

Article

Work as an Entrustment and Its Addressees According to Leonardo Polo's Transcendental Anthropology

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Abstract

This work expands upon Leonardo Polo's anthropological proposal regarding human work as a distinctive entrustment from Creator to each created person. Situated within philosophical anthropology as a branch of knowledge devoted to a deeper understanding of the human being, it delves into the highest human dimension—the personal act of being—as the heart of this dedication, and breaks down the appeal to destiny. The goals to which human beings aspire are innumerable, but they all ultimately depend on the first, the ultimate one. In light of the manifestative dimension—which in Polo's framework corresponds to the order of human essence, distinct from yet intrinsically related to the personal act of being, and encompasses the sphere of human actions, possessions, and material, intellectual, and virtuous gains—this study, according to the view of work as an entrustment, offers a philosophical inquiry surrounding the ultimate destiny of work and the roles that other persons and the divine Person play in this search.

Keywords: work; entrustment; person; Leonardo Polo

1. Introduction

The social disruptions precipitated by the accelerated pace of technological change in recent years reveal a markedly impoverished understanding of the concept of human work (González 2023). This deficiency is rooted in the anthropological reductionism upon which modern political economy is built (Martínez-Echevarría 2004; Scalzo and Alford 2016), and is further reflected in the resulting crisis of practical rationality (MacIntyre 2016; Murcio and Scalzo 2021).

Among other authoritative voices, Benedict XVI (2009) called for a “broadening” of the concept of rationality, one that enables an understanding of work from an explicitly ethical perspective. This task requires moving beyond its reduction as a purely economic factor of production, in order to encompass its multiple meanings, as well as its impact on the value of personal identity and narrative (Pinto-Garay et al. 2022).

Accordingly, this article advances an innovative basis for understanding work at its foundations within philosophical anthropology, distinguishing this approach from modern empirical or cultural anthropology. In this context, “work” is not defined merely in terms of conventional paid employment, as productive activity in a narrowly economic sense, or in the theological context of the faith-versus-works debate. Rather, building upon John Paul II's *Laborem exercens*, work is understood in its broadest sense as a human praxis that



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integrates productive, relational, moral, and vocational dimensions, through which persons contribute to the world, develop their capacities, cooperate with others, and pursue both personal fulfillment and the common good (Pinto-Garay and Scalzo 2026). To deepen this perspective, it builds upon what was established in a previous study regarding Leonardo Polo's anthropological proposal on natural filiation as a view of work that goes beyond the usual framework (Guerra Lamadrid 2022, pp. 189–212). Starting from the well-known 'objective' and 'subjective' meaning of work, it seeks to open up consideration of the place that each person occupies in this important undertaking. From this perspective, among other findings, we can infer that life does not depend on this task, that work is not the key factor in society or life, but just the opposite: life, society, and work are structured according to what happens in the highest dimension of human existence. We sustain this thesis by exploring the following three themes: 1. Leonardo Polo's anthropological proposal regarding human work as an entrustment. 2. The personal order as the source of work and the appeal to its ultimate destiny. 3. The elements of work as an entrustment.

2. Leonardo Polo's Anthropological Proposal Regarding Human Work as an Entrustment

2.1. An Anthropological View According to Man's Three Unifying Dimensions

According to Leonardo Polo, the human being is a complex unity. This philosopher does not harbor an all-encompassing view; nor does he treat man as an abstract object, if this were even possible. He strives to keep his sight on man's real unity.¹ He proposes these dimensions for understanding the human being, including his *corporeal nature*, *immaterial essence*, and *personal act of being*. He argues that these distinct levels are articulated and harmonized, and that their relational character opens up consideration of their hierarchical distinction and integration.

Polo discovers these levels in dialogue with preceding philosophers. Specifically, his anthropological proposal departs from Thomas Aquinas' distinction between *essentia* and *actus essendi*, which represents the culmination of Aquinas' philosophy (which, in turn, profoundly builds upon Aristotelian philosophy). In both theme and method, Leonardo Polo seeks to continue this line of inquiry, thus opening up a new horizon in philosophical research.

As far as theme, his investigation delves into anthropology in an even more radical way. In this way, the distinction between being and essence does not remain solely in the metaphysical order (i.e., every creature's status in relation to God), but rather goes deeper into an understanding of human beings as personal creatures, which makes us stand out among the other creatures of the world.

Regarding method, Polo emphasizes the abandonment of mental presence (objectifying knowledge) to reach higher truths, such as the human condition of having been created. According to him, the acts of being and their true essence can be known starting from the abandonment of objective knowledge (that which forms objects or ideas when thinking). This safeguards research into what is properly human from being reduced to a logical application or generalization. Polo proposes four forms of exercising abandonment of the objectifying mental limit. Two correspond to anthropological study: the third approaches the human *person* (or *personal act of being*) and the fourth clarifies the *immaterial essence* of man. Since work is an activity through which the human being expresses and manifests himself by means of both material and immaterial possessions and acquisitions, its explanation is primarily situated within the fourth dimension of Polo's method, namely, that corresponding to the human being's immaterial essence. In this sense, the meaning of work may be said to be essential. Nevertheless, its deepest foundation lies at the personal level, upon which the human essence depends and which it manifests. It is precisely this primacy

of the personal order in grounding the meaning of work that the present article seeks to clarify and justify.

