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## **APPROACH TO TRANSCENDENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Leonardo Polo**

Translated by:  
Jaya Kilaire, Clara Nolan, Mercedes Rubio  
Edition and footnotes:  
Mercedes Rubio

This presentation must deal with two goals: on the one hand, it must consider your interests as listeners;<sup>1</sup> but on the other hand, I would like to say something more than what has been said in the publications or doctoral courses that I have devoted to this matter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a transcription of a lecture given by Leonardo Polo in the University of Malaga on Nov. 24, 1994, as part of the course "Antropología después de Hegel" organized by the research group on German idealism of the said university. It was initially published in Spanish in *Miscelanea Poliana*, Malaga 2005 (4): 8-24. It was also included in the collective volume *Antropología y trascendencia*, Eds. I. Falgueras, J. García González, University of Malaga (Malaga 2008): 9-29. It was reprinted in L. Polo, *Escritos Menores 2001-2014, Obras Completas*, vol. XXVI (Eunsa: Pamplona, 2018): 39-62.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. *Quién es el hombre* (Rialp, Madrid 1991) and *Presente y futuro del hombre* (Rialp, Madrid, 1993), reprinted in *Obras completas*, vol. X, Eunsa, Pamplona, 2016. Cf. particularly *Presente y futuro*, ch. 7: *Por qué una antropología trascendental*, 337-385. Also, "Libertas Transcendentalis." *Anuario Filosófico*, Pamplona, 1993 (26, 3): 703-716. Reprinted in *Persona y libertad, Obras completas*, vol. XIX (Eunsa: Pamplona, 2017): 239-252.

## TRANSCENDENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS A PROPOSAL

We could begin by saying that I consider transcendental anthropology as a proposal: it suggests a transcendental version of anthropology. This proposal means, first of all, that it is a study in progress; but I am also suggesting a new approach that does not disqualify other different approaches, that it aims to be respectful of the other possible ways of approaching the subject of man. Naturally, it must necessarily stand out, or differentiate itself from them, even if it includes some of their aspects; otherwise, it would not be a proposal. But if it were proposed in a critical way with respect to other versions of anthropology, then it would have too dogmatic a sense in my opinion, and that is not my intention.

Above all, because it seems to me that philosophy is always an open road. I usually express this—in a somewhat paradoxical way—by saying that where philosophers make a mistake is in their last word if they consider it to be the last word. Philosophy can always go further because truth is inexhaustible. No matter how many achievements, how many acquisitions made in the course of the history of philosophy, on such a broad scope as belongs to it—philosophy takes on many issues—; no matter how much it moves forward, philosophy can never end. That is why it is called *philo-sophy*: there is no last word, no last finding.

This proposal eliminates dogmatism: I never intend to be dogmatic. Dogmatic is the philosopher who considers that he has thought of everything, who constructs an entire system, as Hegel might do. No, this is not it: one can continue along that path and perhaps contribute other things, or one can achieve different goals along another path, by another methodology. This is not dogmatism.

Transcendental anthropology is, let us put it this way, a song to the open character of the human being. If the human being is indeed an open being, it cannot be exhausted. No matter how much one wants to carry its

study forward, it always remains unfinished. There are always more things to say that one never ends up saying. This is an issue that Husserl already expressed at the end of his life – he was over seventy years old – when he was asked if he considered himself mature after the many years he had dedicated to philosophy, or if he had acquired insights that could be considered final; and he said 'no' because one needed to live as many years as Methuselah, nine hundred years, to begin to be mature. In fact, I have devoted over forty years to philosophy, and no matter how much you rack your brains over these matters they never end, they are never exhausted.

Transcendental anthropology—I repeat—is a proposal. What is being proposed? The proposal is to approach the theme of man in a different way from the one adopted by classical philosophy—meaning the one that starts with the Greeks and continues in the Middle Ages—. According to the latter, the theme of man is understood or approached in a way that is, properly speaking, non-transcendental. Some possible hints or indications notwithstanding, from which one could start as help or precedents, the complete or final profile that anthropology has in that tradition is something inherited from the Greeks that the medieval thinkers didn't know how to break through. According to that anthropology, man is, properly speaking, the object of second philosophies. Anthropology is a second philosophy, by no means a first philosophy. The first philosophy is metaphysics, which is, precisely for this reason, the one that must deal with the transcendentals. At most, man would be a being open to the transcendentals, but he himself would not be transcendental, or there would be no human transcendentals. Man is simply an entity, an entity of great category, but no more than an entity among entities. However, the medieval position is not exactly the same as the Greek position, because in Greek philosophy the subordination of man to the universe is much more intense than in medieval Christian philosophy. You all know that Aristotle considered that there were intellectual elements in the universe

too, such as the spheres and the prime mover or prime movers. By introducing such an element into the universe, man is subordinated to it, participates of it. Christian philosophy attempts to overcome the paganism of Aristotle, but despite this attempt it preserves many elements of that ancient intra-cosmism. An intra-cosmic interpretation of man still prevails.

In the classical position, man is a second being—a second cause, it is sometimes said—precisely because the prime of reality is the foundation or ground.<sup>3</sup> The primordial character of reality is approached in a *fundamental* or *grounding* way, and primary being corresponds to it. What is properly or primordially transcendental is the foundation. Not man, because man is understood as a founded or caused being, and the relation between the foundation and the founded determines the position of the themes or subject matters. If man is studied thematically as such, he will be studied by a second philosophy; he cannot be studied as a primary theme, properly speaking. Man is not the foundation, but a being that is founded, caused, dependent on...; ultimately, a finite being. This is the classical approach; there is no room for a transcendental anthropology. At most, one can speak of anthropology as a second philosophy. From my point of view, there is a shortcoming in this formulation, of which the authors themselves are aware of to some extent. That is, there is also an effort to break away from this position, to break the limits assigned to man by the Greeks in order to go beyond; but it is not successful and, in the end, they give up.

