedom, root of the other two freedoms, is personal transcendental freedom, which means that one does not have freedom, but that one is one’s freedom. Each person can say: ‘I am my freedom’. ‘If you take it away at this level I cease to exist as a person. I become an animal or a stone, not a person’. At the lower levels, which are levels of possession, I can say ‘I have freedom’ either at the natural or essential level, but not at the personal level; at the personal level I do not have freedom; I have to say, that ‘I am free’. Because of this no one can take it away from me, nor give it to me, once I exist as a person. They may take away the other two freedoms, lock me or prevent me from being in control of my mind and will by depriving me of information or drugging me, but they can never take away my radical freedom which is my being as a person.

⁴³ “No es que la ética, insisto, lo considere todo, que sea una antropología completa. Pero su planteamiento es coherente con una antropología completa, porque, aunque sea de modo indirecto, tiene en cuenta los factores radicales; entre otros, la libertad, que es la dimensión más importante del ser humano y la más característica”. *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁴ “Ethics is a knowledge about human action that can not be replaced by others”. “La ética es un saber acerca de la acción humana que no puede ser sustituido por otros”. *Ibid.*, 189.

These remarks can help to understand this dense quotation in which the three levels of freedom are stated: “The sensitive faculties are not free, but neither are the passive potencies; habits are the means by which freedom comes to them. Freedom does not belong primarily to nature; it is a personal transcendental; from the person it gets through acquired habits, to passive potencies. And as a weaker participation freedom reaches the sensitive appetites; fortitude, for example, is a habit of the irascible appetite (one can speak of a certain contact with bodily freedom)”⁴⁵.

There is much Polo has said about personal, essential and physical freedom but for this topic it is enough to know that only free actions are the material object of ethics. Now we have to see the formal object.

b) *Ethics' formal object*. For Polo all free human actions are either ethical or unethical, since no action is beyond moral consideration, as already seen. What does ethics look for within these free actions? Or expressing it differently, what makes an action good or evil? What makes a moral habit either a virtue or a vice? Polo first states that the action has to be free: “good and evil are strictly ethical notions that are only understood if one is free”⁴⁶ and that what is looked in free actions is their goodness or evilness⁴⁷. In Scholastic philosophy the goodness or evilness of any specific action was determined by the three fountains of morality: the object, the intention and the circumstances. In principle all three had to be good for the action to be good, or more accurately it is enough for one of them to be evil to make that particular decision evil. But the question remains, what does make the object, intention and the circumstances good or evil? We are looking for the key of goodness, that is, the ultimate foundation of ethics.

Scholastic philosophy, as found in Aquinas, considers the criteria as *ordo ad finem* or simply *recta ratio*⁴⁸. It means that whatever

⁴⁵ “Las facultades sensibles no son libres, pero tampoco lo son las potencialidades pasivas; los hábitos son la vía por la cual la libertad llega a ellas. La libertad no pertenece primariamente a la naturaleza, sino que es un trascendental personal; desde la persona se comunica, a través de los hábitos adquiridos, a las potencias pasivas. Y según una participación más débil llega a los apetitos sensibles; la fortaleza, por ejemplo, es un hábito del apetito irascible (cabe hablar de un cierto contacto de la libertad con lo corpóreo)”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 42.

⁴⁶ “Donde realmente aparece su original sentido es en la ética: bien y mal son nociones estrictamente éticas que sólo se captan si se es libre”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 61.

⁴⁷ “Ethics' formal object is the qualification of acts. Such decisions qualifying is on decisions domain, if it's good, it ratifies it, and if bad, it rectifies it”. “El objeto formal de la ética es la cualificación de los actos. Tal cualificación respecto a decidir es justamente un dominio sobre la decisión que, si es buena, la ratifica, y, si es mala, la rectifica”. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Ética*, op. cit., 108.

⁴⁸ “Man's good must needs be appraised with respect to some rule. Now this rule is twofold, [...] viz. human reason and Divine Law”, *Summa Theologiae*, op. cit., I-

leads to the final end, and therefore leads to human perfection, is good; what separates one from the final end, is bad and makes one imperfect⁴⁹. There is a consequence of this approach in a normative way, which is the coincidence of norms between the eternal law and the natural law as reflection of the eternal law. This interpretation, if taken on its own, without reference to the personal call of each individual person, tends to foster the understanding of ethics in naturalistic terms, as expressed by Sousa-Lara: “In other words, the rule of the morality of a human act is its agreement or not with the eternal law, that law which, as we have seen, is participated in by man through the light of natural reason. In fact, according to Aquinas ‘there are two rules of the human will: one is proximate and homogeneous, viz. the human reason; the other is the first rule, viz. the eternal law, which is God’s reason, so to speak, (*Regula autem voluntatis humanae est duplex, una propinqua et homogenea, scilicet ipsa humana ratio; alia vero est prima regula, scilicet lex aeterna, quae est quasi ratio Dei. Summa theologiae, I-II, q. 71, a. 6, c.*)’”⁵⁰. Ethics is a matter of agreement between my decision and a universal and impersonal code, already decreed, and that is the *recta ratio*, understanding the convergence of one’s behaviour with the eternal natural law.

This is why some authors refer to conscience as the ‘moral compass’; the instrument that gives the right direction to actions. The degree of goodness or evilness will depend on the degree of closeness or separation from the final end; it is not the same a gentle deviation that can easily be corrected, as running in the opposite direction. Naturally, these are physical similes to a spiritual reality which will never be totally adequate. This image is not bad by itself, what is not that accurate is the uniformity of the rule to be followed, as we mentioned above.

Polo shares this traditional vision with several caveats, and states that morality, in fact, is to choose the means towards the final end. This clearly states that the final end is the key to ethics. Its proper determination will be the key to moral success, to human perfection. “Well, these acts are performed because they are means required to be proportionate to practical reason. These acts can be good or evil: aligned to the end or mistaken. In fact, the distinction between good and evil is only proper of the acts that are means. A bad mean does not lead to the end; this middle act is evilness. If the act is exercised, the moral error occurs. This error also occurs if one ignores the connection of this act with the end, because that act which is a means is taken as end; and then the action stops in it. Therefore, ethics has to do with the will, i.e. with the tendency provided by the intelligence, which is able

II, q. 63, a. 2, c.: “oportet quod bonum hominis secundum aliquam regulam consideretur. Quae quidem est duplex, ut supra dictum est, scilicet ratio humana, et lex divina”. Translation from Sousa Lara, D., “The Ordo Rationis and the Moral Species”, *Josephinum Journal of Theology*, 17/1 (2010) p. 81.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, op. cit., lib. 3, cap. 128, n. 2.

⁵⁰ Sousa Lara, D., *A Especificação Moral dos Actos Humanos segundo São Tomás de Aquino*, (Rome: Pontificia Universita della Santa Croce, 2008), 433.

to capture the formality of medium and can decide the choice of a medium, which requires that the mean is highlighted as such”⁵¹.

So the most important question for ethics is to find and establish the final end, and only then can one establish whether or not each action is aligned to that specific end. Since Aristotle there is something that is universally agreed and that is, everyone strives to be happy⁵². This was subsequently taken by most authors and particularly by Aquinas: “For Aquinas, the human spirit is made in such a way that it can only tend to happiness, but it can only do it effectively through reason that will give information on what makes one happy, and the will will seek it... From the beginning, our spirit is directed to happiness before we know it. This is not an epistemological thesis but an ontological thesis: the will does not know what happiness is”⁵³.

The proper final end will not be found, or will be distorted if there is no radical decision to do good, to seek the good for which one has been created. That internal disposition is well expressed by Trigo in this text, but rather than the decision belonging to the will it is at the superior level of the person, where this radical distinction belongs to: “The good disposition of the will is needed to ‘know’ and recognise the moral truth. ‘The will is no indifferent to the judgment of the intelligence. On the contrary, it is the will who directs the gaze of intelligence to see what it likes. If the will is firmly adhered to the good; if it is the will of a righteous person, with a clean heart, truly free, he will lead the intelligence to the consideration of truth. There is no truth if there is not love for it; one does not know the truth if one does not want to find it”⁵⁴.

⁵¹ “Pues bien, esos actos que son realizados en cuanto que son medios exigen la proporción con la razón práctica. Esos actos pueden ser buenos y malos: ajustados al fin o equivocados respecto de él. En rigor, la distinción entre bueno y malo se da en los actos que son medios. El medio malo no enlaza con los actos referidos al fin; eso constituye la maldad del acto medio. Si se ejerce dicho acto, tiene lugar el error moral. También se da este error si se prescinde de la conexión de ese acto con el fin, porque ese acto que es medio se confunde con el fin, y el querer se detiene en él. Por tanto, la ética tiene que ver con la voluntad, es decir, con la tendencia proporcionada con la inteligencia, que es capaz de captar la formalidad de medio y puede decidir la elección de un medio, lo cual requiere que el medio se destaque como tal”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 29.

⁵² “Man is capable of being happy: we all know it, simply by the desire for happiness, which is inborn in us”. “El hombre es capaz de ser feliz: todos lo sabemos, simplemente por la aspiración a la felicidad, que es innata en nosotros”. Etica IV In Aristotle’s words “that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else”. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097 a 30-34.

⁵³ “Para Tomás de Aquino, el espíritu humano está hecho de tal manera que sólo puede tender a la felicidad, pero sólo lo hace efectivamente cuando toma contacto con la razón: la razón le dará información de lo que hace feliz, y a eso irá... Desde el inicio, nuestro espíritu es respectivo a la felicidad antes de saberlo. Esta no es una tesis gnoseológica, sino una tesis ontológica: la voluntad no sabe qué es la felicidad. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 134.

⁵⁴ “La buena disposición de la voluntad es necesaria para ‘conocer’ y ‘reco-nocer’ la verdad moral. ‘La voluntad no es ajena al juicio de la inteligencia’. Por el contrario, es ella la que dirige la mirada de la inteligencia hacia lo que le gusta ver. Si la

Aristotle also pointed out that the problem is to find out what happiness actually is, because different people understand happiness differently⁵⁵. This issue then, requires clarification⁵⁶. We have two different approaches; one subjective –how one feels about happiness– and another, objective –what is really what makes one perfect. The first one is normally called happiness, or ‘subjective happiness’, and the second more technically, ‘final end’ or ‘objective happiness’. Irrespective of whether the subjective coincides with the objective or not —and the best solution is that they coincide—, the desire for happiness is part of human nature and therefore it is impossible to go against it, which links it to synderesis, as we shall see later. “The act dealing with the ultimate end, i.e., to the happiness of man, does not entail uncertainty and, therefore, this act is not free, but necessary”⁵⁷.

One thing is what ‘one thinks’ makes him happy, and quite another ‘what really’ makes one happy. If this distortion did not happen all people would be happy, but life teaches us that this does not actually happen. In the next section we shall see how subjective happiness moves us to act, followed by discussion on objective happiness.

5. Subjective happiness

Subjective happiness can be approached from a psychological⁵⁸ point of view by finding the different feelings on happiness⁵⁹, or a sociological point of view and, for example, classify countries according to a happiness index⁶⁰, or what makes people feel happier. Polo does

voluntad está firmemente adherida al bien, si es la voluntad de una persona recta, de corazón limpio, verdaderamente libre, dirigirá a la inteligencia hacia la consideración de la verdad. No se encuentra la verdad si no se la ama; no se conoce la verdad si no se quiere conocerla”. Trigo, T., *En Busca de una Ética Universal*, op. cit., 129.

⁵⁵ Cfr. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095 b 20.

⁵⁶ A good introduction to the different conceptions of happiness can be found in Abbà, G., *Felicidad, Vida Buena y Virtud*, op. cit., 27.

⁵⁷ “El acto que mira al fin último, es decir, a la felicidad del hombre, no entraña indeterminación y, por eso, dicho acto no es libre, sino necesario”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 16.

⁵⁸ For an introduction to Positive Psychology also called Psychology of Happiness a good resource is the Positive Psychology Centre of the University of Pensilvania; <http://www.positvepsychology.org/>

⁵⁹ “The classics understand happiness as ‘the psychological situation corresponds to the possession of the desired good’. This good is desired over any other and is considered sufficient. It is therefore clear that the notion of happiness is equivalent to the preferred situation of equilibrium”. “Los clásicos entienden por felicidad ‘la situación psicológica que se corresponde con la posesión del bien deseado’. Ese bien se desea por encima de cualquier otro o se considera suficiente. Por tanto, es claro que la noción de felicidad equivale a la de situación de equilibrio preferido”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 111.

⁶⁰ There are different happy indexes; the HPI, Happy Planet Index available at: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>, the WHR, World Happiness Report done by

not refer to any of them, he has an ontological approach⁶¹, which is the one we shall follow, since it is the one that this dissertation is about and because neither psychology, nor sociology, nor other science can give the ultimate foundation of ethics, as we have already seen above.

Subjective happiness can be understood either as what the person thinks about what happiness is, or how he feels about it, which includes affections and sensations. Regarding the subjective feeling it helps to distinguish three types of feelings following the triadic structure of the man. At the natural level, the level of sensations, happiness can be the feeling of happiness which can be somehow similar to what a satisfied animal feels after eating, sleeping, drinking, etc. At the essential level, happiness is the affection of achievement, when one understands something difficult, when one completes a difficult project: getting a promotion, climbing a mountain, marrying, etc. Such achievements require the use of the intelligence and the will. Finally, at the personal level, happiness is more difficult to express because it is more intimate and it is a relationship with other people of our level and with God, and basically it involves personal love. With others, the personal positive relationships corresponded by friends, spouse, children, and relatives. With God it is the personal relationship well described by such mystics as Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Maria Valtorta, and Gemma Galgani, among others. Leonardo Polo distinguishes sensations from affections⁶² and among these sometimes he speaks as notices being the sensation on moral issues⁶³.

Among moral affections, a singular one is regret or repentance. It is a fact that one makes moral errors, and commits evil acts, sometimes willingly and at other times without full knowledge. It is also a fact that, at times, we repent and would like to correct our actions and make up for past mistakes. All we try to do is to achieve happiness, but errors show that we can be mistaken on how to reach happiness. Polo is more radical, establishing that at the bottom of moral misdeeds there is a latent error regarding happiness. “Moral errors are due to

the United Nations; <http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/Sachs%20Writing/2012/World%20Happiness%20Report.pdf>. For an introduction to different measurements check <http://www.theguardian.com/world/happiness-indices>.

⁶¹ “From the beginning, our spirit is bent to happiness before one knows it. This is not an epistemological thesis, but an ontological thesis”. “Desde el inicio, nuestro espíritu es respectivo a la felicidad antes de saberlo. Esta no es una tesis gnoseológica, sino una tesis ontológica”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 135.

⁶² “The affections can be called feelings of the spirit, and point to what transcends: wisdom to God; the habit of first principles to the being; synderesis, to the good”. “Los afectos se pueden denominar sentimientos del espíritu, y apuntan a lo que nos trasciende: la sabiduría, a Dios; el hábito de los primeros principios, al ser; la sindéresis, al bien”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 231.

⁶³ “To the intellectual experience must be added the moral experience, which I call knowledge by connaturality or to notice, to use a Thomist expression. It is the emotional affective notice of innate habits”. “A la experiencia intelectual debe añadirse la experiencia moral, a la que llamo conocimiento por noticia o por connaturalidad, para emplear una expresión tomista. Es la noticia afectiva de los hábitos innatos”. *Ibid.*, 227.

misunderstandings regarding happiness. Now this thesis is not pessimistic; it is supported by an ontological-anthropological optimism: we are made for happiness”⁶⁴. Polo remarks that this opinion is also Aquinas’: “The big problem is that it is not known what happiness is. Thomas Aquinas says that happiness is the vaguest notion that exists, that if you take ‘frui’ as happiness there can be all kinds of errors and man then places happiness in inferior goods. A man can enjoy food and believe that in there lies happiness”⁶⁵. “If knowledge presents something as good, the will is drawn towards it. However, this is insufficient, because as the will is determined to happiness, the will never acts against felicity”⁶⁶.

It is easy to seek happiness in the wrong plases, because the knowledge we receive from the senses –feelings– is easily confused with the emotions given by the faculties’ acquired habits, which we can call, with Polo, ‘affections’⁶⁷, and furthermore confused with the type of ‘notices’ given by the three innate habits. One needs a very refined moral life and a clear reason to be able to distinguish them with the precision of Polo after a life devoted to studying these anthropological topics. “Feelings are important, but they are only consequences. Happiness is in the acts. Happiness is not pleasure, but is accompanied by pleasure. Happiness is the end; it is the possession of the end, or being in it”⁶⁸. Polo is pointing here to the difference between subjective and objective happiness.

⁶⁴ Los errores morales son debidos a una equivocación en lo que respecta a la felicidad. Ahora bien, esta tesis no es pesimista, sino que es sostenida por un optimismo ontológico-antropológico: estamos hechos para la felicidad. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 137.

⁶⁵ “El gran problema es ese, que no se sabe qué es la felicidad. La felicidad es la noción más vaga que existe y por eso dice Tomás de Aquino que si se toma el *frui* como la felicidad ahí cabe todo tipo de errores y el hombre pone la felicidad en bienes inferiores. Un hombre puede disfrutar de la comida y creer que ahí está la felicidad”. Polo, L., “Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana”, op. cit., paragraph 53.

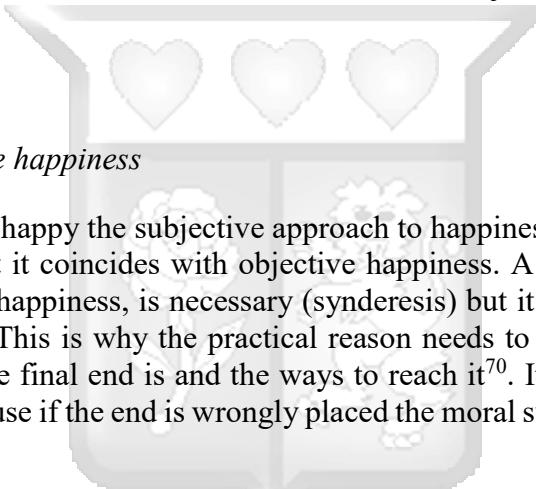
⁶⁶ Si el conocimiento presenta algo como bueno, la voluntad se mueve a ello en cuanto movida. Sin embargo, esto es insuficiente, porque como está determinada a la felicidad, la voluntad no actúa nunca en contra de la felicidad, Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 148.

⁶⁷ “Affections can be called feelings of the spirit, and point to what transcends us: wisdom to God; the habit of first principles to the being; synderesis, to the goods. It can also be said that connatural knowledge affections are also dual. First they report the existence of innate habits, secondly, they report the ontological limitation accompanying such habits”. “Los afectos se pueden denominar sentimientos del espíritu, y apuntan a lo que nos trasciende: la sabiduría, a Dios; el hábito de los primeros principios, al ser; la sindéresis, al bien. Cabe decir también que los afectos en que consiste el conocimiento por connaturalidad son duales. Por una parte, informan de la existencia de los hábitos innatos, y por otra, de la limitación ontológica que acompaña a dichos hábitos”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 231.

⁶⁸ “Happiness is the implicit of the A axiom. Happiness belongs to the order of the acts, not the potency. The act is happiness. The feeling is a useful-aesthetic extension of the act. Therefore, important as it is for man, it is secondary”. “Los sentimientos son importantes, pero son sólo consecuencias. La felicidad está en los actos. La felicidad no es el placer, sino que va acompañada de placer. La felicidad es el fin; es la posesión del fin, o el estar en él: la felicidad es el implícito del

The error of the intelligence, for whatever cause, has not only the consequence of provoking bad acts but also of corrupting the will ontologically, through vices, which are not attachments to the will but the corruption, the diminishing of the will itself: “The confusion is possible because of the defective knowledge of happiness; if what intelligence presents as happiness polarizes the will, then an error about the ultimate goal takes place which affects the ontological root of the will”⁶⁹. This means that the subjective idea one has made of happiness influences the way one feels about it, at least at the level of affections, and this because the human person is an organic unity and the upper levels in the ontological hierarchy have more influence in his behaviour than the lower ones, unless one renounces to behave as a person.

When one queries what happiness consists of, one is trying to find what happiness actually is, distinguishing between the subjective and objective happiness. One starts the path to wisdom, to look inside oneself to find out objectively what happiness is in reality and how to find it. This is what we discuss in the next section: objective happiness.



6. Objective happiness

To be truly happy the subjective approach to happiness requires validation so that it coincides with objective happiness. A tendency, an inclination to happiness, is necessary (*synderesis*) but it cannot be left unspecified. This is why the practical reason needs to present to the will where the final end is and the ways to reach it⁷⁰. It is an important task because if the end is wrongly placed the moral system will be distorted.

Leonardo Polo places the finding of happiness in knowing the end, i.e. what is ones' purpose in life. This requires not only freedom to decide to go towards it or not, but above all, knowledge which is to possess intellectually the end. The intelligence, the final end, freedom and happiness are inseparable in morals. Polo goes back to Aristotle as his immediate inspiration: “The happiness – *eudaimonia*– is one of the great Aristotelian ideas. Who is really happy? Among the animals

axioma A. La felicidad es del orden del acto, no de la potencia. El acto es la felicidad. El sentimiento es un añadido, una ampliación estético-útil, del acto. Por eso, por importante que sea para el hombre, es secundario”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 277.

⁶⁹ “La confusión es posible por el defectuoso conocimiento de la felicidad; si lo que la inteligencia le presenta como felicitario polariza a la voluntad, se produce un error acerca del fin último que afecta a la raíz ontológica de la voluntad”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 137.

⁷⁰ “Though the human spirit can only tend to happiness, the power of the human spirit alone is not capable of tending to happiness without having an idea of it. It is a far-reaching thesis: that the native will is a transcendental relationship”. “La mera potencia del espíritu humano no es capaz de tender a la felicidad sin tener idea de ella, aunque no puede tender más que a eso. Es una tesis de mucho alcance: la voluntad nativa es una relación trascendental”. *Ibid.*, 134.

only man is. A stone, an animal, cannot be happy. Who can it be? One in which the relationship with the final cause is clear to himself. Freedom is a need only for one who can be happy. And the reverse: only one who is able to be happy can appreciate freedom. Placing freedom in an ant is absurd because the ant does not know its purpose, it does not direct itself knowingly, or knowing that the end is for herself: the ant cannot be happy”⁷¹.

So, to find out what true happiness is, is a question of finding out the end, the final end, what one’s purpose in life is. This is a task of the intelligence but an intelligence which is not the ultimate end, since it is at the service of happiness, as Leonardo Polo indicates in the following text in which the ontological tripartite hierarchy can be seen in its first two stages; the productive which requires the use of the natural level powers and the intellectual which is at the essential level. Later we shall see how happiness is not at any of these two levels but at the personal level where true happiness can be found, in a way that normally integrates the three levels harmonically in this life: “As holder, the man is not simple, one-sided but he is extremely rich, and his possessions are at various levels (not as independent layers because that would not be Aristotelian). There are upper and lower levels, but not isolated: they all have to be coordinated. The first form of coordination, proposed Aristotle, is that of means and ends: what is highest is the end, and what is less is medium. Immanent, or cognitive, possession exceeds production, manual, etc., so production is at the service of the intellect. And if virtue is superior to immanent possession, then reason is at the service of happiness, of the ultimate activation of the human being in terms of eudaimonia”⁷².

We use happiness in at least four different senses and we can assign a specific name to each: as satisfaction at the natural level, achievement at the essential level, fulfilment at the personal level in satisfactory relationships with other persons at our level, and bliss in our relationship with God at the personal level. This distinction is very helpful so as not to confuse them and expect bliss from a spouse, or

⁷¹ “La felicidad -eudaimonía- es una de las grandes ideas aristotélicas. ¿Quién es propiamente feliz? Entre los animales solamente el hombre. Una piedra, un animal, no pueden ser felices. ¿Quién puede serlo? Aquel en el que la relación con la causa final es clara para sí mismo. Ser libre sólo se justifica si uno puede ser feliz. Y al revés: sólo en aquel que es capaz de ser feliz tiene sentido la libertad. Poner libertad en una hormiga es absurdo porque la hormiga no conoce su fin, no se dirige a éste sabiendo que es poseído, o para ella misma: no puede ser feliz”. Polo, L., *Introducción a la Filosofía*, op. cit., 210.

⁷² “Como poseedor, el hombre no es un ser simple, unilateral, sino sumamente rico, pues su tener está constituido por distintos niveles (no capas; entenderlo así no sería aristotélico). Hay niveles superiores e inferiores, aunque no aislados: todos ellos se han de coordinar. La primera forma de coordinación que propone Aristóteles es la de los medios y los fines: lo que es superior es fin, y lo que es inferior tiene carácter de medio. La posesión inmanente, o cognoscitiva, es superior a la tenencia productiva, manual, etc., de manera que ésta estará al servicio de aquélla. Y si la virtud es superior a la posesión inmanente, la razón está al servicio de la felicidad, de la última actualización del ser humano en términos de eudaimonía”. *Ibid.*, 162.

fulfilment from a cat. These names and distinctions are based on Polo's texts but never used by him as such; nevertheless they are very intuitive and probably helpful to understand Polo's proposals⁷³. We are going to see each type of happiness in the next sections.

a) Natural level happiness. Objective human happiness cannot be only at the natural level, it cannot be mere satisfaction of material needs, or just sensitive pleasure. Material things, because they are external, can be lost and this gives us permanent fear⁷⁴. They cannot be integrated in one's being and therefore they do not make one better.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Happiness Achieved</i>
Natural	Satisfaction
Essential	Achievement, Success
Personal with other people	Fulfillment
Personal with God	Bliss

Table 11: Four Levels of Happiness.

“The good to attain can be seen as something external to the free system that can be reached and, therefore, one may possess; but the first kind of possession, namely the corporeal possession, is not enough, because it is not immanent, and one cannot say that the good is reached and that one has achieved the final good if it does not saturate one's capacity to understand”⁷⁵. They do not satisfy our unending desire for more, which is the characteristic of our spirit, unlike animals, and rather than producing permanent satisfaction, which is one of the characteristics of happiness, they end up giving suffering and blocking higher affections: “Sensuality in the animal is almost always right; in man it is abnormal whenever the spiritual part aims to satisfy his great urges on the sensible. That mistake is a nett loss: instead of control,

⁷³ For more details on this 4 levels of happiness check Branya, J., “Antropological Foundation of the Levels of Happiness: Spitzer, Maslow and Polo”, *Miscelánea Poliana*, 46, (2014).

⁷⁴ Cfr. “Thomas developed the matter with his habitual clarity and rigour. He states that complete happiness cannot be something that one has the possibility of losing (which is what happens to all the material goods). Complete happiness cannot include the fear of being unhappy because lossing the goods (whih is what happens with all material things)... Therefore, those who place happiness, in possessing material things, neither understand it nor achieve it. They condemn themselves to never be completely happy”. “Santo Tomás desarrolló el asunto con la lucidez y el rigor que le son propios. Afirma que si se trata de un bien que implique la posibilidad de perderlo (que es lo que ocurre a todos los bienes materiales), no se puede decir que la felicidad sea completa, pues no cabe ser feliz albergando a la vez el temor de dejar de serlo por la pérdida del bien. La felicidad en la que pueda fallar el término de ella, es decir, el bien, no es entera; por tanto, aquellos que ponen la felicidad, o la hacen consistir en poseer cosas materiales, no la entienden ni la alcanzan. Se condenan a no poder ser completamente felices”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 111.

⁷⁵ ‘El bien se puede considerar como algo externo al sistema libre, que se puede alcanzar y, por tanto, que se puede poseer; pero si la posesión del bien es el primer tipo de tener, es decir, la posesión corpórea, no basta, porque no es inmanente, y no se puede decir que se alcanza y se tiene el bien si no satura la capacidad de entender’. *Ibid.*

the soul ceases to direct and is carried away by the lower tendency. The incontinent destroys sensitivity and, basically, by seeking happiness in sensuous pleasure what it finds is suffering”⁷⁶.

Not only are the external goods external, but its inordinate pursuing can detract from seeking and getting the higher inner goods: “The sensitive appetite goods are such immediate goals that one should be suspicious when they are exaggerated: if we abuse them, we lose other higher purposes which, because they require means, they take longer time to achieve, and are better, with total certainty likely to provide greater satisfaction than the purely sensual”⁷⁷.

The cause of the suffering brought on by placing happiness exclusively at the natural level are the demands that the essential level faculties, intelligence and will, inordinately demand of it, pretending to obtain total happiness at a level that cannot be achieved in plenitude: “In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that man abuses his sensuality because he has logos. In fact, the disordered pursuit of pleasure is due to the logos giving up control on sensuality. This happens when one searches –through sensuality– the satisfaction soul’s desires, which are infinite”⁷⁸. So satisfaction is not properly speaking the whole of human happiness, and to look for it exclusively at this level brings dissatisfaction, boredom and anguish. Kierkegaard describes this well and Polo comments that most people live at this level⁷⁹.