The personal act of being (the human *who*) is the highest dimension, and it is reached through the innate habit of wisdom. Thus, the personal transcendentals emerge as distinctive features of a unifying character. This dimension points to richness and contribution, to a kind of co-existence that implies the expansion of existence, to free dependence, and to personal self-giving. All of this is found in the intimate² human sphere, the core from which it is deployed.

For its part, the *essence of man* is clarified with the innate habit of synderesis, where linking and integrating meaningful interconnections is required. In this way, harmony is achieved among the many complexities of human growth, its unfolding, and overall manifestation. Herein, rational and virtuous works are especially important. The essence of man, moreover, vitalizes and vivifies the inferior dimension, that is to say, our *corporeal nature*, characterized by manual possession and organic, limited growth, which is externally bound.

2.2. Work According to Man's Three Dimensions

Starting with this understanding of human reality, the broad panorama associated with the meaning of work comes into focus. In our view, this line of inquiry integrates a direct and specific consideration of work, and, simultaneously, underpins it. It relates to what man thinks about his life, with his understanding of himself and of society (Martínez-Echevarría 2004). This line of inquiry is the basis on which we approach the anthropological foundation of work which, according to Corazón (2007), has yet to solidify a truly solid defense despite the fact that significant steps have been taken to defend it throughout the history of thought³ (Corazón 1999).

Polo's consideration of work starts from the *meaning* of this task and directly implicates the unfolding of our corporeal nature and immaterial essence. Both dimensions reveal man's possessive character. In terms of a corporeal nature, the meaning of work is described based on productive, manual, and cultural works (the 'objective sense' of work) because it answers this question: what is the result of the work? Thus, it highlights the material improvement achieved, which remains an external reference, is governed by utility, depends on time and space, and is limited and medial. Under these conditions, man's responsibility is revealed, first, in the maintenance and improvement of his corporeal dimension, and second, in his care for and cultivation of the world. Thus, man is a 'perfecter.'

When discussing work from the *immaterial essence* of man (the 'subjective meaning' of work), we find rational and virtuous works, which involve activating the two superior faculties. This connotation relates to human interiority and reveals the inquiry that answers this question: what happens to the worker when he works? In this framework, the worker stands out as being capable of *perfecting* himself and others. In this way, work becomes something that impacts the one who carries it out. Because the subjective meaning of work involves the deployment of intelligence and will, Polo specifies two channels for it: one that is expressed in the improvement entailed in cognitive activity, and the other that is seen in the improvement that occurs through intellectual habits and moral virtues.

Given this, work occurs thanks to the unfolding of man's immaterial essence, that is, it is ordered toward the manifestation that also involves his corporeal nature. Work reveals itself as acting, as an activity directly related to practical human life. Work relates to the attainments, expressions, and results achieved in the familial, cultural, and social orders. For Polo, the infinity of human works, possessions, and manifestations occur in the immaterial essential order and the corporeal natural order, and understanding them favors

their greater depth according to the hierarchical order to which both are called. Polo breaks this down as the meaning—both objective and subjective—of work.

Polo presents a deeper understanding of work in line with Saint John Paul II's distinction between both meanings of work presented in his 1981 encyclical *Laborem exercens*. Indeed, in them, Polo highlights the products obtained and the internal improvements that occur in the worker. But Polo attends to a question that remains unanswered in this explanation of work from the two human dimensions (*corporeal nature* and *immaterial essence*): how does the *personal act of being* support work? Indeed, if work belongs to the person, if it is the person who works, is inquiry into both senses of work sufficient? The answer to this question will significantly advance our understanding.

2.3. Human Work as an Entrustment

To advance the philosophical examination of work is to delve into what makes it most dignified, into recognition of the highest human dimension and, above all, into discovery of the radical reality that occurs at the level of the personal or intimate act of being, not just of the two potencies associated with man's essence (intelligence and will). This responds to Polo's approach to the anthropological apex, in line with his interest in better understanding the true status of the human being as creature.

In his philosophical inquiry into the link between work and the personal act of being, Polo highlights the necessity of attending to what he terms the native (constitutive) filiation of the human person. Within his transcendental framework, he posits the human being as a creature linked freely and directly to a divine Creator. Rather than a dogmatic theological assertion, Polo presents this relationship as a philosophical postulate necessary to understand the radical origin of human effusiveness and the ultimate source of personal meaning. This has more to do with what happens in the personal order than it does with exactly how work is deployed. Because man is not just interested in growing and manifesting himself corporeally and immaterially, but rather is an "each one," work must be linked to his intimacy; from this perspective, work as a manifestation, or the meaning of work, proceeds and descends *from the personal act of being* as its source.

By recognizing native filiation on the personal level, we can see, among other things, that: (i) human beings are born of God, (ii) every man is radically His child (not that of his parents or progenitors), (iii) being a child of God is the personal name of each one of us. Thus, being a created person indicates a relationship of free dependence on the Creator. This filial bond is described in radical and intimate terms, and permeates both essence and corporeality with value.