### **THE MODERN INVERSION OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL**

In modern philosophy, from the very first instance, even with some very late medieval precedents, there is an attempt at reversing the

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<sup>3</sup> The words "foundation" or "ground" and their derivatives stand here for the Spanish "fundamento," "fundamental," "fundado," and "fundante." I have used them interchangeably in the discussion that follows. (n.t.)

approach. I usually call it *symmetrisation*. Modern philosophy is very much concerned with the theme of man, it pays much more thematic attention to man than the ancients did. Thus, man gradually grows in importance; but in order to formulate this importance, to establish it in a philosophical way, the categories of classical thought are reiterated. In that way, if man was not transcendental in the classical approach because he was not fundamental, he was not the foundation but a founded being, the modern approach, which advocates the dignity or the primordality of man, claims it in terms of fundamentality. It seems to me that nothing is gained with this, it is rather a loss. What is not gained—and this is the approach that I propose—is an enquiry into what is strictly peculiar to man. It is often said that the primary reality is the substantial reality. In the case of man, the substantial reality is called the subject. And in modern philosophy the subject is understood in a subjectivist sense, to say it bluntly. This is evident in Kant, because the notion of subject acquires a noumenal character: Subject means a grounding apriority that has to do with the unfolding of all that is given in experience. The subject is the foundation of what is founded. Hegel also says that the substance is the subject.<sup>4</sup> Has anything been gained with this symmetrisation? I insist, have we gained with this symmetrisation? It might seem so, because man has been put in the first place, and now we'll be able speak of anthropocentrism. But in fact, we have not gained all that could be gained because—in my opinion—what should be said is that the transcendental character of the human being in no way means that man is the foundation, it means something else: that the foundation is not the unique or single thing.<sup>5</sup>

The total equivalence between primordality and foundation cannot be made; it cannot be made precisely because man is also primordial. Man

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<sup>4</sup> Cfr. G. W. Hegel, *System of Science, First part: The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Bamberg and Würzburg, Joseph Anton Goebhardt (1807), Preface 17:15; 18:16; 25:21.

<sup>5</sup> "Unique" and "single" stand here for the Spanish "único," which L. Polo uses throughout the discussion that follows in close connection with the transcendental notion of "one." (n.t.)

is also a primordial being, but that does not turn man into a fundamental being: man's primordially is not that of the foundation. Now, if man is also primordial, on the one hand it is evident that we eliminate his dependence on the foundation as a founded being. Therefore, we don't have to say that anthropology is a second philosophy either. On the other hand, by saying that man is primordial but not in the fundamental sense, the primordial nature of the foundation is preserved. It is true that the founding character does not belong to man, but while it does not, or precisely because of it, the foundation is a primordial sense of being, or one of the senses of primordially. And this is what I usually call *expansion*. The proposal of a transcendental anthropology is—strictly speaking—an expansion of the transcendentals, or an expansion of the transcendental approach.

There is neither a tie nor a quarrel to see who comes first, the foundation or man. Because if it is said that man comes first in terms of foundation, all that has really been done is to displace the notion of foundation, and this also has significant shortcomings. I have already said that, as this is just a proposal, it does not rule out other approaches. At the same time, it is necessary to point out the discrepancies, although without being necessarily critical in tone. But it seems obvious to me: what is to be gained by saying that the foundation is man instead of a being other than man? What does that imply regarding the knowledge of man? Nothing. And most importantly, nothing is gained with regard to the progress or broadening of philosophical knowledge, like a new finding. At most, that we were mistaken; it is simply a matter of position. What is the foundation: something on which we depend as second beings, or are we ourselves the foundation, and consequently the independent beings on whom everything else depends?

Sometimes, especially in the 19th century, it was argued that man does not depend on anything, that man is independent. This independence makes all else depend on him. Well, you are telling me that

man is the fundamental reality. But that's just a change of position; we believed that the foundation was that and now we say that the foundation is us, but is this a good finding about ourselves? It is a form of taking hold of what seemed external, which is quite clear in Feuerbach, for example, and in Marxism as well. There has been a shift, so to speak, a Copernican turn in the foundation-founded relation. We are not the ones founded, but we are the foundation. The truth is that, in terms of strict enquiry, in terms of the expansion of philosophical enquiry, this is null and void, because what difference does it make? What have we actually gained? The notion of foundation we already had it; we have just relocated it. We have gained nothing, we have not innovated, there are no new notions about man.

This reversal can be clearly seen in Newton and Kant. For Newton, the space of the universe is *sensorium Dei*. Basically, it looks a lot like an attribute of Spinoza, it is the infinity in which God creates the universe: the universe is an island in space; that is why space is not created but divine: *sensorium Dei*. What does Kant do? Well, he says 'no: Space is *sensorium hominis*.' Has Kant really gained anything in respect to Newton? Is it not simply a question of a different subject of attribution for the same notion? By changing the subject of attribution, has anything been achieved, a new finding? Have we taken the investigation further? It seems clear that we have not.

So, my proposal is this: to say that anthropology is transcendental is an extension of the transcendental approach; it cannot be done in terms of symmetrisation. When it is done in terms of symmetrisation, man becomes a noumenal being, and—in addition—this approach makes metaphysics impossible as treatment of a reality that transcends us, or of a fundamental reality which we are not. Strictly speaking, Kant's critique of metaphysics, his metaphysical agnosticism, ends up contradictorily admitting a noumenon. Where is the noumenon now? In short, it is in the transcendental subject in its practical version. In the face of that, in the

face of the symmetrisation of the transcendental, what we do in a transcendental anthropology and by claiming that anthropology is not a second philosophy, is to eliminate the uniquely fundamental character of the primal. For this reason, speaking of a transcendental anthropology has a real value of progress, even if—I repeat—it is just a proposal.