This does not mean that we should not seek satisfaction. Satisfaction is a physical need, but neither the only, nor the most, important feeling. It should be subordinated to the higher level pursuits which are needed for total human happiness. There are states of happiness that bring physical pain, so happiness cannot be confused with pleasure. It does not mean that total happiness does not bring pleasure, but

⁷⁶ “La sensualidad en el animal es casi siempre normal; en el hombre es anormal cuando la parte espiritual pretende satisfacer su gran anhelo en la parte sensible. Esa equivocación es una pérdida neta: en vez de controlar, el alma deja de dirigir y se deja arrastrar por el tender inferior. El incontinente destroza su sensibilidad y, en el fondo, al buscar la felicidad en el placer sensible encuentra el sufrimiento”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 109.

⁷⁷ “Los bienes del apetito sensible son fines tan inmediatos que hay que sospechar de su exageración: si abusamos de ellos, perdemos otros fines que, por exigir medios, son más prolongados y, con toda seguridad, mejores, susceptibles de proporcionarnos una satisfacción mayor que la puramente sensual”. *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷⁸ “Aristóteles dice en la Retórica que el hombre abusa de su sensualidad porque tiene logos. En rigor, la búsqueda desordenada del placer se debe a una renuncia del logos a controlar la concupiscencia. Ello acontece cuando se busca a través de la sensualidad la satisfacción de la capacidad de fin del alma, que es infinita”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 25.

⁷⁹ “Kierkegaard is clearly aware that pleasure does not allow stable satisfaction Kierkegaard adds that immediatism transpires distress... All that the aesthete says –in despair– is true, if taken the other way round”. “Kierkegaard es netamente consciente de que el placer no permite satisfacción estable... Kierkegaard añade que el inmediatismo trasluce la angustia. Todo lo que dice el esteta –desesperado– es exacto a condición de volver su sentido al revés”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 81.

it is a combination of sensations of different levels; the highest ones are what Polo calls affections, rather than sentiments. Each level of happiness has characteristics and exclusive feelings that are good to distinguish because, as we saw, even habits can be confused with feelings: “The concupiscent appetite does not make us happy, because the pleasure and happiness are not exactly the same. However, happiness is accompanied by a pleasure that may be called affective”⁸⁰. The next step is to see whether happiness is at the essential level.

b) Happiness at the essential level. What about happiness being at the essential level? There is a natural tendency to the infinite: “The will, which is the human spiritual tendency, is not finalized by the species, nor by the intellect, but by the full happiness that can only be achieved by the virtuous adherence to the real and highest good”⁸¹.

The longing for happiness is felt mainly at this level, though its achievement, according to Leonardo Polo is not at this level. Polo goes back to Aquinas with whom he agrees: “For Aquinas, the human spirit is made in such a way that it can only tend to happiness, but only when it actually makes contact with reason: reason will give the information on what makes the will happy, and then the will seeks what reason presents. The will from its very root cannot ever go for anything but happiness”⁸².

The characteristics of the perfect and final good for Polo are the classic ones: it has to be eternal, infinite, all powerful, all wise, etc.⁸³ to match the unlimited capacities of the intellect and will. Furthermore Polo says that there is an inbuilt knowledge, a type of habitual knowledge, that tells us about the orientation humans have towards happiness and how only something everlasting Supreme Being can quench it. He also points out that one’s reason can only present partial

⁸⁰ “El apetito concupiscente no nos hace felices, pues el placer y la felicidad no son exactamente lo mismo. Sin embargo, la felicidad va acompañada de un placer que cabe llamar *afectivo*”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 108.

⁸¹ “La tendencia espiritual humana, la voluntad –lo mismo sucede con el intelecto–, no está finalizada por la especie, sino por la felicidad plena, que sólo se puede conseguir por la adhesión virtuosa al bien verdadero y más alto”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 158.

⁸² “Para Tomás de Aquino, el espíritu humano está hecho de tal manera que sólo puede tender a la felicidad, pero sólo lo hace efectivamente cuando toma contacto con la razón: la razón le dará información de lo que hace feliz, y a eso irá. Pero lo que no puede nunca la voluntad desde su raíz misma es ir a algo que no sea la felicidad”. *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸³ “Of course, it is necessary that the good be eternal, that it will never fail or fade, that it is infinite, that meets all my spiritual aspirations or desires, and that there is nothing superior to it. If the property were not so, it would not satisfy entirely the spiritual tendency of man, which is potentially infinite”. “Desde luego, es preciso que el bien sea eterno, que no falle o se desvanezca, que sea infinito, que satisfaga todas mis aspiraciones o todos mis deseos espirituales, que no haya nada superior a él. Si el bien no fuera así, no podría satisfacer del todo a la tendencia espiritual del hombre, que es potencialmente infinita”. *Ibid.*, 113.

goods due to its limitations –which is the need for the sensitive phantasm– and without full certainty so the will is never satisfied following what the intelligence presents⁸⁴.

Polo recognises that God is the ultimate end of spiritual beings, and by this he means human beings: “in fact, the only thing that can provide happiness to spiritual potencies is God. But the will as nature, does not know this in such a way that adequate knowledge is extremely important for the will, i.e. improving the capacity of human thinking”⁸⁵. As discussed before, this has, nevertheless, to be known and accepted by each person to become an intimate reality, so it is necessary to have some understanding of its meaning, and this means some objectivation of the final end, and the way to reach it: “Therefore, the only thing that can make man completely happy is an imperishable, and therefore immaterial, good. The good must be infinite, spiritual and that is God. The only thing that can make man entirely happy is the possession of God, the joy of being with Him, because God is an incorruptible spiritual good, eternal and infinite; the only one who fills all the longings of the human heart. This psychological consideration of happiness is quite obvious, but we should not forget that man is a free system. This is the only way to correctly insert the strictly ethical notion of good alongside happiness”⁸⁶.

But the possession of the final end will be neither intellectual nor by virtues. Polo disagrees with the classics in that contemplation, as

⁸⁴ “Though we may not know exactly what happiness is, we do know that our spiritual power is determined *ad unum* for happiness and that happiness can only be achieved if the good is infinite. The only thing that can make us happy is the infinite good. So the natural tendency to happiness would be frustrated if there were none, or if intelligence found none, but finite goods. But in the stage where the will comes into contact with intelligence (*voluntas ut ratio*), the presentation of the good is always finite and therefore unsatisfactory to the will as infinite power. Therefore, whilst it is true that only wants what is known, the knowledge of good must grow”. “Aunque no sepamos exactamente qué es la felicidad, sí sabemos que nuestra potencia espiritual está determinada *ad unum* por la felicidad y que la felicidad solamente se puede alcanzar si el bien es infinito. Lo único que nos puede hacer felices es el bien infinito. De manera que la tendencia natural a la felicidad quedaría frustrada si no hubiese, o la inteligencia no encontrara, más que bienes finitos. Pero en la fase en que la voluntad toma contacto con la inteligencia (*voluntas ut ratio*), la presentación del bien es finita y, por tanto, insatisfactoria para la voluntad como potencia infinita. Por consiguiente, aunque es cierto que sólo se quiere lo que se conoce, el conocimiento del bien debe crecer”. *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁵ “Lo único que puede proporcionar la felicidad a una potencia espiritual es Dios. Pero eso la voluntad como naturaleza no lo sabe. De manera que un conocimiento adecuado, es decir, el perfeccionamiento de la capacidad de pensar humana, es sumamente importante para la voluntad”. *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸⁶ “Por consiguiente, lo único que al hombre puede hacerlo feliz es el bien imperecedero, y por tanto immaterial. El bien tiene que ser infinito, espiritual, y eso es Dios: lo único que puede hacer enteramente feliz al hombre es la posesión de Dios, gozar de El, porque Dios es un bien espiritual incorruptible, eterno, y además infinito, que colma todos los anhelos del corazón humano... Esta consideración psicológica de la felicidad, es bastante obvia, pero no conviene olvidar que el hombre es un sistema libre. Sólo así se introduce correctamente con la felicidad una noción plenamente ética: la noción de bien”. *Ibid.*, 111.

an act of the intellect, can be the highest human happiness, even if it is the contemplation of God. For him the object of happiness is not God as supreme good but God as a person. He takes from Augustine the term *ordo amoris* which is a personal way of resting on the person loved, even in the person of God. This is why he can say that: “fruition is the contemplation of the *ordo amoris*, and should not be called a possessive act, but the act of desiring the highest. This for two reasons: first, because as a voluntary act, it is intention of other; and the second reason is that human love has to be accepted by God; without that, the agreement would be void”⁸⁷.

An interesting feature of man’s capacity to decide on his final end, subjectively, is that one can always change it, while in this life. So the decision regarding the final end has to be supported continuously, and this is done regularly in every action. It accompanies every decision since in every decision the alignment with the final end is judged and our conscience indicates whether is in line or not to the final end. Furthermore, conscious that its achievement is beyond time, it is in the future, as Polo likes to say; a future that never stops being a future, always future-able: “Therefore, it is impossible to fully achieve, at any given time, one’s life purpose to which the will is directed. This equates to establish the eminence of the future in human biographical time: we live open to a future that never ends while we live, that is, to a future that continues to be: a future without de-futurization. Relating to the end in a completely potential way implies that the end is totally in the future, or that life is entirely destine-able. Therefore, an empirical verification is not appropriate: the pure future is not empirical”⁸⁸.

We can conclude this section by saying that for Polo, the final end of human beings is the loving resting in God, a resting that is an ever-increasing love, which is at the personal level as root, and it will be everlasting, but that in this life is reached through the will moved by synderesis. How this is done will be discussed in the next section.

c) *Happiness at the personal level.* The consideration of happiness at the essential level reaches to a happiness that is the quietness of having, a possession that can only be intellectual. The intellect can possess the good intentionally without any transformation of the good

⁸⁷ “La fruición es la contemplación del ‘ordo amoris’, no debe decirse que sea un acto posesivo, sino el acto de desear más alto. Y ello por dos razones: primera, porque como acto voluntario, su intención es de otro; y la segunda razón es que el amor humano ha de ser aceptado por Dios, de manera que sin esa aceptación se anularía”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos II*, op. cit., 25.

⁸⁸ “Por consiguiente, es imposible alcanzar plenamente el fin al que se abre la voluntad en algún momento de la vida. Esto equivale a sentar la eminencia del futuro en el tiempo biográfico humano: vivimos abiertos a un futuro que no acaba nunca mientras vivimos, es decir, a un futuro que no deja de serlo: a un futuro no desfuturable. Relacionarse con el fin de manera enteramente potencial, comporta que el fin está totalmente en el futuro, o que la vida es enteramente destinable. Por eso, la verificación empírica no es procedente: el futuro puro no es empírico”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 145.

possessed. This cannot be done by the will because it is intention of other; its object is on the outside. So happiness, both for Aristotle⁸⁹ and Aquinas⁹⁰, consists in contemplation of God. The final end of humans will satisfy the most elevated potency which is the intellect.

Polo, noting that the final end will quieten these potencies, nevertheless considers that the proper, higher happiness cannot be at the essential level. God cannot be just a good.⁹¹ A person cannot be satisfied with a relationship with another person just as a good that just satisfies one's needs. There should be a personal relationship. Polo basically says that Aristotle's and Aquina's theories of happiness, even if they are not wrong, they fall short and therefore should be complemented; that there is something better than the good, which is the person: "The one who discovers he is a person knows that he either

⁸⁹ "Contemplation moves man out of history, and even from the *polis*, because it is not a topic of practical philosophy. The connection freedom-necessity is teleological (from *telos*). The end of the *polis* is the good life, virtuous life, ie, a kind of happiness which is less than contemplation. By contemplating man reaches *autarky*, independence and therefore a higher situation than being member of the *polis* (*autárkeia* is more than *enkráteia* or moral adequacy) ... Summing up, for Aristotle happiness is the contemplation of the divine". "La contemplación saca al hombre de la historia, e incluso de la *polis*, porque no es asunto de la filosofía práctica. La conexión libertad-necesidad es teleológica. El fin de la *polis* es la vida buena, virtuosa, es decir, un cierto tipo de felicidad inferior a la contemplación. Al contemplar, el hombre alcanza la autarquía, la independencia y, por tanto, una situación superior a la de miembro de la *polis* (la *autárkeia* es más que la *enkráteia* o suficiencia moral)... En suma, Aristóteles cifra la felicidad en la contemplación de lo divino". Polo, L., *Introducción a la filosofía*, op. cit., 212. This is clearly stated by Aristotle: "What choice, then, or possession of the natural goods—whether bodily goods, wealth, friends, or other things—will most produce the contemplation of God, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard, but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of God is bad; this a man possesses in his soul, and this is the best standard for the soul—to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible". Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 1249 b 24-1249 b 25, in *The complete Works of Aristotle*, op. cit., 75.

⁹⁰ "According to Thomas Aquinas happiness resides mainly in wisdom (cfr. *In Ethicorum*, l. X, c. 10 n. 17). This implies that wisdom directs human life not only by human rules, but also according to divine reasons. (cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 19, a. 7, c.)". "Según Tomás de Aquino en la sabiduría se encuentra máximamente la felicidad (cfr. *In Ethicorum*. l. X, c. 10 n. 17). Ello implica que la sabiduría dirige la vida humana no sólo según las reglas humanas, sino también según las razones divinas (cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 19, a. 7, c.)". Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 149.

⁹¹ Other authors reach to a personal God through the will, as for example: "Then where can come the absolute value from the bottom of our soul—if we are sincere—we give to first moral principles? If the one who gives the command is to be a person who has a will—because commanding is an act of will—the ultimate foundation of those commands—in this case, the moral duties—is the will of God, but a loving will". "Entonces este valor absoluto que en el fondo de nuestra alma—si somos sinceros, reconocemos a los primeros principios morales, ¿de dónde pueden venir? Si el imperante ha de ser una persona de voluntad—porque el imperio es un acto de voluntad—el último fundamento de lo imperado—in este caso, los deberes morales—es la voluntad de Dios. Pero una voluntad amorosa". Millán-Puelles, A., *Ética y Realismo*, op. cit., 68.

realizes himself *personaliter* with respect to someone else, or he becomes either pure calamity, or something he has himself to bear with. But this should not be like this. So the classical notion of happiness is insufficient. Indeed, man is not called to a happiness which consists just on attainment of the infinite good. In addition, this happiness is not assured, because man can fail and therefore one may fear not to be able to reach it. Humans cannot be happy simply with the good. That would be a kind of absolute hedonism”⁹².

We mentioned that happiness at the personal level is dual, though this is an addition to what Polo suggests. He did not speak of the four levels of happiness as we are doing. The first is the happiness that comes from the relationship with other persons which we called fulfilment, and the second is bliss which is the happiness that comes from the intimate personal relationship with God. Here we are only interested in discussing bliss, since it is clear that another human person cannot give others total happiness which they themselves do not have⁹³.

While the quotation is a lengthy one, it is better we do not shorten it because it expresses clearly what is the final good and indicates the double condition to achieve it: one related to each the person, and the other to God. It also gives the characteristics of infinitude and eternity that human spiritual potencies require: “Virtue is a condition for happiness, which consists of the possession of the final end, the culmination of life. If at the end life is separated from its end, life has failed. To possess the final end is necessary: 1st that the end does not abandon one. This means that it should not be fickle. It should be perfect and that cannot be lost as end. In order to be entirely perfect it has to be entirely faithful. Because the means cannot provide happiness, because they are particular ends, temporal, and as such do not accompany one for ever. Perfect good does not only mean the sum of all goods, but also that it never fails. The Final Good has to give full security, an intrinsic strength, so that it cannot ever expire. 2nd on the part of the faculty, also total strength is required, because if one’s support is not always there, one would withdraw from the Final Good once possessed (in this case one could not be happy either). Happiness is synthesis of two loyalties: God’s and man’s. Virtue is the ultimate potency when there is no desire, but possession, because adhesion is the strength of the potency. How to enter heaven without virtues? ‘If you’re not faithful in little you will not be faithful in much’. Virtue is

⁹² “El que descubre que es persona sabe que, o se realiza ‘personaliter’ respecto de otra persona, o es la desgracia pura, o tal vez su persona es una cosa que soporta. Pero eso no puede ser. Por eso la noción clásica de *felicidad* es insuficiente. En efecto, el hombre no está llamado a la felicidad si por ésta se entiende la consecución del bien infinito. Además, esa felicidad no está asegurada, porque el hombre puede fallar y, en consecuencia, puede temer no alcanzarla. El hombre no puede ser feliz meramente con el bien. Eso sería una especie de hedonismo absoluto”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 282.

⁹³ Fulfilment is mainly achieved through the different types of friendship. For this Polo’s article on friendship can be a good introduction. Polo, L., “La Amistad en Aristóteles”, op. cit.

the highest of the potencies. If the potency is not strong, there is no virtue. One has to be as solid to the Final Good as the Final Good is to you”⁹⁴.

To know whether one is on the path towards subjective or objective happiness is different at each level. At the natural level, when one is satisfied, at the essential level when one is successful, one has attained the goals ear-marked; at the personal level it depends a lot on the acceptance of others, of the significative ones, and at the personal level relationship with God depends a lot on one’s religious convictions and the action of God in one’s soul. Chalmeta gives three hints on how to distinguish the path to true happiness⁹⁵ which refer mostly to the awareness one has at the personal level.

d) How does one relate to God at the personal level? That God is the final end, is a topic that can be reached at the essential level through metaphysics. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle reached the knowledge of God’s existence. Aquinas summarised the ways of probing the existence of God in his *Summa Theologiae*. At the metaphysical level God is not found as a person, but as a cause not caused, an immobile mover, greatest good, great ordered, ultimate beauty, but He has not reached as a person. One can reach Him as a person through the notice of the agent intellect which is at the personal level. Then He is known as a person and one relates to Him with the personal transcendentals, and more specifically with the highest one, personal love, something that mystics had intuition of⁹⁶. This is important to our topic because in Polo’s view, even if not specifically

⁹⁴ “La virtud es una condición de la felicidad, que radica en la posesión del fin, la culminación de la vida. Si al final la vida está apartada de ese fin, la vida fracasa. Si lo posee es necesario: 1º. Que el fin no nos desasista, que no sea veleidoso, que no se nos dé y en algún momento pueda no darse. El fin debe ser lo perfecto que no puede perderse en cuanto fin. Para que el fin sea enteramente perfecto tiene que ser enteramente fiel. Por eso los medios no proporcionan felicidad, porque son fines particulares, caducos y no acompañan siempre. Bien perfecto no significa sólo suma de todos los bienes, sino que nunca falla. Por parte del Bien tiene que haber una seguridad, una fortaleza intrínseca, de modo que no pueda caducar. 2º. A su vez, por parte de la facultad, se exige una solidez entera, porque si mi adhesión no fuera siempre fiel, podría desistir del Bien una vez poseído (tampoco en este caso podría ser feliz). La felicidad es síntesis de dos fidelidades: la fidelidad a Dios y la del hombre. La virtud es lo último en potencia cuando ya no hay tendencia, sino adhesión, porque la adhesión es la firmeza de la potencia. ¿Cómo entrar en el cielo sin virtudes? ‘Si no se es fiel en lo poco tampoco se es fiel en lo mucho’. La virtud es lo último de la potencia. Si la potencia no es firme, no hay virtud. Se tiene que ser tan firme respecto del Bien como el Bien lo es de ti”. Polo, L., *Lec- ciones de Ética*, op. cit., 168.

⁹⁵ “1. The human desire for true happiness as desire for infinitude; 2. True happiness to be found using the personalistic principle; 3. True happiness requires ascesis”. “1. El deseo humano de verdadera felicidad (beatitud) como deseo de infinito; 2. La felicidad verdadera (beatitud) como deber de actuar según el principio perso- nalista. 3. La felicidad verdadera (beatitud) como ascética”. Chalmeta, G., *Etica Especial: el Orden Ideal de la Vida Buena* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1996), 22.

⁹⁶ We have seen this approach in Bonaventure, Eckhart, Gerson and Marcel among others in Chapter 4.

indicated by him in this way, the personal love of God will be the key-stone of ethics, the foundation of a personalist view of ethics⁹⁷, what determines whether one's personal actions are good or evil, this is, whether or not they are aligned with one's personal Final End, if they please God as a loving person. This should be properly explained to avoid either assigning to Polo words and thoughts there is no proof he said, or that this proposal may be understood in a voluntarist way, as if morals depended entirely on a capricious decision of God and therefore that blind faith be a requirement for happiness, a theory that Polo clearly rejected. In his words it sounds like this: "With this we link up with the highest topic of ethics: love, which is the only human activity at the same level as contemplation... Ethics links virtue-good well with the final end, and the final end is love. Clinging to the good is happiness, but not the fundamental key, because the culmination is what Augustine called *ordo amoris*"⁹⁸.

This love is not the love of the will, but personal love, the one who one is, because it is a personal transcendental committed in a personal relationship. At the personal level we can somehow say that 'we are our love'. This is why the love that brings happiness is total love that includes our natural and essential level faculties, as Polo remarks: "God must be loved above all things and beyond that, with all one's heart, with all one's mind and with all one's strength. It is also commanded to love one's neighbour as oneself. Thus, love is superior to any act of the will, even if it is an act of the virtue of piety"⁹⁹. Polo expresses the same idea more clearly in the following text: "The relationship loving-loved is metaphysical because the beloved is a good. But if behind the good there is no person, such a good is inferior to the person and then the classical notion of happiness falls short. Happiness

⁹⁷ Scheler already distinguished general moral rules valid for all men and others tailored to each person: cfr. "But, I pointed, man, inasmuch as he is for the person, is both an individual and unique, different from any other, and therefore his value is also an individual and unique value (...) According to this, in addition to the valid objective good and general good —and the content of duty resulting from that— also exists for each singular person (...) a good of individual validity, but no less objective and intuitive in principle, for which apprehension we resort to the "moral conscience" in the bare meaning of the term". "Pero —indicaba yo— el hombre, en la misma medida en que es para persona, es a la vez un ser individual y único, distinto de cualquier otro, y, por consiguiente, su valor es también un valor individual y único. (...) Conforme a esto, además del bien objetivo y generalmente válido —y además del contenido de deber resultante de aquél—, existe también para cada persona (...) un bien de validez individual, pero no menos objetivo e intuitivo en principio, para cuya aprehensión recurrimos a la "conciencia moral", en el sentido escueto de la expresión". Scheler, M., *Etica*, op. cit., 658.

⁹⁸ "Con esto enlazamos con lo más alto de la ética: el amor, que es lo único en el hombre que está a la altura de la contemplación. ... La ética vincula virtud-bien con el fin, y el fin es amar. Aferrarse al bien es la felicidad, pero no la clave básica, sino la culminación de lo que San Agustín llamaba *ordo amoris*". Polo, L., *Lec-
ciones de Ética*, op. cit., 182.

⁹⁹ "A Dios hay que amarlo por encima de todas las cosas y, aparte de eso, con todo el corazón, con toda la mente y con todas las fuerzas. También se manda amar al prójimo como a uno mismo. De esa manera, el amor es superior a cualquier acto de querer, incluso si es un acto de la virtud de la piedad". Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 154.

is to achieve the ultimate goal, the absolute good and if absolute good does not tell me my identity, who I am, then it is insufficient”¹⁰⁰.

We can summarise that now we know that Polo places human's final end as the active love of God in a personal relationship with him. It will be good then to discuss what personal love means for Polo before we see how synderesis knows and directs all faculties towards this final end. From the topic of happiness, we climb to love, which is the top level of happiness.

7. Personal love of God as final end

When talking about love we can use the triadic structure to distinguish the different levels of human love as we have done with happiness, and repeat that though Polo did not express it as we are doing what we say is inspired by his texts as will be seen by the numerous quotations. Naturally love and happiness are related in that love achieved at each level is happiness at that particular level.

At the natural level we can speak of love of food, love of comfort, love of cars, love of exercise, etc., which can be also attributed to animals; we can say that cats love fish and dogs love meat, for example. We can name this love just ‘desire’. At the essential level we can love mathematics, love the country, love money, love virtue; this is whatever can be achieved by the use of intelligence at will. We can call this second level of love interest, or interested love. One should not despise this type of love, because firstly, it does not prevent the highest love, but should accompany it because those who love other persons work for the best interest of the beloved. It is only bad if one remains at this level, because it will be selfish, even if the selfish interest is shared by the people involved. Finally love at the personal level is what Polo calls donating love (or giving love), love from person to person. This can be among human persons. It can also be the love between the human person and the person of God, and then it can be called adoration or worship. (Cfr. Table 12) There are some psychological theories which speak of triadic love, such as those of Robert Sternberg¹⁰¹, Zick Rubin¹⁰², and John Lee¹⁰³ that, in our opinion, can

¹⁰⁰ “Relación amar-amado: eso es metafísico porque el amado es el bien. Pero si detrás del bien no está la persona, ese bien es inferior a la persona y la clásica noción de felicidad se queda corta. La felicidad es lograr el fin último, el bien absoluto, y el bien absoluto como tal no me dice quién soy, luego no basta”. Polo, L., “La Ética y las Virtudes del Empresario”, op. cit., 88.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. Sternberg, R.J., “A Triangular Theory of Love”, *Psychological Review*, 93 (1986) 119-135.

¹⁰² Cfr. Zick, R., “Measurement of Romantic Love”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 16 (1970) 265-273.

¹⁰³ Cfr. Lee J.A., “Love styles”, in Barnes MH, Sternberg R.J., *The Psychology of Love*, New Haven, Conn, Yale University Press, 1988), 38-67.

find ontological support from Polo's triadic structure of the man. Similarly one can classify the theories of contemporary philosophers and say that for example Sartre and Marcuse understand love reductively at the first level, just as something passional; that Zubiri, Pieper, Von Hildebrand, understand it at the essential level either as an act of the will or a status and that like Polo some understand it as part of the personal most intimate being, the personal intimacy, above the intelligence and the will, such as Maritain, and Ortega y Gasset.¹⁰⁴

<i>Level</i>	<i>Love</i>
Natural	Desire
Essential	Interest
Personal with other people	Donating
Personal with God	Worship

Table 12: Four Types of Love.

C.S. Lewis, who matches the Greek terms to a more contemporary understanding of love with his intuitive theory of the four loves¹⁰⁵, can also benefit from Polo's proposal though they are different from Polo's understanding of the Greek terms¹⁰⁶. The interesting comparison between the different theories will divert us from the main topic which is to find out what is the ultimate criterion of morality, what decides what is good or evil, which is the purpose of this dissertation, so we shall have to leave it for further research. What is linked to our topic is to see how the personal love of God is the ultimate guide of morality according to Polo and how it links with his proposal regarding synderesis.

To give a brief explanation of the ontological foundation of Polo personal love and the implications this has on ethics, it is good to see how he distinguishes the Greek concept of love and personal love. The Greek, represented by Aristotle, his highest peak, understands the will as desire, as *orexis*, which can also be translated as want¹⁰⁷. Wanting

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. Sellés, J. F., "Love: Passion, Emotion, Frame of Mind? Review of Some Relevant Theses of XX Century", *Endoxa. Series Filosóficas*, 32, (2013), 107-113.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. Lewis, C. S., *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1960).

¹⁰⁶ "Christian love elevates and integrates the three Greek senses of love: *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. The first, for the Greeks, was the love of the superior; the second, the love of friendship, that is, the love between equals. *Agape* is the love of the lower". "En el amor cristiano están unificados y elevados los tres sentidos griegos del amor: *eros*, *filia* y *ágape*. El primero, para los griegos, era el amor a lo superior; el segundo, el amor de amistad, es decir, el amor entre iguales. El *ágape* es el amor a lo inferior". Polo, L., "Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana", op. cit., 570.

¹⁰⁷ "Neither for Aristotle, Plato, nor any Greek, the will is possessive: it is precisely not possessive, i.e. it is a tendency; it is even noteworthy that 'voluntas' which is Latin word does not have an equivalent in Greek. The closest equivalent in Greek is 'orexis' which means desire or, more graphically, 'want'. Medical jargon uses the word 'anorexia': lack of desire, lack of wants. One desires what one does not

is imperfect and has an end. Once the end is achieved, the desire, the want, is satisfied. This interpretation of love limits it to the first two levels. It works well for the natural level –desire– and the essential level –interest– and for an ontology based on *telos* where the final end is the act that fulfils the potency that has given rise to the desire or the interest.

For Polo the personal love is beyond *orexis*, it is not just essential because it is not nature but spiritual act of being and as such is always more, is an un-restricted capacity to grow: “Man as a self-giving being sets superior goals for himself than the mean-end or interest-target. The meaning of the Greek *telos* fits the concept of nature. The person gives rise to activities beyond-*telos*, it is *hypertelos*”¹⁰⁸. The same idea is repeated in different ways by Polo because he wants it to be properly understood. It can be seen that in this one he includes under the general term of ‘desire’ what we call desire and interest types of love, and stresses the all-englobing nature of love, which includes desire and interest, because in a hierarchy the higher act always includes the acts under it: “The distinction between love and desire requires transcending the idea of finality. To put it briefly, the understanding that not only is man ‘hyper-formal’ but ‘hyper-*telos*’... True, the man wants (it is a fact of experience); true that the will is a desiring faculty in man; not in God, but in man. However, it is not true that man only desires”¹⁰⁹.