This emblematic proposal in Polo's anthropology is not an inquiry of a metaphysical order, nor is it a proposal that understands human beings starting from their own sphere. It also does not define human beings starting from how they manifest, nor does it postulate work as a defining axis of the person, the family, or the history of humanity. Instead, it offers an understanding of work that looks to its most central core, that is, its status as a singular personal entrustment.

Said reflection is sustained by the fact that the person is filially linked to his Creator. It serves as an invitation to live one's life facing God, and not for just any reason, but because He supports it. This support does not mean that God overshadows man's life, acts in man's name or answers for man's actions, but rather that God appoints his existence and shines through it. Therefore, Polo's thought suggests that, because of its personal connection, work reflects a distinctive divine entrustment, an exceptionally unique task asked of "each who." Since no two persons are equal, there are no two identical entrustments; and, since God does not repeat Himself when creating, he also "breaks the mold" when entrusting tasks.

Work is then the response to this entrustment and entails mobilization that is especially directed to the Creator. This involves human beings accepting their own native recognition, since “the meaning of work changes when man accepts his condition as a child versus when he rejects this condition” (Polo 2019, p. 477)⁴. With this, it is argued that one’s achievements, no matter how great they are, become separated from their highest justification when work fails to be understood in terms of constitutive filiation due to rejection thereof. Such rejection leaves one vulnerable to meaninglessness and despair, to a self-centered life on a desolate plane.

Evading entrustment reveals, among other problems, the pride that “proclaims that I owe everything to myself. Piety objects that I have an unpayable debt! But it is also true that bankruptcy is not on the table. The unpayable nature of this debt points to the novelty that I am” (Polo 2016b, p. 116). Thus, work as an entrustment is meant to be developed along with piety (Polo 2019).

Here we must distinguish between welcoming (acceptance) constitutive filiation, and its subsequent offering in works, from each person’s filial condition, which is in place from the beginning because the human being is who he *is* from the start. Thus, Polo affirms that, “I am a child; I depend in such a way and so radically on the one who made me a child that I cannot transform myself into something else so that according to that other thing I might be. I have to accept myself as a child, but accepting myself as a child doesn’t require me to do anything, because I already am one” (Polo 2015d, p. 290).

Therefore, when he speaks of piety in the context of work, it develops towards recognition of filiation. Piety improves man so that his activity and his purpose refer back to his filial condition; it leads him to understand that he owes his life and his gifts to Someone. That work is related to man’s filial condition implies neither disparaging human activity nor senselessly exalting it; nor does it mean disproportionately highlighting his dependence or understanding life and work as pure passivity. Admitting dependence does not imply denying activity, insofar as “radical dependence is activity” (Polo 2016b, p. 328).

Thus, we see that man is called to the activity found in his social maneuvering, but, above all, to that which is found in the “act” of his personal being. With this activity, man does not reach God’s level, but he does aim toward Him as a goal, offering Him his being and his action. By responding to his filial condition he recognizes *who* he is and takes on his life, and his work, in relation to God. Thus, “man has to bring the universe to God, and that is why he works” (Polo 2015a, p. 231).

Consequently, man neither works to live nor lives to work, but rather lives to carry out his entrustment in accordance with the calling that shines through at the personal level. With this, work calls for a response; this is central because it takes shape in his being and is deployed in the manifestative, familial, and historical spheres. Consequently, society, culture, and the broad panorama of human unfolding depend on what happens at the personal level. This brings priorities to the fore, especially the fact that work does not inject meaning into existence nor does it fuel all other values. Man is enriched by the personal articulation between all of his commitments. Man is not man because he works, but just the opposite: he works because he is a person, strictly speaking, because he is a son (Sellés 2006).

We must, therefore, first insist on discovery of this filial condition. Work depends on acceptance of divine entrustment and proceeds from there. It may go unnoticed or be taken for granted, but it is key, for how can one work without knowing who one is and what one is called to do?

3. The Personal Order as the Source of Work and the Appeal to Its Ultimate Destiny

It is clear that, when trying to understand work, one must underscore the human personal order, since it is a *condition* for the manifestative human reality of the natural, familial, cultural and historical realms. For this reason, Polo calls the superior dimension of man (the personal act of being) the root, spring, and source from which novelty sprouts. This entails seeing that the world has been created for man, for his work, and that it is unfinished so that he can improve it (Polo 2018). The world is for the human being in that, by improving it, he relies on basic sustenance to direct himself toward higher goals, and, ultimately, toward his constitutive relationship, toward which he walks with everyone else.

This entails including in anthropological study God's place in the unity and hierarchy of man. We do not refer here to God's place in the universe, which corresponds to metaphysical or physical study, but rather to His primordial role in the reason for man's existence. To understand this, we must start from a study of what is native or constitutive, and not necessarily from a supernatural or revealed angle, since "God is the great spur of philosophical investigation: in philosophy one cannot dispense with God, because without him the work comes loose" (Polo 2016a, p. 202).

