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SPECIAL ISSUE

A personalist approach to business ethics: New perspectives for virtue ethics and servant leadership

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Abstract

This article has a twofold purpose: first, it explores how Leonardo Polo's personalist anthropology enriches and enhances neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and second, it highlights how this specific personalist approach brings new perspectives to servant leadership. The recently revived neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics tradition finds that MacIntyre's scholarship significantly contributes to virtue ethics in business—particularly his conception of practices, institutions, and internal/external goods. However, we argue that some of his latest insights about the virtues of acknowledged dependence and human vulnerability remain underdeveloped because of the underlying anthropology that neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics relies on. To overcome this limitation, we introduce Polo's transcendental anthropology as a possible foundation of a personalist approach that enriches virtue ethics. To do so, we address how transcendental anthropology can enrich two central aspects of virtue ethics, namely (1) the understanding of human beings and their flourishing and (2) the relationship of virtue to praxis and human work. Finally, to address the practical implications for business leadership and work that can derive from assuming transcendental anthropology, we address how servant leadership acquires a new perspective in light of this personalism and its logic of gift, highlighting interpersonal self-giving as a way of service.

KEYWORDS

logic of gift, MacIntyre, personalism, Polo, servant leadership, transcendental anthropology, virtue ethics

1 | INTRODUCTION

Virtue ethics (henceforth VE) has a longstanding tradition in moral philosophy, and although it includes different approaches in Western and Eastern Ancient thought, the Greek idea of virtue—*arête* that stands for excellence—has played a central role in the history of Western moral discourse. Indeed, Aristotelian ethics constitutes a major branch of philosophical ethics and is known as “classical” ethics (Porter, 2013; Russell, 2013). In its classical (Aristotelian) and neo-Aristotelian expressions, VE has been revived in recent decades in an attempt to overcome the limitations of the modernist approach

to ethics (Hursthouse, 1999; Petri, 2017) and to shift morality's focus from “the right thing to do”—characteristic of “action-centered” ethics, such as deontology and utilitarianism—to “the best way to live”—representative of “agent-centered” ethics, which is found especially in VE (Russell, 2013; Sison et al., 2018). Moreover, although virtues play a central role in this latter approach, in an attempt to avoid moral reductionism, it also includes goods and norms—the other two main elements that are central to deontology and utilitarianism, respectively—under the rule of practical reason (Melé, 2020).

Although involving a complex and profound progression, in brief, it can be said that the modernist approach—as an heir to

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the Enlightenment—is based on an individualistic conception of the human being that seeks a public—instead of a common—good (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 168). The recovery of the concept of a common good, as understood by Aristotle and Aquinas, has been a turning point in philosophy and the applied social and psychological sciences because it rejects modernist understandings of human beings as in possession of an individualistic autonomous self and recovers a richer anthropological foundation (Akrivou & Sison, 2016).

This paper builds on the neo-Aristotelian VE tradition by drawing from the insights of personalism, particularly from the transcendental anthropology of Leonardo Polo (1996a, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2011). Personalism (Mounier, 1936; Marías, 1996; Maritain, 1947; Spaemann, 2006; Wojtyła, 1979, 1981, 1993; see Burgos, 2018 for an introduction) is a real philosophical approach that sees human beings as an end in themselves. Transcendental anthropology, for its part, builds methodologically (Murillo, 2019) on personalist philosophy in an effort to address the fundamental question of *our most profound reality*, that is, *that which characterizes us as human beings*, as will be explained later.

In order to explain why and how this personalist approach can enrich VE, we proceed as follows: We first present MacIntyre's contribution to VE, in particular his conception of virtues, practices, and internal goods, and we argue that, in spite of his unique contribution, which has also incidentally contributed to demonstrate the advantages of VE in business (Ferrero & Sison, 2014; Hartman, 2013; Melé, 2009; Russell, 2013; Staveren, 2007), some of his latest and most interesting insights about the virtues of acknowledged dependence and human vulnerability remain underdeveloped because of the philosophical limitations associated with the anthropology underlying neo-Aristotelian VE. We then introduce Polo's transcendental anthropology as a possible foundation for a personalist VE approach that can enrich, enhance, and even overcome certain shortcomings found in neo-Aristotelian VE. In so doing, said anthropology reveals how its teleological horizon requires a shift from the Greek notion of *ergon* to the Latin conception of *munus* (gift). Finally, to exemplify the benefits of assuming this personalist anthropology, we explain how servant leadership, whose conceptual background is compatible with an understanding of interpersonal self-giving as a way of service, acquires a new perspective in light of anthropological personalism and the logic of gift.