The source of the dignity of the will above the intelligence is its link with the person, and the person has a perfection that the Greeks could not grasp: “The will is a much higher faculty than what the Greeks had dared to think. Love is an initiative, not a pure wake-up to

have; you do not desire what you already have. Therefore, strictly perfect operations, are the immanent intellectual operations; by no means can a tendency be perfect. Knowledge does not tend to be known, by no means is a tendency between thinking and what is thought, but if you think, you already have the thought; both are in strict simultaneity”. “Ni en Aristóteles, ni en Platón, ni en ningún griego, la voluntad es posesiva: es precisamente no posesiva, es decir, tendencial; incluso es de notar que la palabra voluntad, que viene del latín, no tiene equivalente griego. Lo que se corresponde con lo que nosotros llamamos voluntad es la palabra órexis, que significa deseo o, de una manera más gráfica, ‘gana’. La jerga médica utiliza la palabra anorexia: falta de deseo, falta de gana. Ahora bien, se tiende o se desea aquello que no se posee; no se tiende a lo que se posee. Por eso, la operación estrictamente perfecta, es decir, la operación inmanente intelectual, de ninguna manera es una tendencia. El conocimiento no tiende a lo conocido, de ninguna manera hay una tensión desiderativa entre el pensar y lo pensado, sino que si se piensa, ya se tiene lo pensado; ambos están en estricta simultaneidad”. Polo, L., *La Esencia Humana*, op. cit., 56.

¹⁰⁸ “El hombre como ser que da de sí se propone metas superiores a las que permite la relación medio-fin o tendencia-objetivo. El significado del *télos* griego se encuadra en la *naturaleza*. La hiperteleología arranca de la *persona*”. *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰⁹ “La distinción del amor con el deseo requiere trascender la idea de finalidad. Para decirlo rápidamente, la comprensión no solo ‘hiperformal’, sino ‘hiperteleológica’ del hombre... Ciento que el hombre desea (es un hecho de experiencia); cierto que la voluntad es una facultad deseante en el hombre; no en Dios, pero sí en el hombre. Ahora bien, tampoco es cierto que en el hombre sea únicamente deseante”. *Ibid.*, 58.

what is desirable, but has an intimate source. Love leads to discover the personal character of man”¹¹⁰.

Polo explains that personal love is structured. He refers to it as ‘*estructura donal*’ which can be translated in many ways. We choose to translate it as ‘donating structure’, which keeps both words and it is easy to refer to in the original Spanish text. This structure that is at the top level of the personal transcendentals hierarchy explains better than the others the singularity of each person and the other personal transcendentals. It is triadic, and the first of its elements is curiously ‘acceptance’, the second being ‘donation’ and the third one the ‘gift’ or what is donated.

To place ‘acceptance’ as the first of the elements is counter-intuitive but for Polo donating, which is ‘to give’ at the personal level, is not constituted until the donation is accepted. So, the acceptance is what really constitutes the donation, not the intention to donate: acceptance is what makes donation a real donation, something in act. In other words it does not become a donation until it is accepted. The gift is somehow constituted as a relationship between the two previous members, what is accepted and what is donated. Polo often quotes Aquinas when explaining this point, that there is no true love if it is not corresponded¹¹¹. Unrequited love is not true love and should be killed¹¹².

For God the three elements are at the personal level but not for humans. This is because humans have not given themselves their being nor their essence; therefore they are neither in possession of their being nor of their essence and consequently they cannot give them away. They can give only what they have control over, which are the operations of their faculties, the will and the intelligence, and the body and sensitive faculties. At the essential level we are not in command of our essence, but of its growth. Only the Creator is the one who can change essences, because they intrinsically are associated to the act of being. “The donating structure in God is personal. In man only the first two members –accept and give– are personal. Instead, human love –the

¹¹⁰ “La voluntad es una facultad mucho más alta de lo que los griegos se habían atrevido a pensar. El amor es una iniciativa, no un puro despertarse ante lo deseable, sino que tiene una fuente íntima. El amor lleva a descubrir el carácter personal del hombre”. *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹¹ “Thomas Aquinas says that not reciprocated love is monstrous; therefore, absolutely speaking, it does not exist”. “Tomás de Aquino dice que un amor no correspondido es monstruoso; por tanto, hablando en absoluto, no existe”. Cfr. Aquinas, Th., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, op. cit., l. III, cap. 151; Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 62.

¹¹² “The adjustment is guided by a Thomist text that says: ‘the main intention of a lover is to be corresponded in love by the beloved [...]'; and if this correspondence does not take place, it would be necessary to destroy such love””. “Dicha rectificación está guiada por un texto tomista que dice: ‘lo principal en la intención del amante es ser correspondido en el amor por el amado [...]'; y si esta correspondencia no tuviera lugar, sería necesario destruir el amor”. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, l III, cap. 151.” Polo, L., *Antropología Transcendental II*, op.cit. p. 95.

gift— is not personal, but essential. I repeat this observation because it helps to understand the real distinction between being and essence in anthropology, which is not rigid, since otherwise love will not be integrated into the donal structure”¹¹³. We understand that when Polo refers to love at the essential level he refers to the manifestations of the personal love that necessarily have to be through the intelligence, the will and the body¹¹⁴.

Once we have seen the donating structure of personal love we can see how the ultimate end of humans, which is to relate personally with God, can be implemented according to Leonardo Polo.

8. Personal Love to God as the ultimate end

We take as premises that we already know the existence of God at the essential level, following the arguments of Aquinas and that, following Polo’s method of overcoming the mental boundary, we can relate to God at the personal level. We also give as explained that the ultimate end of man is to reach to him in a personal relationship and as the Origin of the world and of each person.

For Polo the four personal transcendentals apply to all persons, that is, to all spiritual beings, and therefore, in a very distinct and singular way, to God. In the same way that we can apply analogically the intelligence and will to God we should be able to speak of love, personal knowledge, freedom and coexistence as belonging to God.

In the same way that many theologians use existence, knowledge and love to help rationalise the intimate relationship of the three divine persons, Polo uses the donating structure. This is an interesting development but we only bring it here to show how Polo distinguishes between theology and philosophy and the benefits his method as an instrument can bring. Our interest is to see how the donating structure, the three elements of personal love, affect the human being in his relation to God.

¹¹³ “En Dios la estructura donal es personal. En el hombre son personales sus dos primeros miembros: dar y aceptar. En cambio, el amor humano no es personal, sino esencial. Repito esta observación porque contribuye a entender la distinción real de ser y esencia en antropología, la cual no es rígida, pues en ese caso el amor no se integraría en la estructura donal”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 173.

¹¹⁴ “As mentioned when discussing the structure donal, loving –giving and accepting- are personal transcendentals. Instead, in human love -the gift- is not transcendental but essential, and is equivalent to the constituent nature of the willing, of the I-want”. “Como se ha dicho al hablar de la estructura donal, el amar – el dar– y el aceptar son trascendentales personales. En cambio, el amor –el don– en el hombre no es trascendental sino esencial, y equivale al carácter constituyente de lo voluntario del querer-yo”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental I*, op. cit., 230.

The first one is acceptance. One should accept what he has received. The first, is the act of being, the personal being is exclusive, unrepeatable, and the richest thing one has, without which all other perfections have no support. Acceptance includes also of all what the act of being brings with it, which is the body with its characteristics, sex, temperament, and associated features; even when the received characteristics are deficient, such as being born blind, crippled or with other limitations. Acceptance also that we had no control over our development, which are, among many others, the place of birth, family set up, education received, historical situation, culture, etc. All these are gifts one has received. Some people receive more, others less, but as one Spanish dramatist, Calderón de la Barca, in his work *The Great Theatre of the World*¹¹⁵ expresses, life is a great theatre where each is given a different role to play, some as kings, noble people, and others as common citizens, or servants, but they will be judged by the way they act out their character, not the character assigned to them. The gifts received are not what counts, but how they are played.

The second one is donation. Donation is what one gives back to God. As we quoted above, Polo explains that one can only donate what one has control over, and these are only the operations of the soul, the essential potencies, intelligence and will. But one only has control on ‘the use’ of the potencies, not of the potencies themselves, which are received. He expresses it saying that ‘one can use but not dispose of them’¹¹⁶. The potencies are used by the person but they are not the principal actor, who is the person. The person has to make a decision to use them as a gift, to direct them towards the final end. There is a conscious decision, which precedes the use of the faculties of the intelligence and the will. Leonardo Polo calls this decision ‘to destine’ and this decision will permeate all ulterior decisions. This is, to have in mind that whatever one does, is directed to please the Person that has given one whatever one has received. And this destination cannot

¹¹⁵ Cfr. Calderón de la Barca, P., *The Great Theatre of the World*, John W. Parker & Son, London, 1856.

¹¹⁶ “The word ‘dispose’ can be used in that double meaning when it comes to the human essence. The essence is to dispose about what is available, and to have what is available; Not only that, but there are modalities of disposing, because one does not dispose in blocks, but the way to dispose depends on the different types of availability. In the case of man it is evident that one can use the will, and also the body. The person can dispose of what he knows, and according to the way one disposes it can be seen how freedom penetrates the essence. The capacity to dispose is to look at the essence from the point of view of personal freedom, because the person is free and his essence is to dispose”. “En ese doble sentido se puede emplear la palabra disponer cuando se trata de la esencia humana. La esencia es un disponer respecto de lo disponible, y es un disponer de lo disponible; no solamente eso, sino que el disponer tiene modalidades, pues no se dispone en bloque, sino que se dispone según las modalidades de disponer que pueden ser varias. En el caso del hombre es evidente que se puede disponer con la voluntad, también con el cuerpo. La persona dispone de lo que conoce, pero según ese disponer se ve cómo la libertad pasa a la esencia. Disponer es la esencia vista desde la libertad de la persona, porque la persona es libre, su esencia es disponer”. Polo, L., *La Esencia Humana*, op. cit., 163.

just be another limited person, who cannot fulfil the desire of infinitude, of total perfection one has¹¹⁷. In his habitual concise way Polo expresses this as follows: “To destine leans on the recipient. To put it another way, taking stock of all that comes from the personal level, man finds that all that is not enough, one has to find a target that is not the end of desire, but of the act of offering”¹¹⁸. Not to destine properly would mean a radical bad decision that compromises one’s life, one’s perfection, one’s happiness¹¹⁹. Another issue is the intensity and activation of such destination alongside one’s life activities.

The gift would be varied and will be all the specific activities conducted through one’s life, not only those directed specifically to God in acts of worship, but all activities, because the activities only have full meaning if they are related, somehow to accomplish one’s mission in life¹²⁰, done freely, not only in the election of the direction of achieving what one thinks God’s wishes, but freely also in the way one chooses to accomplish it¹²¹.

¹¹⁷ A realistic description of the destination process can be found in Rodríguez Luño: “Las características específicas de la condición humana (corporalidad, temporalidad, etc.) hacen que la dirección de la totalidad de la vida no pueda ejercerse normalmente por media de opciones puramente espirituales (lo que se suele llamar «opción fundamental») Esa dirección existe, y está en nuestro poder, pero se ejerce normalmente mediante un complejo proceso de interacción recíproca entre reflexión y vida práctica, así como entre la persona y el ambiente social (leyes, costumbres, modelos, etc.) en el que tiene lugar la educación gradual de las tendencias y la formación de hábitos morales que configuran la identidad personal. El ejercicio de la libertad personal sobre los principios primeros de la vida moral (y el fin último es el primer principio de la razón práctica) es extremadamente complejo, y en él se pone de manifiesto de forma privilegiada la naturaleza social y cultural de la persona humana. En virtud de nuestra naturaleza social y cultural la reflexión ética acerca del fin último puede aspirar a ser un motivo desencadenante de la reflexión acerca del bien”. Rodríguez Luño, Á., *Ética General*, Pamplona: Eunsa, 2010), 210.

¹¹⁸ “La cuestión del destinar reside en el destinatario. Por decirlo de algún modo, al hacer el balance de todo lo que es desde la persona, el hombre se encuentra con que eso no le basta, sino que tiene que encontrar un término, que no es el término de deseo, sino el del ofrecimiento”. Polo, L., *La Esencia Humana*, op. cit., 61.

¹¹⁹ “Not to accept being who one is, is extremely serious; wanting to be another is the product of desperation. Because each one is a gift due to a love of predilection. The human person is a radical novelty that is created directly by God”. “No aceptar ser quien se es, es sumamente grave; querer ser otro es producto de la desesperación. Pues cada quién es un don debido al amor de predilección. La persona humana es una novedad radical porque es creada directamente por Dios”. Polo, L., *Antropología Trascendental II*, op. cit., 205.

¹²⁰ “We have to behave as who we are. Therein lies the justification of ethics. When asked why do I do this? One should answer: because if I don’t, I let God down. The love of predilection must be matched by deeds, and not in a cursory or lazy way”. “Tenemos que comportarnos como quienes somos. En ello reside la justificación de la ética. A la pregunta ¿por qué debo hacer esto? Se ha de responder así: porque si no lo hago defraudo a Dios. El amor de predilección debe ser correspondido con obras, y no de forma leve o perezosa”. *Ibid.*, 207.

¹²¹ The idea of mission is related to the idea of life meaning, life purpose, which also has a deep psychiatric application, as proved by the Austrian Victor Frankl and his ‘logotherapy’. Without developing this idea full of connotations lets’ quote two texts related to this: “Finalmente, todo hombre busca que su vida esté llena de

What does this have to do with our topic? That whatever is in line with God's plan for each person is good for that particular person; whatever is against it is evil. So the same action could be meritorious for one person, for example getting married, and could be evil for other if one is called to celibacy, or renouncing to marry out of fear or selfishness when one's call was for a married dedication.

Love, personal love, looks for the good of the other, not for personal desires, so the one who is the recipient of love, is the one the lover looks at, listens to his or her wishes, learns them and tries, to the best of one's abilities, to put them into practice. In the case of the final end, one has to listen to God, who being Love also wants the best for the one who loves Him. This makes the lover perfect, which in religious terms is called sanctity. Sanctity equates to personal perfection, which is personal love if fully developed. So this is part of the curvature of the will, but now we can call it the curvature of love. The lover grows by loving, the more one loves actively, the more one grows as a person, the more one perfects oneself, the more one acquires more happiness. So happiness, love, grow by giving oneself to a person who corresponds to such offering. Only God can accept all we can offer, which is unlimited.

What is the relationship between synderesis and this personal love? Polo expresses it in the following quotation: "Precisely because man can improve he can resemble God in holiness, but it is an analogous holiness, not the pure holiness of God that is unique. The moral from synderesis is seen as an incentive to improve and act: that is your destiny, you have to destine yourself to be holy, you have to realize what is in you is a seed of holiness and that it is your ability to act because that capacity is to contribute. So instead of the categorical imperative, act, contribute! No longer is the will taken as the centre but the person, because the person can be described as being who contributes, who expands reality"¹²².

sentido. Pero descubrir un sentido para la propia vida, es tanto como descubrir ella una misión. Y la idea de misión remite facilmente a Alguien que envia a participar en ella". García-Huidobro, J., "¿Dios en la Ética?", in Etica sin Religión?: VI Simposio Internacional: Fe Cristiana y Cultura Contemporánea, Instituto de Antropología y Ética, Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2007), 131. "I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story-teller". Chesterton, G.K., Orthodoxy, IV. Accessed 13th June 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/chesterton/orthodoxy.vii.html#vii-Page_6.

¹²² "Justamente porque el hombre puede mejorar puede parecerse a Dios en la santidad, pero es una santidad parecida, no la pura santidad que es exclusiva de Dios. La moral desde la sindéresis se ve como una invitación a mejorar y a actuar: ese es tu destino, tienes que destinarte a lo santo, tienes que darte cuenta de lo que hay en tí de semilla de santidad y eso es tu capacidad de actuar porque esa capacidad es aportativa. De manera que en vez del imperativo categórico, haz, aporta. Entonces ya no se toma como centro la voluntad sino la persona, porque la persona se puede describir como el ser que aporta, que incrementa la realidad". Polo, L., "Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana", pro manuscrito, paragraph 43, Seville, July 1994. "En definitiva, de la sindéresis se desprende la indicación de que es deber humano desarrollar la imagen de Dios. De esta manera disminuyen los temores y las inhibiciones humanas. Para parecerse a Dios en santidad, el hombre tiene que mejorar. El destino del hombre es la santidad; es preciso darse cuenta de que en cada quién

Synderesis is therefore an impulse, which is the source of one's desires to give, to contribute to the loved, and if the love is the personal relationship with God, that impulse makes one love all that God loves, in a hierarchical way, this is, following the order of perfection, other persons first, and all related to their needs.

We are now in a position to answer the initial question of this dissertation, which we do in the next and final section.



hay una semilla de santidad que reside en su capacidad de actuar, es decir, de aportar. Así pues, en vez de imperativo categórico, es conveniente hacer, aportar. De esta manera no se toma como centro la voluntad, sino el acto de ser personal. En este sentido la persona se puede describir como el ser aportante, que incrementa la realidad, porque de él depende que algo nuevo sea". Polo, L., "Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana", op. cit., 565.

CONCLUSIONS

Traditional manuals on ethics or morals are normally based on metaphysics, which leans on human nature. This is good and valid for an ethics done in the third person, valid for a generic human being¹. While this is good and important, it is not sufficient for a personalist ethics that considers each person as someone different from anyone else, for a particular ‘who’, son or daughter of a particular mother and father, living in a particular historical situation.

The first objection that comes to mind is that science is of universals, not of particulars. One cannot do science of this particular stone, or this particular person. Nevertheless we can study the general rules of behaviour that require each person to face their destiny whatever that destiny specifically is. We are not specifying each destiny but we might be able to say that every person has the capacity and duty to seek and follow his own destiny, and this applies to all persons. These are general rules, that each has to apply to one’s particular life. We are in the realm of applied science, and one cannot ask more precision than applied or practical sciences can give, as Aristotle warned²; necessary events can give necessary sciences, contingent events, only contingent sciences, and free decisions can only give general rules or advice according to the circumstances and wishes of each person.

The initial question “whether Polo’s proposal regarding synderesis is accurate and whether it can be a good approach for a personal view of ethics” has to be answered in two subsections because it is actually double; whether Polo’s proposal for synderesis is adequate; and whether it can be a good approach for a personalist view of ethics.

1st. Polo’s synderesis view is adequate

We understand that Polo’s proposal of synderesis comprises all previous traditionally-accepted functions of synderesis plus new ones related to the triadic structure of the man, personal transcendentals and superior innate habits. It also explains better than previous theories the

¹ The different approach needed for ethics and morals is highlighted by several authors, among them Bauman: “Desde un punto de vista ético, la moralidad es antes que el ser, aunque ontológicamente, no hay nada antes del ser, ya que también ontológicamente, el ‘antes del ser’ es otro ser. La moralidad es ‘antes que el ser’ sólo en su propio sentido moral de ‘antes’; esto es, en el sentido de ser “mejor”. Bauman, Z., *Ética Posmoderna*, op. cit., 88.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 b, line 1. Accessed 21 May 2015 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg010.perseus-eng.>

natural will and first act of the intellect. So it is adequate, though it has to be developed further to explain how the act of being influences the will in deciding or not on its initial agreement with God's will through synderesis, and how education affects moral conscience.

As we shall show briefly below, it is also very powerful in showing how a complete ethics requires three elements, the goods, norms and virtues in a positive way, explaining the necessary interaction between them and by showing the insufficiency of ethics that are partial by considering either one or two of the elements with neglect of the others³. This is well explained in his book *Ética: hacia una versión moderna de los temas clásicos*⁴, the only one translated into English so far⁵.

2nd. Synderesis as Foundation of Personalist ethics

The second question requires first to know what we mean by a personalist ethics.

A personalist-based ethics would be one that adequates the universal ethical principles and norms to the personal characteristics common to all persons. Which are those characteristics? The ones that refer to the common nature of the man, that is, the triadic structure of the man, and the distinction between the received and the added powers.

From the point of the personal level they are: personal love, personal knowledge, transcendental freedom and coexistence. From the point of the essential level we have: synderesis, intelligence and will. From the point of view of the body they are: the internal and external senses and the body characteristics and needs.

A personalist based ethics should first recognise and define properly what a person is. Ontologically the one proposed by Leonardo Polo's seems attractive. Transcendental anthropology, as a continuation of the findings of Aquinas regarding the distinction between the act of being and the essence looks promising. Leonardo Polo applies this distinction to the human being and places the final initiative of free decisions at the highest personal level, which is the act of

³ "We said that ethics consists of virtues, goods and norms. These three di-dimensions of ethics should not be considered decoupled. This dissociation involves unilateral, i.e. focusing ethics exclusively from the point of view of the virtues or norms or goods, leads to impoverishing of each of the three". "Decíamos que la ética consta de virtudes, bienes y normas. Estas tres dimensiones de la ética no deben considerarse disociadas. Dicha disociación lleva consigo unilateralidad, es decir, enfocar la ética exclusivamente desde el punto de vista de las virtudes o de las normas o de los bienes, lo que conlleva al empobrecimiento de todos ellos". Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 169.

⁴ Cfr. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit.

⁵ Cfr. Polo, L., *Ethics: a Modern Version of its Classic Themes*, op. cit.

being⁶. He further develops four personal transcendentals that as such, apply to all spiritual creatures. In this he is original, though he takes the acting intellect from Aristotle. These transcendentals show what is personal love, personal knowledge (which has all the characteristics of the *intellect ut actus* of Aristotle, plus new ones), transcendental freedom and co-existence-with. These transcendentals are different ways of seeing the unique and unrepeatable act of being of each person, of each ‘who’, who cannot be reduced to a general term ‘person’, and the two transcendental innate habits wisdom and first principles. As they are at the personal level –act of being level– they can access the inner being of the person (wisdom) and the being of the external realities (the habit of the first principles). So far there is no ethics based on these transcendentals, though Leonardo Polo has given some ideas as to how to develop it.

A personalist based ethics has to explain how a person is happy, and how this happiness depends on the four transcendentals; how from them through synderesis one directs one’s will and intelligence to achieve objective happiness. Though this is a common goal for all people, it depends on the characteristics and capacities of each one. Happiness is tailored for each person in a different way. Happiness, once known directs the specific virtues and goods to be developed. “Happiness opens the issue of the good; if man could not be happy, that is, if there were no goods then ethics would not make sense”⁷.

Good morals, which are the right relationship between virtues, norms and goods is acquired and developed from the core of the person from the act of being. Leonardo Polo says that is done through the innate habit of synderesis. The ‘I-see’ is the one who proposes norms that apply the first principles coming from the synderesis to the particular decisions. The ‘I-want’ takes care of the development of the moral ‘virtues’ and the synderesis again takes care of seeing whether a particular good is in line or not with the final end.

Polo says he took the concept of synderesis from Aquinas, though he develops it farther than Aquinas, for whom it was just the repository of the moral principles. He adds that synderesis is the only link between the root of all one’s actions –the act of being– with all other potencies. Synderesis is the constitutive and integrating habit of the spiritual faculties: will and intelligence, in their first habit, subsequent actions and acquired habits. The acquired habits of the intelligence, to which he gives each a specific name in the four books of *Curso de teoría del conocimiento* and the habits of the will which are the moral virtues. The development of the habits depends on the

⁶ We agree with the view that freedom as a radical of the person already carries with it the ethical component, as suggested by Peña: “la libertad lleva consigo, inseparablemente, una intrínseca dimensión ética que la marca desde dentro”. Peña Vial, J., *Ética de la libertad* (Santiago de Chile: Instituto Respública, 2013), 147.

⁷ “La felicidad abre el tema del bien; si el hombre no pudiera ser feliz, es decir, si no existiera el bien, la ética tampoco tendría sentido”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 111.

capacities received through the body, so those who by birth have congenital defects will not be able to develop all of them, or those who during life have some accident will be incapacitated to use some of them⁸.

We see then that synderesis is vital to know the norms through the first principles or morals are known, and which is the one who knows, to regulate and develop the moral virtues needed to acquire the goods required to progress in life, which is done through the practical knowledge and application of it in daily life.

Synderesis is involved in knowing the human nature, but it does not reach the existence of God, nor God as a person. This one is done, first, through Metaphysics based on the the habit first principles; second, through the habit of wisdom based on the impulse of the agent intellect that reaches Him in a personal way. Properly speaking then, synderesis is not giving one's response to God, which is proper of the personal level. Nevertheless, synderesis is entrusted to align all acts to this reference to God's desire for each person, which, as a personal relationship, communicates its unique relationship with each person, what traditionally is called *God's call*, and from the received person *one's vocation*. So personalist ethics can also be called vocational ethics. The term vocation is used in lay terms to speak of professional vocation, but it is more commonly used for religious matters, so philosophers tend to avoid using this term⁹.

So to the question whether synderesis as understood by Polo could be the ultimate foundation of a personalist ethics, my answer will be no; the ultimate foundation is the concept of the *person as act of being* because of its intrinsic orientation to God through love, love that has to be accepted, subsequently donated, and made effective on a daily basis in the actions performed. Synderesis, though is the necessary link between the acceptance, donation and gift. This necessary link is the one we are directly aware of, and the one in which our normal decisions are taken, because consciousness depends on it. Morals depend on synderesis because the material object of ethics is the free decisions, and the use of the transcendental freedom passes necessarily

⁸ "All human beings are, in principle, intelligent. But another thing is that we can use the intelligence or not, use it more or use it less, which is proof that we are animals endowed with reason; the human biological basis does not determine, but conditions its use. However, intelligence is not a matter of heredity and therefore of specification". "Todos los seres humanos, por principio, somos inteligentes. Pero otra cosa es que podamos usar o no, o más o menos, la inteligencia, lo cual es una prueba de que somos animales dotados de razón; la base biológica humana no es determinante pero sí condicionante. Con todo, la inteligencia no es cuestión de herencia y por tanto de especificación". *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹ According to Crespo, in Husserl papers on conscience there are indications that from an intellectualist view of ethics he in his later years was inclined on a personal look for a foundation of ethics in the priority of love over intelligence: "Este ideal de la razón sería, en última instancia, demasiado formal y desconocería una dimensión más profunda de la persona, el amor. En el amor la persona sigue su vocación individual entendida esta como su tarea ética y 'abre' sus ojos a nuevas valores subjetivos". Crespo, M., *El Valor Ético de la Afectividad*, op. cit., 39.

through synderesis on its way, so to speak, to our body. Synderesis is the one in charge of corroborating the alignment of any action towards the final end. This is properly done through the will enhanced by the virtue of prudence. This may help to understand why virtues are a medium between extremes, not in a spatial fixed way as is usually represented, but a diversion of the path towards the final end; one can deviate because it is too much to the right or to the left, or even going backwards in the process of personalization.

3rd. Development of a personalist ethics

While discussing the characteristics of a personalist ethics based on Polo's proposal is beyond the scope of the initial question, it is interesting to sketch what we have discovered in his works, which may show the effectiveness of his proposal¹⁰.

A key text comes from a conference Polo gave in Sevilla in 1994 which we have already quoted: "This is how the problem of duty, of obligation, appears. Man is obliged. But obligation relates to action: You must find your vital project your vocation in the deepest sense of the word, what kind of acts you are committed to do according to your upbringing, your skills, and your fitness. This issue of duty has been formulated by the moral philosophers"¹¹.

Polo speaks of a duty to act, and this is congruent with his view of synderesis as the impulse of action, to do, not to remain inactive. Human beings are active, are made to act, and to improve themselves by acting. It is an obligation. It is nevertheless a free obligation, not in the sense of not being obliged, but in the sense of being able to look and choose the best way to act according to one's understanding and will. Polo speaks of 'vital project' or 'vocation in the deepest sense of the world'. An obligation is something general, a vital project is particular of each individual, and a vocation adds to the vital project the

¹⁰ The notion that man has no essence but is just an existence that makes his own essence, is a common topic of most existentialist philosophers. What is new in Polo is that he gives an ontological foundation with the triadic structure of man. An exponent of the existentialist claim has been studied by Dorronsoro with regards to Rahner: "con la categoría de símbolo esencial, Rahner sintetiza la dinámica existencial de la persona humana como sujeto que, a través de su propia actividad, alcanza una identidad que no posee originariamente en acto y a la que tiende". Díaz Dorronsoro, R., "La Noción De Símbolo Esencial Rahneriana Revisada a Partir de la Antropología Trascendental De Leonardo Polo", *Miscelánea Poliana*, 46 (2014) p. 1. For Polo the identity comes before the essence because it comes from the personal level, and develops it later; morals is the personalization, not the creation, of the essence, and the essence is just to dispose of something that is given before, what is at its disposition.

¹¹ "Así es como aparece el problema del deber, de la obligación. El hombre está obligado. Pero la obligación se refiere al actuar: debes encontrar tu proyecto vital, tu vocación en el sentido profundo de la palabra, aquel tipo de actos que de acuerdo con tu educación, tus habilidades, con tu idoneidad, pues debes hacer. Esta cuestión del deber ha sido formulada por los filósofos morales". Polo, L., "Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral", Appendix 1, op. cit., paragraph 40.

characteristic of being a “call”, somebody calls. This vital project has to be in line with one’s “upbringing, skills, fitness”, so it is particular to what one has received. One has the duty to add to what one has received but one can only do this according to his or her initial possibilities, which one has received through his inherited DNA, education and situation. On this one can build in different ways, that’s one’s choice, but one has a duty, and obligation to do, to contribute.