Following along these lines, when man deploys in his essence what has occurred in his person, he seeks and ratifies the means to destine himself to God, distinguishing medial matters from a deeper yearning. Thus, he appeals to the work's radical destination from essential and corporeal manifestation. It must be noted that this happens because complete and perfect acceptance cannot be found in work, even the highest forms of it, because a personal creature cannot offer what corresponds to God alone. Therefore, not even the greatest man is equipped to transmit the highest meaning of a created person's work, as we see reflected in life, which only has one answer, one authentic goal. With this truth, innumerable disappointments and degradations of man and of the meaning of work can be avoided.

With the fundamental feature of the personal order established, i.e., the constitutive filial relationship of each human being, from here several considerations are inferred. In this section, we will return to inquiry into the person as the source of work and will also attend to the ultimate destiny of work. With the former clear, we can then advance in the final section of this text an explanation of the elements of work seen as an entrustment.

3.1. The Person as the Source of Work

The person who works is the source of work. This work involves the highest layer of our hierarchical unity, that is, the personal act of being, intimacy, "each *who*." So, what happens, above all, in the person who works? Polo is explicit in indicating that personal being is the *core* of all the many ways in which contribution, task minding, and dedication unfold. Thus, "man works because he is a personal being, and the deepest dimension of personal being is effusiveness, i.e., the effort to elevate reality through work and to contribute something to what is already there" (Polo 2018, p. 20).

Work denotes a granting, and this personal center accounts for the "capacity to carry out (...) better and more intense contributions" (Polo 2018, p. 21). Thus, this task is steeped in innovation and contribution and takes on new life in an expansive intimacy that is witness to man's growth. What is more, "man is a priori and from himself a being who gives, gives of himself, and gives himself, and, in principle and in a radical light, that is the meaning of work" (Polo 2018, p. 21).

In this way, man's diverse possessions and achievements are characterized by being more or less intense. His action does not unfold from other manifestations or from what the universe provides him; rather, it occurs from his source: his novel act of being. Therefore,

“man is an innovating being, upon whose action depends something that, without it, would not exist at all. He is an innovative being because he contributes starting from himself rather than from the world” (Polo 2015d, p. 65). Against this, “work cannot be separated from contribution and, therefore, from initiative” (Polo 2015c, p. 185).

Man thus natively requires of himself, from the depths of his *being*, to work “as a person, and (. . .) (not) like a cockatoo or a slave” (Polo 2018, p. 25). If the person is contributing, “effusiveness will define and characterize him” (Polo 2018, p. 20). Thus, the person’s true character shines through in offering, and not in a set of formulas, applications, or through obtaining results. From this, it is inferred that “the human condition is violated when the worker is treated as a simple means, as an instrument for the achievement of corporate objectives as reflected in the formulation of certain liberal economists” (Polo 2018, p. 20).

Work rooted in personal intimacy denotes novel and effusive contribution. This indicates that “when working, the dignity of the human person, understood in a primarily active way, is at stake. The man who works is not a mere individual, tethered by salary to a clumsy productive mechanism, but rather a contributing intimacy exercising from within himself. Therefore, labor relations must not be superimposed, but must be integrated into the work itself as an action emerging from a radical and irreducible core” (Polo 2015e, p. 325).

In this way, we find that every created person justifies the manifestation and deployment of their labor. Consequently, the active personal core is the source of work, and any approach that undermines this depth has reductive consequences for man and how he is understood. In this regard, economism shows up as “an error insofar as it ignores that core and dilutes it in abstract legality without destiny looking to superficial satisfaction. By subjugating man, it evicts him from himself and turns him into an entity reduced to predetermined roles and functions” (Polo 2015e, p. 325). We must, therefore, maintain that man is, above all, an offerer, and that being an offerer is coherent with being a person (Polo 2015c). When intimacy is seen as the active core, it becomes clear that promoting omission, the privation of activity, the absence of effusiveness, or not working is contrary to man. At its core, this implies promoting the violence of ‘not-being a person’ (Polo 2008).⁵

3.2. The Ultimate Destiny of Work

According to Polo’s anthropological foundation, destiny involves the goal to which man aspires when placing his activity before it (whether his personal or manifestative activity). Obviously, there can be many and diverse goals in life. Here we wish to understand the definitive one, the pursuit of which corresponds to each person; and, likewise, to link intermediate goals, both short or long term, to it. Therefore, Destiny can be referred to with a capital letter because it is not just any kind of goal or a general end; and, strictly speaking, Destiny appeals to the Addressee.

Understanding the person as the source of work brings us to discuss a panorama of growth, manifestations, possessions, and results. Thus, “everything man does has medial value because the character of an end corresponds to the person” (Polo 2015c, p. 335). Of all the creatures in the world, man “is the joy of God” (Polo 2018, p. 44). Man is not a means, and not even just an end; the person is more than that. The value of human action does not correspond to his personal being, but rather it is the expansion of this *being* that makes said growth possible. Therefore, man’s manifestations and work account for what happens in his intimacy, since what happens on the plane of action reveals what occurs in his being (*operari sequitur esse*).

