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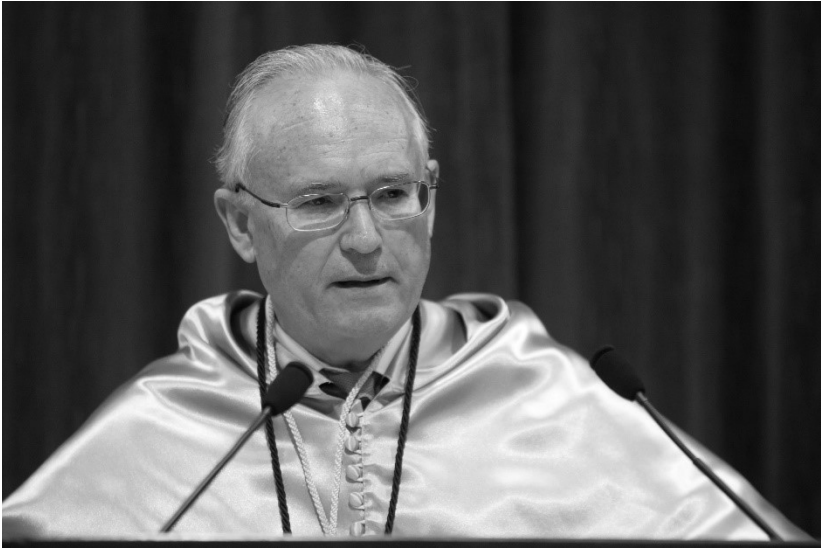
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Angel Luis González, Professor of Metaphysics at the University of Navarra, died suddenly but peacefully this last April 16, 2016. He was one of the principal promoters of the research and publications of Leonardo Polo's thought. Until his passing he was Editor-in-Chief on the Board of the *Complete Works* of Leonardo Polo and of *Studia Poliana*, the philosophical Journal on Polo's thought published yearly since 1999 by the University of Navarra. In a conference after receiving an Honorary Doctorate by the Panamerican University (Mexico), he said that Polo was the "university professor that I principally admired." He dedicated a good part of his life transmitting a passionate spirit for the truth in the university and fostered an unlimited search for truth. This issue is dedicated to his memory. May he rest in peace.

Habitual Knowledge of God

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores Polo's proposal of an anthropological access to God's existence in addition to the traditional metaphysical Five Ways. More specifically, it focuses on the role of intellectual habits, in particular the habit of wisdom and the habit of the personal intellect, in acquiring knowledge of God as creator of the person. Habitual knowledge according to Polo is possible because the agent intellect illuminates intelligible contents, may that be the phantasm, the operations of the intellectual faculty, or any other actualization and perfection of the intellect. Through that illumination, the agent intellect communicates freedom to the human nature rendering the former open to unrestricted growth. The anthropological path to God is dependent on the habit of wisdom by which we come to know ourselves, not just in our nature and faculties, but in the source of what makes our nature capable of unrestricted growth and freedom, namely, our personal act of being. It is when we know our personal act of being that we also glance at the Creator of our freedom, not just as a cause of it, but as the kind of Co-existence that bring us into co-existence.

KEYWORDS: Intellectual Habits, God, Knowledge, Agent Personal Intellect, Wisdom, Co-existence.

As it is the case with many other philosophical findings, we owe to Aristotle the notion of habit, both, of the intellectual and moral types.¹ Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle in his understanding of the intellectual and moral habits: “For, as Aristotle proves in *Ethics* II, “from like acts, like habits are formed, which in turn give rise to like acts.”² Leonardo Polo has continued this Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition of the habit, bringing new developments that bear important consequences for the philosophical thought.³ The goal of this paper is to present Polo’s notion of intellectual *habitus* to the question of how we acquire knowledge of the existence of God.

First, since the emphasis here is on the habit as a cognitive capacity that provides access to God’s existence, it is necessary to make explicit Polo’s contributions to the understanding of intellectual habits. Presenting the structure of habits, and their connection with the operations, the faculty, and the agent intellect, is crucial in order to show how Polo understands the habit as what makes possible the freedom and unrestricted growth that stem from the agent intellect as the personal act of being.