An important ontological point is that the call for a vital project one has to choose is not something external, a kind of accident but it constitutes the very act of being of the person and not only as an individual but one’s individuality has a task that involves contribution, because he has to take care of his family –mankind– and his home –the world-. As Polo says: “Man is called; meaning that its vocation is indistinguishable with his being, it cannot be said that one’s call is something extrinsic. Man has a place in the cosmos and is obvious that the cosmos is his home. That makes it perfecter of the universe”¹².

So, in some sense, what one has received physical body, education, culture from society, historical moment, living circumstances, i.e. all that one cannot control but affect one’s capacities can be used in different ways, but it has to be used, and furthermore it has to be used to contribute. This can be the beginning of the specification of the principles of the personalist morality; seek your final end in the personal God, discover your talents, enhance them, and contribute with them to those around you.

Synderesis is the impulse to act and this impulse has the task to look for what is convenient for us, what is the truth of our being, starting with the truth of the will¹³. Leonardo Polo explains that synderesis is the one that constitutes the natural will –*voluntas ut natura*– as explained in the chapter seven. The *voluntas ut natura* then is the one that pushes the will to look for what is good, but being blind it has to seek the help of the intelligence. Synderesis as ‘I-want’ requires the intelligence to act because by itself the theme of the intelligence is the truth, not the good. For the intelligence to be able to present goods synderesis has to give the intelligence the templates, so to speak, of what is good for a person. The intelligence then becomes practical –the practical intelligence– and presents to the will what thinks more

¹² “El hombre está llamado, en cuanto que su vocación se confunde con su ser, no se puede decir que alguien es llamado a algo extrínseco. Que el hombre tiene un puesto en el cosmos es obvio y el cosmos es su casa. Eso le hace perfeccionador del universo”. *Ibid.*

¹³ “Therefore, even if the will can deviate from the good, initially synderesis discloses the truth of the will: which is its transcendental relationship with the good. ... the installation of the truth in the first voluntary act is so intrinsic that it is equivalent to its constitution”. “Por eso, por más que la voluntad puede apartarse del bien, inicialmente la sindéresis descubre la verdad de la voluntad: relación trascendental con el bien... la instalación de la verdad en el primer acto voluntario es tan intrínseca que equivale a su constitución”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 66.

convenient, and the will, exercising the freedom received from the person, chooses. “But precisely because to Aristotle the will is basically desire, the will be only launched, only waked up, if it is preceded by knowledge. The famous aphorism *nihil volitum nisi praecognitum* expresses exactly what is the will is for Aristotle. The will depends on the intelligence, the will is preceded by the intelligence, because the will cannot wake up if the intelligence does not show it something, or because ultimately, no matter how warm it is, it is passive with respect to the intelligence, because as appetite, goes to get what the intelligence shows”¹⁴.

It is interesting to see this process in detail, because, it is the core of the human free action and it includes the three elements that Leonardo Polo assigns to a proper, complete study of ethics: the goods, the norms and the virtues¹⁵. The goods are the goods to obtain and they are mainly at the natural level, though the spiritual goods like friendship belong to the personal level and science to the essential level. The norms are the realm of the intelligence and the virtues fall into the realm of the will. Both at the essential level and all under the activation and integration of synderesis which is the ‘I’ we believe we are. “Ethics is formally a type of organization. It considers that everything should to be classified, from the standpoint of perfection. Ethics does this based on three major issues that are the dimensions of man through which one organizes life: virtues, norms and goods”¹⁶.

We can briefly see what can be said regarding each of the three elements starting with the goods.

a) *Goods*. Perhaps it could be helpful to distinguish five types of goods, two entitative and three operational. The transcendental good,

¹⁴ “Pero, precisamente porque la voluntad para Aristóteles es deseo, la voluntad solamente se pone en marcha, solamente se despierta, si es precedida por el conocimiento. El famoso aforismo *nihil volitum nisi praecognitum* expresa exactamente lo que es la voluntad para Aristóteles. La voluntad depende de la inteligencia, es precedida por ella, porque no puede despertarse si la inteligencia no le presenta algo, o porque, en definitiva, por muy ardiente que sea, es pasiva respecto de la inteligencia, pues como apetito, se dirige a conseguir lo que la inteligencia presenta”. Polo, L., *Presente y Futuro del Hombre*, op. cit., 47.

¹⁵ “The global scientific consideration of ethics has three dimensions. First of all, two main themes: the goods and virtues. We must consider the ethics of virtues and ethics of ethical goods not as two, but two dimensions of the same ethics. A third dimension of ethics is the law, the moral norm. So we can also speak of an ethics of norms. The complete ethics must be an ethics of goods, norms and virtues”. “La consideración científica global de la ética consta de tres dimensiones. Ante todo, dos grandes temas: los bienes y las virtudes. Debemos tener en cuenta que la ética de virtudes y la ética de bienes no son dos éticas, sino dos dimensiones de la ética. Una tercera dimensión de la ética es la ley, la norma moral. Por tanto, también cabe hablar de ética de normas. La ética completa ha de ser una ética de bienes, de normas y de virtudes”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 112.

¹⁶ “La ética tiene valor formal, de organización. Considera todo en cuanto ordenable, desde el punto de vista de la perfección. Eso lo establece la ética según tres grandes temas que son dimensiones del hombre y por las cuales organiza su vida: virtudes, normas y bienes”. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Ética*, op. cit., 137.

is the traditional ‘good’ as transcendental. It means that whatever exists has the most important of goodness; reality, existence. The second entitative good is the natural good that consists in being as complete as one’s nature demands; so, blind or crippled people do not have the natural level goodness. At the operational level we have health which is the good working at the natural level, which is lost when we have some sickness or a bad digestion; this is when things do not work well. Up to the next level these type of goods normally are not voluntary so Polo will consider them as ‘life received’ unlike the next two. The first is the technical good –*poesis, facere*– and the last one the moral goodness –*praxis, agere*–. Of these five types of goodness only the transcendental is absolute, the others are relative transcendentals, relative to some standard, and their mis-match brings with it some due deficit which we normally label as bad. The standard for the entitative natural good is the nature of each animal or person. If the absence is big, especially those at birth are called ‘freaks’ or ‘monsters’ like a goat with two heads. In human beings we speak of ‘malformed, or ‘disabled’. A person whose body does not work properly is ‘unwell’ or ‘sick’, and the standard is a healthy body. The technical goodness is usually contrasted with the ‘best practice’ in that particular skill, which actually keeps on improving continuously, and the lack of a due skill is an ‘unskilled’ or ‘shoddy’ piece of work.

Finally, we reach the question that brought in this discussion: what is the model or standard for good moral decisions? There are objective goods¹⁷ that are those that are based on the natural moral law, and apply to all humans, and are those which apply to a particular group of humans due to age, sex, e.g. the special care children require, women who are expecting or taking care of their babies, elderly people, people with a particular type of sickness etc. And finally are those

¹⁷ When talking about goods Polo refers to real goods, not abstract goods. The same has been pointed out by Gotzon Santamaría who also quotes another autor, Dorronsoro: “This has been clearly seen by Dorronsoro: Therefore, it is necessary to dig deeper in the very heart of that good that is called freedom to seek for a stronger foundation. This is important either for starting a dialogue or for the understanding and performing the good that is calling us and that makes us human. Thomas Aquinas analysis gives us a firm foundation to further the understanding of freedom and of the good that appeals to freedom. The error can only be overcome when the metaphysical method and analysis goes beyond the scope of the essence, to hit directly the real being, where there is nothing clear and distinct, but has the advantage of being real. An analysis of the real act as it is in itself, not an analysis of the differences of essences as they are trimmed to be clear and manageable, in our abstract knowledge”. “This has been clearly seen by Dorronsoro: Por eso, es necesaria una ulterior profundización en el núcleo mismo de ese bien que llama a la libertad para encontrar una base más sólida, sea para el diálogo, sea para la comprensión y realización de ese bien que nos llama y nos hace humanos. El análisis de Tomás de Aquino nos ofrece una base firme para seguir ahondando en la comprensión de la libertad y del bien que se presenta ante ella. De ese error solo se sale cuando el método y análisis de la metafísica supera el ámbito de la esencia, para morder directamente en el ser real, que no tiene nada de claro y distinto, pero tiene la ventaja de ser real. Un análisis del acto real tal y como es en sí, no un análisis de las diferencias de esencias tal y como son recortadas, claras y manejables, en nuestro conocimiento abstracto”. Gotzon Santamaría, M., “Otra Vuelta de Tuerca”, op. cit., 212.

personal goods that are specific to each ‘who’, each person, depending on the strictly personal circumstances, so what could be good for an engineer may not be good for a dentist, and this is just in reference to the professional vocation, but the same applies to free choices one has taken or a special call from God that one may feel. Polo clearly states that the good is a relative transcendental, and that it is subordinated to love, to personal love¹⁸.

Leonardo Polo speaks of goods, sometimes referring to material or external goods, sometimes to what can be possessed. In this second way he speaks of the three types of human ‘having’: ‘the predicamental’, which is to have something external, attached to one but not forming part of oneself; then the two types of essential having, the habits of the intellect in which he includes the knowledge acquired, and the most intimate of the three, the habits of the will: the virtues or vices. In the hierarchy the virtues are the highest, and therefore the ones that should be sought first, then the habits of the intelligence, and lastly the external goods. Not that any of them are not necessary, but external goods and the intellectual are means to develop the highest ones that are the virtues, which make us better persons. Among the virtues there is also a hierarchy but this belongs to another section.

Polo also explains how the ethics based exclusively on the consideration of the good is not complete, and therefore not properly human: “The ethics of goods is reductionist and distrusts norms; there is no choice but to accept rules, but not because they have an ethical value, but simply because they are useful. Virtues have no room here because the virtues serve to structure life; but if what one cares for are the immediate goods, structuring life is superfluous: immediate gratification dispenses from organizing life. While virtues are stable dispositions, with which one faces the future, the pleasures are ephemeral”¹⁹.

Though, more can be said on this issue, we leave it here to speak about the norms.

¹⁸ “Moral virtues strengthen the will: they are perfective habits of the will, and therefore, strengthen the adhesiveness of the will, that is, the capacity to love; however, the vices will impoverish the will, and thus reduce the capacity to love. So he who has vices cannot be happy, or very little because he can also love very little”. “Las virtudes morales fortalecen la voluntad: son hábitos perfectivos de la voluntad y, por serlo, fortalecen la capacidad de adhesión de la voluntad, es decir, la capacidad de amar; en cambio, los vicios empobrecen la voluntad, la estropean, y por tanto disminuyen la capacidad de amar. Por eso, el que tiene vicios no puede ser feliz, o lo es muy poco porque puede amar también muy poco”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 114.

¹⁹ “La ética de bienes es una ética reduccionista que desconfía de las normas; no hay más remedio que aceptar normas, pero no porque tengan un valor ético, sino simplemente porque tienen un valor útil. Las virtudes no tienen nada que hacer aquí porque las virtudes sirven para estructurar la vida; pero si lo importante son los bienes inmediatos, estructurar la vida está de más: el goce inmediato prescinde de la organización del tiempo de la vida. Mientras que las virtudes son disposiciones estables, con las cuales se encara el futuro, los placeres son efímeros”. *Ibid.*, 124.

b) *Norms*. The norms are an essential constitutive of morals. We have natural laws which apply to all material creatures, which are the physical, chemical laws for example, some that apply to living creatures such as the biological laws, and we have moral laws which are completely different because they apply only to free beings, and because of this, and unlike the previous ones, can be flouted, can be not obeyed. Obedience is a moral term and therefore it only applies to free beings, though it can be analogically applied to other beings as well. Moral laws imply therefore, that a task has to be accomplished, and whether the actions to achieve it are aligned or not to the task to be accomplished; these are the criteria that decide whether something is good or evil. “Ethics comes into being because men have to direct their own existence. That task, insofar as subject to alternatives, can only come from freedom, which allows us to speak of a peculiar normativity: the moral norms; and of a peculiar difference which we call good and evil, and of a modification of the moral subject which are the virtues and vices”²⁰. The norms also refer to responsibility which comes from an obligation to do, to act in a particular way, but again, they suppose the possibility of not fulfilling the obligation, to be irresponsible: “Moral norms bring about obligations, and obligation is to link, a link that can be accepted or not”²¹. Obligations that cannot be skirted are natural, and therefore accompany all humans by the mere fact of being human: “The ethical standard is, so to speak, natural in the sense that it is proper to the human being and arises from his rational and free nature”²².

Naturally, as well, there are different types of norms. As we have mentioned, in a personalist ethics, the levels of norms have to be clearly stated, so as to distinguish what is just personal, because the proper end of all norms and regulations is the person, what is essential, this is valid to all humans, and what is corporeal which is not under the control of the person. The norms are meant to help the persons be more personal. To the point that the whole purpose of ethics, which is eminently personal, is to personalise the essential and natural levels²³, and through this contribute to the personalisation of all persons, which means making a society in which each person can develop his or her personality to the outmost: “For example, the natural law is necessary, but certain consequences that are formulated in positive law are not.

²⁰ “La ética surge porque el hombre tiene que conducir su propio existir. Ese conducirse, en cuanto que sujeto a una alternativa que sólo puede venir de la libertad, nos permite hablar de una peculiar normatividad: la norma moral; de una peculiar diferencia que llamamos bien y mal, y de una modificación del sujeto moral que son las virtudes y los vicios”. *Ibid.*, 61.

²¹ “La norma moral comporta obligación, y obligación viene de ligar, una vinculación que puede ser aceptada o no”. *Ibid.*, 63.

²² “La normatividad ética es, por así decirlo, natural en el sentido de que es propia del ser humano y surge de su carácter racional y libre”. *Ibid.*, 58.

²³ “Ethical norms, which governs interpersonal relationships and controls the dominion one has over its received essential potencies”. “La normatividad ética, que rige las relaciones intersubjetivas y controla el dominio del sujeto sobre su dotación esencial”. *Ibid.*

They are consistent *ex supposito*, because though they convey natural law precepts, they could be expressed in other ways. The difference between primary and secondary natural precepts has to do with this”²⁴.

Leonardo Polo states that reducing ethics to norms is a characteristic of modern philosophers and ends up in subjectivism. Subjectivism bases moral norms on subjective sentimental feelings. Values are not objective but the individual’s appreciation of goods, and this explains the attraction of the value ethics²⁵. In this passage Leonardo Polo expresses both the insufficiency of an ethics based only on norms and how it survives in the form of negative ethics, and ethics without its radiant impulse, which is what he calls a bureaucratic attitude: “Ethical normativism if considered alone has no foundation. Without virtues, compliance is inhumane and ethically insufficient. Doing without the moral growth and trying to govern the conduct by fixed reasoning degrades the norms transforming them into a code. Naturally, this attitude had to collapse –in fact it already has collapsed–; yet somehow it remains in what may be called bureaucracy, giving a restrictive view of ethics”²⁶.

Norms are not the most important, though necessary part of ethics, because to be able to fulfil them one needs moral strength and this

²⁴ “Por ejemplo, la ley natural es necesaria, pero ciertas consecuencias en las que se formula positivamente no lo son. Son coherentes *ex supposito*, pues a través de ellas se vehicula la ley natural, pero se podría vehicular de otro modo. La diferencia entre el Derecho natural primario y el secundario tiene que ver con esto”. Polo, L., *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento I*, op. cit., 24.

²⁵ “It is characteristic of the modern age to reduce the notion of virtue to the decision to adhere to rational norms and nothing else. The goods are delinked from the norms and are transformed into what is often called vital values (modern man does not give up goods, but is trapped by his view of rationality, which is rather emotional). The concept of value is then born”. “Es característico de la edad moderna reducir la noción de virtud a la decisión de atenerse a normas racionales y nada más. Los bienes se desligan de las normas y se trasforman en lo que se suele llamar los valores vitales (el hombre moderno no renuncia a los bienes, pero su acción está atrapada por su interpretación de la racionalidad, cuya apreciación es más bien emocional). Aparece la noción de valor”. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 122. Some authors distinguish values from goods in a different way, e.g. they consider values as the objective goodness external to man, and good as what one should do in a particular situation: “¿Y por qué yo experimento esa llamada a realizar esos «valores»? ¿Simplemente porque son valiosos? No. No basta que sean valiosos. No es su valor en sí mismo lo que los convierte en «lo que hay que hacer», sino el hecho radical –obvio y quizás por eso no contemplado– de que no se hacen solos, sino que están «por hacer» ante mí, como tarea mía personal. Esto es lo que hace que un «valor» adquiera el carácter de «bien»: que es lo que, aquí y ahora, está ante mí, reclamando mi implicación personal”. Gotzon Santamaria, M., “Otra Vuelta de Tuerca”, op. cit., 212.

²⁶ “Aislado, el normativismo ético es una petición de principio. Sin virtudes, el cumplimiento de normas es inhumano y éticamente insuficiente. Prescindir del crecimiento moral y regir la conducta por una razón fija degrada la norma convirtiéndola en un reglamento. Naturalmente, dicha actitud se tenía que derrumbar –de hecho, se ha derrumbado–; sin embargo, de alguna manera se mantiene en lo que cabe llamar burocratismo, del que emana una visión restrictiva de la ética. Polo, L., *Ética: Hacia una Versión Moderna de los Temas Clásicos*, op. cit., 121.

comes from the virtues, the most important element of ethics²⁷. Without moral strength one will find it difficult to follow the norms and this will prevent one from getting to the important and necessary goods. The full meaning of the norms can only be understood from the virtues, naturally only if the norms are proper norms, not arbitrary decisions of a leader²⁸. And virtues need the backing of love, transcendental love that reaches them through synderesis as the ‘I-want’: “Ethics is neither unilateral knowledge of good nor just an ethic of norms which is merely instrumental; ethics also addresses love, that is, the adherence to good: ‘goods be not missing, and do not miss doing good’. But if it is necessary not to neglect the good; compliance to the norms cannot be necessarily fastidious, as if they were product of an arbitrary will. The rules themselves are also kind, so Thomas Aquinas says; but one can only know this if one have virtues”²⁹.

Leonardo Polo has an interesting addition to the traditional view of virtues which we shall see in the next section.

c) *Virtues*. “Virtue and vice are what are most intrinsic of ethics”³⁰. We have already seen how Leonardo Polo explains that virtues are acquired habits of the will that are morally good. The contrary habits of the will that are morally wrong are called vices³¹. Virtues constitute, as quoted above, the most important part of Polo triadic view of ethics. While some norms and goods can be external to man, all virtues are part of man, they are not just attachments but ontologically they are new capacities of the same person. It is not that one

²⁷ “Ethics is encouraging. Therefore, an ethic of restrictive rules of human action is incorrect. Ethics stimulates. Thus the virtues are its central theme, as they reinforce the power and therefore facilitate action and increase it”. “La ética es animadora. Por eso una ética de normas restrictiva de la acción humana es incorrecta. La ética estimula al hombre. De ahí que las virtudes sean su tema central, ya que fortalecen la facultad y, por tanto, facilitan la acción y la aumentan”. *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁸ “The man who is not virtuous fulfils the norms reluctantly. Instead Thomas Aquinas says that who is virtuous follows them easily because, strictly speaking, the rules are for freedom. The virtues increase the capacity to exercise of freedom”. “El hombre que no es virtuoso cumple las normas a regañadientes. En cambio – dice Tomás de Aquino– el que es virtuoso las cumple con facilidad porque, en rigor, las normas son para la libertad. Las virtudes aumentan la capacidad de ejercicio de la libertad”. *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁹ “La ética no es unilateralmente la ciencia del bien; tampoco es sólo ética de normas o meramente instrumental; la ética también se ocupa del amor, es decir, de la adhesión al bien ‘que no falte el bien y que yo no le falte al bien’. Pero si es preciso no faltarle al bien, el cumplimiento de las normas no puede ser puramente fastidioso, como si fueran producto de una voluntad arbitraria. Las normas ellas mismas también son amables, y así lo dice Tomás de Aquino (*S. Th.*, 1-2, 107, 4 ad 2m et 3m); pero esto sólo se sabe cuando se tienen virtudes”. *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Lo más intrínseco de la ética son la virtud y el vicio”. Polo, L., *Ethics: a Modern Version of its Classic Themes*, op. cit., 86.

³¹ “The determination by the acts can be negative or positive, i.e. a vice or a virtue. Vice is a detriment of nature and virtue is growth and improvement”. “La determinación por los actos puede ser negativa o positiva, es decir, un vicio o una virtud. El vicio es un detrimento de la naturaleza y la virtud un crecimiento y una mejora”. Polo, L., *Nietzsche como Pensador de Dualidades*, op. cit., 130.

deserves praise and rewards because one has done something good that benefits society and oneself, this being true, it is not the most important part of developing virtues, what is most important is the ontological change that takes place in the person: he becomes a better human being, a better person³². His faculties have acquired new powers, which make the person freer, cleverer, more loving, and stronger in the line of the acts performed³³. “Virtue is the point where having made contact with human’s being, the meeting between the dynamic with the constitutional. Man does not always theorize; however, virtue is permanent, it is stably incorporated”³⁴.

This is the reason why Polo says that human beings are more than nature, they are not of the world but above the world, because there is no limit to growth in the spiritual faculties, because they grow as they exercise new good acts, and this growth gives them the capacity to do new types of acts which before they were not capable of³⁵.

³² “A person is specified as human by virtues and un-specified, degraded, falling into a state of stoppage which is a destruction of all internal order and all self-control, if one acts wrongly and becomes vicious. Humans are beings capable of doing and growing, has this double entry: an exterior and an inner result. To think that the importance of the action is what is produced, that is what the modern activism leads us to believe, and this leads to the loss of the ontological value of virtue”. “El hombre se especifica como hombre por sus virtudes y se desespecifica, se degrada, cae en una situación de continencia que es como una destrucción de todo orden interior y de toda capacidad de autocontrol, si actúa mal y se hace vicioso. El hombre es un ser capaz de hacer y de hacerse, tiene esa doble entrada: un resultado exterior y uno interior. Creer que lo importante de la acción es lo que se produce, eso, que es a lo que el activismo moderno nos inclina, lleva consigo la pérdida del valor ontológico de la virtud”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Moral”, Appendix 1, op. cit., paragraph 9.

³³ “Freedom is above all self-control. The one who owns himself has virtues; and the one who lacks them is not his own master for one simple reason: because he has vices. And that’s unfailingly. The alternative is not elective, it is ontological, it affects the actual nature of man: one becomes good or bad”. “La libertad ante todo es el autodominio. Es dueño de sí el que tiene virtudes y no es dueño de sí el que no las tiene por una razón sencilla, porque tiene vicios. Y eso es impecable. La alternativa no es electiva, es ontológica, afecta al ser mismo del hombre: uno se hace bueno o se hace malo”. *Ibid.*

³⁴ “La virtud es el punto en que el tener toma contacto con el ser del hombre, la conjunción de lo dinámico con lo constitucional. El hombre no teoriza siempre; en cambio, la virtud es permanente, queda incorporada de manera estable”. Polo, L., *La Esencia Humana*, op. cit., 51.

³⁵ “Aristotle, who is the one who matures more the notions, admits that being the act is previous and superior to the potency, then the potency has to be limited because it becomes the substance. And this is the nature; nature means that potency is finite. Well, the man has no nature because his potency is not finite and does not have it because it makes its potency infinite, but not as infinite action in the modern understanding, but because it makes it infinite by acquiring virtues. Man is capable of unrestricted development and that is the infinity of his potency. This is why man is not a natural being”. “Aristóteles que es el que madura más las nociones, admite que siendo el acto anterior a la potencia y superior a ella, la potencia tiene que ser finita porque el acto le sucede como sustancia. Eso es la naturaleza; naturaleza significa potencia finita. Pues bien, el hombre no tiene naturaleza porque no tiene potencia finita y no la tiene porque infinitiza su potencia, pero no según la acción infinita en sentido moderno, sino que la infinitiza en la manera de adquirir virtudes. El hombre es capaz de un perfeccionamiento irrestricto y eso es la infinitud de su

This means that good morals rather than constraining, increases the powers, gives more freedom because it increases the possibilities and gives more control over the faculties and therefore the acts of those faculties: “It must be held that morality does not constrain but enables man to increase his freedom. In effect, to be in control *causa sibi* means to strengthen sufficiently one’s own capacities. The feedback of the action in the faculty is virtue. The two higher faculties of the soul, intelligence and will, are not fixed allocations. This is why they are more than nature”³⁶.

The acquisition of virtues is not an exclusive task of the will, because the will is blind, it needs direction, and that direction comes from synderesis which impulses the intelligence, to what is good, this is, what is aligned to the ultimate end or not, in general, and through the practical reason in each particular case, and doing this well is what is the task of the most important and first of the virtues, which therefore, like synderesis itself, sits in between the intelligence and the will: prudence³⁷. This is why the classics call it a dianoetic virtue and the charioteer and, at other times, the origin of all other virtues as quoted before: “The first acquired virtue, which expresses the link between the will and the intelligence, is prudence. So prudence is *genitrix virtutum*, and without it one cannot acquire any other virtue. The exercise of acts must refer to the *simplex velle* and also to prudence as acquired by the will. Prudence marks the relationship of the will to reason, but not the knowledge of transcendental relationship. Only considered as a duality with synderesis, the natural will ascends to the level of the *velle*”³⁸.

Synderesis is the innate link, upper link, between the virtue of prudence and the transcendental good, that is, the outside real goods, and whether they are in line with the final end, otherwise it will not be

potencialidad. Por eso no es un ser natural”. Polo, L., “Socratic Ethics and Christian Morals”, pro manuscrito as translated in Appendix 1, op. cit., paragraph 11.

³⁶ “Se debe sostener que la moral no constriñe, sino que permite al hombre aumentar su libertad. En efecto, ser *causa sibi* comporta fortalecer suficientemente las propias capacidades. El feedback de la acción en la facultad es la virtud. Las dos facultades superiores del alma, la inteligencia y la voluntad, no son dotaciones fijas. Por eso son más que naturaleza”. Polo, L., “Ética Socrática y Moral Cristiana”, op. cit., 553.

³⁷ Posada has a felicitous way of expressing the interconnection between the intellect and will within synderesis the “habit of synderesis inasmuch it includes not only intelligence but also the intellection embedded in the willing”. El “hábito de sindéresis en tanto que comporta no sólo inteligir solo, sino además intelección inserta en el querer”. Posada, J. M., *Voluntad de Poder y Poder de la Voluntad*, op. cit., 54.

³⁸ “La primera virtud adquirida, que expresa el enlace de la voluntad con la inteligencia, es la prudencia. Por eso, la prudencia es *genitrix virtutum*, y sin ella no se puede adquirir ninguna otra virtud. El ejercicio de actos se ha de referir al *simplex velle* y también a la prudencia en cuanto que adquirida por la voluntad. La prudencia marca la relación de la voluntad con la razón, pero no es el conocimiento de la relación trascendental. Sólo considerada en su dualidad con la sindéresis, la voluntad natural asciende al nivel del *velle*”. Polo, L., *La Voluntad y sus Actos I*, op. cit., 52.

prudence, but a vice, which is called ‘shrewdness’ which has all the characteristics of prudence except for the right orientation towards the final end, which is the most important. In a pithy text Leonardo Polo expresses this and the link between prudence and the virtues under it as follows: “Through the moral virtues one can see that synderesis is the source and precedes them. It is especially clear in prudence. This is why prudence (of ‘pro-videre’) is described as monitoring the means. Similarly, justice highlights what is righteous in synderesis. Fortitude and temperance show the harmony synderesis introduces into human life”³⁹. This is supported by Aquinas texts interpreted by Sellés, which shows how synderesis is the link, through prudence, between the person and the actions the person performs: “The practical habit of prudence is, according to Thomas, linked to synderesis; as the theoretical habit of science is to the habit of the theoretical first principles. The role of prudence, therefore, is medial, because it leans on its work on synderesis, and directs the moral virtues of the will to act. It is illuminated by synderesis and applies the universal principles to particular conclusions to of act”⁴⁰.

To complete the section on the virtues we would like to highlight the subordination of all virtues, and norms to synderesis. Synderesis links the will to love at the personal level, and wanting to the final end. Wanting is love at the essential level. The orientation to the final end that permeates from the personal level, through synderesis, continues through prudence and through it reaches the moral habits (virtues or vices) that guide all human free actions.

The following two Polo’s texts show how a personalist-based ethics requires a good understanding of synderesis and the personal decision to orientate life to the objective final end: “The prudent person tries to make permeable the considerations to the primary moral principles, which are the ones that synderesis invites us to open on its course towards practice. Knowing how to stick to them is to be prudent. A level of virtue what is dianoetic is prudence that is also the nexus of synderesis with active use. In this way virtue connects with the norms. It is also seen how a norm without virtues is a norm that is imperfectly open to prudence. This is the most important content of

³⁹ “En las virtudes morales se advierte su procedencia por la sindéresis que las preside. Es especialmente claro en la *prudencia*. Por eso la prudencia (de ‘*pro videre*’) se describe como vigilancia sobre los medios. A su vez, en la *justicia* destaca lo que la sindéresis tiene de rectitud. En la *fortaleza* y en la *templanza* se nota el equilibrio que la sindéresis introduce en la vida humana”. Polo, L., *Epistemología, Creación y Divinidad*, op. cit., 137.