Thus, the human being is an exalted reality and is so, as has been said, because he *is* constitutive openness. In this way, we can see that he is designed for relationship, for *being-with*; that is to say, he not only exists, but also co-exists (Polo 2016b). According to

this, “man’s being is second being (. . .), in the sense that he cannot be solitary” (Polo 2015f, p. 11). The person is a gift, a feast (Polo 2015e)⁶, not only because he lives with others, but because he exists for others and for God. Thus, the person is spoken of along the lines of donation, and not in terms of fabrication or production (Polo 2019).

In this way, man cannot remain rooted in his achievements, nor in his possessions nor in his action. If man does not achieve things for others, then he works poorly. This conviction is reinforced by Polo when he warns that “if money is earned, welcome be it, but if by earning money I have not improved [anything], I am lost as a person, I have worked poorly (. . .) To serve wealth means to subordinate oneself to wealth, not to be a person. On the other hand, earning money, splendid! That is not necessarily serving wealth, since the more money I have at my disposal, the more things I can do, the more I can develop my capacities, and the more I can serve others” (Polo 2018, p. 28). This opens up a reflection on human destiny as service, which is so key in our days.

In line with native openness, perspectives of human personal co-existence are underscored in the consideration of work. Polo speaks of “co-existence” and of “the types of co-existence” (Polo 2016a). In the “types of co-existence” he describes levels of co-existence as outward openness, which he calls as such because it is not radical (among them, he highlights that man co-exists with the material universe and with other human beings in an essential and social realm). On the other hand, on this plane he justifies that co-existence is radical duality or radicality that comes second, starting from what has to do with the inner openness of intimacy (recognition of the lack of a replica⁷) and inward openness (which denotes that this lack cannot be definitive). In this regard, he maintains “that, radically, the human person co-exists with God, turning himself into a search” (Polo 2016a, p. 233). This argument sustains that radical co-existence corresponds to each man insofar as he exists before God.

Based on the above, the perspectives of human personal co-existence stand out as the principal forms in which man co-exists and relates, whether in an interior and inward manner, or outward one. The person co-exists because he *is* ‘richness’ and ‘activity,’ he is a who, he is an encounter; he co-exists because he is not ‘two persons’ and because he is not a unique (lonely) person either. If we refer to the radical relationship, he co-exists because, besides lacking a replica, such a lack is not definitive. Based on this, how are co-existence and the types of co-existence articulated with regard to work?

Of all the deductions, one of them stands out: the only addressee worthy of a personal contribution is another person. This consideration is backed by the person, but this time it is not the human person, but the divine Person (a personal God). From here it is clear that co-existence among created persons is not radical, but the co-existence of each man with God is. Why? Because God is his personal *theme*. Other relationships (with progenitors and parents, with children, siblings) are derived, secondary, and subsequent insofar as they occur once one already possesses existence. Thus, “not all works can be accepted by other human persons, for the simple reason that no one knows them all. Therefore, the only personal being who knows them and can accept some and reject others is the divine being. Therefore, the font of the created gift is God” (Sellés 2020, pp. 228–29).

So, how might we better understand work starting from radical co-existence? If native filiation occurs at the level of the personal act of being, it must have repercussions in the immaterial essence of man and in the deployment of his corporeal nature. This denotes that man, throughout his life, offers his work to other persons, and, ultimately, to God. The height of the person as a creature who works denotes intimate dealing with God. It implies ascribing act and being to the only Person who can completely accept them.

4. The Elements of Work as an Entrustment

Once the radical terrain of the human being has been opened up, the elements of work seen as an entrustment become the next matter to delve into. These components are explained starting from recognition and acceptance of the filial relationship, and are strongly linked to the essential and corporeal deployment of work. These derive from a broader signification in which Polo addresses the matter of “life as an entrustment,” or “a most profound way of understanding the human adventure” (Polo 2016b, p. 206), an issue he describes especially when he approaches the structure of the heroic myth in key matters of life (such as freedom as destiny, the difficulties of being free, the beneficiary of freedom, the encounter with truth, etc.).

From this inquiry, the elements of work as an entrustment can be broken down. Although detailing the contribution of hope goes beyond the limits of this paper, we must mention that hope is highly supportive of the elements of work. Polo especially values the hopeful task. He states that, “the complete structure of human hope consists of persons” (Polo 2023, p. 70). This inquiry offers innumerable contributions, for example, when dealing with optimism as its first ingredient, “the hope-filled man directs himself to what is best, comes out of self-absorption and sets himself to the task” (Polo 2023, p. 54). Thus, hope surrounds the broad signification of existence along the lines of personal offering, distinguishing itself from man’s possessions.

Polo proposes the following as elements of work: (a) He who gives the entrustment of work; (b) He who works, who accepts the work as an entrustment; (c) Collaborators and adversaries in the performance of the work; and, (d) The addressees of the work. Although somewhat simplified, these elements are taken into account in the following proposal: “There is no hero without a task, nor task without an entrustment, nor execution without an adversary and without a beneficiary” (Polo 2016b, p. 206). With this proposal, man is sustained not only in his starting point, but also in his goal. Thus, the primacy of the first element, the place of the subsequent ones, and the unity they form come into view such that, “if we eliminate an element, the system is impoverished. If there is no one to entrust, there is no task (. . .) If someone does not accept the entrustment, there is no free subject.” (Polo 2016b, p. 206).