We say that the primal is not foundation uniquely, but that there are other kinds of primality, or another sense of primordially; and this other sense of primality is precisely that which—let us put it this way—constitutes man, or that which man contributes. In short, to speak of a transcendental anthropology is not to rob the foundation of its character of foundation to attribute it to man, certainly not. The foundation is where it should be. Perhaps some progress will have to be made in the knowledge of the foundation, because it is possible to better determine what foundation means, and this is a theme of metaphysics. But the human being, while being primal, while being transcendental, is not fundamental. This is the point, and I call it *expansion of the transcendentals*, or expansion of the transcendental approach. Transcendental anthropology is thus effectively transcendental and not a second philosophy. Not by symmetrisation, I stress once again, but by expansion, by the discovery of a non-fundamental sense of the transcendental.

### **TRANSCENDENTAL FREEDOM**

And what is it that can be non-fundamental and yet be transcendental? In what way can we place anthropology as a transcendental knowledge without thereby taking hold of metaphysics, but leaving metaphysics in its proper place? Well, by distinguishing a sense of the transcendental whose study corresponds to metaphysics, and another sense of the transcendental that corresponds to the study of anthropology, not to metaphysics. In other words, there would be



transcendentals that we do not discover as such, as transcendentals, unless we study man.

The first of these is freedom. The primacy of the foundation and the primacy of freedom are not the same. Freedom cannot be said to be a fundamental transcendental, nor can the foundation be said to be a free transcendental. First of all, freedom cannot be said to be foundation; freedom does not have the task of founding, nor does it have a fundamental structure or a fundamental character. Thus, if we understand freedom as a foundation—and Kant clearly does—, then we have not discovered a new sense of the transcendental, we have not expanded the consideration of the transcendental.

This is what should be said now: that what we educe when speaking of a transcendental anthropology is the transcendental character of freedom, and simultaneously its distinction with respect to the foundation: freedom does not ground. But the fact that it does not ground does not mean that it is not primal, what it means is that the primal nature of the foundation is not a monopoly: the foundation does not monopolise the notion of priority, or of radicality. One can be radically free, or freedom can be radical, without freedom being the foundation of anything, without freedom being a theme to be studied by metaphysics. Freedom must evidently be studied by anthropology because, where do we discover freedom? In the human being. Starting from the human being we can also say that God is free, but we must consider the human being first. In order to speak of freedom, we cannot start from the foundation as pondering the universe allows us to grasp it. The foundation of the universe *qua* foundation of the universe—which is how we discover it—cannot be said to be free.

Therefore, shifting the foundation in order to attribute it to the human subject leads to such oscillating positions as Kant's. For Kant, the transcendental subject is a foundation in two ways, and this is already beginning to look suspicious. Foundation as *ratio essendi* of a *ratio*

*cognoscendi* that is the categorical imperative. Freedom is *ratio essendi: ratio*, foundation of the categorical imperative and—consequently—moral autonomy, autonomy of the will. But there is another sense of the transcendental in Kant, which is a descending transcendental, a transcendental that does not remain on its own level; and that is the transcendental subject in its theoretical use. There the transcendental subject goes downwards, it is the starting point of a deduction which ultimately ends in the phenomenon, in sensibility. Kant suspects—and he says so clearly—that in this sense the apriority of the subject is evil; and not only evil, but radically evil. When Kant speaks of radical evil, he is referring precisely to this: that a subject ends in the sensible. If a transcendental subject ends in the sensible, then we have *conversio ad creaturas*, and therefore radical evil, because in Lutheran terms it is sin that has this radical character. It is puzzling because for Kant, just as for Luther, knowing is a radical evil; and this is because, supposedly, knowing means knowing objectively, thematically, the sensible world; knowing by being filled with sensitive contents, which Kant calls the object of experience. Well, admitting these two senses of the transcendental of the subject is aporetic, and the Kantian subject—I stress—is transcendental in these two ways: it is transcendental in its real but not objective sense, the one of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and it is transcendental with respect to objects but not in a real sense, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Naturally, these observations or allusions to Kant are meant to clarify the difference between his approach and the approach of a transcendental anthropology that I propose. But this does not mean that I have a particular resentment against Kant, or that I want to establish a transcendental anthropology in opposition to Kant, or in a strictly different sense from the Kantian one. No; in the first place because I do not regard Kant to be so important as to be a point of reference on which to mount a great amendment. And secondly because it seems to me that what Kant says, from a certain point of view and taking into account Kant's limits and

historical context, is not something one can admit, but it is at least understandable; and what is understandable should not be dismissed. It is not a question of dismissing it, it is rather saying that it falls short. Freedom is transcendental, but not as *ratio essendi*, or as foundation, because freedom does not ground anything. It does not ground anything indeed, because its very nature is not to ground.

Sometimes it is said that the person is cause and that this is freedom, because otherwise we fall into determinism. I repeat that freedom does not ground. If freedom does not ground, do we fall into determinism, then? No, freedom does not ground because grounding does not correspond to it. Founding is not its work: its task is rather something else. That is to say, there is certainly something that depends on freedom: Freedom gives way to something that depends on it. But this dependence on freedom is not exactly a causation, or a foundation, but is rather the essence of man. And here I would like to make a very slight precision, but in my view very interesting, or very important for me: when I speak of being, I always speak of the human being, not of the being of man. In contrast, when I speak of essence, I never say human essence, but rather the essence of man. Perhaps I may occasionally drop it out of convenience, but I try to maintain this principle. Well, transcendental freedom has the possibility of giving way to something of its own on another level, to which it also arrives; but then it is—let us put it this way—a second-level freedom. This is how I understand that which freedom gives way to, that others say is caused by it. Personal freedom gives way to a psychological freedom, for instance, or to moral freedom, or to freedom of choice, etc., none of which are transcendental, but rather derivations of transcendental freedom. I usually say that they are like the slopes of freedom, the slopes in the sense of a mountain. A mountain has slopes, so transcendental freedom, which is an apex, has slopes. Are these slopes caused by freedom? No, I would say that they are neither

caused nor founded. What happens is that freedom comes to them, reveals itself in them.

