

Surprised by Polo

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ABSTRACT: How does one who is not an academic or a philosopher—worse, still: a financial journalist—discover Leonardo Polo? Not only are his works notoriously difficult, but most of his writings have appeared only in Spain. Very little has been translated into other languages. Although there is an institute named after him, academic interest in Polo is still rather limited to Spanish-language academic environments. In this reflective essay, the writer seeks to uncover the reasons for his fascination with Polo, and provide a summary of some of the basic concepts and ideas to which he has been introduced in the course of his haphazard involvement with Polo's works.

In 2007, an unexpected convergence of factors took this writer—a journalist with long-standing aspirations not just to study philosophy but to *philosophize*—to the city-state of Hong Kong to work at the now-defunct *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Quite improbably, during an unexpected social event, he happened to meet a Roman Catholic priest from Spain—Fr. Javier de Pedro—with whom he had a long conversation about careers, vocations, and his desire to study philosophy. Surprisingly, the priest was quite encouraging. He very generously described some of the areas in the field of philosophy that deserved more study—and which could form part of this writer’s possible future studies. These areas included axiology (i.e., the philosophical study of value), personalism, philosophical anthropology, and what he described as ‘Polian studies’.

What were Polian studies? According to the priest, this was a whole new field of inquiry into the life, mind, work, and thought of one of the most interesting, difficult, complex, profound, and exciting Spanish philosophers of the twentieth century: Leonardo Polo.

1. WHY POLO?

Given those descriptors, and enticed by the idea of tackling a new and notoriously challenging Spanish thinker, this writer embarked on a long, slow, laborious process of discovery. Beginning with the book *Quién es el hombre: Un espíritu en el tiempo* (*Who is Man. A Spirit in Time*) (1991) and then moving on to *Introducción a la filosofía* (*Introduction to Philosophy*) (1995), this writer discovered something new—and began to learn about a very deep thinker widely unknown by those unfamiliar with Spanish. Other scholars were subsequently sought out to see how many of them knew of Polo and his work (very few did). Additionally, a variety of on-line sources fueled his interest, serving as complements to his own ‘self-directed’ learning in philosophical matters and Polian studies.

Eventually attempts were made to read other works by Polo, including *Nominalismo, idealismo y realismo* (*Nominalism, Idealism and Realism*) (1997), especially since this writer’s own emerging research interests began to focus on the emergence of nominalism through Roscelin de Compiègne, Peter Abelard, and William of Ockham. This work, however, was more challenging than expected. This initial disappointment led to a questioning of this writer’s own philo-

sophical formation—did he have enough training in classical philosophy and basic metaphysics?—and to a questioning of his own Spanish language abilities—were his language skills strong enough to be able to grapple with Polo in the original Spanish? The main concern was being sufficiently intellectually prepared at the start—for as Polo himself has written, “one small error in the beginning becomes large in the end.”¹

Putting aside Polo for a while, this writer took a few years to go back and re-read earlier seminal philosophical texts. This included returning to the Ancients as well as revisiting Duns Scotus, Aquinas, and other Scholastic thinkers. He continued exploring and reading widely, animated by the idea that with additional formation, proper study, and careful reading, he might then be able to return to Polo—as well as other equally difficult and demanding thinkers (like, for example, Eric Voegelin)—and profit from reading their works.

The apparent culmination of this independent reading came rather unexpectedly with this writer’s attendance at an international conference organized around Polo’s work on September 29, 2014. Held entirely in English, the event took place at the Madrid campus of IESE Business School and brought together various academics, scholars, and independent researchers from around the world. They presented and critiqued papers, examined different interpretations, and generally engaged in a lively discussion of Polo’s works and ideas. This writer, attending as an independent scholar, attended each of the presentations, and listened with great attention to the subsequent discussions. In the process, he revived his earlier interest in Polo. Although some of the concepts still remained overwhelming, he was encouraged by the amount of material he did manage to understand, and was excited by the sophisticated analysis of Polo’s ideas and the extent of the international interest in his work. In short, the Madrid conference was an excellent opportunity for this writer not only to gauge his progress after many years of independent reading but also to learn more about other aspects of Polo’s work.