Secondly, the habit makes possible knowledge of God’s existence both in a metaphysical and anthropological sense. Again, Polo receives the Thomistic tradition of the Five Ways but reinforces the validity of these proofs by making explicit the epistemological propaedeutic that the habit of the first principles provides. He also shows that this metaphysical access to God is not the only philosophical access to God’s existence but that an anthropological one is also available, this time, provided inchoately by the habit of wisdom and fulfilled by the habit of the personal intellect. However, Polo’s proposal demands closer scrutiny to ascertain whether he is engaging in an ontological argument for God’s existence, that he would clearly reject, and furthermore, whether his anthropological path to God’s existence is really reducible to a metaphysical one. These are the questions that I will be addressing in the following pages.

¹ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VI chp. 5, 6, 7 y 8 (BK 1140a 22-1144 a 30). Cfr.

² T. AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentes* II, c. 73, n. 22.

³ In Polo’s theory of knowledge, habits have an important role in correcting the problems of Modern epistemology as well as placing the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in dialogue with Contemporary philosophy.

1. WHAT ARE INTELLECTUAL HABITS AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

Intentional knowledge, also called objective or –following the Thomistic tradition– operative knowledge, is cognition of mind independent realities and it is intrinsically limited.⁴ The limitation of the knowledge of the operation comes fundamentally from the fact that the operation is only able to access some aspects of reality. This limitation is due to at least two main factors: 1. The operation is the act of a faculty that, as such, is in potentiality towards certain sensible and intelligible aspects and not others; 2. As the actualization of a potency, the operation is intrinsically contingent. At the level of the senses, for example, sight receives only color, hearing only sound. At the intellectual level, the concept grasps the *quiddity* of a thing, but leaves behind its individualizing matter, its particularity conditions, and the real existence of the thing. On the other hand, these limitations of the operation make possible the intentional possession of mind independent realities. As Aristotle mentioned, our intellect can become –cognitively– all things, without physically transforming into any of them. We can know fire without getting burnt.

Polo notices that besides the cognition that the operation provides, we can also uncover and illuminate the condition of the operation itself and its limitations. The question is what kind of cognitive act is able to provide such knowledge. Following Aristotle's and Aquinas's insights, Polo proposes that it must be a superior form of cognition, namely, an intellectual habit.⁵ In accordance with the Aristotelian principle of actuality and potentiality, Polo presents different habits that proceed from illuminating different types of operations.⁶ A map of our intellectual habits derives then from what faculties we have and what operations they enact. Continuing the Medieval distinction between higher reason and lower reason that corresponded respectively, to knowledge of higher or lower realities, Polo distinguishes between reason and intellect. Different habits would ensue from these different rational and intellectual parts. The habits of the reason would follow its operations: from abstraction, the abstractive habit; from generalization, the generalizing habit; from simple apprehension, the conceptual habit; from judgment, the judging habit; and from reasoning, the habit of logical

⁴ For this reason Polo refers to this intentional, objective knowledge as the 'limit'.

⁵ Among many other references see L. POLO, *Curso de teoría del conocimiento*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1985, vol. 2, 149. Also, L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 4/2, 396-14.

⁶ Cfr. L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 1, 147.

axiom. However, in the habits of the intellect we find a form of knowledge that is superior to the one of reason. Polo defends that the habits of the intellect are innate because they do not require a preceding operation. These are the *synderesis*, the habit of the first principles and the habit of wisdom. It is the latter, wisdom, which, according to Polo, provides knowledge of the created person, and in so doing, paves the way for the habit of the personal intellect to know God. This is a point that it will be addressed later on, but first it is necessary to analyze how habits work. More specifically, what it is that we know through the habit, and how is the habit possible? The answer to the first question is that whereas objective knowledge is knowledge of extra-mental objects, habitual knowledge is knowledge of cognitive acts. Therefore, operations have extra mental reality as their object or content, whereas habits have as their content, not objects, but the operations themselves.⁷ This point was noted by Aquinas who explained: “The object of the intellect is something universal, namely, ‘being’ and ‘the true,’ in which the act also of understanding is comprised. Wherefore the intellect can understand its own act.”⁸