On the other hand, determinism is indefensible today, and not just in relation to freedom. It is untenable as a thesis. Determinism is a modern thesis, which depends on the existence of initial conditions and on the initial conditions being finite in number and also fixed. Well, it is known today that these requirements are not necessarily fulfilled. However, it is not even possible to speak of initial conditions without them. The central problem of any theoretical physicist today is the notion of initial condition, but without the notion of initial condition, the notion of determinism—of the existence of entirely determined processes—cannot be upheld.

Further: I would say that freedom, insofar as it is expressed, or insofar as it appears at the level of the human essence, and therefore also at the level of human acts, has a peculiar sense which is more than merely not letting determinism invade everything; because I have already said that determinism does not invade anything, because today we don't know what determinism means. Freedom does something else: what freedom does is to intervene in processes. And so, it is not that it causes processes, but rather that the efficacy of freedom, essential freedom, or freedom in action, consists in putting an end to them: closing a future, annulling a future, and opening another; and this is intervening in processes. Intervening in processes in such a way that what was going to be will never be, but will be instead that which without freedom would never be. Does that mean to say that it causes it? No, it doesn't cause it; it just opens up another process. Freedom, in a moral sense and in a practical sense, is like a capacity for insight into futures, for the annulment of a future and the opening of another. But naturally these futures are like directions of processes in which the interference of freedom changes their sense; in this way it could be said that freedom is creative; but is it a

foundation? Foundation, in the metaphysical sense, which is the authentic sense of the word foundation, it is not.

I have dwelt on these questions, which are partially preliminary, precisely because my approach is a proposal. These preliminary considerations are inherent because, first of all, the exact value that I attribute to the proposal must be determined. I propose that it is possible to establish a transcendental anthropology, but not at the cost of nothing, rather in the form of an expansion, in the manner of an expansion. 'Not at the cost of nothing' means not in the form of an oscillation, or of a symmetrisation, because in that case strictly speaking there is no cognitive gain. When it is said that freedom is *ratio essendi*, what happens is that one does not understand what love is, one does not understand what freedom is. And when one confuses intellection and truth, strictly speaking one does not know what truth is, what intellection is, etc.

### **THE HUMAN TRANSCENDENTALS**

If we now turn a little more closely to classical philosophy, we should say that they too fell short with respect to freedom, or with respect to anthropology. And yet, if one turns over the things they say about transcendentals, then we can benefit from some suggestions and say that there are personal transcendentals, human transcendentals, or transcendentals that can only be discovered by studying man. The word 'transcendental' was first coined, albeit with strong Greek precedents, in the Middle Ages. In the classical sense, 'transcendental' refers precisely to the broadest notions. That is, precisely from Aristotle onwards, transcendental means meta-categorial: that which is beyond the categories. Subsequently, the notion of transcendental had in the Modern Age a series of inflections, some of them implicit in what I just said about symmetrisation. And—from my perspective—this notion has experienced yet another inflection. Let us see it now.

When the medieval philosophers speak, for example, of truth as transcendental and of good as transcendental, they say that these are relative transcendentals; that is to say, that there is no truth if there is no intellection, and that there is no good if there is no will. Now if truth is transcendental and good is transcendental, then how can we not say that their correlatives are transcendental? Intellection must at least be as transcendental as truth, and will too. But the transcendental of intelligence cannot be confused with that of truth, as it would be the case if we were to say that what is thought is true precisely because it is thought; that would be symmetry again. No: it is rather a correlative transcendental. The classics call it relative, but we could call it correlative: Intelligence is open to the truth, since without intelligence there is no truth. Does that mean that the intelligence is the foundation of truth? Intellection does not found truth. It has its own priority, just as truth has its own priority too. The same happens with love, that is, with the good and the will. What corresponds to good in the will? Well, something at least as transcendental as the good: love. Love is also a transcendental, but it is a *personal* transcendental. Kant also says something to this effect: Man is the true good; the holy is a good will.<sup>6</sup> But can one speak of the transcendental of the will in terms of goodness, or should we speak of the transcendental of the will in terms of correspondence with the good? And then, this correspondence with the good will no longer be the good, but love. Love is primordial with respect to the good, even if the good is also primordial in its own order.

It seems to me that these observations contribute to clarify the extension of the transcendentals too. Transcendental anthropology understood as an extension of the transcendentals is in no way carried out to the detriment of the order of the metaphysical transcendentals. There is no theft, like saying that truth is the same as intellection, that the good is the will, or that freedom is the foundation; nothing of this sort is said.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Part I, Section II.

What is said is that there is a sense of the transcendental that expands the metaphysical transcendentals. There is a classical precedent, although not clearly seen, which gave rise to a series of quite serious discussions. The one who I believe discusses this in depth, precisely because there wasn't a sufficiently firm or clear position on the matter, is Duns Scotus. The great problem that Duns Scotus articulates is this: what is *prius*, truth as understood or the intellection of truth? We find the same in Ockham: what is *prius*, goodness or the will? is it the will that is really transcendental, so that the good depends radically on the will? In Ockham there is already an inversion, a quite clear symmetrisation, which is his theological voluntarism.