In this situation one might question: how are the elements of work made compatible with the *senses* (objective and subjective) of work? Or, in any case, why add those elements if we already have other manifestative significations of this task? To avoid nominal equivocations, the response here is that the elements are deduced from the deepest justification of work, from the articulation of work with the personal order of the human being. They are not justified according to the achievement of results in the world, in man himself, or in other men (material and immaterial or internal results). The elements point out, rather, the place that God and human persons occupy in this dedication, admitting that man, as he does not exist alone, does not work alone, but rather does so with others and for others.

Therefore, the elements of work are understood starting from the personal realm. Given this, it must be added that, just as it is manifest that the performance of work concerns each man gathered in a social community, it is also manifest that each man is not described solely by what happens there or by the results he offers to the world and to other persons. In this way, the imprint of human and divine persons in work is glimpsed with more clarity by explaining such elements. Below, we offer a synthesis of their development.

4.1. “Who” Gives the Entrustment of Work

To begin, it must be made explicit that man is, evidently, the one who works. Although man is the one who carries out his work, he neither constructs nor invents entrustment. Thus, “one does not come up with an entrustment oneself, but rather it is granted”

(Polo 2016b, p. 206). To admit otherwise would be akin to saying that man creates himself, that he gives himself existence. Nor is an entrustment created by parents or family, by culture or community. Polo makes it clear that man cannot dispose of his immaterial essence and his corporeal nature, but must respect each's unfoldings and bring them to plenitude; that is, exercise them *according* to his endowment, to reach a plenitude linked to the entrustment.

Thus, in the unfolding of his existence, man evidences that 'much' has been given to him and 'something' he has inherited. By looking into the familial and social order, we find innumerable collaborators who can be seen as authors of an entrustment (bosses, progenitors). But, strictly speaking, they must be recognized as 'human authors' insofar as they spring from the specific functions and roles they play. However, "Who" gives an entrustment of work is found on a higher, superior plane. The giver of an entrustment is a personal Creator being. Then, just as 'human authors' of certain tasks are not rejected, even less is the existence and donation of the radical author of life and of the entrustment of work contested. The entrustment of each *who* and the incalculable commitments that manifest in the family and society are spliced and linked in the divine author. In denying this, work is impoverished.

Thus, "strictly speaking, the author of an entrustment is the Creator. For that reason, an entrustment must be understood as a granted mission" (Polo 2015b, p. 116). With this, we see that "the primordial donating initiative starts from God" (Polo 2016a, p. 251). Therefore, the first word (understand first as native, radical), is personal and divine. This initiative that starts from God denotes that He is the giver of an entrustment and that, by entrusting, He calls man to the task of labor. If man has his true north in said donating initiative, his existence transpires according to how he embarks upon this entrustment. Consequently, neither man's being nor his action answer, ultimately, to another created person, not even to the familial nucleus. Referring to God, Polo indicates that "if no one made me, then no one has given me a task. If there is no room for this endorsement of my performance, then I do not know what I am ultimately bound by, since I lack the indispensable critical criterion: to whose call do I respond?" (Polo 2023, pp. 52–71).

4.2. He Who Accepts the Entrustment of Work

Faced with the gift-giving initiative, a *yes* can occur. Acceptance of an entrustment follows from the acceptance of the radical bond that unites each man with God, that is, a welcoming of his filial condition and of the meaning in his life. Thus, the response must be from *another who* because, in this way, a deep bond is formed. In this framework, we see that "from such a great gift, a parallel yield or a work worthy of God is demanded, with justice" (Polo 2017, p. 164).

Acceptance of an entrustment does not consist of modifying the task according to one's interests, preferences, or whims; it is rather a personal response to the entrusted task. Surely it implies that man will question what corresponds to him. In this way, faced with an entrustment, man is "required to take charge of it" (Polo 2016b, p. 206) because, by entrusting tasks, God has given him special attention for said response. In this way, the trust that God has deposited in man is revealed. This call involves different capacities that man increases, utilizes, and yields, so that he can respond and measure up to the entrusted work. This makes patent the affinity of the perfectly divine act with the human personal act of being, which, although peculiarly distinct, can be strongly linked. Work is fastened onto this superior act of man and from there springs the actualization of his potentialities deployed in his essential and social order.

In this panorama, if the structure of the heroic myth is followed, man is represented as a hero; and regarding his work, his existence shines through when considering that “man is a collaborator of God” (Polo 2022, p. 208). In addition, while the initiative starts from God, its acceptance is not guaranteed. The fact that such an initiative exists does guarantee, upon acceptance, a deeper bond for man, since the acceptance of an entrustment imbues his existence with greater integrity and stature. However, man can refuse, reject his filial condition, and deny this entrustment. From here, we see that “if one turns one’s back on the task, hope cannot be put together” (Polo 2015d, p. 70) because hope occurs by trusting the author of the entrustment and flows in accordance with the human being’s response as well.

With this, non-recognition of an entrustment denotes a rejection of the task, but not the elimination of it (and, even less, of the *Who* that gives it). Here hope appears again; in this case, with a possible future acceptance of an entrustment, even if that beginning again supposes greater effort and endeavor because it must also respond to the absence of action or to mistaken works. However it may happen, acceptance of an entrustment is in harmony with man’s integrity; rejection of it defies his unity, separates him, and leaves him wounded.