However, Polo’s view enhances the Aristotelian-Thomistic view on the habits. The intellectual habits are characterized as cognitive acts. In other words, Polo’s particular view acknowledges a crucial cognitive dimension in addition to a predicamental characterization of the habit, that is, the habit as an ontological perfection of the faculty. In this sense, we can draw an analogy between operations and habits. The cognitive operation can be considered ontologically as an accident, that is, a quality of the faculty, and epistemically, as a formal sign, that *by which* we get to know mind independent realities. In the same way, the habit has a predicamental dimension, it is an accident of the faculty, but also is a cognitive act that, as such, has its own content. The content of the operations are objects, external realities. In the case of

⁷ See for example L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 1, 159. Also: “El conocimiento habitual es la *iluminación de la operación por el intelecto agente*,” L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 3, 79.

⁸ *ST I*, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1. He continues: “But not primarily, since the first object of our intellect, in this state of life, is not every being and everything true, but ‘being’ and ‘true,’ as considered in material things, as we have said above, from which it acquires knowledge of all other things.” Also in *II Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, a. 1, co: “(...) intellectus intelligit se; quod non contingit in aliqua virtute cuius operatio sit per organum corporale.” See as well *III Sent.*, d. 23, a.1, a.2, ad 3.

habits, their content, except in the case of the habits of the intellect, is something mental, an operation.⁹

The second question posed asked how the habits are possible. Polo understands that “the habitual knowledge is due to the agent intellect.”¹⁰ The proposal is that the agent intellect not only illuminates the phantasms received from sensible knowledge, bringing to actualization the intelligible *species expressa* in the passive intellect. It also illuminates the operations of the intellect, obtaining habits. The agent intellect then provides cognition of the external world through the *species impressa*, but it also illuminates its very own intellectual activity.¹¹ Therefore, since the agent intellect illuminates different actualities that ensue in take place the intellect, we have that, for the phantasm, the agent intellect makes possible the *species intelligible expressa* in the passive intellect, and for the operations that take place in the intellect, the agent intellect communicates its illumination to the faculty by way of habits: “The habit carries the light of the agent intellect onto the faculty without the habit being themselves ‘agent intellects’.”¹² In the case of the illumination of phantasms provided by the sensibility, there is an increase of knowledge of the external material reality: we know more things. But in the case of the illumination of the operation, what is achieved is a growth of the intellectual capacity itself: we exert higher

⁹ This proposal would seem to depart from Aquinas’ understanding of the habit as something purely ontological. However, some scholars have presented a reading of Aquinas’ *reditio* that coheres with the notion of the habit. Aquinas’ *reditio* would be taken as a reflecting on the operation itself, not in the way Modern Philosophy understood reflection, but in a similar way as the habit works. “That, then, is the supreme and perfect grade of life which is in the intellect, for the intellect reflects upon itself and the intellect can understand itself.” *Summa Contra Gentes* IV, c. 11, n.5. As J.I. MURILLO notes, what impedes the sensitive faculties to know their own operations is that they act through a material organ, but that is not the case with the intellect making possible the *reditio* (cfr. J.I. MURILLO, *Operación, hábito y reflexión. El conocimiento como clave antropológica en Tomás de Aquino*, Eunsa, Pamplona (1998), 31).

¹⁰ L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 3, 14. As a matter of fact, Polo formulates this as an axiom for the theory of knowledge: “The axiom of the habits states that the intellect is susceptible of habits; now it is added that habits are made possible by the agent intellect. This is how the formulation of the axiom is finalized.” (ibidem).

¹¹ “We enter the question of the intellectual habit through the *actus essendi*”. More specifically, for Polo the agent intellect coincides with the *actus essendi*: “Habitual knowledge is an illumination due to the agent intellect (which is the *actus essendi*).” L. POLO, “El conocimiento habitual de los primeros principios”, *Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico*. Eunsa, Pamplona (1991), vol. 10, 18.