2 | MACINTYRE'S CONTRIBUTION TO VE AND ITS APPLICATION TO BUSINESS

VE in business has undergone huge developments in the last three decades, and many scholars have delved into this line of thought (Hartman, 2013; Melé, 2009; Sison et al., 2012; Staveren, 2007; for a review, see Ferrero & Sison, 2014). Although there are different streams among virtue ethicists—including Neo-Aristotelians, Confucians, Humeans, Smithians, Nietzscheans, etc. (Russell, 2013; Sison et al., 2018)—its main branch focuses on a recovery of the Aristotelian tradition, an agent-based approach that highlights the moral character and practical wisdom (Hartman, 2008; Scalzo & Alford, 2016).

This led to the growth of a neo-Aristotelian VE in business (Bernacchio, 2018; MacIntyre, 2007; Moore & Beadle, 2006; Sison et al., 2012; Sison et al., 2018), in particular, through the lens of the virtue of practical wisdom (Conrad, 2018; Sison & Hühn, 2018). Neo-Aristotelian VE broadly recalls the importance of moral habits and teleologically oriented humanistic ideas to reinvigorate the moral life of organizations and society (Alzola, 2012; Annas, 2011; Carr, 2008; Carr & Steutel, 2005; Sherman, 1989).

Most important in this line of scholars, Alasdair MacIntyre (1967, 2007) has become a key thinker in the rehabilitation of the VE paradigm, which his followers have applied to business (Collier, 1995; Dawson, 2009; Dawson & Bartholomew, 2003; Dobson, 2004; Halliday & Johnsson, 2009; Horvath, 1995). Indeed, even though MacIntyre has stated many times that he himself is not interested in business (MacIntyre, 1994; Moore, 2002, 2005; Moore & Beadle, 2006), several of his publications outline a definition of work (MacIntyre, 2007, 2016) that went on to inspire an entire generation of thinkers in business ethics (Dawson & Bartholomew, 2003; Halliday & Johnsson, 2009; Moore & Beadle, 2006).

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (2007) highlights that work as a human activity should facilitate human excellence based on the difference between *man-as-he-happens-to-be* and *man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature*, which requires the development of virtues as well as engagement in communities of practice (Pinto-Garay & Bosch, 2018).

According to MacIntyre, a practice is

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity. (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 187)

Accordingly—as sustained in *After Virtue*—bricklaying, for instance, is not a practice, but architecture is. This is so because a technical task does not contribute to the development of the wider human good, and instead mainly points to an external result. For its part, the principal outcome of practice corresponds to the achievement of the internal goods related to the activity involved in the practice itself rather than to the external product.

To illustrate this, he uses the example of a 7-year-old child learning to play chess; his motivation centers on the candy that he receives as a reward for doing so (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 188). Although a reward-based system can be a good way to introduce a smart kid into a practice, “there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands” (p. 188). As this example shows, internal goods are related to the excellence of the practice—in this case, playing chess—whereas external goods—like candy—focus on an end that is alien to the practice itself.

The internal goods of the practice are reached through the quest for excellence of the product resulting from that practice. The excellence of the product results from a practice done in accordance with cooperatively defined standards that are pertinent to a certain tradition (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 189). Besides excellence in the product, reaching the goods internal to that form of activity requires the development of virtues that are necessary to attain related standards of excellence and, therefore, the quest for excellence of the product allows the agent to attain her own good in the form of the virtues acquired during this process. In addition, MacIntyre considers excellence of the product not only a goal whose quest leads to reaching the internal goods of the practice but also an internal good in itself. The excellence of the product is an internal good that benefits the community engaged in the practice (MacIntyre, 2007: 189–190), while external goods—such as money, status, or power—are “always some individual's property and possession” (p. 190).