4.3. Collaborators and Adversaries in the Performance of Work

A key matter must be added to this view of acceptance, namely, that man is hard pressed to believe that he is capable of achieving everything in life, or that life exclusively and absolutely needs his *being* and his *acting*. Rather, he must keep in mind that he, together with others and with God, carries existence forward. Thus, work as an entrustment not only summons one human being, but also others, who are recognized as collaborators. In this way, the divine initiative as a call to work summons each human being. Entrustment does not just remain in man’s *yes*, but also involves a broad panorama whose passing must be highly integrated.

The fulfillment of this task encompasses different partnerships through which man receives help. Regarding radical co-existence, man relies on God from the beginning as the giver of the entrustment, and He is the most important collaborator. Thereafter, diverse encounters evidence that other created persons are also collaborators. Every man discovers them because he works in the essential and material order, that is, with other persons and in the world. In this familial and social partnership, secondary collaborators are added, who are close in line with proximity. But, since this involves non-radical bonds, adversaries also appear.

Regarding collaborators, their collaboration depends in large part on the extent to which they connect themselves to the radical. This is so because, if the radical occurs at the superior level, said strength is noticed at the manifestative level. For their part, adversaries, if they are truly such⁸, have some disturbance in their being such that antagonism is seen in their action (their desire for domination, their selfishness, etc.). That something has to do with rupture of the filial condition, a result of which man fails to value God, others, and himself. With native filiation removed, relationship with God is undermined and that with others deteriorates (with parents, bosses, and workers). Although this rejection hinders entrustment for others, it harms the adversary himself most of all. Accordingly, “generosity does not disappear and leave in its wake a normal and justifiable human state. The refusal to be generous affects the person himself” (Polo 2015c, p. 115). Thus, assuming work as one’s own entrustment and collaborating with others is not only virtuous, but also constitutively personal.

Furthermore, the essential order is inscribed in the realm of the free and contingent, which is why it is where problems appear: works can manifest the rejection of an en-

trustment, man can constitute himself as an adversary and not a collaborator with others. Indeed, “whoever receives an entrustment (...) can freely relinquish it and not fulfill it (...) And, of course, adversaries decidedly oppose the fulfillment of an entrustment” (Sellés 2019, p. 100). From here, the feeling of an entrustment as a *burden* is understood (Polo 2015c). This involves commitment in the face of the obstacles that appear in life (including the painful and deformed behaviors of adversaries). Indeed, in various instances, this burden can be very heavy.

However, although work is laborious, it is a divine burden (from which, in turn, joy springs). Is it possible to falter in the face of this? Polo invites us not to forget that such a burden is ‘divine’ because, if God has given it, “the hope of bringing an entrustment to term has support (...) the goal is attainable, and the path feasible” (Sellés 2019, p. 101). Man thus relies first on God, since “the greatest help to complement my contribution comes from he who entrusts me with the task” (Polo 2015d, p. 78)⁹. And then he counts on others, since asking for help involves others, it seeks, it brings together. Accordingly, “to come together is the same as declaring that one cannot alone, or that isolated triumph does not matter much” (Polo 2015d, p. 72).

4.4. The Addressees of Work

We arrive at the final element of work; herein, attention is given to the persons involved in this task. To appeal to the destiny of work is to speak, as has been referred to, of other persons and of the final Addressee (Polo 2015d). It supposes looking beyond each man, that is, to others. Polo explores this consideration as follows: “Man finds, when assessing everything that comes from the person, that it is not enough for him; he has to find a term that is not a term of desire, but of offering (...) It is not primarily about reaching new heights, but about giving; who is going to accept it? The space in which my capacity to give resonates must also be personal” (Polo 2015d, pp. 62–63).

In this way, one arrives at the fact that, ultimately, man always expects a reception and a response. Regarding the matter of work, we see that, “when one works taking into account the consequences (...) that one’s own action produces in other persons distinct from oneself—the service provided, the facilities granted, help offered to a colleague, the good of others, etc.—then it can be said that man unitively integrates all the dimensions of his work and truly does so in accordance with his personal being” (Polo 2018, p. 26).

In work, according to the non-radical link, innumerable addressees are appropriate (parents, spouses, children, bosses, friends); they are identified as proximate or intermediate acceptors. What is the scope of their acceptance? These addressees’ reception is not complete because man accepts some works, forgets many others, tries to accept a few, and sometimes does not even do that. He cannot entirely accept each person’s gifts because, strictly speaking, he does not know them in the full sense of the term. This is confirmed in every moment that acceptance is not found or little is found. Faced with this unavoidable circumstance, should man renounce his life, or get on board with such yearning?

In this regard, emphasis is placed on the fact that the task of work must be “well directed, that is, ultimately, that there be a response” (Polo 2023, p. 70). Man must know what he can expect from the proximate acceptors of his labor. If he understands the nature of such an acceptance, he discerns that, although his offerings are valued, they cannot be recognized completely. In this aspiration he intuitively feels that there is Someone who measures up to his best donation, but that this does not emerge in a created person; his path, thus, is traced once again facing his Creator. He “is the only one who can value all our tasks, not only because neither others nor we ourselves can remember them all, but also because we do not know their entire, real value” (Sellés 2019, p. 104).