¹² J. F. SELLES, “Los hábitos intelectuales según Polo,” *Anuario Filosófico*, Pamplona, 29/2 (1996), 1032.

acts. Turning to Aquinas again: "(...) an intellect that understands the highest of intelligible objects is more able afterwards to understand those that are lower."¹³

The reason why we need to appeal to the agent intellect in the explanation of intellectual habits is because the habit cannot be brought about merely by the operation or by the faculty. Insofar as through habits we know the operation, habits are acts higher than the operation, and therefore, their actualization, although dependent on the existence of an operation in some cases, cannot be capacitated by the operation. It would seem then that, since the habit is a perfection of the faculty, the habit is brought about by the faculty. However, whereas the operation depends on the faculty, the habit does not. The reason stems from the principle of actuality and potentiality and its hierarchy. The habit, being a perfection that is communicated to the faculty, cannot possibly be effectuated by the faculty itself but by a higher act. Therefore, according to Polo, habits are not brought about by the faculty but by the agent intellect.¹⁴ We can see this clearly if we consider that the human intellectual potency receives something only under the *ratio* of being intelligible. Therefore, an actualization of the intellect is susceptible of being known by the intellect. This ensues in a *reditio*, a habit in the intellect.

As a consequence, our intellect is capable of unrestricted growth.¹⁵ We can also quote Aquinas on this point: "(...) the process of reason is not fixed to one particular term, for at any point it can still proceed further."¹⁶ Aquinas also states: "The intellectual soul as comprehending universals, has a power of extending to the infinite; therefore it cannot be limited by nature to certain fixed natural notions."¹⁷ In reference to Aquinas again, who states that a free nature is a contradiction, Polo observes that if our nature was not able to access freedom, there would be a deterministic mechanism in the explanation of human action.¹⁸ In that regard, Polo notices that we find in the intellect

¹³ *ST I*, q. 75, a.3, ad 2.

¹⁴ Cfr. J.F. SELLES, "Los hábitos intelectuales según Polo," cit., 1031.

¹⁵ Cfr. L. POLO, "Dios y la infinitud de la intelección," *Studia Poliana*, Pamplona 14 (2012), 14. Also see "La noción de infinito" in L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 2, 162-73.

¹⁶ *ST I-II*, q. 18, a 10, co.

¹⁷ *ST I*, q. 76, a.5, ad 4.

¹⁸ Cfr. L. POLO, *Enciclica 'Solicitududo Rei Socialis'*, Aedos, Madrid, 1990, 115. For Polo, the difference between human nature and human essence is that the first is necessary,

the transcendental freedom that we do not find in nature. The infinite capacity for growth characterizes the freedom of our intellect.¹⁹ Freedom, as understood here by Polo, is not the mere free will to choose between A or B. Freedom is placed, not in a metaphysical realm as a property of certain voluntary acts,²⁰ and at the level of causality and effect, but in an anthropological arena.²¹ Transcendental freedom is not only related to actions, it is the constitutive feature of the person.²² Freedom is the unlimited openness of the intellect and the will that characterizes personhood.²³

The question then is, what is at the root of this infinite capacity for growth that opens the intellect to freedom? Given that a free nature is a contradiction, according to Polo this freedom of our intellect is only possible if the human nature is receiving something that allows for that unrestricted growth. Polo believes that that instance is the act of being.²⁴ But the possibility of unrestricted intrinsic perfection that is at the root of freedom, requires the work of the habits. In that regard, Polo states that “intellectual habits open the intellect to freedom.”²⁵ As Aristotle and Aquinas presented, habit entails freedom, not just as under determination to opposites, but also as sovereignty of the act. Through habits the person can manage his nature. The habits bring nature into a ‘second nature’, granting then freedom to nature because habits allow for growth, for going beyond.²⁶ The habits are the way the act of being of the person, and the freedom that characterizes the personal act of being, is communicated to the nature.

whereas the second has freedom. Human nature is necessary because it lacks habits that bring and connect the personal act of being to the nature.

¹⁹ This growth is understood as the infinite operativity of the intellect that Aquinas also acknowledges. Aquinas argues: “But the part of the soul which does not use a physical organ in its activity does not remain limited, but is in a sense infinite, in so far as it is immaterial.” *De Veritate*, q. 15, a. 2.

²⁰ Cfr. L. POLO, “El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre,” *Studia Poliana*, Pamplona 1 (1999), 18.

²¹ Cfr. L. POLO, *Quién es el hombre: un espíritu en el tiempo*, Rialp, Madrid, 1991, 224-25.

²² Cfr. L. POLO, “Libertas Transcendentalis,” *Anuario Filosófico*, Pamplona 26/3 (1993): 705.