I believe that transcendentals convert with one another; and that this can be upheld, but not shown, with respect to the metaphysical transcendentals. In metaphysics, convertibility must be understood just as order. That is to say, in order to affirm that transcendentals convert with one another, what must be said first of all is in what order: which one is first, which is second, which is third—assuming that the transcendentals are three: 'Being,' 'truth' and 'goodness,' which is what seems to me; as well as 'one,' which is also transcendental but in a peculiar way—this as far as the metaphysical transcendentals are concerned. On the other hand, when it comes to personal transcendentals, or to that extension which is transcendental anthropology, it seems to me that the convertibility is more clearly noticeable. It seems to me that *intellectus* and freedom are convertible, and that freedom and love are convertible. A love that is not free cannot properly be called love, or it is not transcendental. It would be desire, it would be attraction to..., etc., but not love in the strong sense of the word, which is gifting, *donatio*.<sup>7</sup> I think that it is easier to see that personal transcendentals are convertible than in the case of metaphysical

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<sup>7</sup> The word that L. Polo uses here and in other places to describe love is "donal," which derives from "don" (gift) but does not exist in this specific form in the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language. It could also be translated as "gift in action." (n.t.)

transcendentals. Certainly, there cannot be a being without it being true, yes. But how is being itself true? Just... according to a certain order, one might say. It is one thing to see the need for conversion, understanding by conversion that there cannot be one without the other, and another to show the conversion. There cannot be a truth that is not the truth of being, nor a being that is entirely foreign to truth, or to goodness, etc. In this sense it is said that, ultimately, we must speak of convertibility; but in metaphysics it seems to me that it is not so clear as to how does convertibility work. In the case of the human transcendentals, it is clearer. It can be seen—I think—that freedom and intellection, and freedom and love, are transcendentially convertible.

What is being proposed is that the notion of transcendental can be expanded: there are more transcendentals than were thought or properly recognised as such. And, at the same time, some of those thought to be transcendental are not. In the list of transcendentals produced by the medieval philosophers, neither there are all that are transcendental, nor all that are there are transcendental. You will remember the list of transcendentals that appears in the textbooks, mostly taken from the works of Thomas Aquinas,<sup>8</sup> where there is a very rich elaboration of this matter. *Aliquid* and *res* are usually included in the list of transcendentals. Well, I believe that *aliquid* and *res* are not transcendentals. And it seems to me that I can show that they are not; but that is not so important, because both are somewhat strange transcendentals within the same classical approach.

#### **TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY**

I believe too that the question of the transcendental 'one,' the transcendental of the one, is very difficult, and that it is not solved by any philosophy; but above all it is not solved by the one who brought it to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, 1, 1; *De natura generis*, 2.



light, who was in fact Plato. Even if Plato does not speak of transcendentals, the theory of unity, that unity is transcendental, we owe to Plato. How is the 'one' transcendental? For if there is a transcendental that is particularly affected by the proposal of expansion is this one, because we propose a distinction between metaphysical transcendentals and human transcendentals. What is there to say about unity, then? The importance of the one, even the primordially of the one, or the identification between the one and the foundation, is quite clear in Plato, especially in the later Plato; and it is directly withheld by Plotinus. The discussion about whether 'one' or 'being' comes first, that is, about whether the foundation must be called 'being' before 'one,' or whether it must be called 'one' before 'being;' or that if it is called 'one' it cannot be called 'being,' and if it is called 'being' it cannot be called 'one,' etc., triggered a long discussion and controversy. Philosophical controversies are always fruitful, among other reasons because when one debates within philosophy, if the controversy is really serious, one brings up, and the mind is occupied with, very important matters. And since they are very important matters, one can hope—and it can certainly happen—that the debate may yield some finding.

One of the findings which seems to me to be successful about the one, and which I also subscribe to, so to speak, and which I must take advantage of precisely to propose the extension of the transcendentals, is that 'unity,' the one, is transcendental as long as it is not intended in the sense of 'unique'—i.e. *monon*—or in the sense of 'everything.' Remember what Parmenides says when he says that being is one, and in addition being is everything. It is one in the sense that there is no more than being. Here, 'one' can be translated as 'unique,' from which the famous problem of unity and plurality arises: how to make plurality compatible with unity and unity with plurality? A subject long discussed and long examined over many centuries.

The ability of the great philosophers to always deal with the same issues, without ever clarifying them and yet never giving up, is remarkable. The ability to keep one's mind on a subject without having yet mastered it, but whose importance is perceived, is clearly noticed, or intellectually experienced. This is one of philosophers' great merits, of the minds devoted to philosophy. Philosophy teaches precisely this, to never give up. Practical life rather invites often to give up: when things don't go well, or when they go awry, then they are abandoned. When a problem seems insoluble, when we can't see clearly enough, then... the fox and the grapes: as he could not get hold of them, he said they were green and went away. This is the practical position, not a strictly theoretical position; this is not the philosophical position. Philosophers are capable—and he who isn't is only half a philosopher—of standing their ground. The more difficult the matter, the better. The harder it is for one to solve it, the better. The more centuries it has taken to think over a problem, the better. It is often said that philosophers are always quarrelling, going at each other's throats, and that this is a sign that they know nothing for certain; scientists sometimes argue in this way. But the philosopher cannot accept this argument, he must reverse it: we are settling an issue for a long time because we have not yet seen it clearly; and we have not yet seen it because it is a worthwhile subject, capable of setting in motion, of stretching, all the resources of the human mind.

Regarding the matter of unity, I don't think I have managed to see it clearly yet—that would be a last word—but rather that I have cleared up the question a little bit: 'One' cannot mean *monon*. And that is what was underlying the secular problem of the one and the multiple and making it unsolvable. Some solution was tried, such as speaking of analogy, or speaking of *koinonia*, etc.; but it always had something of a logical solution, or a solution arbitrated *ad casum*. Since it was necessary to make plurality and unity compatible, then a certain compatibility was sought. But no: what must be said is that the expansion of the

transcendental eliminates the confusion between 'one' and 'unique,' or between 'one' and 'all.' This confusion remains in modern philosophy too. Hegel formulates it as follows: the true is the whole.<sup>9</sup> Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of totality, and this totality is the one. Dialectics is a solution to the problem of the one and the many, but a compromise solution, in which the one simply takes over the many, encompasses it, and so constitutes itself as a synthetic totality, as an all-encompassing *Begriff*.