⁴⁰ “El hábito práctico de la prudencia está, según Tomás de Aquino, vinculado a la sindéresis, como el hábito teórico de ciencia lo está al hábito de los *primeros principios teóricos*. El papel de la prudencia, en consecuencia, es medial, porque está inclinado en su obrar por la sindéresis, y a la vez inclina a obrar a las virtudes morales de la voluntad. (Cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 7, a. 2, ad 3). Es iluminado por la sindéresis y a la vez aplica los principios universales a conclusiones particulares en el orden del obrar. (Cfr. *Q.D. De Virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 6.). Sellés, J.F., *Los hábitos Adquiridos: las Virtudes de la Inteligencia y la Voluntad según Tomás de Aquino*, (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2000), 112.

prudence: to make more intimate the connection between conscience and synderesis”⁴¹.

In this second text one has to be aware that it is the only place in which Polo calls synderesis a ‘virtue’. Probably he says it to highlight that it is eminently moral, can grow and is the ultimate source of all proper virtues. “All the already discussed virtues that integrate prudence, look for a high purpose which is synderesis. Prudence (that unifies justice, fortitude and temperance –that are one system–) is simply a dimension of synderesis. So to limit oneself to the cardinal virtues is a moral error, and to dismiss them is also a moral error, because in this life they are means”⁴².

While we have seen that virtues are the core of ethics, an ethical theory based only on virtues cannot sustain itself. It requires the knowledge of what is the true good and the means to reach it (whether they are aligned or not to the true good) and the norms that facilitate reaching it (the right paths, which indicate objectively the correct alignment). “An ethics based exclusively on virtues is only illusory because virtue loses its meaning and is reduced to a rigid attitude, where one takes refuge. But, in turn, an ethic based only on norms eliminates the notion of virtue and simply says to the man: behave in a particular way. However, without virtues it is not possible to freely comply with moral norms”⁴³.

4) *Quick review to problems raised.* We could continue describing more elements of the possible development of a personalist ethics, but we are far beyond the length and theoretical limits of the initial proposal and we have to finish by seeing whether we have also answered the questions posed regarding the problems this research could elucidate which can be answered as follows:

⁴¹ “El prudente trata de hacer permeables las consideraciones a los principios morales primarios, que son los que la *sindéresis* nos invita a abrir en su cauce hacia la práctica. Saber atenerse a ellos es ser prudente. A nivel de virtud lo dianoético es la prudencia, también es el nexo de la sindéresis con el uso activo. Así la virtud conecta con la norma, y se ve también como una norma sin virtudes es una norma que se abre a la prudencia de modo imperfecto. Ese es el contenido más importante de la prudencia: hacer más íntima la conexión entre conciencia y sindéresis. Polo, L., *Lecciones de Ética*, op. cit., 178.

⁴² “Toda las virtudes vistas, que integran la prudencia, tienen que ver con fines de gran altura, pero no son el Fin Último. Existe una virtud más cardinal todavía que es la virtud de la sindéresis. La prudencia (que unifica la justicia, la fortaleza y la templanza –constituyen un sistema unitario–) no es más que una dimensión de la sindéresis. Por tanto, quedarse sólo con las virtudes cardinales es un error moral, y quedarse sin las virtudes cardinales es también un error moral, porque ellas son para esta vida que es medial”. Polo, L., “La Conexión de las Virtudes”, (unpublished manuscript, Piura: Universidad de Piura, August 15, 1995).

⁴³ “Una ética sólo de virtudes es ilusa porque la misma virtud pierde su sentido y queda reducida a una actitud rígida, donde uno se refugia. Pero, a su vez, una ética sólo de normas elimina la noción de virtud y se limita a decir al hombre: compórtate de determinada manera. Ahora bien, sin virtudes es imposible cumplir libremente las normas morales”. Polo, L., *Ética, Versión Moderna de un Tema Clásico*, op. cit., 118.

What is Polo's conception of synderesis as an innate habit? This was answered in the chapter: 'Knowledge of Synderesis'.

How does synderesis act according to Polo? This was answered in the chapter: 'Synderesis' Dynamics'.

How do Polo's proposals fit with the proposals of previous philosophers?

In the historical section we have seen the development of synderesis up to our days. We did not comment on how they related to Polo's proposal because we had not explained it at that stage. We can do it summarily now.

As we have seen through the many references to Aquinas in Polo's quotations, the main influence comes from Aquinas⁴⁴; from him he takes the term, its ontological status as an innate habit, as the source of the practical first principles of action, the primary enunciated as: 'do good' and secondarily 'avoid evil', and above all the ontological distinction between *esse* and *essence*. He improves on Aquinas' by distinguishing the personal level, the human act of being –the *esse*– from the essence; and both from the corporeal level. Then Polo introduces the four personal transcendentals and gives synderesis new functions, not foreseen by Aquinas. By this distinction and the method of overcoming the mental boundary Polo can be more precise in the understanding of the explanation of the personal structure in three levels, –triadic– which helps to understand much better the reality of love, happiness, freedom and the dynamics of the practical action with respect to the theoretical reason. This is done by integrating the root of both, intelligence and will, within synderesis and distinguishing in it two sides: the I-see and the I-want, which are the habit as it activates the intelligence and the will respectively. The distinction between the personal and essential level in humans also allows him to give a better ontological position to the active intellect, personal freedom, personal love, and explain why they cannot be explained in terms of causality as the modern and classic philosophers tried to do. It is worth mentioning that Aristotle's influence is great, but it is somehow included in the comments made to what we have said about Aquinas, in the topics Aquinas took from Aristotle, which Polo frequently acknowledges e.g. the acting intellect, the distinction between the practical and theoretical knowledge, the theory of habits and the guidelines of ethics.

We can trace a secondary influence from Bonaventure in the distinction between the faculties and its acts, but this is based on a single comment on Polo's works and will require further research.

⁴⁴ "Los filósofos de la tradición en los que Leonardo Polo se basa son fundamentalmente dos: Aristóteles y Tomás de Aquino". Sellés, J. F., "Review, La Voluntad y sus Actos", *Studia Poliana*, 1 (1999) p. 122.

In a nutshell Polo's proposal fits, as he says, withing the classic philosophy and expands it in a direction congruent to the realistic principles that support it, albeit with some corrections needed to proceed and incorporate the findings of modern and contemporary philosophy, of which he is part. Nevertheless we have to hightlight again his originality as Piá Tarazona does: "the meaning Polo gives to synderesis cannot be found in traditional philosophy"⁴⁵.

How does Polo's proposal compare with contemporary philosophers?

Modern and contemporary philosophy had no room for synderesis and had forgotten the capacity of the habits as a way to permit the knowledge of the intimacy of the subject and its indefinite progress which they sought. So there is no possible direct comparison regarding synderesis, as we discussed in Chapter 5. Nevertheless there are clear indications of the need to develop synderesis to solve the problems created by the radical immanentism and voluntarism of modern philosophy, which, according to Polo, lead to a dead end: "After six centuries, we are in a position to say that they have been employed in a badly conducted philosophical research. This modern project requires to be thought again"⁴⁶.

Polo studied in depth modern philosophy from which he borrowed the use of language that has many similarities with Heidegger's and Zubiri's styles with whom he also shares some views and terms⁴⁷; mostly in theory of knowledge from Zubiri and on human 'co-existence' from Heidegger⁴⁸.

In his works one can see that Polo is in frequent dialogue with Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche in his works. Nevertheless none of them deal with synderesis, as mentioned above. Polo has similitudes with Kierkegaard and the existentialist philosophers but considers that they do not have an ontological foundation to their intuitions, which are mostly based on a psychological approach, while his approach is ontological. The lack of consideration of synderesis in modern philosophy is part of a neglect of the consideration of habits in general, as Polo states: "I repeat that what I propose about habits is not clear in modern philosophy, which ignores habitual knowledge and is an objectivist philosophy but also in traditional philosophy is not clear.

⁴⁵ Piá Tarazona, S., "Sobre las Dualidades Intelectuales Superiores", op. cit., 151.

⁴⁶ As we quoted before in note 32.

⁴⁷ On top of the quotations found in Polo's work on Zubiri, especially in the 1st Volume of his *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, it is interesting to note the personal testimony and the data given by Isabel Aísa regarding the common themes in Zubiri, Heidegger and Polo. Aísa, I., "Leonardo Polo: la Persona y el Maestro que Conocí", *Thémata*, 50 (2014) p. 335.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Castilla y Cortazar, B., "En Torno a la Díada Transcendental", op. cit., 397. This article is good to see some similitudes between Polo, Zubiri, Heidegger and other contemporary authors.

Husserl himself, who once used the notion of habit, does it superficially. If the works of the great modern philosophers are analyzed, one can see how that the notion of habit is missing”⁴⁹.

Polo’s interests are more distant from the hermeneutics or analytical philosophers, though he knew them, because their approach, being mainly logic and linguistic was not fundamental and they did not deal either with synderesis.

5th. The last question was: Whether Polo’s proposal can explain in a better way human actions, especially with regards to ethics. And this is what is being discussed in this Chapter 11.

6th. Final remarks

As with works of art, in philosophical research we are told that dissertations are never completely finished, they have to be just stopped and presented at a particular moment. It is time to close this dissertation by summarising the advantages of Leonardo Polo’s proposal and pointing out at topics that may need further development as possible lines of research.

6a. Advantages

We already mentioned that the triadic structure of the man, linked to the method of overcoming the mental boundary is a great novelty and a powerful instrument to understand ethics and be the foundation of a personalistic ethics. It helps also to understand the four levels of love, of happiness and of freedom, and how the personal decisions permeate the unity of the person in every action through synderesis. It also helps to understand why freedom, personal love, personal knowledge and coexistence cannot be objectivised, or in other words that the objective approach to these realities is just ‘objective’ not real. It also explains well the natural common knowledge based on the innate habits which explains why common people, without further knowledge can know God, others, the world love them, and direct their lives according to their religious and ethical beliefs, or deliberate going against the innermost tendencies they have because wrong rationalizations. Further, but far beyond this dissertation, the works of Polo are great to analyse and understand in a personalistic way the proposals of most philosophers which Leonardo Polo is in a continuous dialogue through his works.

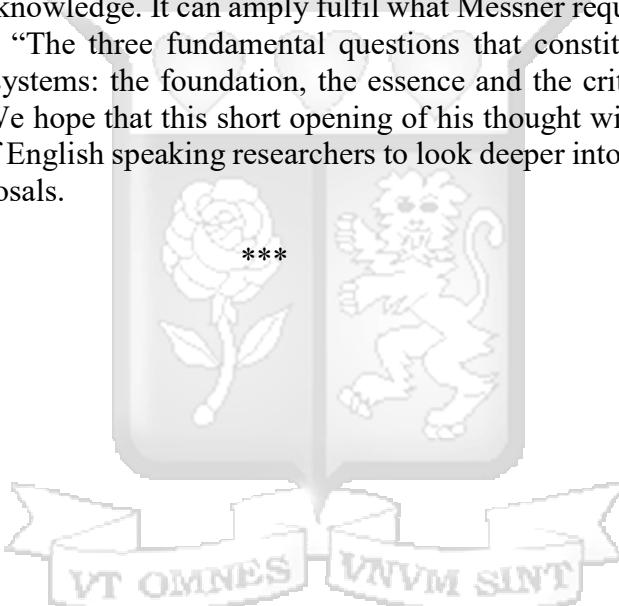
6b. Points that need further research

⁴⁹ “Repite que lo que sostengo sobre los hábitos no está claro, no digo ya en la filosofía moderna, que ignora el conocimiento habitual y es una filosofía objetivista, sino también en la filosofía tradicional. El mismo Husserl, que emplea alguna vez la noción de hábito, lo hace de manera superficial. Si se analizan las obras de los grandes filósofos modernos, se observa que la noción de hábito ha desaparecido”. Polo, L., *El Conocimiento Habitual de los Primeros Principios*, op. cit., 10.

We feel that some points of Leonardo Polo's proposals will need further study of which he was aware. For example to clarify the distinction between sentiments, affections and notices will help to give a bit more objectivity to the ethical analysis of synderesis. All of them are an un-objective way of knowing something about ourselves, but if we do not distinguish them properly we can fall into a sentimental approach to ethics and reduce happiness to merely 'feeling good'.

While Leonardo Polo has a whole course in which he dealt with the 'I' his development of conscience and consciousness can be further developed, especially taking into account that synderesis for him is the 'I'. He probably did not devote much time to this because of fear to get into a psychological or phenomenological approach which for him was not sufficiently deep.

Leonardo Polo's new way of doing anthropology opens a new door to philosophical research in most of the branches of philosophy because he is giving new instruments to anthropology, metaphysics and theory of knowledge. It can amply fulfil what Messner required in proper ethics: "The three fundamental questions that constitute the great ethical systems: the foundation, the essence and the criteria of morality"⁵⁰. We hope that this short opening of his thought will whet the appetite of English speaking researchers to look deeper into Polo's valuable proposals.



⁵⁰ "Las tres cuestiones fundamentales que constituyen el objeto de preocupación de todos los grandes sistemas éticos: la cuestión del fundamento, la de la esencia y la del criterio de moralidad". Messner, J., *Ética Fundamental*, op. cit., 32.

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To all many thanks.





APPENDIX 1

Conference

Socratic Ethics and Christian Morals

Seville, July 1994

First Session

The best way to know what morals is could be to approach the great geniuses who have dealt on this topic and who have a strong moral sense because, as Aristotle warns, moral is not learned in books, but in good men. You can learn it in good men because moral reality is the good men and reality is known where it is. Books are neither moral nor immoral, they are a few pieces of paper that collect some experiences which with empathy or understanding one can assimilate. But the main core, the real core of morality, is in the being-human.

If things are like this, the best way forward is to look into the main topics, that the great men who discovered ethics –some of whom gave their lives by living their moral principles to the end. I look firstly into Socrates' legacy. Socrates, according to Plato, who in a great dialogue, raises the question: what is worse, to suffer an unjust act, for example, being beaten without any reason whatsoever, or to commit oneself the wrongful act? The answer to this question shows if one has understood what morality is about. If one thinks the worst that can happen to someone is to be killed by another or beaten by another, and that nothing other than the physical exertion happens to the one who has committed the crime, then we do not actually understand morals, and this is the opinion that common sense seemingly leads us to. Morals are based on the opposite answer. The worst consequence of a wrongful act is that it affects the one who commits it. The argument that Socrates gives is deeply ontological: the sufferer of an unjust act is extrinsically subjected to the consequences of the act, but the one who acts unjustly; the actor of the act, *becomes* unjust by doing it.

Our language says it clearly: in a murder there is the person murdered and a murderer, what is worse: to be killed or to be the murderer? What does makes one worse human being, to be the murderer or to be the victim? The ethical answer is clear; committing murder makes one worse. And the same goes for good deeds. There is something paradoxical in talking about virtue. To become a murderer is to acquire a vice; to do a good act is to acquire a virtue. It is not possible that a man

does a good act without his very nature acquires an intrinsic good characteristic. When the act is a good one, this intrinsic characteristic is a virtue.

Aristotle starts from this: where is morals? In the virtuous man. Where is the immoral reality? In the vicious man. Aristotle takes this to its logical conclusion and says that a vicious man is one who cannot control himself, the wanton; the incontinent. An incontinent is a victim of its own acts to the point that he cannot control them and to such extent that he loses his freedom. For the great classical tradition up to Thomas Aquinas, freedom is being able to control one's behaviour, to be cause of himself; *sibi causa*. Sometimes this is taken at the psychological level of choices, etc., but freedom, above all, is self-control. The one who has virtues is his own master and the one who is not his own master is for the simple reason that he has vices. And that is unfailingly. The alternative is not elective, it is ontological; it affects the actual nature of man: one becomes good or bad. How does one become good or bad? Through one's actions. This is the way the classics see it. This is important because the nucleus of morality is in the acts and the acts are determined by their objects; so the moral object must be studied.

John Paul II is interested in the moral object in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. But that is only the beginning of the issue. Then comes the ontological construction of morals, which is to become a good man or diminished man: the man growing, who increases his capacities, the man who is capable of self-control, of freedom, or on the contrary the man who starts declining. All this starts in the acts, they are the starting point, but they do not terminate in the act but in the one who acts. Therefore, moral without virtues is not a Socratic moral. Socrates restates the theme of virtue, '*arête*'. *Arête* was one of the major constituents of morals in the pre-classical Greek era. *Arête* is the eagerness man has of immortality that ephemeral man has to endure in the memory of posterity. *Arête* ultimately comes down to fame. Who has *arête*? The one who is not forgotten.

Although this meaning of virtue can be maintained, added within the philosophical approach, by going deeper we find that we must internalize *arête*; that *arête* is more than doing glorious deeds to ensure that when one dies one is remembered. Sappho, who was a great woman, said in splendid verses: "dead I will be eternally buried, no memory left of me and posterity will ignore my name". This is the human drama: being forgotten, being reduced to a being who is born and dies and that is it. You can be born, you can die, but you can also live on. As Sappho continues: "I will wander without shadow on the house of Hades". Wander without shadow means to be incapable of exercising any action, is an inactive survival that for Greeks was the greatest disgrace. The dead live a ghostly life, an inactive life. The dead have hands, but cannot do anything, but that does not mean they do not live on. Moreover, to move to Hades the river Eteo has to be crossed; it is the river of forgetfulness ('ether' means forgetfulness).

The dead are in a tragic situation, a situation of utter helplessness, where they can do nothing.

One way to live on is to be inspiring to those who come after, that is arête. As I said, this is a first approach to the theme of virtues that Socrates intensified to the ultimate point. One can follow this direction: having virtue is to grow as living. If one follows this direction one will escape Hades. Socrates' immortality is already the one of a soul that is active, and Plato develops further this understanding of immortality. Plato's theory of the soul is inspired by this Socratic approach.

Being better is not an extrinsic denomination; to be better is a strengthening of the human nature that frees one from the devouring nature of time, of the ephemeral nature of a being. This is unlike what Alcmaeon of Crotone mentioned as what distinguishes gods and men: the gods can join the beginning to the end. Men on the contrary cannot unite birth to death. Man is a being who acts but has an end. To overcome this, one grows such density to go through death ensuring a post-mortem activity. This is the way Socrates understands arête and this is just true. Man is a type of being able to improve or degrade on its own terms, as a human being. Man is not a being already done, a being specified beforehand.

Man is specified as a man by his virtues and un-specifies himself, degrades, falls into a state of stoppage that is like a destruction of all internal order and all self-control, if he acts wrongly and becomes vicious. Man is a being capable of making things and making himself, his making has double output: an outer and an inner result. To believe that the importance of the action is what is produced, that is what the modern activism inclines us to think, but this entails the loss of the ontological value of virtue. It is one of the most important things to recover the true meaning of virtue. Human actions always have this double result: when a shoemaker acts, he produces shoes, but what happens to the shoemaker who makes the shoes? The shoemaker does not remain unchanged when he acts, the action flows back into him and makes him better, this is for certain. This is the Socratic finding whose loss destroys morality and makes it a matter of opinion or an obsession. Morals is not to be constrained, but gaining freedom progressively, to be *causa sibi*. Who is *causa sibi*? The one who has strengthened his capacities sufficiently, strength that is the feed-back of the action in the faculty.

Man is not a being with fixed faculties. Intelligence and will are the great faculties of the soul. These two faculties are not fixed powers and therefore are not nature, strictly speaking. The man is not only a natural being, a being who has operational principles and nothing else; no, he is a being who has operational principles that can grow by feed-back.

I explained this in a doctoral course in Pamplona as follows: I often say that there are two ways of understanding potency. The modern thinkers usually put potency before the act, and that is an infinity interpretation of potency: Man is an infinite dynamism. Hegel, for example, speaks of the infinite action and infinite action is the self. If the self is infinite action, then the self is the infinite potency. This was preceded by the flip over that Greek philosophy experienced by the Neoplatonism. Plotinus' first hypostases is like this. The classics on the contrary, and particularly Aristotle who is the one who matures notions more, admits that the act precedes and is superior to the potency. Then potency has to be finite because the act follows as substance. And this is nature; nature means finite power. Well, man has no nature because his potency is not finite, but does not have infinite potency as modern philosophy understands it. Man makes infinitude by acquiring virtues. Man is capable of unrestricted development and that is the infinity of its potential. Because of this he is not merely a natural being.

If we consider man before the exercise of his actions and, therefore before achieving virtues, man is not endowed with infinite potential and can be considered as a natural being, both at the level of the spirit and of the body. If man does not acquire virtues he is merely a natural being that has finite potencies. The reason why modern thinkers do not accept the notion of nature is because they do not accept the finitude of the potencies. I too do not accept the finitude of the potencies, but we must rectify the modern understanding of potency because the infinity of the potencies is something different, it is the growth of the same potency. The growth of the potencies is in the virtues, in the habits. Without the habits man is a purely natural being and therefore is not yet strictly human. This is why the poet Rilke can say that man is a being beyond the end, yes, because being subordinate to the end is characteristic of nature and to be beyond any end is characteristic of virtue. Characteristic of the potencies infinitude well interpreted, not as in the modern meaning, because an infinite action that does not improve the agent is a useless infinity. Modern thinkers considered the infinity of the potency in a wrong way. If they had been more Socratic, if they had not forgotten the notion of virtue they would not have fallen into that wrong direction. Now, those who settle for a finite power do not know what 'morals is'. The one who is satisfied with his natural being and reduces morals to nature, falls into the naturalistic fallacy which is not to know what morality is. It is not that morals disagree with nature, it is much more than that, it is that morality is the development of nature. But not just an extensive deployment in the same direction in the sense of pure exercise, no, it is the intensification of nature. Humans who have intensified their nature are good men, and from them we can learn morality. Aristotle says that morality is in them and it must be sought there.

I dare to think that Socrates, when he said this, said it under the action of the Holy Spirit. The action of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the people of Israel and later to the Catholic Church; the Holy Spirit blows where he wills. For how can a man say that it is better to be

killed than be a murderer? This means that the acts of man will inherently affect him; usually I say that man is a being that intrinsically rewards or punishes himself. St. Augustine also repeats: what is the punishment of a disordered mind? His own disorder. What is the punishment of one who has done wrong? That he becomes bad, or as an old Castilian saying expresses: God punishes without pain or stick. A cluttered mind, a soul torn by his actions; that is the punishment.

Plato retakes the matter up to higher levels, he says that it is clear and that from this comes the feeling of guilt. Notice that the whole sense of responsibility for the acts is here: what does it mean to be responsible for an action? That the act is attributed to you. From the point of view of the judge, there is an external judgement that attributes the act, but there is an internal trial, a trial in an ontological sense: one judges oneself, one punishes himself for becoming evil. Evil is not a vague term, evil is to become less, to deprive oneself of being. Thomas Aquinas says that the condemned is *proper nihil*, is as close to nothing as possible; one is not annihilated, but one is as if annihilated. Is he a condemned man? It was a man, but does he remain as one? He does not, he is the remaining ashes of a man, an ember without fire. That's worse than the Hades. What can a condemned person do? Nothing, he cannot even speak, says Thomas Aquinas. Those condemned can speak only of themselves, they are not interested in anything else, they are entangled in an inner tragedy, and dialogue in hell is pure rumour, no dialogue. Nobody exchanges ideas, nobody cares for others, there everyone takes care of each himself; they have killed language.

This is a development that can be made based on Socrates and include it in the Christian vision of life. I say that Socrates hits the nail on the head and that it is right to think this is not easy for the fallen human being to get it right. The fallen human being normally thinks that it is better to hit than to be hit, because the worst is to receive the blow. But Socrates says that the worst is to give the blow. Evil affects firstly and more intensely than anyone to the one who gives the blow. This is revolutionary and in our culture, which is in a deep moral crisis, that has lost this meaning, this revolution is still to be done. Our culture has a more or less obscured conscience, but the worst moral crisis is to lose the sense of virtue. We do not know what virtue is; instead we want external goods at any price. We do not know what happens to us when we acquire external goods; nor do we care to know. Therefore, we lack self-control and we are building a disorganized society; we have lost the meaning of society, we are in a very deep crisis.

Without knowing it, there are people who acquire virtues and are progressing. Thanks to that, society has not collapsed. We leave aside now the Catholic Church or Revelation which is the second source of morality that considers the same topics but in a more serious angle, or more intensely seen, that is, that man puts in line his life as regards to God. That is, if it does good he is more like God, he is making his image and likeness and if not, he becomes a lie and is risking the judgment of God: I know you not. How can God say that he does not know

the man whom he has created in his image and likeness? Only if you have deleted that image. Come to me, blessed of my Father: this is image of recognition. Come unto me, you are like me and you have increased your likeness. Increasing similarity is to be virtuous and to be virtuous is to increase the similarity. Now we take another key of what Socrates said, when speaking of a soul that looked at itself, the soul that can survive being active or the one in the situation of Hades. Man is immortal, but how is he immortal? St. Augustine also asks this question; you know that you are immortal; would this suffice? Well, not so, because immortality has two meanings. [Augustine indicates that the immorality of the bleesed is the true immortality; that of the condemned is a different type of inmortality that is not fit for men]

Well, the island of the blessed, which is the Platonic heaven, is a very, very small heaven where the souls just contemplate ideas. Some people say that the Christian vision is platonic. No, being the image and likeness of God is something more serious, it is to increase the similarity. To be more like God to the point of putting on Christ to be *ipse Christus* [the same Christ], that's the key. Aristotle spoke of the good man, but we say that the one who reveals man is Jesus Christ.

First Session Answers; the questions were not recorded.

Human power cannot be saturated. God is not, cannot be, opposed to ‘nothingness’; he creates what he wants. That is an unfortunate fixity. We speak of divine nature because we adopt a terminology to understand ourselves, but God has no nature because he is not a substance. To say that God is substance is blasphemy, this is what Saint Augustine says. God is the absolute intimacy; he is the original, the absolute increasing. To say that, that is a thing, a substance with nature...

Metaphysics, says that God is either absolutely original and that he is no substance in any way, or is a fiasco. How is God going to be an operating principle? There is nothing in God that originally was not in him? In God there is no deployment whatsoever. In God we cannot speak of distinction between essence and esse says Thomas Aquinas, but to the point of its ultimate conclusion that there is no divine essence; of God we can only speak of esse. The essence has absolutely nothing to do with the personal Trinity.

Second Session

Let's have a look at Genesis, where there is something that can be put in parallel with the Socratic approach. There it says that man is made to dominate the earth and this is in a context in which the world is good (God saw that it was good), but when God created man he saw it was very good. So one can say that the relationship man has with the universe is to the active; strictly active: the relationship of the very

good with the good. But that relationship is obviously the improvement of the good by the very good. Saint Augustine alludes to this when he says that God has reserved to man the work of beautifying the universe.

The man is not the creator of the universe, but the universe has been made so that it is not incompatible with man. The man would be incompatible with the universe if he had nothing to do with it. It would have been inconsistent and would have no relationship with him. The theory of evolution that can be taken as correct. Another thing is how it is understood or described, but man is in a very close relationship with the universe, because of his origin in the universe; he is made of clay. However, this does not make man an intra-cosmic being, but he is the ruler of the universe in the sense that his relationship with the world is predominantly active. Therefore, man is called —as his vocation merges with his being, because one cannot say that someone is called to something extrinsic— to have a place in the cosmos and that it is obvious that the cosmos is his home. That makes it the perfecter of the universe.

This idea can be seen as problematic today because some may think that the action of man over things is not perfecting, but disturbing them. This is proven by the ecological problem. But the emergence of the ecological problem, which is undeniable and also its ethical characterization, makes us see to what extent there has been a disturbance. It makes no sense to think that God has created man and the universe in a conflicting relationship. If the conflict happens, it is because man has not been true, because man has betrayed his relationship with the universe. This must have taken place at the very beginning of history. The emergence of the phenomenon of the ecological problem is displayed: Adam was already told that his relationship with the land will be difficult, that they will have to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, that there will be thorns that the world will not be in a completely harmonious relationship. Here we already have the ecological problem. Man has to do some violence to things. Also Paul says: creatures suffer vanity. And this vanity is because they are waiting for the manifestation of the glory of the children of God. This is because man has failed, has distorted, what he had to do. Men's mission in the universe has been broken in some way.

That does not mean that man is completely spoiled, that man has a corrupt nature, as Luther says. Man's relationship with things is productive, is inventive, and as it is also said creative. Man is God's collaborator and what is radical of his personal being is not to separate from God. Man is done in this way and is provided with powers and capacities, which in the same measure that have not been corrupted, are beautifying work even if there are some failures. Man cannot renounce work. One cannot say that if I work I am spoiling the world.

Nevertheless it is clear that man is ontologically made to perfect the universe. Man's place in the cosmos is to add reality to the cosmos,

add something that the cosmos cannot give itself. That mediating character is constitutive of their being created, this is what specifies man. This is expressed in a simple formula: man is perfectible perfecter. That perfectibility refers to virtue: man when perfecting, perfects himself and cannot continue perfecting more if he does not perfect himself more. This is the dynamics of virtue. So we have to see it in this way: first of all, that man is placed in the universe, but not as a being who follows the rhythms of the universe or a being that has nothing to do with the universe. No, first of all man is a doer, he is a perfecter by his activity.