Although the presentations confirmed the complexity and profundity of some of Polo’s ideas, this writer was relieved to discover that the difficulties he had previously experienced were not just due

¹ “[U]n pequeño error en los principios se vuelve grande al final” (Polo, 1995, 15).

to improper formation or insufficient training: Even some with decades of experience in reading and interpreting Polo's works admitted that they were still trying to understand him—for Polo is not someone you simply read and then immediately master. He requires subtlety and care; his works require careful, patient reading and, to some degree, a life-long commitment. Polo requires time spent alone with him in dialogue, so that he can begin to speak to the reader as he did to his students in Pamplona: gently, in almost hushed tones. In a word, understanding Polo requires *inspiration*.

The other difficulty with Polo—which was partly on display at the conference—is the sheer breadth of his work. He not only grapples rigorously with fundamental ontological and epistemological problems, but he turns his powerful intellect to other areas as well. The secondary literature (nearly all in Spanish) that has sprung up around Polo over the past decade speaks to the tremendous range of his thought, and the diversity of the themes he chose to tackle.

2. THE HUMAN PERSON & MENTAL LIMITS

It would be wholly misleading, however, to claim that Polo represents or embodies a wide variety of philosophical trends that encompass all schools or traditions. Nothing could be further from the truth. His approach is fundamentally rooted in realism. His teachings take students of philosophy—that is, those engaged in the search for truth—back to the roots of what is real. Needless to say, this reality is not just limited to the physical or social reality around us; it is a reality that is born and found in the human person himself.

It is for this reason that some have found it useful to approach Polo primarily as a theorist of the nature of the human person. His works can certainly be used in order to develop reasoned arguments as to what the human being is, what his nature is, what his proper field of action is, and how he can best belong to (and conform to) the reality in which he exists—and into which he has been placed. However, none of this should be understood as suggesting that the human being in the Polian oeuvre can mean anything or even many things. In fact, nothing could be further from the case.

If one starts with a basic interrogative—such as the question: What *is* a person?—then one can better approximate the reality to which Polo points. To begin with, a person is *not* the same as an ani-

mal. There are, as Polo taught, fundamental differences that can be appreciated and understood simply by looking at two very basic aspects: the smile and the idea of “gift-gratitude” (*don-gratitud*) (Romero, 2013). As a former student of Polo’s, Juanjo Romero, has written, “phenomenologically there is gratitude in a smile, the pleasant recognition of the other, this is the expression of internal happiness.”² But this is something that simply does not occur in animals (no matter how much we humans try to anthropomorphize them).

Another Polian approach is to posit the following: A person is simply a being that is capable of grace. And inextricably linked to grace is gratitude (*cf.* Romero, 2013). Such statements, however, are invariably lost on many modern readers. Few people in the modern world think in such terms anymore; fewer still can distinguish moments of grace. Modern man chooses instead to ignore such ineffable, unfathomable notions such as ‘grace’, since it is much easier to deal with humans when they measurable and predictable, and when they conform to expected patterns of behavior—especially if they are to fit within modern conceptions of what is (or is not) appropriate to the human person.

Polo spent much of his life resisting this tendency to reduce the human being to less than what he is, teaching instead that man is and will remain a wonderful mystery who has to be understood on his own terms—and who must be approached with an openness of spirit that few have today. Unfortunately, the tendency is to adopt blinders when viewing ordinary reality. According to scholar Daan van Schalkwijk, Polo thought that, too often, people with different ideas (to which they are stubbornly committed) and people trained in a particular way (or “school”) of seeing the world all get “very much caught up in their own mental world,” Polo thought (*cf.* Schalkwijk, D. van, 2014) And this is a fundamental intellectual and philosophical mistake. Schalkwijk elaborates on this, saying that it “creates a boundary between your mind and the real world out there. And by creating the boundary, chances are your mental world will not do reality any justice.” The mistake is to create a *mental* boundary, which is really nothing less than the boundary of *ideological* thinking. This is anathema to true philosophy.