I reiterate that what is most affected by, or has most to do with, the notion of expansion is precisely the transcendental 'one.' The one has a lot of prestige, even if today we have sort of renounced it. I believe that we have renounced the one largely because of demoralization: we have become demoralized. There are philosophers—and I am sorry to say this because they are my contemporaries, or younger than me—who are demoralized; and they are demoralized precisely because of this issue of the one, which is indigestible for them. They renounce the 'one' understood as 'everything,' and do not know how to solve the problem of the one and the multiple. Renouncing unity, they speak of pluralism: pure pluralism, accepting pure difference as insoluble; the differences whose convocation or whose unity there is no way of achieving. That pluralism must be definitively accepted, sometimes provokes a strong reaction on the political plane that is the so-called fundamentalism; Islamic fundamentalism, for instance, which is the total rejection of pluralism. The one must be compatible with the difference; that is to say, the one has to be compatible with the expansion. It is not possible to speak of the one as a block. This is also why I say that it is a proposal: to say that something is proposed, if one is coherent, if what is proposed is really presented as a proposal, obviously eliminates dogmatism. Because in the end, dogmatism—and now it seems to me that we can say it—is the absolutism

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline Part 1: Science of Logic*, paragraph 14. Transl. and Ed. K. Brinkmann, D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2010) p. 43.

of the one, i.e. the confusion of the one with the unique, or with everything. But avoiding this confusion does not imply denying that the one is transcendental; it is simply not transcendental in that way, it must be transcendental in another way.

That is to say, the transcendental sense of the one must get rid of that connotation of totality or unicity, and that is a solution that is entirely in solidarity with the fact that the expansion of the transcendental is a proposal. I don't know if you see this, but it is evident that if we must expand the transcendentals it is because priority does not have a single meaning: it is not only the foundation. It is not that it's not foundation, but it is not *only* foundation. And then the one cannot be only founding of the multiple, as if the plural were below the one, as it is sometimes said. Hegel says so too; for him the multiple has to be caught in the one, and saved from its particularity, which makes it false. Saved by unity is totalization; well, no. Last word, no. Strictly speaking, if the one is the whole, it is the last word; and I have already told you that the last word is always false.

This attitude is coherent with what I have been saying: that transcendental anthropology is a proposal. Philosophy proposes thematically, and for the same reason it keeps expanding. There is an approach, and I propose to expand it. Evidently, I propose to add to it: I found out something different, I have moved forward. Thus, philosophy keeps advancing, it is coherent with itself, it is not paralyzed, does not sclerotize in formulations that are considered definitive. No; in philosophy, formulations are not definitive; they can be maintained, and many of them must be maintained because they are true, but that does not mean that they are the ultimate, that beyond which one cannot go. I am being somewhat reiterative, but the reiterative expression seems to me to be the only way to formulate a thought that tries to be coherent with itself.

## **UNICITY AS METHOD**

If the question is in the one, that is, if that which is affected by the transcendental expansion is the one, then, in order to be able to proceed to the expansion, it is essential to make an inquiry about the one, made as precisely as possible. And I stress, the first thing to be said about the one is that one and unicity are not equivalent: the transcendental 'one' is not unicity; and neither is it the ideal of system; that is to say, the totality. Well, now we must add that the notion of unicity, however, is a notion that we can formulate, and in fact do formulate. Moreover, our mind almost always formulates it, it functions based on it. And this is precisely where the methodical dimension is to be found, that is, the line along which transcendental notions can be thematically established as we try to expand them. If one admits metaphysical transcendentals—metaphysics deals with transcendentals—and one also admits anthropological transcendentals, anthropology is also a transcendental philosophy. Where the matter lies is there, in the one; and if it is in the one it must be said that the one is the obstacle. As long as we do not know how to go beyond the one, or if we are not able to go beyond the one as unique, then this proposal is vain, it cannot be seriously formulated. So, it is in the unicity of the one that the methodical aspect of transcendental expansion is concentrated. Or in other words: if we are going to advance, we will advance in the same measure in which we leave, in which we abandon—I put it this way—the notion of unicity.

Because the notion of unicity accompanies our thoughts whenever we think objectively; when we think in this way, we think only that which we think, and we think it as one and the same. I do not know if I have ever spoken about theory of knowledge here in Malaga, or if you have read the *Course on Theory of Knowledge*.<sup>10</sup> Although the truth is that,

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<sup>10</sup> L. Polo, *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, v. I, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 1984); v. II (Pamplona, 1985); v. III (Pamplona, 1988), v. IV/1 (Pamplona, 1994). In *Obras Completas* v. IV-VIII (Pamplona, 2015-2017).

already in *The Access to Being*,<sup>11</sup> I began to formulate this; it was the first time that I came across plain evidence, so to speak. In short, unicity is the peculiarity of objective knowledge. Aristotle puts it this way: one knows only the one.<sup>12</sup> When we know, we know the same that we know; this is true when we know objectively. Therefore, to untangle the confusion, or to highlight the transcendental 'one' without confusing it with the *monon*, with the unique, we must be able to go beyond the object, beyond objective thought or knowledge, since objective knowledge is precisely the knowledge of the same. When we know objectively, we know only what we know; we always know the object as unique. We can say that there are two objects, or three objects; but when we perceive three objects, that plot of objects is one, we know them unitarily, they constitute what we think now, and we think of it as unique, as a unicity, which is precisely what we think. When we think objectively, we think what we think, nothing more, nothing less; that is unicity.

Well, this unicity I call the *mental limit*, so that in order to formulate the proposal by finding a method according to which this proposal can go forward, it is necessary to abandon the limit, that is to say, it is necessary to think but not objectively. Metaphysics, metaphysical themes, cannot be thought objectively either. Someone who thinks objectively the first thing, the primary thing in terms of foundation, does not think adequately, or thinks badly; and naturally, whoever thinks only objectively cannot know either the transcendental character of freedom, or of intellection, or of love, which are the great human transcendentals.