Here is the subject of the action and as I already said it is the basic theme of ethics because through it ethics begins, virtues are acquired by acting and through action one acquires goods. I think that this is not sufficiently clear in the classical interpretation. The idea that the man tends to the good with his will is not enough; man with his will does good, perfects. This, on the other hand, makes a distinction that Thomas Aquinas suggests when he says that good in a proper sense is ethical good, the goodness of the action. One can speak of the good transcendentally, but goodness is in the action. And that action, if it is good is perfective, has a result... thus is productive, it is not sterile. Producing is more than what the universe can do. The physical universe cannot produce, it can cause, has an influence, its own effectiveness; one can even speak of the natural history of the universe, but the appearance of man in the universe introduces an innovation over the universe that rebounds in the universe. This has probably to do with the new heaven and the new earth. We probably are missing something, no matter how hard we try. The doctrine of progress shows awareness of the value of human action, and I do not renounce to this because in the modern conception, although not well oriented, there is an increasing awareness of the value of the human action. Modernity, in fact, appears with the Newtonian mechanics that is an interpretation of the universe that says that man can influence it; it is a technical interpretation of the universe.

Newton did not manage to construct a cosmology; his theoretical study of the universe is classical, modern physics is rational mechanics and in the preface to the *Principia*, Newton says: we need to understand the universe in this way because what the *vetere*, the old, called mechanical was an art, now one has to apply this to all the universe. Behind this deep desire to produce is one of the things we have inherited from the modern age. This productive way leads to perverse effects today, not to perfect the world, but to spoil it. The attitude of postmodernism is reluctant to human action, criticism of the technical. But the technical today covers everything. Medicine, for example, is also production; biology: genetic engineering. Everything is interpretation of the universe as something that man can already handle and to which he can add something. And the knowledge of the universe, technique, has a practical meaning.

Perhaps there are some neglects in stressing this aspect. To consider man as productive asserts that man is perfecter, but there's a lack

of care that environmentalists point out. I do not share the environmental stance; I think it points out an abuse, but it is not a solution. The point is not to reduce the activity of beautifying, but to give more emphasis to it and eliminate what spoils the world, but not declare that man is by nature a spoiler. That is false anthropology. No, man is not made to spoil, but to improve.

The relationship with the universe can be applied also to the relationship between man and man, relationship that is also perfectible. Here we discover another dimension of human action. Aristotle, when he comes to this, distinguishes two types that he calls dominion, not technique. The despotic rule is a relationship between man and the universe in which the universe is passive; that is how the man is a craftsman or a technician and this is the first dimension: the dimension of the arts. But then there is the political dominion that is characterized as being established between beings, that all of them are active and this is the appearance of collaboration. This is a structure for action that is sometimes forgotten and political action is also forgotten. Political action has nothing to do with the current idea we have of politics; for Aristotle it is the action that is established among humans.

The structure of the relationship between two human beings has double entry: there is a double input and output in each of the subjects. Furthermore each input and output are correlative but different since action between men is inter-action. This has a number of implicits that would be difficult to expand now. This is well developed by Pérez López, but it is basically Aristotle's political action. So, man is always 'perfectible perfecter' to the universe and 'perfectible perfecter' in the relationships with other men. And when it comes to other men the character of 'perfectible perfecter' is more intense, more engaging. The extent to which a man can improve or damage another is much greater than the technical application of man to things. The domain of politics is higher than the domain of the despotic.

However, environmentalists refer to an abuse of despotic action: we are spoiling the universe in biblical terms, we are located in the universe incorrectly and we extend it, we do not stop it nor correct it. Aristotle says that the characteristic of these practices is that they are actions that *can* be corrected. The issue of correcting the practical reason is essential in the philosophy of Aristotle, and Aristotle himself admits that we always make mistakes. However, in the origin it was not, in the beginning it was not so. That is, as the *Bible* shows us, the first man exerted an action that is not correctable and when we wanted to correct it we made a great mess. The correction of human action from Adam and Eve tempted by the serpent; that is the original sin. Why was Adam's action strictly correct? Why by practical reason Adam was not correctable? Because it had to do with good and do more good; It had to do with good and improving. The first action described in the *Bible* was to name things. Naming things was something I could do; things cannot name themselves. In short, the primary action, thanksgiving, is the language par excellence. Language is not theory, it is action. What political relationship existed between Adam

and Eve? The *Bible* gives us no other reason than that they talked. Talking is adding, is perfecting. Talking is the most perfective of all human actions. Therefore, from the point of view of the action the worst thing that can happen is the corruption of language. Wrong language about things tears things apart; people using language wrongly destroys society. We should take utmost care with language. The main concern is to take care of man's language. There are banned expressions; you cannot call your brother a rat. You should not shock and scandal, which is linguistic. Impoverishment of language is the decay of a society. Deceit, abuse of language, is strictly prohibited. These standards are in the Decalogue, to lie is inherently wrong. To say foul brood is contrary to our own thinking; it is intrinsically bad and that is a standard for all, we should never lie. That affects our highest action: our highest mode of action is to speak.

To develop this would take many hours, we would have to see how man has altered language. The father of lies is the devil. The original temptation consisted of cheating, saying that God had not given to man the knowledge of good and evil. Because of this Thomas Aquinas says that original sin is a sin of science. What I am saying is a gloss on that thesis. A sin of science as a practical science is science, it has to do with the beautifying of the universe and has to do with the action and reaction among humans. The despotic action at the end is linguistic, it is a form of language; political action is strictly linguistic. The denial of information, the silence, is bad, is unethical. What is human is to talk. The short and larger silence; are not silence, who understands it in this way does not know what it is; those silences are for talking, not with others but to talk to God and to establish a linguistic relationship, without which one cannot work. But staying silent is anti-human. To remove linguistic communication is a moral fault of the first order, and a lie is an extension of silence, i.e. a vacuum of communication. The error is also unethical, a vice of intelligence, according to Thomas Aquinas; not only the will can sin, intelligence also has its errors, it is to dare to say what one does not know. Thinking is always stopping, rushing into thinking goes against thinking.

Morals are like this, they have an ontological foundation. You can have moral sense, but when it comes to understand the issue, one either comes down to the ontological foundation, or one does really understand it. The most radical thing man can do with his being is to admit that the knowledge of good and evil belongs to him, because the science of good and evil is the original sin. As I have already said, to determine the right and wrong is not for man. Imagine we have the knowledge of good and evil. What is evil? Whatever I declare. What is good? Whatever I declare. Man is not made for that. Unfortunately or fortunately, because we have been redeemed, we have unleashed evil and we have to deal with it, by trying to drown evil in an abundance of good. What does it mean to do good so that evil is drowned in an abundance of good? It means to do so much good as to banish evil. Catholics are committed, redeemed from the original sin which is the knowledge of good and evil that man robbed from God, but to the perfecter, perfecting should belong the science of the good and the

best, and nothing more than that. In no way corresponds to him the science of evil as an alternative; that is not human. Just as God does not give his glory to anyone, he did not give the knowledge of good and evil because man's place in the cosmos is to increase the good and in doing so man becomes better, he is increased in order to the good, he acquires virtues. And that is the only thing that legitimately belongs to man.

Thomas Aquinas says that original sin is the very essence of sin. What happens when the idea of evil appears after one has acquired the knowledge of good and evil? What comes first is a lie of believing that there is something evil; there is nothing evil because all that God has done is good. But as it is a sin of science, it entails that if there is something bad I have to sort it and I have to repair it alone; thus man becomes a mender. The primary vocation of man is not that of a mender, but when he runs into evil it needs to be fixed: this is the historical situation. But in the same measure as there is evil, that something is seen as bad, there are two very serious implicits of sin: the first is that one believes that God is clumsy, which is a blasphemy 'as big as a house'. God the creator is not a clumsy God. This is the essence of Gnosticism which is a line of thought that runs through all mankind and that, besides, is the essence of heresy; all heresy is gnostic. I thought that the only heretic who was not a gnostic was Luther until I read his commentary on Philippians 2:5-11, which is a gnostic interpretation. Redemption is the self-justification of God. That is Luther's thesis of the abasement and even the glorification of Christ; truly monstrous. But all gnosis contains is this idea: a savior God that comes to make up for the mistake of God the Creator. If God created a being that can be radically corrupted, whose nature is corrupt, God was wrong. So redemption is merely correcting the error on the part of God and man's justification is extrinsic because whoever is justified is God. Even in heaven man is still as sinner; God does not take away the sin, he just covers it.

This is a blasphemy as big a castle because it denies divine omniscience and the negation of Gods' omnipotence is in original sin. If there is evil, God has done wrong, he has done bad things. When the Bible says that God saw that it was good, evil does not appear anywhere. In this situation to admit that something is evil is an insult to God. But as science works, we have to remedy this evil and when man separates himself from God, he demands to act without collaboration. Man no longer works with God, but corrects God. This interpretation of God as a God who is mistaken runs throughout history. Nietzsche says this in a remarkable way: 'the great boldness of German idealism is to put evil in God'. But such courage is not only found in the German idealism; it appears throughout history, as Gnosticism. Gnosis is radically to establish that God is evil, or that evil comes from God.

No answers recorded for the 2nd session

Let's see, I think it is clear that the original sin is a pretty big sin, which contains all elements of sin, as Thomas Aquinas says; it is pride, lack of hope, the claim of autonomy, blasphemy, lying, doing what should not be done, and not accepting what needs to be done.

I believe that this view of original sin, apart from looking like the only one that has to do with the biblical vision of man as one that is made to work and accomplish the work of embellishment, has a number of historical corroborations; one of the most notable is the understanding of the structure of Gnosticism.

We can say now that this is the way evil is triggered. That original sin has efficacy because man, being a creature, is extremely active and acts in either way. God allows it (let us say man's sin is not as intense as the Angel's), but evil penetrates history and can spread and there is a struggle between good and evil. This implies that the moral order changes. Here we have an issue that never would have existed without the original sin, and that is the origin and deployment of a number incorrect attitudes that make legislation necessary; they have to be forbidden. The first prohibition is that man should not have the knowledge of good and evil. Once this was broken, a series of wrongful acts appeared. A provident God, A God who cares for humanity tells man what he cannot do. I think that this is the origin of what are called the negative norms, whose universal value has historically been emphasized. It is like this: you cannot kill, you cannot lie, you cannot fornicate, you cannot steal. But these are consecutive prohibitions, prohibitions on the situation *post peccatum* (after the original sin) when it is possible for man to commit such acts because it has been disorganized. Evil appears in many ways and all this has to be banned. Moreover, the original sin does not totally corrupt man, he realizes that there are evils. Here appears the issue of moral conscience, and this is the way man has lived in his state of *post peccatum* through history.

But beneath the moral conscience that captures the prohibited nature of such misconduct there is a more important thing and that is that man maintains his status as an active being and this is shown to him by a deeper source than conscience, which is synderesis. Synderesis is the human beings innate understanding of the first moral principles, not only of the negative rules. In the same way that if we disregard the moral virtues morality collapses, if we do not take into account synderesis the perception of morality would also be very limited. Here is a deeper understanding of the core of actions, of the value of actions as such, since man is a being made to act. Now comes the problem of how to formulate what is captured with synderesis: do good and avoid evil; that is the great moral principle. I would say "avoid evil", yes, but synderesis has more a character of an impulse that indicates more what is positive than what is negative: do good. Synderesis indicates that good should be done: do not settle! do not

get out of the way! do not be useless! Why? Because even though this situation of violated or incomplete status, of not having moral integrity, nevertheless, in spite of all this, what is paramount in man is still valid; it has not been erased; man has to do! man must act! I think this is the moral obligation, the moral duty.

The moral duty is not to avoid evil; that is already assumed; the moral duty is that one cannot inhibit himself. One can express it as follows: do not be afraid to take responsibility, you have to take command on issues to the possibilities you have; you cannot be coward, timid; you have to act. What is implicit in this that if one does good works, one improves. Do! You have no choice but to act because otherwise you cannot improve. I think the development of the *imago Dei* (image of God) is the indication that emerges from synderesis, of the understanding of the first moral principle.

This is how the problem of duty, of obligation, appears. Man is obliged. But obligation relates to action: You must find your vital project, your vocation in the deepest sense of the word, that kind of acts you are committed to do according to your upbringing, your skills, your fitness. This issue of duty has been formulated by the moral philosophers. One of the more drastic approaches is the Kantian formulation. Kant proposed that the will exudes a categorical imperative. That imperative is categorical in the sense that it obliges by itself and precisely that it obliges by itself means that it is not due to other reasons: the advantages, pleasures, conveniences or results. In short, the Kantian approach is anti-hedonist. I am required to never act below the level of my own will. As Kant puts it: what is holy in the world is a good will. This means that Kant exalts the will, which is above everything. Where it is subordinated to something somewhat lower, it will not be kept at its own level. Fichte, following the same approach puts it another way; I know who you are, do not allow yourself to be dominated by anything because if you let it dominate you, you have somehow been diminished. Anything that is not pure will, acting in response to sheer will, is degraded; it is a decline, since what is holy is a good will.

There is no doubt that Kant's formulation seems plausible, there is moral greatness on it. However, the approach is inadequate because firstly, it is fixed. To act in accordance with the law, not to particularize it by empirical interests, shows that the imperative has a static formulation. There is no progress. Actually the categorical imperative replaces virtue and, in fact, is not practical, because it does not say go, it is not the synderesis, but a replacement. Because synderesis does not say what you have to do but: 'you have to do'. Synderesis has the form of an impulse. Being true to yourself is not to maintain in the order of one's own will, it is not that, but that you have to give, that's synderesis. The categorical imperative seems to be practical but it is not because it is not an invitation to do. From the categorical imperative does not come out any impulse to do, but is rather what should be or how it should be, but it does not say by what types of acts? It's actually rather

an incentive not to act, because of this it eventually degenerates basically into a moral formalism, which is actually the history of Kantian morality as it has been understood. That itch for absolute purity which is equivalent to an uncontaminated will makes it impossible to take any action. Because if some action is exerted contamination seems inevitable. Rather it is there I do not know how to put it across; you should act in a way that you are completely pure. In this Socrates and Fenelon have been found, and this is acknowledged by Kant. The influence of Fenelon would be very revealing for the meaning of Kant's categorical imperative. Fenelon says that man must act out of pure love; this is the famous theme of pure love. To act of pure love is too much to ask, to start with. Can one act out of pure love? Perhaps after acquiring many virtues, but pure love, pure love, I would say no; there is something that you cannot remove from love and that is hope. An act of pure love, perhaps it may be, but to maintain moral life in terms of pure love does not seem possible, because that would end in the failure of doing nothing.

There is some stiffening in Kant. The categorical imperative is not a good interpretation of synderesis. Synderesis says go ahead, you have to do. From your acts you will be providing, increasing, because your performance, if it is not contravening the negative norms, will result in something good for others, and also an improvement of your own will. This means that the pure will is not the highest, not the holy. There is a theological error here. Saints believe that God is Holy and what God wants is most lovable, it is his will, because what is primordial holiness and human holiness should not aspire to be equivalent to God's holiness. Holiness is God himself, God is holy, thrice holy. That would take a long time to expose. The will of God is holy because God is the holy of holies. So talk of a pure and holy will who is the transcendental subject and that it will determine the duty, I think it is taking the wrong end of the stick. No, man has to improve.

Precisely because man can improve he can resemble God in holiness, but is a similar holiness, not the pure holiness of God that is unique. The moral from synderesis is seen as an incentive to improve and act: that is your destiny, you have to destine yourself to be holy, you have to realize that what is in you is a seed of holiness, and that is your ability to act because that capacity is to contribute. So instead of the categorical imperative, act, contribute! Then no longer is the will is taken as the centre but the person, because the person can be described as being that contributes, who expands reality. Something new will come if I decide to act. I do not have to take care obsessively of the holiness of my will, firstly because there is no such thing, and secondly, because if I worry of that, I do nothing.

Goodness is in the action because the action by itself contributes and is also the condition of an improvement, an acquisition of virtues. I think these are two different ways of understanding morals, without denying the Kantian grandeur. But the high demand Kant proposes is not possible, there is a mistake; he does not realize that man has to do more and has to want better. This second view, wanting better, I think,

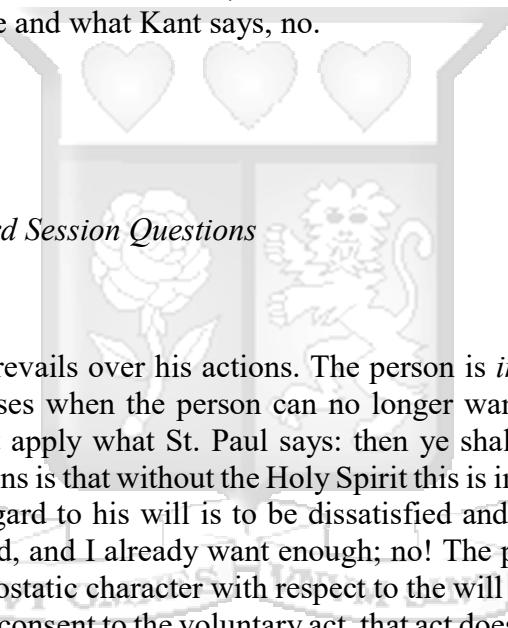
is a better deployment, and is implicit in this issue of acting. You should not only want the thing you want but you want to improve your want. This is in Thomas Aquinas in a short manner, but dominates his ethical approach: it is what he calls the curvature of the will. The curvature of the will can be described as follows: that the will is curve means that our wanting involves our subjectivity, in a partial manner, but yes, and this is an observation that has been discovered in modern times, that unlike what happens when one thinks, when the will wants, the 'I' has to support the will and if not, the want does not exist. There is a sentence of Nietzsche that is profitable; it is a riddle that is already seen in Thomas Aquinas' curvature of the will. Nietzsche said that I cannot despise if I did not accept myself as despiser. I can not perform the act of contempt if I do not accept myself as the one who despises. When one thinks, one does not have to accept oneself as a thinker because the person does not constitute the act of thinking. That will be nonsense, because the person does not constitute the act of thinking, this would be silly, it will be superfluously and uselessly transferring the real way of thinking, but that is characteristic of the will. The thought unfolds because it unfolds, because we have sufficient power. We do not have to make ourselves as the thinker or to accept ourselves as thinking to accept the thought, but we have to do it for wanting, because if not, the voluntary act cannot be exercised. The voluntary act drags, commits the human subject. Without that kind of recognition of the human subject in the voluntary act there is no voluntary act. This is more than the categorical imperative of Kant because it occurs in every voluntary act and not in the categorical imperative that is like a norm, not an act.

Let us remind ourselves what Socrates said: Whoever commits murder becomes a murderer. Nietzsche says: to despise one has to accept himself as the despiser, otherwise one actually does not despise. And I would have to say it all times; if I do not accept as the one who actually wants, I do not want. If I do not accept myself as the one who wants to eat, I do not eat, if I do not accept myself as the one who wants to kill, I do not kill. And that goes for all deeds, good and bad, and that means that the will is curved, that the 'I' is in the will, that is, the will is reflexive while the intelligence is not. But then there is a mismatch: if I accept myself as the one who wills, I do not accept myself completely, I realize that I am not my want, that the want is not the same as the 'I' who wants. The 'I' lends his assistance, but at the same time perceives that accepting himself in that particular wanting is not enough for him and that therefore the person aims to want more, to do more, which is also proper of synderesis.

In that improvement we realize how virtues arise, how this happens, because man cannot settle for any of his wants, viewed from the point of view of the reflexivity of the will. Man is dissatisfied with all his wants and therefore the issue of the holy will cannot be accepted, because the will can improve and have to improve because the wants involve the 'I', but they do not exhaust the 'I'. The imperative can be expressed like this: want better, want more; do not want more things

but want better, want more. I think this is the right approach. Therefore, in the intention of the voluntary act has two sides; what is wanted (loved), and the 'I' who by getting involved in what is wanted, is not totally satisfied. The will says, I have to want more; it's wanting to want. The voluntary act is not simply to want what one wanted, but wanting to want. But that wanting to want aspires to want more, to better want. Here we find what is primary in man: a knowledge of good and only of good. A knowledge of good and only good is the science that comes from synderesis: by engaging man in love; the superiority of the person with respect to any act of the will, is what that drives a person to look for a better voluntary act.

I think we have seen enough ethic's dimensions and that the ethics of virtues is coming from the person, from that personal connotation that is constitutive of the voluntary act, but that it does not exhaust it and that the person always requires a better love. Therefore, there is no an act of pure love, but something better, an act entirely generous: I am not satisfied with this, I want to want better. This has an ontological value and what Kant says, no.



Answers to 3rd Session Questions

The person prevails over his actions. The person is *imago Dei*, and satisfaction arises when the person can no longer want better. I think here we must apply what St. Paul says: then ye shall know as known. What happens is that without the Holy Spirit this is impossible. Man's fate with regard to his will is to be dissatisfied and who says I'm already satisfied, and I already want enough; no! The person imposes its non-homeostatic character with respect to the will because if the person does not consent to the voluntary act, that act does not exist. But for the person for whom the voluntary action is insufficient, unsatisfactory, because the voluntary act does not entirely express it, what the person does is to demand constantly more from his will. This is what can be discovered from synderesis and confront Kant.

The will reflects that the person is more than the intelligence, which does a poor job of this. When the limit is overcome is when the person appears to the intellect. Because of this overcoming the limit is much like a voluntary act, because it gets to the other, it no longer works by assimilation, but it has access to what is radical without an objective possession. I'm on the other by distinction, but when it is an act of love there is congregation, joining yourself to the other, realizing that this union with the other commits yourself but that it is not yet enough. There is a dimension of overcoming the limit that is the human essence. To remain at the human essence is just to remain in what is available. That is the fourth dimension of overcoming the mental limit. In it one captures what the will is, and that is the human essence.

This is the finding of insufficiency of the voluntary acts. Overcoming the limit has four dimensions; this is the last, the fourth. First one abandons the being that one is not, and then (2) overcomes the limit of the essence of the being that one is not, (3) then the limit of what one is not, and (4) then the limit of one's essence. When overcoming the limit of one's essence, the essence appears as pure independence of the person and that is the notion of arranging and the real distinction is that to want does not identify one in a way that wanting to want be one's exclusive fulfilling. That is the real distinction between the *essence-esse*.

Why is the human essence described as arranging? Because it depends on the transcendental freedom. What depends on the first principle is the causal analytics, which is the essence of what is extra-mental. What depends on freedom is what is available. Freedom arranges, but one should not confuse 'to arrange' with 'what is arrangeable'. I cannot arrange myself, I can want to increase my capacity of arranging but I cannot increase what is available to be arranged. What is available is the culture. Willing is not identical to the person.

In the beatific vision arranging will no longer be interesting. The will and intelligence depend on the person, so when the person exercises love of God, this is not proper of the will, which *a priori* means that it is the person; the radical nature of the will and not at its essential character. This love also rebounds to the essence, but it never happens in the will as distinct where the beatific vision takes place but in its personal root. This is because both the intelligence and the will are primarily in the person. Therefore, in the person both are indistinguishable. One can talk about personal transcendentals and that will rebound in the essence, but that is not the fulfilling of the person; the person is fulfilled by God, the person is fulfilled by his co-existence with God; but not in identity.

Duty is compatible with happiness as happiness is the possession of goodness, which Kant does not take into account even if he postulates it. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* there is a oscillation when speaking of the will as *ratio-essendi* (reason to be) of the categorical imperative and when he says that it begets merit and that it will be rewarded. Then what is eudemonic must be eliminated because it is of low standing, but that begets merit and if merit is engender this will lead to eternal happiness, and therefore God must exist. That's the postulate. But if begets merit this means that he is not the highest, God is higher because he is the one who rewards merit. If happiness is in God then it begets merit. There is a final happiness got on the merit of maintaining a will, but this is a postulate, that there is happiness that has to correspond with that; and that happiness does not reside on the imperative. Man cannot be happy, but God can make him happy, and that has to be postulated. There is non-representative character in this approach.

I have to want to increase the amount of good and for that I have to increase my love. The big problem is that, one does not know what happiness is. Happiness is the vaguest notion that exists and why Thomas Aquinas says that if we identify happiness to *frui* (fruition) then all kind of errors come along, when man places happiness in inferior goods. A man can enjoy food and believe that is happiness, but that according to the curvature of the will he will remain as an eater. So I say that what we have here is within one's control because when I want to enjoy eating I realize that does not satisfy my 'I'. To bring good to one's being is necessary to take the willing to the highest level through the curvature of will. In the event that 'good' be an absolute transcendental, although I think it is not then 'good' is reduced to what is nice and that someone is nice; the good is then reduced to love which is a personalist understanding of good. The tendency towards happiness leads the will to act and this is fruition, but the will cannot determine whether that act is good or evil. So we can speak of *voluntas ut natura* and if it were not for the person, that cannot be straightened and understand that, with fruition alone, one does not want enough. The *voluntas ut natura* does not have a culminating act. A culminating act regarding God cannot be known and this is why *desiderium naturale videndum Dei* is not proof of the existence of God. The person cannot fill this desire, but knows that there is un-satisfaction. But in order to talk about this, we should have explained that one cannot tell which is the act of the will that has to do with the supreme act; we have no knowledge about which is the act that fills the will. You can say what it is the act that set the will to rest, but then you have to understand the will as *orexis*. That is also what Thomas Aquinas attempts to prove when he says that the good that leads to happiness is an unfailing good. Nevertheless we need also another thing, and that is that the firmness of the good is corresponded with the firmness of adherence to the good. This adherence can only be achieved with virtue because, if not, the will is fickle. It is not enough the indefectibility of the good but also that one's commitment is firm.

The *semina virtutum intellectualis* is the agent intellect and here in the will has to be something similar. The starting point is synderesis. Love, as a transcendental, is to go out to the other. The other is already brought in by the intelligence and due to the initiative of the other. It could happen otherwise, this is the Holy Spirit, which is the mediator. The one who pushes to go to the other is the Spirit, who is the Comforter, because he is the mediator, because he is the gift, the third dimension of the gift; giving is the first, the second is to accept, and the personal gift that has a mission which is the improvement. As the Spirit is unitive, he says do not separate, do not keep yourself in separation. But one has to think this over much longer. Another person is the only thing that eliminates loneliness, the monadic character of the person would be pure misery.

APPENDIX 2

Ética socrática y moral cristiana

Conferencia

Sevilla, Julio 1994

Primera session

Para saber lo que es la moral quizás lo mejor sea ir a los grandes genios que se han ocupado y han tenido un fuerte sentido moral, porque como advierte Aristóteles, la moral no se aprende en los libros, sino en los hombres buenos. Se aprende en los hombres buenos porque la realidad moral es el hombre bueno y la realidad se conoce ahí donde está. Los libros no son morales ni inmorales ni nada, son unos trozos de papel donde hay expresión de algunas experiencias y por empatía o comprensión lo puede uno asimilar. Pero el bloque, la realidad en bloque de la moral, está en el ser humano.

Si es así, lo mejor es acudir a los puntos centrales, a los grandes descubridores que alguno de ellos lo ha vivido hasta la muerte. Me referiré en primer lugar a Sócrates. Sócrates, según narra Platón en un gran diálogo, plantea la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué es peor: sufrir un acto injusto, ser apaleado por ejemplo sin motivos, o cometer el acto injusto? Según sea la respuesta que se dé a esta pregunta se capta la respuesta de la moral o no se capta. Si se entiende, y parece que el sentido común nos inclina a ello, que lo que peor le puede ocurrir a alguien es ser matado por otro o apaleado por otro y que el que apalea no le pasa nada, le pasa menos, tiene que ejercer un esfuerzo físico a base de pegar latigazos, pues si aceptamos eso no podemos entrar en la temática moral porque la moral se basa en la respuesta contraria. La peor consecuencia de un acto injusto es la que afecta al que lo comete. El argumento que da Sócrates es profundamente ontológico: el que sufre un acto injusto es sometido extrínsecamente a las consecuencias del acto, pero en cambio, quien ejerce el acto injusto ese es actor del acto y al hacerlo le constituye de manera que él mismo se hace injusto.

El lenguaje lo dice claramente: en un asesinato hay un asesinado y un asesino, ¿qué es peor, ser asesinado o ser asesino? ¿qué afecta más al ser humano en sentido defectivo, cometer el asesinato o ser víctima del asesinato? La respuesta ética es justamente cometerlo. Y lo mismo pasa con los actos buenos. Aquí se mostró una cierta extrañeza al hablar de la virtud. Ser asesino es adquirir un vicio; ejercer un acto bueno es adquirir una virtud. Es imposible que un hombre ejerza un acto bueno sin que en su misma índole de hombre adquiera un carácter intrínseco y ese carácter intrínseco es una virtud y es que el acto es bueno.