²³ See also L. POLO “La Libertad”, in *Antropología transcendental I: la persona humana*, vol. 1, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1999, 229-56.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ L. POLO, “Lo intelectual y lo inteligible,” *Anuario Filosófico*, Pamplona, 15/ 2 (1982), 30.

²⁶ Cfr. L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 4/2, 12.

HABITUAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

However, the habit is also the cognitive stance that allows us to know about this unrestricted possibility for growth. It has been noted that the agent intellect is a light that illuminates any actuality and determination of the intellect. Polo notices that not all the illuminations by the agent intellect are of operations, some are of habits and faculties that are not preceded by any operation; that is, some are illuminations of other real acts. In this regard, the habits of the intellect are higher than the habits at the level of reason because they know higher realities, and they are innate because they are not preceded by any operation. Through the habit of *synderesis*, the agent intellect knows the human faculties and their nature; through the habit of the first principles, the agent intellect knows the existence of the universe, of God as First Cause, and of the relation of causation between the universe and God. Lastly, through the habit of wisdom, the agent intellect knows the created character of the human person: “the habit of wisdom differs from the habit of the first principles because its theme is human existence itself: knowing that I exist as a created person”.²⁷ For that reason, Polo states that it “connotes”, glimpses, the theme of personal knowledge.²⁸ The habit of wisdom knows the personal being; then it knows co-existence and its transcendentals. In so doing, it paves the way for our access to God’s existence through the habit of personal knowledge: “There is a habit of the intellect, the habit of wisdom, which relates to what is above the metaphysical order. My proposal is that with this habit we get to know the human personal being as co-existing with the universe, and, ultimately, with God. Therefore, knowledge of God is sapiential as well.”²⁹

2. HABITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S EXISTENCE

The contributions brought about by the philosophical insight of the habitual knowledge are many, but here I will focus on cognition of God’s existence. When it comes to knowledge of God, we may wonder how the way our mind works may facilitate or impede our access to an Absolute being. Objective knowledge of God does not seem possible as God is not an object that is given directly to our sensible experience,

²⁷ L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., vol. 1, 166.

²⁸ Cfr. L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., vol. 1, 167.

²⁹ L. POLO, *Curso*, cit., vol. 4/2, p. 47.

and no operation of the mind, being limited, would be able to apprehend God's infinite nature. Our idea of God not only does not capture God's essence, it also falls too short to reach God's existence. However, the mental limit, that is, the operation, is illuminated and surpassed by habitual knowledge. Moreover, some intellectual habits are innate to the intellect. Does this represent any vantage point for our cognitive access to God? There are at least two possible ways in which habitual knowledge may proceed in knowing God, according to Polo.³⁰

One is a metaphysical access to God, the one that Aquinas provided with the Five Ways. The Five Ways all arrive, under different perspectives (as First Mover, First Cause, First Necessary Being, and First in Perfection and Order) to God as Origin and Principle.³¹ The key of Aquinas' proofs is that they do not arrive to God's existence as the truth of the proposition "God exists,"³² but as the mind-independent, extra-mental, existence of God.³³

In order to know God's existence as something that He possesses, *existentia ut exercita*, we need experience of the existence. If our experience was limited to sense experience, accessing God's existence would be problematic. However besides sense experience, we also have intellectual experience of reality by which we can grasp the first principles of reality. In doing so, the intellect can understand the notions of cause and effect and the impossibility of an infinite regress in a subordinated order of causes. Although we do not experience God's existence with our senses directly, we experience the created things and infer from there the existence of a First Cause. This is the knowledge that the habit of the first principles provide: being caused by God as the foundation of the universe. The habits are then the foundation for intellectual experience.

But the understanding of being as foundation of the universe, does not capture a different radical existence, the one of the person, and one characteristic trait: its co-existence.³⁴ Polo proposes that in order to

³⁰ For an explanation of these different paths see F. CONESA, "El conocimiento de fe en la filosofía de Leonardo Polo," *Anuario Filosófico*, Pamplona, 29/2 (1996), 432.

³¹ Cfr. L. POLO, "El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre," *Studia Poliana*, 1 (1999), 19-20.

³² Cfr. L. POLO, *El ser: la existencia extramental*, Eunsa, Pamplona (1997), 229.