I reiterate, expanding the transcendental, saying that it is not only the foundation, and not only freedom, etc. what this does within the classical teaching of the transcendentals, is to affect the one. Therefore, it must be said that the one may be transcendental, but not as unique. And

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<sup>11</sup> L. Polo, *El acceso al ser*, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 1964). In *Obras Completas* v. II (Pamplona, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *De anima*, 425b 27; *Metaphysica*, 1037b 25; *Parva naturalia*, 447b 18.

then, what does unique mean? Unique means precisely limit. And what is the limit in terms of knowledge? The object. When thinking, we think what we think and nothing more, and exclusively what we think. So then, evidently, if we think exclusively that and nothing more, we think uniquely that, but we think nothing else. Therefore, to think objectively means strictly what has been said: to think what is thought and nothing more; nothing less either, but nothing more. Objective thought is not expandable; strictly speaking, what happens is that objective thought is not transcendental. Transcendentals cannot be known objectively: neither metaphysical transcendentals, nor the transcendental of human being, which consists in free being.<sup>13</sup>

#### UNICITY AND FOUNDATION

There is a study of mine called *The Habitual Knowledge of the First Principles*<sup>14</sup> in which I try to make this point with respect to the foundation; and the first principles are primary in terms of foundation. If one speaks of first principles one already avoids unicity, because first principles are discernible; there isn't a single first principle, but several first principles. I try to demonstrate in that study that any objective formulation of first principles falls into unsolvable *aporiae*; and that only if we manage to think beyond, if we abandon the limit, that is, if we do not objectify the first principles, can we know them insofar as they are discernible. That is to say, knowledge of the first principles is not objective but habitual. It is not the result of a cognoscitive operation, which is the objectifying one according to what Aristotle called *praxis teleia*, or

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<sup>13</sup> The original Spanish verb "se cifra"—widely used by L. Polo— is difficult to translate into English. Other possible terms could be used, such as "is expressed," or "compendiates in." (n.t.)

<sup>14</sup> Leonardo POLO, *El conocimiento habitual de los primeros principios*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, Serie Universitaria, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 1993); in *Nominalismo, idealismo, realismo, Obras completas* v. XIV, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 2016).

*energeia*, but it is carried out by a habit: the habit of first principles. Only then can we exclude the monism that always threatens metaphysics.

In the history of metaphysics, monism has always hovered over it, or, as it is sometimes called, pantheism. Antonio Millán Puelles says that the great temptation for the philosopher is pantheism, among other things because Millán's approach is very objectivist. My proposal is to go beyond the object. In order to go beyond the object, it is necessary—although it can also be done in another way, but in the last analysis it is necessary—to know not only with operations, but to know in a way that is not operative. This non-operative way of knowing was called habit (*habitus*) by the classics, intellectual habit, habits of the intelligence. When I started out, I didn't call it this, but simply said that it had to be an unobjective knowing and, as I saw it quite clearly, I had to propose it, so I said it in *Being I: extramental existence*,<sup>15</sup> where the abandonment of the limit concerning the first principles is expounded. There are several ways of abandoning the limit. I call them different dimensions of the abandonment of the limit. That book explores one of them, the first one: the dimension with respect to the foundation. If the limit with respect to the foundation is abandoned, the foundation is not unique, and these are the first principles.

I believe that the first principles are three. At least two of them are very clearly first principles: the principle of contradiction and the principle of identity. The principle of identity would really be the transcendental 'one,' but not as unique. There is also a first principle which is the principle of causality. Those three first principles can be admitted, but at least two of them are very clear, identity and contradiction. The first principle of identity is distinguished from the first principle of contradiction; but they cannot be distinguished objectively. Objectively, the two are mixed. If something is non-contradictory, or in order to be non-contradictory, it must be identical. In fact, this is how Aristotle

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<sup>15</sup> Leonardo POLO, *El ser I: la existencia extramental*, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 1966; in *Obras completas*, vol. III, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 2015).



proposes the principle of contradiction in Book *Gamma*, even if he does not propose it only in this way. It is not possible to say and not say the same thing about the same thing at the same time; that is to say, objectively. It is not possible to say dog is white, and dog is not-white, because white is one sameness and not-white another sameness. But then sameness is identity here and is linked to the principle of contradiction. A is not not-A, because it's A; and A is A, because it is not not-A. I usually call this the twinning, the melding of two first principles. At least the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction are first principles, but they are different principles. Only if the limit can be overcome, that is, if these two first principles can be known unobjectively, only then can they be known as different. The unicity of the foundation is thereby eliminated.

Notice that when this symmetrisation of the foundation, which is characteristic of modern thought, occurs, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to study the principled plurality. If the principle is the subject, the problem of intersubjectivity remains. On the one hand, Kant's transcendental subject is not intersubjective, but unisubjective. And so, he is accused of subjectivism; but it is not properly subjectivism, it is rather monism. On the other hand, Husserl began to notice this; he tried to tackle the problem but didn't solve it. After studying the transcendental *ego* we must study intersubjectivity. But here again we run into the problem: Does it make sense to speak of a personal being, a free, intelligent, loving being... isolated? A free being is a person. We can also call her a subject, but since the notion of person is older, it is opportune to use it. Is there such a thing as a unique person? I have already said that a unique first principle does not fit, what happens is that when we objectify the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction, we mix them up; and then we fluctuate between one and the other. All objective formulations of the first principles harm them, precisely because they do not fit into an object. Since the object unifies them, in the sense of trying to see them as unique—that is, if both are considered they must both be

the same—then we give up discerning them. Either we achieve a non-objective thematization of the first principles or we cannot consider each one of them neatly. To know each of them neatly is to know them precisely as discernible, as not mixed.