Por eso Aristóteles parte de aquí: ¿dónde está la moral? En el hombre virtuoso. ¿Dónde está la realidad inmoral? En el hombre vicioso. Aristóteles lo lleva a sus últimas consecuencias y dice que el hombre vicioso es el que no se puede controlar a sí mismo, el acrásico, el incontinente. Incontinente, el que es de tal manera víctima de sus propios actos que ya no los puede controlar y en esa medida pierde su libertad, pues para la gran tradición hasta Tomás de Aquino, la libertad es ser capaz de controlar la propia conducta, es ser *causa sibi*. A veces esto se lleva al plano psicológico de la elección, etc., pero la libertad ante todo es el autodominio. Es dueño de sí el que tiene virtudes y no es dueño de sí el que no las tiene por una razón sencilla, porque tiene vicios. Y eso es impecable. La alternativa no es electiva, es ontológica, afecta al ser mismo del hombre: uno se hace bueno o se hace malo. ¿Cómo se hace bueno o se hace malo? A través de sus actos; así lo ven los clásicos. Por eso es importantísimo puesto que el origen de la moralidad está en los actos y como los actos se determinan por los objetos, pues hay que estudiar el objeto moral.

El objeto moral es lo que le interesa a Juan Pablo II en la *Veritatis Splendor*. Pero eso no es más que el principio del asunto, luego bueno, la construcción ontológica de lo moral que es el hombre bueno o el hombre disminuido: el hombre creciente que aumenta en sus posibilidades, el hombre que es capaz de autocontrol, de libertad, o el hombre que entra en pérdida. Eso se origina en los actos, ahí está su punto de partida, pero no se consuma en los actos sino en el ser que los ejerce. Por eso, una moral sin virtudes no es una moral socrática. Sócrates replantea el tema de la virtud, de la areté. La areté tal como aparece en la época griega preclásica como uno de sus grandes constituyentes. La areté es el afán que tiene el hombre de inmortalidad, que tiene el hombre, ser efímero, de perdurar en la memoria de la posteridad. En definitiva la areté se reduce a la fama. ¿Quién tiene areté? El que no es olvidado.

Si intensificamos, aunque ese sentido de la virtud se puede mantener, recoger, dentro del planteamiento filosófico del asunto, nos encontramos con que la areté hay que interiorizarla, que la areté no es simplemente el hacer hechos gloriosos que aseguren que uno cuando se muera su memoria sea viva. Safo, que era una gran mujer, dice en unos versos espléndidos: muerta será eternamente sepultada, ninguna memoria quedará de mí y la posteridad ignorará mi nombre. Ese es el drama humano: el ser olvidado, el ser reducido a un ser que nace y muere y sanseacabó. Se puede nacer, se puede morir, pero puede pervivir. Como sigue diciendo Safo: vagaré sin sombra en la mansión de Hades. Vagar sin sombra quiere decir ser incapaz de ejercer ninguna acción, es una pervivencia inactiva que para el griego es una suma desgracia. Los muertos llevan una vida fantasmal, una vida incapaz. El muerto tiene manos, pero no pueden hacer absolutamente nada, aunque eso no quiere decir que no sobrevivan. Por otra parte, para pasar al Hades hay que atravesar el río Eteo, el río del olvido (el eter es el olvido). El muerto está en una situación trágica, en la situación la de la impotencia absoluta, del que no puede hacer nada.

Bien, pues una manera de mantenerse es ser inspirador de los que vienen después, eso es la areté. Ya digo que esta es una primaria captación del tema de la virtud que Sócrates intensifica hasta el extremo por donde se puede llegar en esta dirección: tener virtud es acrecentarse como viviente, lo cual sugiere que ese crecimiento como viviente le libra a uno del Hades. El sentido de la inmortalidad que tiene Sócrates ya es el de un alma activa y ese sentido de la inmortalidad de alma activa es el que Platón recoge. La teoría del alma de Platón está inspirada en el planteamiento socrático.

Ser mejor no es una denominación extrínseca, ser mejor es un fortalecimiento de la condición humana que le libra a uno de ese carácter devorador del tiempo, de ese carácter efímero de un ser que no puede, como decía Alcmeón de Crotona que la diferencia entre los dioses y los hombres es que los dioses pueden unir el principio con el fin; en cambio el hombre no puede unir el nacimiento con la muerte. El hombre es un ser que transcurre y acaba. El librarse de eso, constituir uno mismo una densidad que atraviese la muerte y que asegure una actividad postmortem es la areté como la intelige Sócrates porque esto es verdad simpliciter. El hombre es un ser capaz de perfeccionarse o de degradarse en sus propios términos, como ser humano. El hombre no es un ser enteramente hecho, un ser especificado.

El hombre se especifica como hombre por sus virtudes y se desespecifica, se degrada, cae en una situación de continencia que es como una destrucción de todo orden interior y de toda capacidad de autocontrol, si actúa mal y se hace vicioso. El hombre es un ser capaz de hacer y de hacerse, tiene esa doble entrada: un resultado exterior y uno interior. Creer que lo importante de la acción es lo que se produce, eso, que es a lo que el activismo moderno nos inclina, lleva consigo la pérdida del valor ontológico de la virtud. Es una de las cosas más importantes recuperar ese sentido. La acción humana tiene siempre ese doble resultado: cuando un zapatero actúa produce zapatos, pero ¿qué le pasa al zapatero cuando hace zapatos? El zapatero no queda invariado cuando actúa, la acción refluye en él y eso le hace mejor impecablemente. Esto es la averiguación socrática cuya pérdida deshace la moral y la transforma en una cuestión opinable u obsesiva. La moral no es estar constreñido, sino ir adquiriendo la libertad, ser *causa sibi*. ¿Quién es *causa sibi*? El que tiene sus capacidades suficientemente fortalecidas y ese fortalecimiento es el feed-back de la acción en la facultad.

El hombre no es un ser de facultades fijas. La inteligencia y la voluntad, las grandes facultades del alma, esas dos facultades no son dotaciones fijas y por eso no son naturaleza en sentido estricto. El hombre no es sólo un ser natural, un ser que tiene unos principios operativos y nada más, no, es un ser que tiene unos principios operativos realimentables.

Esto lo plantea en un curso de doctorado en Pamplona de la siguiente manera: suelo decir que ha dos interpretaciones de la potencia. Los modernos suelen poner la potencia antes que el acto, y esa es una

interpretación infinitista de la potencia: el hombre es un dinamismo infinito. Hegel, por ejemplo, habla de la acción infinita y la acción infinita es el yo. Si el yo es la acción infinita, el yo es la potencia infinita. Eso está antecedido en un vuelco que sufre la filosofía griega en el neoplatonismo; la primera hipóstasis de Plotino es así. En cambio, los clásicos, en concreto Aristóteles, que es el que madura más las nociones, admite que, siendo el acto anterior a la potencia y superior a ella, la potencia tiene que ser finita porque el acto le sucede como sustancia. Eso es la naturaleza; naturaleza significa potencia finita. Pues bien, el hombre no tiene naturaleza porque no tiene potencia finita y no la tiene porque infinitiza su potencia, pero no según la acción infinita en sentido moderno, sino que la infinitiza en la manera de adquirir virtudes. El hombre es capaz de un perfeccionamiento irrestricto y eso es la infinitud de su potencialidad. Por eso no es un ser natural.

Considerado antes del ejercicio de sus acciones y, por tanto, antes la consecución de las virtudes no está dotado de infinitud potencial y se le puede considerar como un ser natural tanto en el orden del espíritu como del cuerpo. Si el hombre no adquiere virtudes no es más que un ser natural porque es de potencia finita. Por eso los modernos no aceptan la noción de naturaleza porque no aceptan la finitud de la potencia. Yo tampoco acepto la finitud de la potencia, pero hay que rectificar a los modernos porque infinitud de la potencia significa otra cosa, significa el crecimiento de la potencia misma. Pero el crecimiento de la potencia está en la virtud, en los hábitos. Sin los hábitos el hombre es un ser puramente natural y por lo tanto no es todavía humano en sentido estricto. Por eso el hombre es un ser que está más allá del fin, como dice Rilke, sí, porque estar subordinado al fin es lo característico de la naturaleza y estar más allá de todo fin es lo característico de la virtud, de la potencia infinita bien interpretada, no en el sentido moderno, porque una acción infinita que no mejora al que actúa es una infinitud inútil. Los modernos han buscado la infinitud de la potencia por un camino equivocado. Si hubiesen sido más socráticos, si no se hubiesen olvidado de la noción de virtud no habrían caído en esa desviación del planteamiento. Ahora bien, quien se conforme con una potencia finita no sabe qué es la moral. El que se conforme con su ser natural y reduzca la moral a la naturaleza, cae en la falacia naturalista que es el desconocimiento de la moral. No es que la moral no esté de acuerdo con la naturaleza, es mucho más, es que la moral es el desarrollo de la naturaleza. Pero no el despliegue en un sentido extensivo o en un sentido de puro ejercicio, no, es la intensificación de la naturaleza. Los seres humanos que tienen intensificada su naturaleza son los hombres buenos y en ellos se puede aprender la moral. Aristóteles dice que la moral se encuentra en ellos y ahí hay que buscarla.

Creo que, me atrevo a pensar lo que Sócrates cuando dijo esto lo dijo bajo la acción del Espíritu Santo. La acción del Espíritu Santo no se limita al pueblo de Israel o después a la Iglesia católica, el Espíritu Santo sopla donde quiere. Porque ¿cómo un hombre puede acertar a decir esto, que es preferible ser asesinado que ser asesino? Es decir que los actos del ser humano le afectan intrínsecamente a él; suelo decir que el hombre es un ser que se premia o se castiga intrínsecamente

a sí mismo. También San Agustín lo repite: ¿cuál es el castigo de un ánimo desordenado? Su desorden. ¿Cuál es el castigo del que ha cometido el mal? Que se hace malo o como decía un viejo refrán castellano: Dios castiga sin pena ni palo. Un ánimo desordenado, un alma destrozada por sus actos, eso es el castigo.

Platón retoma el asunto hasta puntos enormes, dice que, claro y aquí surge el sentido de culpa. Fijaos que todo el sentido de la responsabilidad de los actos está aquí: ¿qué quiere decir ser responsable de un acto? Que el acto se le achaca a uno. Desde el punto de vista del juez, hay un juicio externo que le imputa el acto, pero hay un juicio interno, un juicio en sentido ontológico: uno es juez de sí mismo, uno se castiga a sí mismo haciéndose malo. Malo no es una denominación vaga, malo es ser menos, desrealizarse. Tomás de Aquino dice que el condenado es *proper nihil*, está lo más cerca de la nada posible; no está aniquilado, pero es como si estuviese aniquilado. ¿Es un hombre un condenado? Ha sido un hombre, pero ¿lo sigue siendo? ¿no es una ceniza de hombre, un carbón ya no encendido? Eso es peor que el Hades. ¿Qué puede hacer un condenado? Nada, no puede ni hablar, dice Tomás de Aquino, los condenados no pueden hablar más que de sí mismos, no se interesan por nada, están sumidos en la tragedia interior y el diálogo en el infierno es puro rumor, no hay diálogo. Nadie intercambia ideas, nadie se interesa por los demás, ahí cada uno se ocupa de sí, han matado el lenguaje.

Este es un desarrollo que se puede hacer a partir de Sócrates metiéndolo en la visión cristiana de la vida. Ya digo que Sócrates acierta de un modo tajante y creo que acertar a decir esto no es propio del ser humano estropeado. El ser humano estropeado suele pensar que mejor le pegan el estacazo a otro, porque lo peor de un estacazo es que se lo peguen a uno. Pero Sócrates advierte que lo peor del estacazo es pegarlo. El mal afecta antes que a nada y más intensamente que a nadie es a quien pega el estacazo. Esto es revolucionario y en nuestra cultura que ha perdido esto, que está en una profunda crisis moral, esta es una revolución pendiente. Nuestra cultura tendrá la conciencia más o menos oscurecido, pero perder el sentido de la virtud es la crisis moral más gorda que cabe. No sabemos qué es la virtud y queremos bienes exteriores a costa de lo que sea. No sabemos qué nos ha pasado al adquirir bienes exteriores ni nos interesa, no lo tenemos en cuenta. Por tanto, carecemos de autocontrol y estamos construyendo una sociedad desorganizada, hemos perdido el sentido social, estamos en una situación de fortísima crisis.

Gracias a que aun sin saberlo hay gente que adquiere virtudes y va progresando; gracias a eso, la sociedad no se ha hundido. Prescindimos ahora de la Iglesia católica o de la revelación que es la segunda fuente de moral que considera lo mismo pero de una forma más seriamente vista, o más intensamente visto, es decir, que el hombre con sus acciones se juega su vida respecto de Dios. Es decir, si se hace mejor se parece más a Dios, se está jugando su imagen y semejanza y si no, se convierte en mentira y se está jugando el juicio de Dios: no os conozco. ¿Cómo puede decir Dios que no conoce al hombre al que ha

creado a su imagen y semejanza? Solamente si ha borrado su imagen y semejanza. Venid a mí benditos de mi Padre: el reconocimiento de la imagen. Venid a mí porque sois semejantes y habéis aumentado vuestra semejanza. Aumentar la semejanza es ser virtuoso y ser virtuoso es aumentar la semejanza. Ahora cogemos en otra clave lo que decía Sócrates, que hablaba del alma más bien referida a sí misma, el alma pudiendo sobrevivir activamente o en una situación de Hades. El hombre es inmortal, pero ¿cómo es inmortal? Esta pregunta que también hace San Agustín: sabes que eres inmortal ¿y eso te basta? Pues no te basta porque la inmortalidad tiene dos sentidos.

Bueno, la isla de los bienaventurados, que es el cielo platónico, es un cielo muy pequeño: son las almas que contemplan las ideas. Hay gente que dice que la visión cristiana es platónica. No, ser imagen y semejanza de Dios es algo más serio, es aumentar esa semejanza. Parecerse más a Dios hasta el punto de revestirse de Cristo de ser *ipse Cristus*, ahí está la clave. Aristóteles hablaba del hombre bueno, pero nosotros decimos que quien revela al hombre es Jesucristo.

Preguntas de la primera sesión

La potencia humana no es saturable. Dios no se diferencia de nada, crea lo que le da la gana. Eso es un fijismo lamentable. Hablamos de naturaleza divina porque adoptamos una terminología para entenderlos, pero Dios no tiene naturaleza porque no es sustancia. Decir que Dios es sustancia es una blasfemia, eso lo dice San Agustín. Dios es la intimidad absoluta, es el incremento absoluto originario. Decir que eso es una cosa, una sustancia con naturaleza.

La metafísica, o dice que Dios es absolutamente originario y no es sustancia de ningún modo, o es un churro. ¿Cómo Dios va a ser un principio operativo? ¿qué tiene que hacer Dios que originariamente no lo sea? En Dios no hay despliegue ninguno. En Dios no se puede hablar de distinción esencia esse y lo dice Tomás de Aquino, pero hasta el punto que llevado a sus últimas consecuencias no hay esencia divina; en Dios sólo se puede hablar de *esse*. La esencia no tiene absolutamente nada que ver con la trinidad personal.

Segunda session

Vamos a ver si nos fijamos en el *Génesis*, ahí hay algo que puede ponerse en paralelo con el planteamiento socrático. Se dice que el hombre está hecho para dominar la tierra y eso está dentro de un contexto en el que el mundo es bueno (vio Dios que era bueno), pero cuando creó al hombre vio Dios que era muy bueno. De manera que habría que decir que esa relación que el hombre guarda con el universo es activa, estrictamente activa: es la relación de lo muy bueno con lo

bueno. Pero esa relación es obviamente el mejoramiento de lo bueno por lo muy bueno. A esto alude San Agustín cuando dice que Dios ha reservado al hombre la obra de ornato del universo.

El hombre no es el creador del universo, pero el universo ha sido hecho de tal manera que el universo no sea incompatible con él. El hombre sería incompatible con el universo si no tuviera nada que hacer con él. Sería incompatible o no tendría ninguna relación con él. La teoría de la evolución que se puede tomar como acertada, otra cosa es como se conciba o describa, pero el hombre está en una relación muy estrecha porque parte de su procedencia es del universo, está hecho de la arcilla. Sin embargo, eso no lo hace un ser intracósmico, sino que es el dominador del universo en el sentido de que su relación con él es predominantemente activa. Por tanto, el hombre está llamado a, en cuanto que su vocación se confunde con su ser, no se puede decir que alguien es llamado a algo extrínseco. Que el hombre tiene un puesto en el cosmos es obvio y el cosmos es su casa. Eso le hace perfeccionador del universo.

Esta idea puede hacerse problemática hoy porque se puede pensar que la acción del hombre sobre las cosas no es perfeccionadora, sino perturbadora. Está el problema ecológico para demostrarlo. Pero la aparición del problema ecológico, que es innegable y también su caracterización ética, nos hace ver hasta qué punto ha habido una perturbación. Carece de sentido pensar que Dios ha creado al hombre y al universo estableciendo entre ellos una relación conflictiva. Si eso ocurre es porque el hombre no ha sido fiel, porque el hombre ha traicionado su relación con el universo. Esto debió tener lugar en el origen mismo de la historia. La aparición del fenómeno del problema ecológico lo visualiza, ya estaba dicho a Adán, que su relación con la tierra será difícil, que tendrá que ganar el pan con el sudor de su frente, que habrá abrojos, que el mundo no estará en una relación completamente armónica. ¡Ahí ya está el problema ecológico! El hombre tiene que hacer cierta violencia a las cosas. También lo dice San Pablo: las criaturas sufren vanidad. Y esa vanidad es porque están esperando la manifestación de la gloria de los hijos de Dios porque el hombre ha omitido, ha desvirtuado, lo que tenía que hacer. Su misión en el universo la ha estropeado de cierta manera.

Eso no significa que el hombre se haya estropeado totalmente, que tenga una naturaleza corrupta como dice Lutero, pero la relación del hombre con las cosas es productiva, es inventiva y se dice también que creadora. Si el hombre es el colaborador de Dios y lo radical de su ser personal es no separarse de Dios, está hecho así y está dotado de unos poderes y unas capacidades, las cuales en la misma medida en que no se ha corrompido, siguen añadiendo la obra de ornato aunque sea con quiebras. Al trabajo no se puede renunciar. No se puede decir, no es que si trabajo estropeo.

Y sin embargo es patente ontológicamente que el hombre está hecho para perfeccionar el universo. El puesto del hombre en el cosmos es añadir realidad al cosmos, añadir algo que el cosmos no puede

darse a sí mismo. Ese carácter mediador es constitutivo de su ser creado, eso es lo que le especifica. Esto lo expresé en una fórmula fácil: el hombre es el perfeccionador perfectible. Esa perfectibilidad alude a la virtud: el hombre cuando perfecciona se perfecciona a sí mismo y no puede seguir perfeccionando más que si sigue perfeccionándose. Esa es la dinámica de la virtud. De manera que, antes que nada, hay que verlo así: el hombre está colocado en el universo, pero no es un ser que siga los ritmos del universo o que no tenga nada que ver con él. No, antes que nada el hombre es un hacedor, es un perfeccionador a través de su actividad.

Aquí aparece el tema de la acción que ya dije que era el tema básico de la ética porque con él se inicia la ética, se adquieren las virtudes a través de la acción y con la acción se consiguen bienes. Creo que en la interpretación clásica no se ve de modo suficientemente agudo. Esa idea de que el hombre con su voluntad tiende al bien no es suficiente, el hombre con su voluntad hace el bien, perfecciona. Esto, por otra parte, marca una distinción que Tomás de Aquino lo indica cuando dice que lo bueno en un sentido más propio es lo bueno ético, la bondad de la acción. Se puede hablar del bien en sentido trascendental, pero el bien está en la acción. Y esa acción en cuanto que es buena es perfectiva, tiene un resultado, por tanto produce, no es estéril. Producir es más que lo que el universo puede hacer. El universo físico no puede producir, puede causar, tiene una influencia, una efectividad propia, se puede hablar incluso de una historia natural del universo, pero la aparición del hombre en el universo instaura una novedad respecto del universo que redonda en el universo. Esto tiene seguramente que ver con ese cielo nuevo y esa tierra nueva. Seguramente hemos omitido algo, por mucho que nos esforcemos, que la doctrina del progreso muestra la conciencia de la acción humana, y yo no renuncio a ello porque en la modernidad, aunque no esté bien orientado hay un aumento de la acción humana. La modernidad, en rigor, aparece con la mecánica de Newton que es una interpretación del universo tal que el hombre pueda influir en él; es una interpretación técnica del universo.

Newton no consigue una cosmología, el estudio teórico del universo es clásico, la física moderna es mecánica racional y en el prólogo a los Principia, Newton dice: tenemos que entender al universo de esta manera porque así lo que los vetere, los viejos, llamaban mecánica, que era un arte, eso hay que extenderlo a todo. En el fondo este profundo sentido productivo es una de las cosas que hemos heredado de la edad moderna. Este sentido productivo que da lugar hoy a efectos perversos, a no perfeccionar, sino a estropear. La actitud de la postmodernidad es reluctante a la acción humana, crítica de lo técnico. Pero lo técnico hoy lo cubre todo. La medicina, por ejemplo, también es producción; la biología: ingeniería genética. Todo es interpretación del universo como algo que el hombre puede manejar y a lo que puede añadir algo. Y el saber acerca del universo, la técnica, tiene un sentido práctico.

Esa acentuación de ese aspecto, quizá en ella haya olvidos. Considerar al hombre como ser productivo recoge el que el ser humano es perfeccionador, pero ahí hay una falta de cuidado que los ecologistas sacan a relucir. No comparto la postura ecologista, me parece que es una detección de un abuso, pero no es una solución. No se trata de reducir la actividad de ornato, sino de insistir más en ella y eliminar aquello que estropea, pero no declarar que el hombre estropea de suyo. Eso es una falsa antropología. No, el hombre no está hecho para estropear, sino para mejorar.

Eso después de la relación con el universo se extiende a la relación del hombre con el hombre que también es perfectible. Ahí se descubre otra dimensión de la acción humana. Aristóteles, cuando se refiere a esto, distingue dos tipos que no llama técnica sino dominio. El dominio despótico es una relación del hombre con el universo en la que el universo es pasivo; así es como el hombre es un artesano o es un técnico y eso es la primera dimensión de la técnica. Pero luego está el dominio político que se caracteriza por ser establecido entre seres que todos ellos son activos y ahí aparece la colaboración, una estructura de la acción que a veces se olvida y no se considera la acción política. La acción política no tiene nada que ver con la idea política actual, sino que para Aristóteles es la acción que se instaura entre seres humanos.

La estructura de relación entre dos seres humanos es de doble entrada: hay una entrada y una salida doble en cada uno de los sujetos y cada entrada y salida son correlativas y diferentes puesto que la acción humana entre hombres es interacción. Esto tiene una cantidad de implícitos que ahora sería difícil entrar. Esto lo desarrolla muy bien Pérez López, pero no es más que la acción política de Aristóteles. De manera que el hombre es siempre perfeccionador perfectible respecto del universo y perfeccionador perfectible en su relación con otros hombres. Y cuando se trata de los demás este carácter de perfeccionador perfectible es más vinculante, más intenso. La medida en que un hombre puede perfeccionar o estropear a otro es mucho mayor que la aplicación técnica del hombre a las cosas. El dominio de lo político es más alto que el dominio de lo despótico.

Sin embargo, los ecologistas se refieren a un abuso de la acción despótica, estamos estropeando el universo en términos bíblicos, estamos situados en el universo de manera incorrecta y eso lo propalamos, no lo paramos ni lo corregimos. Aristóteles dice que lo característico de estas acciones prácticas es que son corregibles. El tema de la corrección de la razón práctica es esencial en la filosofía de Aristóteles y Aristóteles admite que siempre se cometen errores. Sin embargo, en el origen no fue así, en el principio no era así. Es decir, tal como nos muestra la *Biblia* al primer hombre, el primer hombre ejerce una acción que no es corregible y cuando la quiso corregir se armó el cisco padre. La corrección de la acción humana por parte de Eva y Adán tentados por la serpiente, eso es el pecado original. ¿Por qué la acción de Adán era estrictamente correcta? ¿Por qué la razón práctica de

Adán no era corregible? Porque tenía que ver con el bien e ir aumentando el bien; tenía que ver con el bien y mejorar. La primera acción que se describe en la *Biblia* era poner nombre a las cosas. Poner nombre a las cosas era algo que las cosas no podían hacer, las cosas no se nombran a sí mismas. En definitiva, la acción primaria, la acción por antonomasia es el lenguaje. El lenguaje no es teoría, es acción. ¿Qué hacían Adán y Eva, qué relación política existía entre ambos? La *Biblia* no nos da más razón que esa y es que hablaban y hablar es añadir, es perfeccionar; entre todas las acciones perfectivas humanas, hablar es la más perfectiva que existe. Por eso, desde el punto de vista de la acción lo peor que le puede pasar es la corrupción del lenguaje. Un lenguaje equivocado respecto de las cosas estropea las cosas, pero un lenguaje equivocado respecto de las personas destroza la sociedad. El cuidado que hay que tener con el lenguaje es enorme. La preocupación esencial del hombre es cuidar el lenguaje. Hay lenguajes prohibidos, no se le puede llamar rata al hermano. No se puede escandalizar y el escándalo es lingüístico. El empobrecimiento del lenguaje es el decaimiento de una sociedad. La mentira, el abuso del lenguaje, está terminantemente prohibida. Entre esas normas que aparece en el decálogo mentir es intrínsecamente malo. Decir lo que es contrario al propio pensar es intrínsecamente malo y eso es una norma para todos: nunca se puede mentir. Eso afecta a nuestra acción más alta: nuestro modo más alto de actuar es hablar.

Desarrollar esto llevaría horas y horas, tendríamos que ver cómo el hombre ha alterado el lenguaje. El padre de la mentira es el diablo, la tentación consistió en un engaño respecto de aquello que Dios no había entregado al hombre que es la ciencia del bien y del mal. Por eso Tomás de Aquino dice que el pecado original es un pecado de ciencia. Lo que estoy diciendo es una glosa de esa tesis. Un pecado de ciencia en tanto que la ciencia es ciencia práctica, tiene que ver con el ornato del universo y tiene que ver con la acción y reacción entre seres humanos. La acción despótica en el fondo es lingüística, es una forma de lenguaje; la acción política es estrictamente lingüística. La negación de información, el silencio, es malo, es antiético. Lo humano es hablar. El silencio menor y el silencio mayor no son silencios, quien lo entienda así no sabe lo que es; eso es para hablar, no para hablar con los demás, sino para hablar con Dios y para establecer una relación lingüística sin la cual no se puede trabajar. Pero quedarse mudo es antihumano. Eliminar la comunicación lingüística es una falta moral de primer orden y la mentira es una explicación del silencio, es decir, el vacío de verdad hablado. El error es antiético, un vicio de la inteligencia, dice Tomás de Aquino; no sólo la voluntad peca, la inteligencia también tiene sus errores, es atreverse a afirmar lo que no sabe. Pensar es siempre pararse, precipitarse en el pensar atenta contra el pensar.

La moral es así, la moral tiene una base ontológica. Se puede tener sentido moral, pero si se trata de entender el asunto, o llegamos a lo ontológico o no entendemos. Lo más radical que puede hacer el hombre con su propio ser es admitir como propia la ciencia del bien y del mal, porque la ciencia del bien y del mal es el pecado original.

Hoy, ya lo he dicho, determinar el bien y el mal no corresponde al hombre. Nos hemos apoderado de la ciencia del bien y del mal. ¿Qué es malo? Lo que yo declaro. ¿Qué es bueno? Lo que yo declaro. El hombre no está calculado para eso. Desgraciadamente y afortunadamente porque hemos sido redimidos, hemos desencadenado el mal y tenemos que ver con él, pero tratando de ahogar el mal en abundancia de bien. ¿Qué quiere decir ahogar el mal en abundancia de bien? Quiere decir imponer el bien de manera que se destierre el mal. Estamos comprometidos los católicos, redimidos del pecado original que es la ciencia del bien y del mal que el hombre le robó a Dios, pero al perfeccionador perfectible le corresponde la ciencia del bien y lo mejor, y nada más que esa. De ninguna manera le corresponde la ciencia del mal como alternativa, eso no es humano. Lo mismo que Dios no da su gloria a nadie, no le dio la ciencia del bien y del mal porque su puesto en el cosmos es incrementar el bien y al hacerlo él mismo se hace bueno, se incrementa en orden al bien, adquiere virtudes. Y eso es lo único que al hombre le corresponde legítimamente.