² “[F]enomenológicamente en la sonrisa está la gratitud, el reconocimiento placentero del otro, está la expresión de la felicidad interna.” Romero, 2013

Thus, in Polo's teachings, the only thing that someone truly attempting open philosophical inquiry can do is to seek to break through those boundaries. This is a recurring theme in Polo's later works. By "abandoning the *mental limits*", as he put it, Polo points us towards nothing less than *freedom*—and true philosophical inquiry on its way to truth. This does not necessarily lead to what one might normally conceive of as 'freedom'. In fact, the introduction to a recent English-language translation of one of Polo's works clarifies this: "Polo points out that the metaphysical sense of being does not lead to freedom; instead, freedom is found only in anthropology and as a reality that neither grounds nor is grounded" (Polo, 2014, xix).

The true underlying problem, according to Polo, is the *way* philosophy is taught today. The approach taken by philosophy teachers at most universities today is rather narrow and limited, and philosophy is reduced to the mere memorization of key concepts or ideas. Thus, instead of broadening and expanding the minds of students, this approach only truncates truly speculative thought and limits true freedom. Most philosophy today is taught almost exclusively from this perspective—the Anglo-American analytical method. The results are narrow, limited, and (ultimately) rather ethnocentric. Polo puts it bluntly: "The analytical method ends in blindness, and makes one unable to see things in a global way."³

Some of these topics were addressed at the 2014 Madrid conference. In fact, one recurring theme—and the focus of several of the papers presented—was the precise meaning and implications of the concept of the "mental limit" which appears so often in Polo's works. As Schalkwijk explains, Polo "made it his philosophical methodology to ... 'detect the mental boundary so that we can go beyond it.'" (Schalkwijk, D. van, 2014) To better understand this, it may be necessary to simply think of it as an admonition *not* to be limited by preconceived notions or ideologies or ideas. One has to remain rigorously analytical like Polo himself was. "[T]he brave thing to do," Schalkwijk says, elaborating on Polo, "is to recognize our limitation, and slowly but steadily try to make the best of it, and in this way advance, without ever pretending that we have understood it all." (Schalkwijk, D. van, 2014)

³ "[E]l método analítico termina en la ceguera, incapacita para ver las cosas de un modo global." (Polo 2007, 45)

Polo understood this well; and he taught that one had to go beyond conceptual object of study to see reality as it is. “I realized,” Polo writes, “that we cannot arrive at being if one does not abandon the supposition of the object.” (Polo 2014, x) In order to clarify what he meant, he devised an analytical structure to comprehend the “operation of knowing”, and described the methodology of the “abandonment of the mental limit” into various dimensions. This has been described in great detail by scholars like Esclanda and Sellés (*cf.* Esclanda and Sellés 2014, 20-28). It remains one of the many breakthroughs Polo achieved in the field of epistemology.

But this abandonment not only depends on rigorous conceptual work; it also requires great humility. It requires that one abandon any reductionist attempt to understand the human person and demands submission to the great mystery of our being—something which Polo understood viscerally as well as intellectually. It is only when one manages to understand that not everything can be explained, and that not everything will fit into tidy theoretical boxes or categories, that one may be able to finally begin to move beyond one’s “mental limit” into that truly speculative realm in which true wisdom may be found.

3. OCKHAMIST NOMINALISM

Although reflecting further on Polo’s idea of going beyond the mental limit is important, there are other areas in his work that are also of great interest. Polo’s trenchant analysis of Ockhamist nominalism and its legacy is one example. As writers like Richard Weaver have pointed out (*cf.* Weaver 1948), despite Ockham’s passing more than 700 years ago, his philosophical legacy is still with us. It is expressed in various forms today, as Polo explains: radical skepticism, ethical relativism, and the fundamental denials of absolutes universally. In short, the influence of Ockham on modern philosophies such as enlightenment thought, idealism, phenomenology, and structuralism has been profound, with a particularly strong influence on realism, rationalism, and voluntarism—the “most influential currents of thought”⁴

⁴ “[L]as corrientes de pensamiento más influyentes.” (Sellés, 240)