### **UNIQUENESS AND PERSONHOOD**

When we are dealing with the person, the matter becomes even more serious: can we possibly speak of the uniqueness of the person? Of uniqueness of the object, we can: there is uniqueness in the object because the object is the limit. Objective thought is limited thought: this is the methodical proposal. But is it possible to speak of a single person? Isn't the notion of a single person an absurdity? I think this is even clearer than the impossibility of the uniqueness of the principles. Are the three first principles the same first principle? No. And a single first principle? No. Neither they are the same, nor are they a single principle. But to know that we must know it unobjectively, and that is achieved with habitual or experiential knowledge. I also call it experiential because it is experience of reality. Tradition calls it the habit of the first principles. In traditional philosophy there are many pieces that, when one reads them, one can pick them up. The problem is that when I see how they interpret habitual knowledge, then I cannot agree with them; because they understand it simply as a preparation for operative or objective thinking, and that seems to me to be a mistake. I respect that because, I insist, this is a proposal. It's not about destroying anybody, it's not about getting into somebody's head and trying to carve it out; that's stupid, and besides it is inhuman. That would be like believing that one is the unique person, that others are not persons; or to want to make the others be persons from oneself, to found them. But does the person ground the person? The human person definitely does not ground the human person. The human person can be procreated, but not founded; and furthermore, not by one single person

but by two. The notion of a unique human person is a contradiction in terms.

This is not simply a fact of experience—that we are many; it is not that. It is that a single human person is an absurdity; not a contradiction, but an absurdity—it is impossible. But if the human person is not unique, but there is a plurality of persons, the difficult thing is to think of this plurality as profoundly radical, since each person is a person, and all of them are irreducible, and moreover they are not separated, since by being separated each one of them would be unique in its own right; and then we would have to attempt a Hegelian totalisation, which makes no sense, nor did Hegel even think of it. No, persons are irreducible to one another; there is nothing superior to the persons that makes them a totality. So then, in order to think the human being through, we have no choice but to say that he cannot be unique; and that he is therefore only human if he has something to do with other human beings, which requires abandoning objective thought. This is what I usually call coexistence. The difference between being as it is seen in metaphysics and being as it is seen in anthropology—and this is the extension of the transcendental—is that, in metaphysics, being is merely being. But when dealing with the person this is not so. When dealing with the personal we must say that this is not being properly speaking, but it is being-with: coexistence. To be a person is to coexist. If the person is radically coexisting, the matter of intersubjectivity is resolved at its root, from the outset; it is radically resolved.

Why couldn't Husserl solve it? Well, because if we assume that the person is each person, intersubjectivity can be regarded as an accidental relation at most, or as a relation that happens in fact, since we talk to one another, we relate to one another affectively, etc. But this is neither transcendental, nor primordial. Intersubjectivity, instead, is primordial; no person is what he or she is alone, none. The unique character in the person is solitude; and solitude is personal tragedy, the Nietzschean

tragedy, in short. Nietzsche's philosophy is a tragic philosophy because it is a philosophy of solitude. Remember that phrase of Zarathustra's in *Ecce homo*: every sun is cold to another sun.<sup>16</sup> It is the negation of personal being in coexistence, or as coexistence. Coexistence is another theme that there is no way of articulating without abandoning the limit. Because—I insist—coexistence does not mean that one is first oneself and only after that relates to others; coexistence means that the person is dialogical in character, not monological but dialogical. The person is radically open to others, and ultimately open to the personal God.

Can God as personal be unipersonal? It is evident that metaphysics cannot ask this question; at most it can say that God is identity above the one as unique, but it can say no more. But from the point of view of anthropology, which unveils for us the personal being, a unipersonal God would be a God condemned to solitude; a tragic theism, like that of the Nietzschean Dionysus. Whether we can understand this is another matter; of course not—it is a mystery, that of the Holy Trinity. But in any case, the place from where we can glimpse this is transcendental anthropology. If we do not establish the notion of person, and we do not establish it as intrinsically co-existential, we cannot open ourselves to the subject of the divine person(s). God may be first principle, but from that we do not know that he is a person; we find that out when considering the human being. Moreover, this is how the notion has been historically forged, because the first elaboration of the notion of person is precisely in reference to Christ, Man and God. What is his unity? The divine person. Where do the two natures subsist? In his person. Person was initially a theological theme. As far as man is concerned, I do not believe that all its potentialities have

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<sup>16</sup> "Cold against suns, thus moves every sun"; F. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 2: "The Night Song," p. 82. Ed. A. del Caro, R. Pippin, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge–New York, 2006). Cf. also: *The Gay Science* Book IV, "Star friendship." Ed. B. Williams, trans. J. Nauckhoff and A. del Caro, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge–New York, 2001), p. 279.

been exploited. This one first of all: one person alone is impossible, absolutely impossible; a human person alone is certainly impossible.

When the creation of Adam is narrated in *Genesis*, assuming that Adam was before Eve—because obviously it is a narrative—what was such situation? And God said: it is not good for man to be alone.<sup>17</sup> Man cannot be alone because he is not just being, he is being-with, he is coexistence. And this cannot be thought unless objectivity, sameness, uniqueness, are abandoned. So much so that a well formulated transcendental anthropology also requires referring to its methodical dimension; because it is a proposal but not a mere declaration, and it must be developed coherently. Moreover, we have a certain experience that loneliness is very harmful for human beings, and that a human being separated from every other human being in childhood does not become a man, never becomes a full man, and problems of reversal appear after some time. The famous issue of the wolf children, of which there are at least around forty documented cases; children who have grown up on the margins of civilisation, who were able to survive on the margins of any relationship with human beings, but who do not have human reactions. Coexistence has to do with family because the development of the nervous system depends on it. And learning to speak, because how can someone learn to speak without learning from others? In short, man is not made to be solitary, man is not a monadic being. But if we objectify him, if we were to know the human being strictly in a purely objective way, we would have to say that the human being is unique: he is that and nothing more than that. But the human being is not that and nothing more than that, he is rather constitutively open. This openness makes him transcendental, *transcendens*; and this transcendence is not towards the categorical imperative, because the categorical imperative is impersonal. How could I possibly know myself in the categorical imperative? I only know myself if I

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<sup>17</sup> *Genesis*, 2, 18.

know myself as co-existent. Otherwise I don't know myself, because I am co-existent.