Tomás de Aquino dice que el pecado original es la razón misma de pecado. ¿Qué pasa cuando aparece la idea del mal porque uno se ha hecho con la ciencia del bien y del mal? Lo que aparece primero es la mentira cuando estima que hay algo malo; no hay nada malo porque todo lo que Dios ha hecho es bueno. Pero como es un pecado de ciencia, eso conlleva a que si hay mal lo tengo que resolver ... y lo tengo que resolver solo; el hombre se transforma en un arreglador. La vocación primaria del hombre no es la de un arreglador, aunque cuando se topa con el mal hay que arreglar: esa es la situación histórica. Pero en la misma medida en que existe el mal, se aprecia algo como malo aparecen dos razones de pecado gravísimas: la primera es decir que Dios es torpe, una blasfemia como una casa. El Dios creador es un Dios torpe. Esto es la esencia de la gnosis que es una línea que atraviesa toda la humanidad y es por otra parte la esencia de la herejía; toda herejía es gnóstica. Yo creí que el único hereje que no era gnóstico era Lutero hasta que leí el comentario a *Filipenses* 2, 5-11, esa interpretación es gnóstica. La redención es la auto justificación de Dios. Esa es la tesis de Lutero sobre el anonadamiento y la glorificación de Cristo. Verdaderamente monstruoso. Pero en toda la gnosis está esa idea: un Dios salvador que remedie la torpeza de Dios creador. Si Dios ha creado un ser que se puede pervertir radicalmente, cuya naturaleza está corrupta, Dios se ha equivocado. Entonces la redención no es más que la subsanación del error por parte de Dios y la justificación del hombre es extrínseca porque quien se ha justificado es Dios, en el cielo el hombre sigue siendo igual de pecador; Dios no salva el pecado, lo tapa.

Eso, que es una blasfemia como una casa, es negar la omnisciencia y la omnipotencia divina, está en el pecado original. Si existe el mal, Dios se ha equivocado, ha hecho cosas malas. Cuando la Biblia dice que Dios vio que era bueno, el mal no aparece por ninguna parte. En esa situación admitir que hay algo malo es un insulto a Dios. Pero como la ciencia funciona, tiene que ir a remediar ese mal y entonces el hombre se separa de Dios, recaba una acción sin colaboración. El hombre ya no colabora con Dios sino que le enmienda la plana. Esa

interpretación de Dios como un Dios que se equivoca está a lo largo de toda la historia. Nietzsche lo dice de una manera notable: que la gran osadía del idealismo alemán es poner el mal en Dios. Pero esa osadía no está solo en el idealismo alemán está en toda la historia, es la gnosis. La gnosis consiste radicalmente en establecer que en Dios está el mal o que el mal procede de Dios.

No hubo preguntas en la segunda sesión

Tercera session

Vamos a ver, me parece que es claro que el pecado original es un pecado bastante gordo, que tiene todas las razones de pecado, como dice Tomás de Aquino; está la soberbia, la falta de esperanza, la pretensión de autonomía, la blasfemia, la mentira, está hacer que no hay por qué hacer y no admitir lo que hay que hacer.

Esta manera de entender el pecado original creo que, aparte de que parece la única que tiene que ver con la visión bíblica del hombre como aquel que está hecho para trabajar y cumplir la obra de ornato, tiene una serie de comprobaciones históricas cuya característica más neta es la gnosis, la estructura de los planteamientos gnósticos.

Lo que se puede decir ahora es que de esa manera se desencadena el mal, que el pecado original tiene una eficacia porque el hombre, siendo una criatura, es sumamente activa y desarrolla de una manera o de otra, Dios se lo permite (digámoslo así, su pecado no es tan intenso como el del ángel), pero el mal está en la historia y puede cundir y hay una lucha entre el bien y el mal. Esto comporta que el orden moral cambia. Aquí hay un asunto que no hubiera existido nunca sin el pecado original y es la aparición de una serie de despliegues de actitudes incorrectas del hombre que exigen una normativa, ser prohibidas. La primera prohibición es que se haga con la ciencia del bien y del mal, pero una vez se ha hecho con ella, aparecen una serie de conductas incorrectas que Dios providente, Dios que cuida a la humanidad le dice que no puede hacer. Me parece que aquí está el origen de las llamadas normas negativas en las que tanto se ha insistido en su valor universal histórico. Es así: no se puede matar, no se puede mentir, no se puede forniciar, no se puede robar. Pero eso son prohibiciones consecutivas, prohibiciones que en la situación *post peccatum* aparece la posibilidad de que el hombre cometa actos de ese tipo porque se ha desorganizado. Aparece el mal de muchas maneras y todo eso tiene que ser prohibido. Por otra parte, como no por el pecado original el hombre queda totalmente corrompido, se da cuenta de que existen males, ahí está el asunto de la conciencia moral, así lo ha vivido el hombre histórico en su estado *post peccatum*.

Pero por debajo de la conciencia moral que capta el carácter prohibido de esas conductas malas hay otra cosa más importante y es

que el hombre sigue manteniendo su condición de ser activo y es aquella sobre la que está desvelada para el hombre un carácter más profundo que la conciencia moral y es la sindéresis. La sindéresis es la comprensión innata por parte del ser humano de los primeros principios morales, no ya de las normas negativas. Así como si se prescinde de las virtudes la moral se deerrumba, también la percepción de la moral quedaría muy limitada si no se tuviera en cuenta la sindéresis. Hay una comprensión de lo radical en la acción o del valor de la acción como tal, puesto que el hombre es un ser hecho para actuar. Viene ahora el problema de cómo se puede formular lo que se capta con la sindéresis: haz el bien y evita el mal; ese es el gran principio moral. Yo diría que "evita el mal", sí, pero tiene un carácter más impulsor, que indica más lo positivo que lo negativo la sindéresis: haz el bien. La sindéresis indica que hay que hacer el bien, no te conformes, no te quites de en medio, no seas inútil. ¿Por qué? Pues porque a pesar de esa situación vulnerada o no completa, no íntegra moralmente, pues a pesar de eso sigue vigente lo primordial en el hombre: eso no ha sido borrado; el hombre tiene que hacer, tiene que actuar. Yo creo que esa es la obligación o el deber moral.

El deber moral no es hacer el mal, eso ya se da por supuesto, sino que el deber moral es que uno no se puede inhibir. Se podría formular así: no tengas miedo en asumir responsabilidades, tienes que hacerte cargo de asuntos en la medida en que sea posible, no puedes ser cobarde, tímido, tienes que realizar obras. En esto va implícito que si se realizan obras buenas se mejora. Haz, no tienes más remedio que hacer porque si no, no puedes mejorar. Creo que el desarrollo de la *imago Dei* es la indicación que se desprende de la sindéresis, de la captación del primer principio moral.

Así es como aparece el problema del deber, de la obligación. El hombre está obligado. Pero la obligación se refiere al actuar: debes encontrar tu proyecto vital, tu vocación en el sentido profundo de la palabra, aquel tipo de actos que de acuerdo con tu educación, tus habilidades, con tu idoneidad, ... pues debes hacer. Esta cuestión del deber ha sido formulada por los filósofos morales. Uno de los planteamientos más drásticos es la formulación kantiana. Kant propone que la voluntad emana un imperativo categórico. Ese imperativo es categórico en el sentido de que obliga por sí mismo y precisamente que obligue por sí mismo es que no obedece a otros motivos: a las ventajas, a los placeres, a las conveniencias, los resultados. En definitiva, el planteamiento kantiano es anti hedonista. Estoy obligado a no actuar nunca por debajo del nivel de mi propia voluntad. Kant lo expresa así: lo que hay de santo en el mundo es una buena voluntad. Eso significa que la voluntad se exalta, se pone por encima de todo y lo que sea una subordinación a algo es algo inferior y así la voluntad no se mantiene en su propio nivel. Fichte lo formula de otra manera en la misma línea; sé el que eres, no te dejes dominar por nada porque si te dejas domina por algo has decaído. Todo aquello que no sea la pura voluntad, actuar en atención de la pura voluntad es degradarse, es un descenso, puesto que lo santo es una buena voluntad.

No cabe duda de que la formulación kantiana parece plausible, hay ahí una grandeza moral, sin embargo, el planteamiento es insuficiente porque en primer lugar es fijista. Eso de actuar de acuerdo con la ley, de no particularizar por intereses empíricos, bueno, pues esa formulación muestra lo que tiene el imperativo de estático. Ahí no hay progreso. Realmente el imperativo categórico sustituye a la virtud y en rigor no es práctico, porque no dice haz, no es la sindéresis, sino una sustitución de la misma porque la sindéresis no dice lo que uno tiene que hacer, sino que uno tiene que hacer. La sindéresis tiene un carácter de impulso. Ser fiel a uno mismo no es mantenerse en el orden de la propia voluntad, no es eso, sino da de tú, eso es la sindéresis. El imperativo categórico parece que es práctico, pero no lo es porque no es una invitación a hacer, no sale de ahí ningún impulso a hacer, sino que es más bien lo que debería ser o lo que debe ser, pero ¿qué tipos de actos? En realidad, es más bien una incitación a no actuar, porque en el fondo eso degenera hacia un formalismo moral, que es la historia del moralismo kantiano y así ha sido entendido. Ese prurito de pureza absoluta equivalente a la voluntad no contaminada hace que no se pueda ejercer ninguna acción. En cuanto se ejerza alguna acción la contaminación de la voluntad parece inevitable. Más bien hay ahí, no sé cómo decirlo, tendrías que actuar de tal manera que fueses completamente puro. Se ha detectado una influencia confesada por Kant, que se refiere a Sócrates y una influencia de Fenelón. Esa influencia de Fenelón sería muy reveladora del sentido del imperativo categórico kantiano. Fenelón dice que el hombre debe actuar por puro amor; el famoso tema del amor puro. Eso de actuar por puro amor es mucho pedir de entrada. ¿Se puede actuar por puro amor? Quizá después de adquirir muchas virtudes y puro amor, puro amor, yo diría que no, hay algo que no se le puede quitar al amor y es la esperanza. Un acto de puro amor, quizás lo pueda haber, pero mantener la vida moral en términos de puro amor no parece posible, porque eso terminaría en la imposibilidad de no hacer nada.

Hay en Kant una crispación. El imperativo categórico no es una buena interpretación de la sindéresis que dice lánzate, tienes que hacer. De ese hacer surgirá que estarás aportando, incrementando, porque tu actuación si no se hace conculcando las normas negativas dará lugar a algo bueno para los otros, pero también un perfeccionamiento de tu propia voluntad. Eso significa que la pura voluntad no es lo más alto, no es lo santo. Ahí hay un error teológico. Creo que los santos, que Dios es el santo y lo que Dios quiere es amabilísimo, es su voluntad, pero es porque lo primario es la santidad y la santidad no hay que hacerla equivalente a la santidad en Dios, sino que la santidad es Dios mismo, Dios es el santo, el tres veces santo. Eso llevaría mucho tiempo exponerlo. La voluntad de Dios es santa porque Dios es el santo de los santos. De manera que hablar de una pura y santa voluntad que es el sujeto trascendental y que eso determine el deber, me parece que es coger el rábano por las hojas. No, el hombre tiene que mejorar.

Justamente porque el hombre puede mejorar puede parecerse a Dios en la santidad, pero es una santidad parecida, no la pura santidad que es exclusiva de Dios. La moral desde la sindéresis se ve como una

incitación a mejorar y a actuar: ese es tu destino, tienes que destinarte a lo santo, tienes que darte cuenta de lo que hay en tú de semilla de santidad y eso es tu capacidad de actuar porque esa capacidad es aportativa. De manera que, en vez del imperativo categórico, haz, aporta. Entonces ya no se toma como centro la voluntad sino la persona, porque la persona se puede describir como el ser que aporta, que incrementa la realidad. de que yo me decida a hacer depende que algo nuevo sea. No tengo que ocuparme obsesivamente de la santidad de mi voluntad, en primer lugar porque no hay tal cosa y en segundo porque si me preocupo de eso no hago nada.

Lo bueno está en la acción porque de la acción de suyo es aportante y es también la condición de una mejora, de una adquisición de virtudes. Me parece que son dos modos de entender la moral distintos, sin negar la grandeza kantiana. Pero esa mira de altura que Kant propone no es posible, hay una equivocación, no se da cuenta de que el hombre tiene que hacer más y tiene que querer mejor. Esto segundo, el querer mejor me parece que es el despliegue, está implícito en este asunto del haz. No sólo tienes que querer lo que quieras sino tu querer para mejorarlo. Esto está en Tomás de Aquino de una manera breve, pero domina su planteamiento ético: lo que llama la curvatura de la voluntad. La curvatura de la voluntad se puede describir del siguiente modo: que la voluntad es curva significa que nuestro querer compromete a nuestra subjetividad, la compromete de una manera parcial, pero sí, y esta es una observación que se ha descubierto modernamente, y es que a diferencia de lo que pasa cuando el ser humano piensa, cuando quiere, el yo tiene que apoyar el querer y si no, el querer no existe. Hay una frase de Nietzsche que es aprovechable, es una adivinanza que ya está en la curvatura de la voluntad de Tomás de Aquino¹. Nietzsche dice que yo no desprecio si no me acepto como el que desprecia. El acto de despreciar no lo puedo llevar a cabo si no me acepto como el que desprecia. Cuando pienso, no tengo que aceptarme como ser pensante porque la persona no es constitutiva del acto de pensar, eso es una tontería, eso es trasladar superfluamente e inútilmente la verdadera marcha del pensamiento, pero eso sí es característico de la voluntad. El pensamiento se despliega porque se despliega, porque tenemos una dotación suficiente. No tenemos que ponernos como el que piensa para pensar, ni tenemos que aceptarnos como el que piensa para aceptar, pero sí para querer porque si no, el

¹ Another way of presenting the same fact, the involvement of the intimacy, or the person in any voluntary decision is given by Guardini. “This good can only be perceived, the decision regarding it can only be taken, only the conscience can capture it and translate it into action, in the intimacy of the person. No one can decide on the good for me, I have to do it myself. The good is done in as much as I myself is the one –and no one else– get involved in that particular act of the will, i.e. inasmuch as my person is present in that decision”. “Pero este bien sólo puede percibirse, la decisión ante su presencia sólo puede tomarse, sólo puede captarlo la conciencia y traducirlo en acción, en la soledad interior de la persona. Nadie puede querer el bien en mi lugar, tengo que hacerlo yo mismo. El bien se realiza en la medida en que yo —yo mismo y ningún otro— me implico en ese acto de voluntad, es decir en la medida en que mi persona se hace presente en esa volición”. Guardini, R., *Etica. Lecciones en la Universidad de Munich*, op. cit., 161.

acto voluntario no se puede ejercer. El acto voluntario arrastra, compromete al sujeto humano². Sin esa especie de reconocimiento del sujeto humano en el acto voluntario no hay acto voluntario. Esto es más que el imperativo categórico de Kant porque ocurre en todo acto voluntario y no en el imperativo que es como una norma, no un acto.

Recordemos lo que decía Sócrates: quien comete un asesinato se convierte en asesino. Nietzsche dice: el que desprecia si no se acepta como el que desprecia, no desprecia. Y habría que decirlo de todo, si no me acepto como el que quiere, no quiero. Si no me acepto como el que quiere comer no como, si no me acepto como el que quiere matar, no mato. Y eso ocurre con todos los actos, buenos y malos, y eso significa que la voluntad es curva, que en la voluntad está el yo, es decir, la voluntad es reflexiva, la inteligencia no es reflexiva. Pero entonces ahí se ve una inadecuación: si me acepto como el que quiere no me acepto del todo, me doy cuenta de que ese querer no es exactamente lo mismo que el yo. El yo presta su asistencia, pero percibe a la vez que ese aceptarse en ese querer no es suficiente para él y, por tanto, la persona tiene como objetivo, cosa que también está en la sindéresis, querer más, hacer más.

Esa mejora, desde el punto de vista de la reflexividad de la voluntad, nos damos cuenta de cómo surgen las virtudes, cómo eso tiene lugar, porque el hombre no puede conformarse con ningún querer suyo. Es un insatisfecho con todos sus quereres y por tanto eso de la voluntad santa no se puede aceptar, porque la voluntad puede mejorar y tiene que mejorar porque compromete al yo, pero no lo realiza exhaustivamente. El imperativo va dirigido así: quiere mejor, quiere más; no quieras más cosas, sino quiere mejor, quiere más. Eso sí que me parece que es un enfoque acertado. Por tanto, en la intención del acto voluntario hay dos instancias, lo amado o .lo querido y el yo que al comprometerse respecto de lo amado se insatisface y dice: tengo que querer más, es un querer querer. El acto voluntario no es simplemente un querer lo querido, sino un querer querer. Pero ese querer querer aspira a querer más, a querer mejor. Aquí nos encontramos con lo primario en el hombre, una ciencia del bien y sólo del bien. Una ciencia del bien y sólo del bien es esa ciencia que sale de la sindéresis: al comprometerse el hombre en el querer, la superioridad de la persona respecto de cualquier acto voluntario hace que la persona exija un acto voluntario mejor.

Creo que hemos visto bastantes dimensiones de la ética y queda ratificada la ética de virtudes desde la persona, desde esa connotación personal que es constitutiva del acto voluntario, pero no la agota y por eso la persona siempre exige un querer mejor. Por tanto, no hay un acto de amor puro, sino algo mayor, un acto enteramente generoso: no

² The same idea is expressed by Zubiri in a different way: “El acto de voluntad consiste en darme a mí mismo mi propia condición. Por consiguiente, el problema está en la condicionalidad interna de la voluntad, y no simplemente en el objeto sobre que recae”. Zubiri, X., *Sobre el Sentimiento y la Volición*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1992), 271. Found in Ferrer, U., *El Principio Antropológico de la Ética: en Diálogo con Zubiri*, (Sevilla: Thémata, Plaza y Valdés, 2010).

me satisfago con este querer, quiero querer mejor. Esto tiene un valor ontológico y lo que dice Kant, no.

Preguntas

La persona impera respecto de sus actos. La persona es imago Dei, y la satisfacción es cuando la persona ya no puede querer mejor. Creo que aquí hay que trasladar lo que dice San Pablo: entonces conoceréis como sois conocidos. Lo que pasa es que esto sin el Espíritu Santo es imposible. El destino del hombre respecto de su voluntad es estar insatisfecho y el que diga ya estoy satisfecho, ya quiero bastante, no, la persona impone su carácter no homeostático respecto de la voluntad porque si la persona no consiente en el acto voluntario, ese acto no existe. Pero para la persona ese acto voluntario es insuficiente, insatisfactorio, porque el acto voluntario no la traduce enteramente y la persona lo que hace es requerir a su voluntad constantemente a más. Esto es lo que se puede descubrir desde la sindéresis y oponer a Kant.

La voluntad indica a la persona más que el entendimiento, pero la indica mal. Cuando se abandona el límite es cuando la persona aparece en el entendimiento. Por eso abandonar el límite se parece mucho a un acto voluntario porque llega a lo otro, ya no funciona por asimilación, sino que accede a lo radical sin posesión objetiva. Yo estoy en lo otro distinguiéndome, pero cuando se trata de un acto de amor ahí hay congregación, únete a lo otro, pero date cuenta de que esa unión con lo otro según la estás realizando te compromete pero no es suficiente. Hay una dimensión del abandono del límite que es la esencia humana: detenerse en la esencia humana es disponer. Esa es la cuarta dimensión del abandono del límite en la que el abandono del límite llega a la captación de lo que es la voluntad, eso es la esencia humana. Eso es el descubrimiento de la insuficiencia del acto voluntario. El abandono del límite tiene cuatro dimensiones; esta es la última, la cuarta. Primero se abandona respecto del ser que no soy, se abandona el límite respecto de la esencia del ser que no soy yo, se abandona el límite respecto del ser que soy yo, y se abandona el límite respecto de mi esencia. Al abandonar el límite respecto de la esencia, aparece la esencia como pura independencia de la persona y eso es la noción de disponer y el disponer es querer el disponer, y la distinción real está en que el querer no me identifica de manera que el querer querer es mi realización exhaustiva, eso es la distinción real *esencia-esse*.

¿Por qué se describe la esencia humana como disponer? Porque depende de la libertad trascendental. Lo que depende del primer principio es la analítica causal y es la esencia extra mental; lo que depende de la libertad es el disponer. La libertad dispone, pero no hay que confundir el disponer con lo disponible. Yo no puedo disponer de mí,

puedo querer aumentar el disponer pero hacer del disponer lo disponible. Lo disponible es la cultura. El querer no es idéntico del ser personal.

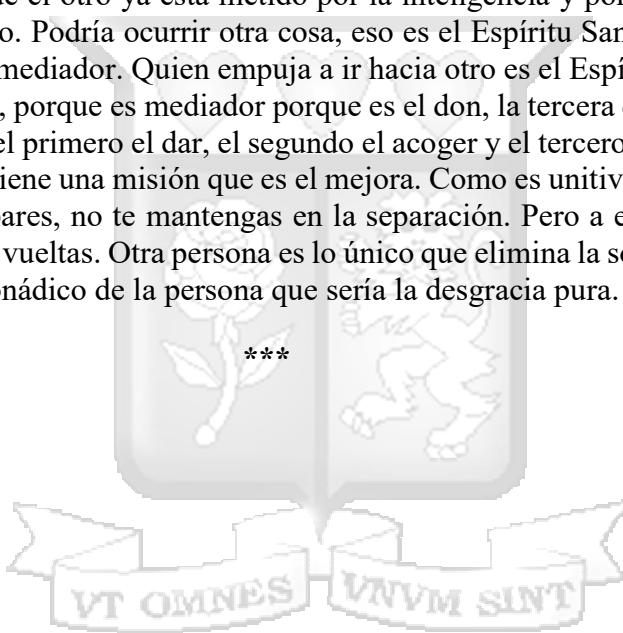
En la visión beatífica el disponer ya no interesa. La voluntad y la inteligencia radican en la persona por tanto cuando la persona ejerce el amor de Dios no es de la voluntad en cuanto cuyo *a priori* es la persona, ahí es la voluntad en su carácter radical no en su carácter esencial. Eso redunda también en la esencia, pues bien, pero nunca es en la voluntad en cuanto distinta donde se puede producir la visión beatífica sino en el arranque personal. Es que la inteligencia prioritariamente es persona y la voluntad también. Por tanto, en la persona no se distinguen. Se puede hablar de trascendentales personales y eso redundará en la esencia, pero eso no es el colmarse de la persona sino que la persona se colma hacia Dios en su coexistencia con Dios; no hay identidad.

El deber se compatibiliza con la felicidad en cuanto que la felicidad es la posesión del bien, cosa que Kant no tiene en cuenta aunque lo postula. En la *Critica de la razón práctica* hay una oscilación cuando habla de la voluntad como *ratio essendi* del imperativo categórico y cuando dice que eso engendra mérito y será premiado. Entonces lo eudemónico hay que eliminarlo porque es bajo, pero eso engendra mérito y si engendra mérito dará lugar a la felicidad eterna, por tanto Dios tiene que existir. Ese es el postulado. Pero si engendra mérito no es lo más alto, es más alto Dios que es el que otorga mérito. Si la felicidad está en Dios engendra mérito. Hay una felicidad final a base del mérito de mantenerse en la voluntad, pero eso está postulado, que tiene que haber una felicidad que se corresponda con eso y que en el imperativo no reside la felicidad. El hombre no puede ser feliz, pero Dios sí puede hacerlo, y eso hay que postularlo. Ese es el carácter no representativo que tiene este planteamiento.

Yo tengo que querer aumentar la cantidad de bien y para eso tengo que aumentar mi querer. El gran problema es ese, que no se sabe qué es la felicidad. La felicidad es la noción más vaga que existe y por eso dice Tomás de Aquino que si se toma el *frui* como la felicidad ahí cabe todo tipo de errores y el hombre pone la felicidad en bienes inferiores. Un hombre puede disfrutar de la comida y creer que ahí está la felicidad, pero para eso según la curvatura de la voluntad tiene que quererse como el que come. Por eso digo que ahí está el control porque si me quiero como el que disfruta comiendo me doy cuenta de que eso no colma mi yo. Para llevar el bien al ser es menester llevar el querer hacia lo más alto a través de la curvatura de la voluntad. En el supuesto de que el bien es un trascendental absoluto, aunque yo creo que no, que el bien se reduce a bueno y que alguien es bueno; el bien se reduce al amor es una captación personalista de la captación del bien. La tendencia a la felicidad lleva a la voluntad a un acto que es la fruición, pero ella no puede determinar si ese acto es el adecuado o no. Por eso se puede hablar de *voluntas ut natura* y si no fuera por la persona, eso no se puede enderezar y ver que con esto no quiero suficientemente. La *voluntas ut natura* no tiene un acto culminante. Un acto culminante

respecto de Dios no se sabe por eso el *desiderium naturale videndum Dei* no es prueba de la existencia de Dios. La persona tampoco lo puede colmar, pero sabe que hay insatisfacción. Pero para hablar de esto habría que haber explicado que no se puede decir cuál es el acto de la voluntad que tiene que ver con el acto supremo; no se sabe qué acto es el que colma la voluntad. Se puede decir que es el acto en el que la voluntad descansa, pero entonces hay que entender la voluntad como *orexis*. Eso es también lo que intenta demostrar Tomás de Aquino cuando dice que el bien que lleva a la felicidad es un bien indefectible, pero hace falta también otra cosa y es que a la firmeza del bien corresponda la firmeza de la adhesión al bien y eso sólo se puede lograr con la virtud porque si no, la voluntad sería voluble. No basta la indefectibilidad del bien sino que mi adhesión sea firme.

El *semina virtutum intellectualis* es el intelecto agente y aquí en la voluntad tiene que haber algo parecido. El primer punto de camino es la sindéresis. El amor como trascendental es un salir al encuentro del otro porque el otro ya está metido por la inteligencia y por la iniciativa del otro. Podría ocurrir otra cosa, eso es el Espíritu Santo, eso es el carácter mediador. Quien empuja a ir hacia otro es el Espíritu, es el Consolador, porque es mediador porque es el don, la tercera dimensión del don; el primero el dar, el segundo el acoger y el tercero el don personal que tiene una misión que es el mejora. Como es unitivo, pues dice no te separes, no te mantengas en la separación. Pero a eso hay que darle más vueltas. Otra persona es lo único que elimina la soledad, el carácter monádico de la persona que sería la desgracia pura.





APPENDIX 3

Two examples of real life

It may not be proper for a doctoral thesis to bring exercises into the dissertation. It may be more appropriate for a school textbook. Nevertheless, it will be interesting in this case to bring the reader down to earth. Philosophy is a matter of life, of living well, not just a theoretical exercise, especially when dealing with ethical topics. The purpose of this subsection is to bring us down to reality and see whether what is being said, is real: as the youth say these days, ‘man, get real!’ The two cases will test the present understanding of synderesis and open a door to map out how one uses synderesis without being aware of it on a daily basis.

Waking up

As we wake up in the dark, we retake our live stream. How? By knowing that we are awake. Is this objective knowledge? Not really, we just know. We may later objectivize it if we want to do philosophy first thing in the morning. Most people just wake up and automatically take notice of themselves and their environment. Sometimes, when one sleeps in a new place, this awakening to the new environment takes a bit more time, because – and this is habitual knowledge – we automatically tend to take the customary environment for granted.

Now, suppose the case of a student who has just been employed in a fantastic job and wants to excel in it. The first condition is to be punctual, that usually is to be at work ten minutes before the actual starting time. Up to now he could wake up at ten o’clock. Now he has to get up at 6.30 a.m. to be able to get to work on time.

On normal days we tend to have a little, or big, struggle with our body and psyche that want more comfort, more sleep. Who are the contestants of the struggle? At the natural level, the body, the will and the intelligence. The intelligence tells us that the best for us is to wake up early and overcome the impulses of the body. The will tries to follow, but the battle is there. Now synderesis appears as the one that knows about this internal battle, the will does not know the intelligence, nor does the body, the intelligence does not know the will nor the passions. So to speak, the control centre is the habitual knowledge of synderesis. Who wins will depend on the will but how? By the person sticking or not with the previous decisions on good or bad behaviour and the actual capacity of doing so. Sometimes one decides to wake up but the body has already shut up, it has placed us into deep sleep. Normally though, if there has been a succession of victories, there is a habit at the essential level that helps to put into practice what we have decided.

We have the following elements in this morning's example. The personal level, root of all we are, synderesis as control centre, the intelligence, the imagination, the will, the habits of the will, and of the intelligence, the body and its passions.

Partnership

A couple of friends propose that you start a business in partnership for the next 10 years. It will mean investing half of your savings and moving with your family to another country. What will be the inner working of the decision as explained by the triadic structure of the person? And, what is the working of synderesis in this process?

I know I am the one to take the decision. It is my responsibility. I am a married person, so I have to count on my spouse's opinion and agreement. I know my spouse as a person, that is to say, by connaturality. Though I know one is very different from the other, we must share the same future.

I know I have a duty to maximise the betterment of both of us as well as that of our children, and even of the possible employees and society in which the business will be started.

I know the track record of the partners' personal and business skills and of their honesty, but naturally these can change, the same as the actual conditions, once the business develops.

The business plan seems technically correct and the risk acceptable.

It will imply a long-term commitment which will affect the education and future of our children.

The climate, health and living conditions seem to be adequate, though a bit less developed to the present country, but if the business works well we shall have the opportunity to enjoy even better conditions.

I know my spouse and I have the character, stamina and skills to be able to do the job.

I have the gut feeling to go ahead.

Now to test the knowledge acquired so far what will be your three levels of knowledge: personal, habitual and sensible, in this decision.

How will you know the notices given by the habits of wisdom, first principles, synderesis, intelligence and will while taking the decision?

What would be the function of the intelligence and of the will and of their acquired habits?

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