It is somewhat surprising that Polo—who dedicated an entire book to Descartes, Hegel, and Nietzsche—did not prepare anything dedicated solely to Ockham. However, this does not mean, as scholars Fernando Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés have pointed out, that he did not consider the Late Scholastic thinker less important in the history of philosophy.⁵ In fact, for Polo, Ockham is utterly fascinating. According to Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, Polo “considers him an original thinker, despite the influence that he received from Scotus. He is also attracted by his radicalness, since he considers that his errors—like, for example, those of Hegel—are not minor ones.”⁶ In the end, Ockham is “probably the philosopher most criticized by Polo.”⁷

His criticism of the Franciscan thinker centers on the perennial problem of universals or transcendentals. Although some scholars have argued that the debate over universals began with Aristotle’s *Categories*, Polo has a different view. “The theory of the transcendentals is not Greek but Medieval, although it counts with obvious Greek antecedents,” he explains.⁸ The Ockhamist error is to undermine the very foundation of these transcendentals. In doing so, he exercised enormous influence on all subsequent philosophy, passing through Luther and eventually to Kant. “[B]oth in Ockham as well as in Kant”, writes Sellés, “the only real thing outside of the mind that can be known is the individual sensible thing. All other realities are left for both authors in the realm of the *sola fides*.”⁹ This is a brute denial of transcendentals.

⁵ “Polo ha dedicado un libro entero a Descartes, otro a Hegel y otro a Nietzsche. No es éste el caso de Ockham, pero no por ello este pensador tardomedieval es, para Polo, de menor influjo en la historia de la filosofía que los citados.” (Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, 156).

⁶ “[L]e resulta interesante este filósofo, porque lo considera un pensador original, a pesar de la influencia que éste recibió de Escoto. También le atrae su radicalidad, pues considera que sus errores—como, por ejemplo, los de Hegel—no lo son a medias.” (Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, 157)

⁷ “[E]s seguramente el filósofo más criticado por Polo.” (Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, 157)

⁸ “La teoría de los transcendentals no es griega, sino medieval, aunque cuenta con claros antecedentes griegos.” (Polo, 1997, 213)

⁹ “Además, tanto en Ockham como en Kant lo único real extramental que se puede

It is this trajectory that has led us, as Polo and others have pointed out, to the sad state of modern philosophy. “In effect, for Polo,” Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés argue, “[Ockham] is the father of modern and contemporary philosophy,” which is characterized by positivism, rationalism, skepticism, and voluntarism.¹⁰ Modern philosophy embodies many errors and false leads, all stemming from the nominalist inheritance, so that in the end one can justifiably say that “the Ockhamist hypothesis leads us ... to the destruction of philosophy.”¹¹

It’s interesting to note that thinkers of the Reformation play an important role in the transmission of nominalist error through the centuries, from the Medieval Age to the Modern Age. As Sellés points out, Kant depends on Luther to the degree that Luther depends on Ockham.¹² He elaborates: “There are many places where Luther recognizes Ockham as his teacher. It was logical that when he began his teaching activities in Erfurt, commenting on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, he would follow the lectures given not only by Ockham, but also of other authors, inheritors of the Ockhamist label, such as Gregorio de Rimini, Pedro D’Ailly and, above all, Gabriel Biel.”¹³

Time and space constraints make it impossible for further exploration of the arguments advanced by Polo against the nominalist legacy. However, it may be sufficient to say that Polo’s contributions to this debate over transcendentals/universals are in stark contrast to the arguments advanced by other thinkers who merely point to the destructive philosophical legacy of Ockham. Polo, after offering a

conocer es lo singular sensible. El resto de realidades quedan, pues, para ambos autores relegados al ámbito de la sola fides.” (Sellés, 246).