³³ *Ibidem*, 288.

³⁴ Cfr. L. POLO, *Introducción a la filosofía*, Eunsa, Pamplona (1995), 227.

give philosophical space to the proposals brought about by the Christian notion of the person, a broadening of the transcendentals is required. To the transcendentals of the metaphysics should be added the transcendentals of the person: freedom, knowledge, love, co-existence.³⁵ When it comes to the person, the notions of cause and effect that belong to metaphysics, are insufficient to describe the intimacy, co-existence and freedom of the person: “The first principle, although it is first, it is not what is highest or most inner. What is most inner is the person, and the person is not less radical than the foundation, only its primordially is not foundational.”³⁶ In other words: “The person transcends the universe by adding the ‘with’: adding to the existence, the co-existence.”³⁷ Co-existence means ‘to exist with’, which Polo also refers to as to exist ‘additionally’:³⁸ the person is *besides the universe*, that is, the person *exists with* the universe, whereas the universe simply exists. For that reason, isolation is incompatible with the notion of the person,³⁹ and “the person, which is an intimacy, implies communication.”⁴⁰

Therefore, according to Polo, knowledge of the first principles is neither the only nor the highest knowledge we have, and consequently, knowledge of God as origin is not either the highest knowledge of God that we can obtain in the natural order. If metaphysics is the subject matter of the habit of the first principles, the person and its co-existence are the subject matter of a higher habit, the habit of wisdom. Through this path we arrive also to a God of the philosophers, but it is not a metaphysical path to God but anthropological, because it does not arrive to God as a First Principle and Cause,⁴¹ but to God as a Person.

How does this philosophical path to God’s existence proceed? As E. Moros notices in his study of the anthropological access to God, Polo does not have a single formulation, and it is more a recurrent topic in

³⁵ See “La dualidad entre el hábito de los primeros principios y el hábito de sabiduría”, in L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., vol. 1, 179-81.

³⁶ L. POLO, *Presente y futuro del hombre*, cit., 174.

³⁷ *Ibidem*

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 183-84.

³⁹ Cfr. L. POLO, *Introducción a la filosofía*, 228.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Cfr. L. POLO, “El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre,” 11-24.

different contexts that acquires a new nuance at every turn.⁴² However, as presented by Moros, it seems that the anthropological access to God path, which is not a formal demonstration, starts from the fact of our own personhood and the freedom that characterizes it, as its first transcendental, to God as the creator of the person. The proposal by Polo is that “if the human being is radically free, then God must exist.”⁴³ However, it should be noted that because the personal act of being is transcendental and there are other anthropological, intrinsically inter-related transcendentals of the person, Polo’s anthropological access to God can be easily approached from the perspective of any of these other personal transcendentals. For example, Polo also uses the transcendental ‘knowledge’ to access God’s personal existence: “The habit of wisdom connotes that the theme known by the personal intellect is superior to the intellect itself. In other words, the knowledge of God by the human person transcends the third dimension of the abandonment of the mental limit. Knowledge of the human person by God is required for the human person to know God, and, therefore, [this knowledge] surpasses any knowledge that the [human] person may attain of herself by herself. The demonstration of God’s existence in anthropology is expressed in this way: If God did not know the human person, it would not be possible to talk of the human intellect as co-actus. This is an implication of the real distinction: the human person cannot get to know herself by herself, because for her, knowing at the level of being equals personhood, and the human person as co-actus or co-existence is not really identity”⁴⁴ Ultimately any consideration of God’s existence through anthropology will be rooted in the real distinction where the act of being of the person is a co-existence.

Polo’s theory of knowledge provides the basis for understanding how habitual knowledge facilitates human cognition of God (cognition frequently tramped by deficient epistemologies). More specifically, Polo defends the “methodic value of the habit of wisdom towards knowledge of the personal intellect”⁴⁵ How does Polo traverse from freedom to God? He proposes that “only a personal being can be the creator of a personal freedom,”⁴⁶ and for that reason, if God does not

⁴² See Enrique R. MOROS CLARAMUNT, “La demostración de la existencia de Dios a partir de la libertad,” *Anuario Filosófico* 29/ 2 (1996), 805-14.