MacIntyre also made an important distinction between institutions and practices. While institutions are necessary for the development of practices, at the same time, they are “characteristically and necessarily concerned with... external goods” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 194) and, therefore, vulnerable to an exclusive focus on external goods; for this reason, virtues help practices to resist the corrupting power of institutions.

Among others, Moore (2005) applied MacIntyre's distinction between institutions and practices to business firms in an attempt to understand how firms can act in a virtuous manner. He argued that although it is true that the institutional dimension associated with corporations tends to myopically focus on external goods that have a corruptive power over the goods internal to practices (Dawson, 2009; Halliday & Johnsson, 2009), institutions can also build a corporate character expressed in an ethical culture (Moore, 2005). Moore and Beadle (2006) explained the conditions under which virtues contribute to the protection of business practices and improve corporate culture with ethical decision-making. Virtues, in addition to preserving institutions' practices from corruption, contribute to enhanced institutional excellence: a virtuous corporate character, that is, one that expresses a proper balance between practices and institutions, allows firms to engage in practices of excellence, as can be seen, for example, in many family firms that stand out for having a shared ethical culture built on values that are transmitted as a legacy through the generations (Scalzo & Ramírez, 2020). This is so for organizations in general, but, in the case of family business, “family involvement can motivate an orientation towards organizational virtue because of family's influence on cultures, processes and decisions” (Payne et al., 2011, p. 261). Hence, the practice-institution scheme initially proposed by MacIntyre in *After Virtue* four decades ago has evolved into one of “goods-virtues-practices-institutions.” This scheme is currently considered the most complete account of neo-Aristotelian VE in business (Collier, 1995; Dawson, 2009; Dawson & Bartholomew, 2003; Dobson, 2004; Ferrero & Sison, 2014; Halliday & Johnsson, 2009; Horvath, 1995; McPherson, 2013; Moore, 2002, 2005, 2008; Moore & Beadle, 2006) and has contributed to the recovery of a “first-person” perspective that focuses on the agent over action (Dobson, 2004).

A first-person, agent-focused perspective not only highlights the importance of communities, narratives, and traditions (MacIntyre, 1990,

2007) but also of the underlying anthropological assumptions proper to each approach including MacIntyre's latest neo-Aristotelian account (MacIntyre, 2016). As Bernacchio (2018) shows, MacIntyre's attempt to enrich the Aristotelian approach includes two key ideas: the notion of a “network of giving and receiving” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 99) and “the virtues of acknowledged dependence” (p. 119). MacIntyre explicitly recognized that taking human vulnerability into account as a central feature of human life is a correction to his earlier enquiries, thus leading him to adequately reconcile “other important aspects of the part that the virtues play in human life” (p. ix-x). However, MacIntyre has never explicitly proposed philosophical anthropology on which his insights into human vulnerability and interpersonal giving and receiving should be further developed. Moreover, although in some works (i.e., MacIntyre, 1999) he seems to be inclined to adopt Thomistic-inspired anthropological foundations, in his latest work (MacIntyre, 2016), he dials back and defines himself as a neo-Aristotelian scholar.

Taking into account that every theoretical approach to ethics builds on given anthropology, and considering that every teleological ethics seeks a certain end or *telos*, we intend to explore the human *telos* in light of philosophical insights from personalism. We purport that the Spanish philosopher Leonardo Polo's transcendental anthropology can help to better understand the transcendent vocation of human beings and, therefore, define the path toward full development and personal flourishing.

Leonardo Polo (1926–2013) is best known for his transcendental anthropology, which is neither analytical nor hermeneutic, but rather personal and systemic, and the philosophical method that makes this possible, namely the abandonment of the mental limit (Murillo, 2019; Polo, 2015). Polo's significance is found in his bold methodology that opens the way for a theory of the person that responds to the concerns of modern and contemporary philosophy, in particular regarding freedom; in addition, it continues and expands on the achievements of classical and medieval philosophy. His works cover a wide range of fields including psychology, theory of knowledge, physics, biology, neuroscience, ethics, philosophy of language, theology, sociology, education, philosophy of science, political economy, and business ethics. Throughout his work, Polo engages with both classical and medieval philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham as well as modern and contemporary thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Habermas. In dialog with the great key thinkers of the history of philosophy, Polo seeks to extend the achievements of traditional philosophy as well as to rectify and correct the pitfalls found in the project of Modern philosophy.¹ In what follows, we will briefly introduce Polo's transcendental anthropology to explain these ideas and then advance toward the introduction of a personalist virtue ethics (henceforth PVE).