¹⁰ “En efecto, para Polo, éste pensador es el padre de la filosofía moderna y contemporánea.” (Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, 157)

¹¹ “[L]as hipótesis ockhamistas llevan, al fin y al cabo, a la destrucción de la filosofía.” (Domínguez Ruiz and Sellés, 157)

¹² “En este punto tan claro como que Kant depende de Lutero es que éste depende de Ockham.” (Sellés, 246)

¹³ “Son numerosos los lugares en los que Lutero reconoce a Ockham como su maestro. Era lógico que al comenzar su actividad docente en Erfurt, comentando las Sentencias de Pedro / Lombardo, siguiera las lecturas que hicieron, no solo Ockham, sino también otros autores, herederos del terminismo ockhamista, como Gregorio de Rimini, Pedro D’Ailly y, sobre todo, Gabriel Biel.” (Sellés 246-7 (footnote 38)).

critique of Ockham (and later thinkers like Kant who incorporated his errors), actually offers modern man a way out—a way to philosophize that takes us *away* from the errors spread by Ockham’s nominalist legacy.

According to scholars Greg Chafuen, Roderrick Esclanda, and Alberto I. Vargas, the way out of the modern crisis in philosophy offered by Polo is to return to the Ancients and that “the discoveries of classical philosophy have to be expanded.” (Polo 2014, ix) They elaborate: “In Polo’s view, classical philosophy reaches its peak with a metaphysics that studies the act of being of the physical universe and with the doctrine of the metaphysical transcendentals.” (Polo 2014, ix) Thereafter, there is a decline that must be offset by rigorous philosophical thinking today. In other words, Polo’s work shows that “[m]odern philosophy ... is a philosophy of the subject. It seeks to establish the self as a radical or transcendent principle, but falls prey ... to errors that stem from the lack of correct philosophical method.” (Polo 2014, ix) Thus, a correct philosophical method is required.

4. PHILOSOPHER & TEACHER

As generations of students at the University of Navarre may attest, there are few who could have been more qualified than Polo to teach a ‘correct philosophical method’. He not only taught it, by all accounts he lived it in both his professional and personal life. Polo consistently reminded his students that the true philosopher has to be engaged fully in a process that cannot be programmed or planned. Philosophy is a constant *unfolding* of mystery, a constant search and unceasing unveiling of things, of ideas not foreseen, of concepts not entirely grasped. This requires an attitude of openness and tolerance—a certain degree of malleability, as well.

As one of his students explains, those who fail to exercise a “living search” for the truth and who instead remain “idolatrously” before objects thought (in other words, those who do not go beyond their “mental limit”) fall into the unknown and fail to make progress towards wisdom. One might even say that the true philosophical act never reaches completion. “To philosophically understand is to admire reality, penetrate its depths, renew one’s self as one accompanies

her, enjoys her,” Ignacio Salinas, another former student, says.¹⁴ Or, as Juan José Padial, a former student and one of Polo’s eulogizers says, what Polo taught was that “[p]hilosophy always began and will begin, according to Aristotle, with admiration.”¹⁵

Polo himself elaborated quite a bit on the nature of philosophy and on the philosopher’s task. “A philosopher is someone who is unsatisfied, a person who does not settle easily, but who pursues the most radical and greatest things,” he wrote.¹⁶ His work necessarily requires an unceasing questioning attitude. “At the very moment that a philosopher remains calm,” Polo warns, “he stops being a philosopher: He becomes an ordinary thinker who settles for established formulas and who marginalizes himself from progress.”¹⁷ He must remain constantly engaged in that search for truth.¹⁸ And since truth can only be apprehended but never wholly possessed, it becomes a life-long quest to which only some are called. It requires sacrifice and, perhaps above all, an indefatigable spirit. It becomes a vocation.

By all accounts Polo had that vocation. As his former students attest, Polo taught by example—in the way he himself approached his calling as a philosopher. His writings and lectures, his conversations and even his humor: Everything was imbued with the philosophical. Romero says “[h]is books always speak with his voice.”¹⁹ Padial echoes the sentiment: “[I]n his books, classes, and conversations one participated in a personally involved task.” He adds: “Philosophy

¹⁴ “Sólo los que no ejercen una búsqueda viva y se detienen idolátricamente ante los objetos pensados (límite mental) pueden caer en semejante desconocimiento. Entender filosóficamente es admirarse de la realidad, penetrar en su hondón, renovarse al acompañarla, gozarse en ella.” (Falgueras Salinas 2013, 8).