Thus it is possible for man to *hope*, but not in any way whatsoever, nor just any addressee. From this it is derived that an addressee of work is another person. Two modalities of personal addressees of work are highlighted, namely God and other created persons. Thus occurs a proximate encounter of human and personal contributions, so that “I give from the plenitude that I have because you are my neighbor; but you will only be my neighbor if you also effuse from the irreducible person that you are” (Polo 2015e, p. 64). Thus, a person is a worthy, meritorious, deserving addressee of work, despite not being the principal addressee.

Regarding the *hopeful task* that looks to the radical, he who works, recognizing the reception of human creatures, appeals to a greater form of acceptance. On this path he seeks God; and knowing that he *can* link himself with Him, he glimpses that, “only the limitless granting of intimacy permits one to maintain oneself before God” (Polo 2015c, p. 99). As the font of the created gift, none of the works and offerings of man are forgotten by Him, which is why the definitive acceptance of each human work corresponds to God alone because He is *Who* that authentically and completely knows each *who*. He knows, strictly speaking, the true and most real resonance of the work that mothers and fathers pour into their families, or that bosses and university professors exert.

From this perspective, native filiation becomes the fundamental key in anthropological foundation for defending man as a son and God as Father, and why this matter is not supernatural or revealed theology, but rather is a constitutively human, anthropological question. In this view, God is irreplaceable for man, and “the ultimate justification of human personal being resides in the capacity to communicate with God, to lead towards Him, and not toward the world” (Polo 2015c, p. 99). From here, we see that He is the principal Addressee of the entrustment, an idea with which the structure of work as an entrustment takes shape and completion.

5. Conclusions

Persons are the key point in an anthropological view of work, and their study is distinguished from the explanation of the manifestations, results, and magnificent works that human beings can achieve throughout life (which have been described from the objective sense and subjective sense of work). To speak of persons is to speak of the person who works, of the other persons who also do so, and, of course, of the divine multi-personal being, who, as Leonardo Polo argues, delivers the entrustment of work to each human person.

The constitutive, native, radical relationship of the human person with God is not the same as a derived or secondary relationship. In admitting the latter, one must also admit the former, which precedes all of the others. For this reason, when examining work, one must not attend to society alone, but, above all, to the native bond that unites the Creator with each human person. From here, work takes a different course, giving greater justification and scope to a task that currently involves millions of people.

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Notes

- ¹ Throughout this article, the term man and corresponding pronouns are used to faithfully reflect Leonardo Polo's original Spanish terminology (*hombre*). In Polo's transcendental anthropology, man is a technical term denoting the integrated anthropological reality that encompasses the human person (the transcendental act of being), the human essence, and human nature. Its use here is strictly conceptual and intended in accordance with the specific anthropological framework developed by Polo.
- ² In Polo's transcendental anthropology, the personal act of being is often referred to as 'intimacy' (*intimidad*). However, unlike the common English connotation of a closed, private, or purely affective sphere, Polian intimacy designates the human person's innermost being or radical core, i.e., the deepest dimension of personal existence, constitutively open, effusive, and directed towards self-giving.
- ³ For a comprehensive study of each conception of work that has emerged in the history of thought, see Negri (1980–1981).
- ⁴ All quotations are the authors' own translation unless otherwise noted.
- ⁵ Although these words express that rejecting novel effusiveness is a kind of 'suicide' in the personal order, a clarification is worthwhile regarding the situation of persons who are incapacitated and cannot participate in the productive dimension. Even though they cannot express this feature of work, their willful realization of works is not ruled out, and, above all, their inward growth. At the level of intimacy, these persons are also receivers and givers, which is why they can commit themselves to work, even if they do not do so exactly like those who are unimpeded. Added to this is their very real contribution to other persons (namely, respect and fraternal treatment), since their existence promotes better conduct in others, more dignified and attentive behavior, so that they are recognized and cared for as the persons they are (for this reason it can be said that they activate personal receiving and giving for those around them, calling them to be more).
- ⁶ A consideration of human life as a gift, as a feast, is reflected in Pieper (1999).
- ⁷ Note that in Polo's usage, the term "replica" designates the fact that the human person is not an isolated or self-sufficient reality but is constitutively open to personal correspondence and encounter. The lack of an intrinsic replica therefore points to the relational openness that underlies interpersonal communion.
- ⁸ Sometimes adversaries are identified solely on the basis of the frailty of the human condition, but this approach is insufficient to justify such a judgment. It is clear that human beings can make mistakes, so the mere fact of their errors is not, strictly speaking, a reason to consider them adversaries.
- ⁹ Whoever is born of God never ceases to rely on Him. For man, relying on the best possible help guarantees that the world cannot end in ruin or misfortune. Polo is explicit in pointing out the crucial nature of God's primary assistance, for with it, "the risk I am taking will not end in catastrophe" (Polo 2015c, p. 252).

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