⁴³ L. POLO, *Introducción a la filosofía*, cit., 228.

⁴⁴ L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., 140.

⁴⁵ L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., 167.

⁴⁶ E. MOROS, “La demostración de la existencia de Dios a partir de la libertad”, cit., 812-813

exist, we are not free: “Freedom opens up a twofold perspective: There is a personal God without whom, freedom would not exist: without God, freedom would end up in nothingness. The certain immortality of the soul, without God, would lead to a total perplexity, to a lack of destiny. Fear of freedom would ensue, even hatred: some people even would prefer not to be free, because if they glanced freedom they would not reach God, but they would just encounter a suspended freedom.”⁴⁷ In other words, we would encounter an unlimited capacity for growth that nonetheless has no reason for its origin; it just exists as a brute fact. But also, this growth is not going anywhere, nor it can be communicated, which precludes the very possibility for growth. Consequently, the unlimited openness that freedom is, is only possible, and can be fulfilled, if the human person co-exists with God.⁴⁸ In Polo’s anthropological access to God, there is an affinity between our co-existence and our freedom that calls for clarification. Both are transcendentals of the personal being, and, therefore, Polo moves comfortably from one transcendental to the other. Moreover, freedom and co-existence are co-implicated. Part of the anthropological access to God is that freedom involves co-existence. More specifically, freedom is *for* co-existing. This is how freedom and co-existence are tied up together in the anthropological access to God: unlimited growth as freedom implies co-existence if it is not to be a “suspended freedom”. The asymmetry between ontology and anthropology is at the heart of the question: “the foundation, founds, but what is founded is inferior to what gives foundation: the cause is superior to the effect (...) However, the person does not name a relation to what is inferior to it, because, if that was the case, the inner life of the person would remain secluded, concealed, to what is inferior to the person (as it would not have the capacity of receiving it). Consequently, we could ask, what is freedom for? For intersubjectivity.”⁴⁹

It was already mentioned that only if there are others, the co-existence can be co-existence, not mere existence. The uniqueness and co-existence that each person is, also entails that the person needs a replica, someone who is as unique as the person: “In other words, the existence of a single person does not make sense, persons are non-reducible and at the same time, they co-exist. On one side, they co-exist with the being that is not co-existence, namely, with the “principial” being.

⁴⁷ L. POLO, *Quién es el hombre: un espíritu en el tiempo*, cit., 224-25.

⁴⁸ Cfr. L. POLO, *Introducción a la filosofía*, cit., 229.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

But they also co-exist among them. The irreducibility of the person is not compatible with its isolation or separation. For that reason, person does not mean substance. Substances occur in separation; but what is separate does not co-exist; substances are given each one on its own; they are isolated.⁵⁰ However, the co-existence at the level of the human persons does not reveal the origin or destination of our co-existence, or the unlimited openness of our constitutive freedom. Although Polo does not provide this argumentation, it seems plausible to appeal to the fact that our co-existence is not a brute that does not need explanation, justification. It is not self-sufficient. It does not have within itself the means to put itself into an existence that is a co-existence. This would be the case, not only from a causative ontological point of view, but mostly from the fact that a co-existence requires “another”.

At this point, we could object that from the fact that we find a tendency, propensity or attribute, in this case co-existing, it does not follow that such inclination may be satisfied. In other words, it would be possible for a co-existent to experience an “absence of others”. However, this is beside the point, since what is at stake is not the possibility of fulfillment of the co-existence but the fact that the person actually exists as a co-existence, whether it is fulfilled or not, and what makes it possible. In this regard, implicit to the anthropological access to God, there seems to be a search for sufficiency for the existence of the co-existence. The crucial point is that such requirement is not satisfied by any existent, may that be the principal being (the physical universe), or any co-existent where there is a composition of *esse* and *essentia*.⁵¹

One possible reason, which Polo however does not make explicit, is that the contingency of creatural existence would make my own co-existence precarious. In other words, if my co-existence needed contingent co-existents in order to co-exist, then not only could it be easily frustrated in its fulfillment, but most importantly, it would not even exist as co-existence. Whereas contingent co-existents have the power to exist with others, they do not have within themselves the power to be called into co-existence. For this reason, the ultimate source and fulfillment for co-existence resides in the First Co-existent that is able

⁵⁰ L. POLO, “El descubrimiento de Dios desde el hombre,” cit., 19.