¹⁵ “La filosofía siempre comenzó y comenzará, según Aristóteles, por la admiración.” (Padial Benticuaga 2013, 13).

¹⁶ “[U]n filósofo es un insatisfecho, una persona que no se conforma fácilmente, sino que va detrás de lo más radical y más grande.” (Polo, 1995, 18).

¹⁷ “[E]n el mismo momento en que un filósofo se queda tranquilo, deja de ser filósofo: se convierte en un pensador rutinario que se conforma con fórmulas consagradas y se margina del progreso.” (Polo, 1995, 18).

¹⁸ “[L]a filosofía es el amor a la verdad, la búsqueda de la verdad.” (Polo, 1995, 21).

¹⁹ “[S]us libros siempre hablan con su voz.” (Romero)

appeared to us, his readers or interlocutors, as something living.”²⁰ What Padial and others eventually learned from Polo was that “the relationship between philosophy and philosophizing, ..., is not a relation of identity but of mutual support, it is a relationship of solidarity.”²¹

In the end, however, Polo “always taught and exhibited the conviction that philosophical criticism should lead to manifesting the will of truth that the exercise of thought encloses on the part of anybody,” says Fernando Múgica, another eulogist.²² This is reminiscent of Pierre Hadot, the legendary philosopher and historian of philosophy at the Collège de France, who according to one reviewer similarly taught “that philosophy is a lived experience, not a set of doctrines” and “that philosophy is best pursued orally, in dialogue and community, not through written texts and lectures.” (Gewen 2002) Like Polo, Hadot believed that “Socrates taught that knowledge was not a collection of propositions to be passed on from teacher to pupil, but a manner of being, communicated through dialogue.” (Múgica 2013, 428) And at the core of the philosophical enterprise, says the reviewer, “[a]t the heart of what Socrates meant by knowledge ... is a way of life, ‘a love of the good’”—which is something that “comes from within the individual, and after it is awakened it must be renewed through self-questioning, self-examination, a personal commitment to a life of philosophy.” (Múgica 2013, 428) This could easily have been written about Polo as well.

Those who knew Polo in life, colleagues as well as students, fondly remember how he taught. It may have seemed informal compared to the standard teaching method of many traditional academics, which is to read their lectures. Instead, Polo *talked* to his students, opening himself up to them in an act of generosity, in a self-giving process of

²⁰ “En sus palabras aparecía su propia actividad pensante, su esfuerzo de orientación. ... en sus libros, clases y conversaciones se asistía a una tarea emprendida personalmente La filosofía aparecía para nosotros, sus lectores o interlocutores, como algo vivo.” (Padial Benticuaga 2013, 14).

²¹ “[L]a relación entre filosofía y filosofar, ..., no es una relación de identidad, sino de apoyo mutuo, es una relación solidaria.” (Padial Benticuaga 2013, p. 11).

²² “[È]l siempre enseñó y ejerció la convicción de que la crítica filosófica se debía encaminar a poner de manifiesto la voluntad de verdad que encerraba el ejercicio del pensar por parte de quien fuera.” (Múgica 2013, 428).

actual mutual discovery within the four walls of his classroom. As a professor, writes Múgica, Polo showed “great generosity and even an overflowing of time and energy.”²³ Polo effectively created an intimate space in his classroom in which the process of discovery could take place. Múgica recalls that “[h]e managed to get those of us who got close to him to enter the experience of thinking and to dare to ask questions.”²⁴ His message was that “[e]very question has meaning and can be taken advantage of, most especially when the exercise of philosophical thought leads not to destructive criticism but to constructive criticism.”²⁵

It was not always a clear or linear path. His was a meandering dialogue, an unplanned process of exploring, examining, and then circling back again to approach a problem from a different direction. As Romero, now a professor, recalls: Polo “opened his horizons”²⁶, teaching him to abandon presuppositions and relinquish expectations and to be open to the wonder of reality. “He would start talking—it seemed there was no focus, that he jumped from one place to another—and when he was done, you discovered the framework.”²⁷

In the end, Múgica says Polo was a gentle guide, a willing mentor, a father figure. He fondly remembers “[h]is constant concern for the formation of students, doctoral candidates, and young professors.”²⁸ He also recalls that “the presence of Don Leonardo in the Department [of philosophy] was proverbial, tangible, kind, serene, and silent.” (Múgica 2013, 428) The end result was always one that left students feeling emboldened, excited to embark on a process of philo-

²³ “[G]ran generosidad y hasta derroche de tiempo y energía.” (Múgica 2013, 429).