⁵¹ We should notice that Polo does not use this metaphysical terminology in his anthropological access to God, but it should not be incompatible with it, as a transcendental anthropology does not come to replace metaphysics but to bring a new theme to the philosophical scrutiny.

both, to call into co-existence, and to fulfill that co-existence.⁵² Even if someone happened to be the last contingent co-existent that is left, even if I am Robinson Crusoe lost in an island,⁵³ that person would not be existing as co-existent in the first place if there was not a non-contingent Co-existence that brings that co-existence about, not just as existing (which would be the consideration of metaphysics), but as “existing with”. In other words, I co-exist, because God exists with me in the first place. This is revealed in co-existence with a personal God which makes possible all co-existence.

To summarize, without a Co-existent who calls us into co-existence, we would not be co-existents. However, we co-exist, and none of the composed co-existents can account for the constitutive character of our being as co-existents. Therefore, our co-existence is only possible because it is made co-existence in relation to God who shares as a gift his own way of existing.

Two objections seem to appear immediately. One is that Polo’s proposal would be subject to the same objections that the ontological argument faces, since it seems that from an idea of God, he reasons out or even intuitively the existence of God.⁵⁴ However, the difference with Polo’s anthropological path and an ontological argument is that it is knowledge as a created person which leads to knowledge of the existence of God as the Person who brings us into His co-existence. This is not knowledge of God as an idea, but it is a habitual knowledge of a real principle, that is, a knowledge of our own intrinsic personal being.

A second objection to this account would be that God seems to be understood as “cause” of our freedom, and therefore, the supposedly anthropological argument would actually be a metaphysical one that uses the perfection of having freedom, as departing point for the use of transcendental causation. However, this access to God is not a sixth way that from some created effect arrives to a first cause. The crucial point is that freedom and co-existence are not a perfection like any other that we may find in the physical universe.

⁵² However God’s Co-existence cannot be equated to the human person’s co-existence since our co-existence does not add anything to God. Conversely, our co-existence with God, constitute us as co-existents. See L. POLO, *Antropología*, cit., 200.

⁵³ From a genetic point of view, a person needs others to develop as such, but the lack of development does not amount to an absence of co-existence. This would be the difference between not being able to develop a potential as opposed to not having one in the first place.

⁵⁴ Leonardo POLO, “La persona humana como relación en el orden del origen,” *Studia Poliana*, 14 (2012), 21-36.

The reason is that we do not depart from ourselves as ontological effects but as persons that, in receiving God's call to co-existence, are constituted as co-existents. We could obviously explain all this from a metaphysical point of view in terms of causation. Such explanation however would render superfluous an anthropological perspective. We, as beings that are part of the physical universe, are caused. But this relation of causation only tell us about a dependence in being. It does not specify what kind of existence we possess. And in the case of the person, the existence is a co-existence. Similarly, a concave surface will have a convex outer side: however, because we can describe the facts under the concave side, it does not mean that the thing lacks a convex one to it. Therefore, reducing the access to God to a metaphysical one, does not capture the peculiar existence of the person, and its path to acquiring knowledge of God. Our dependence in being from God is a relation of causation. Our being persons is a relation of constitution that is only possible if a Personal God, sees us and loves us.

According to Polo, the existence of God as a person as the condition for unlimited openness is required. Only if God exists, we can both, understand where the root for this openness lies, and find a way to fulfill the co-existence. This is actually one single thing, just considered under two different aspects, that is, freedom means origin from God and destination to God.

Summarizing, we see how, according to Polo, the habit channels the freedom of the act of being to the nature. But also, habits help us see that the unlimited growth of freedom is only possible if the person is created in the image of a God that is personal as well. In the same way that the intellect is able to reflect towards the phantasms and understand their origin in the act of abstraction, the intellect knows its own unlimited capacity for growth and its source in the personal act of being, as made possible by God. Knowledge of the act of being as the source of unlimited growth and freedom is captured by the habit of wisdom. Not only then the habit achieves cognition of the self but also knowledge of the existence of God as a Personal Being. In other words, in knowing ourselves, we know God.