²⁴ “Conseguía que quienes nos acercábamos a él accediéramos a la experiencia del pensar y al atrevimiento del preguntar.” (Múgica 2013, 427).

²⁵ “Toda pregunta tiene un sentido y es aprovechable, muy especialmente cuando el ejercicio del pensamiento filosófico se encamina no a la crítica por destrucción, sino a la crítica por superación.” (Múgica 2013, 427)

²⁶ “[E]l profesor Polo me abrió otros horizontes.” (Romero)

²⁷ “Se ponía a hablar, parecía que no había hilo, que saltaba de un lugar a otro, y cuando terminaba descubría el esqueleto.” (Romero)

²⁸ “Su preocupación constante por la formación de los alumnos, los doctorandos y los profesores jóvenes.” (Múgica 2013, 428).

sophical discovery, and full of a sense of wonder and joy in the face of the mystery of life. A professor can have no better legacy than this.

5. GROWING INTEREST

It would be wonderful to share this kind of approach to philosophy with more students around the world. Polo is, regrettably, not read widely. Certain efforts have been made in recent years to bring him to the attention of English-speaking audiences. However, it remains to be seen how effective these efforts will be, given various challenges.

The conference held in Madrid last year was organized by the Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy was an exciting and watershed event. Though well-attended, it was clear that many important Polian ideas and concepts remain to be explored and better understood, and that Polo's works need to be introduced to more scholars in more places around the world. The Institute, which is based at the University of Notre Dame, has also edited and published a chapter of Polo's book, *Presente y futuro del hombre* under the title *Why a Transcendental Anthropology?* (Schalkwijk) This publication was distributed at the 2014 conference. While other translations remain pending, these are welcome and necessary steps. In the meantime, a blog for translators of Polo's works into English is also available. On the home page, there is a quotation from Polo, which includes the following: "Human language was not made for speaking about knowledge" (from his "Curso de teoría del conocimiento, tomo I"²⁹). This should be heeded by all scholars embarking on Polian studies.

Despite these laudable achievements, the reception of Polo in the English-speaking world will not be smooth. This could be because of the problem of translation; but more importantly, as Schalkwijk asserts, it could be simply because of the "the methodological contrast between the analytical philosophy that currently reigns in most English-speaking countries, which attaches the highest importance to well-defined questions and concepts, and Polo's approach, which always invites us to go beyond our small and safe mental world, towards the mysterious richness of reality." (Schalkwijk)

²⁹ Available at: <http://translatingpolo.blogspot.co.at> (last accessed June 12, 2015).

Yet there is confidence that once scholars discover the breadth, richness, and profundity of Polo's work, they will be enchanted, enthralled, mystified, and emboldened to dig deeper and pursue the various strains of thought that come together in his works. In contrast to what some contemporary philosophers try to do—which is to try to get *behind* the idea of the reality all around us—Polo offers a fresh and new approach: to get *inside* the phenomenon being experienced. This, of course, has a lot to do with the phenomenological tradition of the early twentieth century. However, in Polo it is markedly different in one fundamental respect: to get inside the phenomenon, one has to go *beyond* the limit that nature, culture, and the modern world have imposed on our thinking and on the way we think about thinking. This typically Polian insight means—and requires—us to go beyond our mental limits, to defy our natural inclinations to want to arrive at answers, and to adopt a more gentle (and more humble) approach to philosophical understanding and meaning than might normally be sought by modern-day philosophers. In the end, and perhaps not entirely surprisingly, this may end up being one of Polo's most important legacies.

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ALVINO-MARIO FANTINI

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