3 | TRANSCENDENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS THE FOUNDATION OF PVE

The transcendental anthropology of Leonardo Polo addresses the question of the “most profound reality that characterizes human

beings." According to Polo, at least "as far as the West is concerned... there have been... three ways of focusing on or accentuating the most important thing in human beings" (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 10), which he called the "classical radical," the "modern radical," and the "personal radical." The *classical radical*, represented by Aristotle and VE in classical Greek thought, stressed our common human nature (biological and psychological), which can be perfected or improved upon by developing virtues (morally good *habits* that are acquired through phronesis-guided *actions*). The *modern radical* appeared in the sixteenth century and stressed human subjectivity as the locus of the autonomous self² and of an individual, independent freedom, as well as the central role of production in the making of human identity. The third understanding of the fundamental root of being human corresponds to the *personal radical*, represented in Western philosophical traditions by Christian and personalist philosophies, which highlight the person's uniqueness as intimacy, the central role of relationships (coexistence) as constitutive of the person, and the fact that the person is more than her virtues and her products (Fernández-González, 2019a).

These radicals represent three fundamental aspects of human beings that philosophical traditions captured and accentuated differently in their historical contexts. According to Polo, in principle, none of them can be ignored as completely wrong and they should be seen as compatible (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 10). "The key to their compatibility is found in ordering them according to their relative depth" (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 33) and, as the reader might guess, for Polo, the personal radical is the deepest of them. This personalist understanding of human beings synthesizes and redirects the insights that the two other radicals accentuate: virtue as the perfection of human nature (classical radical), and the autonomous self and freedom (modern radical). In a personalist understanding, the person freely opens her selfhood and intimacy to interpersonal, caring relationships with others, and virtuous actions are one of the manifestations of this relationship.

With this personalist background in mind, Polo amplified classic metaphysics with transcendental anthropology. According to him, the fact of being human (which is the object of anthropology) is set apart from being in the rest of the physical universe (which is the object of metaphysics). That is, anthropology is irreducible to metaphysics because the act of being of human persons is irreducible to the act of being of the rest of the cosmos. But "the irreducible intimacy of the personal act-of-being proper to the human person is... not studied in any developed way by classical philosophy" (Polo, 2015). Polo argues that the personal act of being also possesses its own specific "transcendentals" or properties; he, therefore, added to the classic metaphysical transcendentals of being—that is, "one" (*lat.—unum*), "true" (*verum*), "good" (*bonum*), and "beautiful" (*pulchrum*)—another new set of transcendentals proper to the person. They correspond to four anthropological transcendentals (Polo, 1998) and include *personal coexistence*, *personal freedom*, *personal intellection*, and *personal giving and acceptance* (*personal love*). Polo affirms that these four personal transcendentals refer to the act of being of the person, which means, in the first place, that they are not additional or expendable

features. One cannot stop being that which one is, a singularity that is irreducible to the self (Akrivou et al., 2018). Thus, it is more accurate to say that "we are freedom, we are co-existence, etc." rather than "we have freedom, we practice co-existence, etc."

Those four personal transcendentals have practical implications for personal growth and societal flourishing. The fact that we are *personal freedom* implies that growth is fundamental to the human person; in other words, personal growth corresponds to our way of being and is unrestricted (Polo, 1997, 2007) because we are always free. Enabled by transcendental freedom, human beings—unlike any other species on earth—attempt to transform the world as an opportunity for growth. *Personal coexistence* implies that human beings are capable of establishing a singular type of relationship. Unlike inanimate beings, both animal and vegetable life would be impossible without a relationship to their environment; the human person, in turn, is not simply in a relationship with the environment: based on her intimacy, she is also capable of establishing deeper connections with other persons built on mutual trust and self-giving love. Therefore, these interpersonal connections are more properly called "co-existence" rather than relationships. *Personal intellection* allows the person to access the heart of reality and to know things in themselves, especially other human persons because only the person can know the person. *Personal love*, the highest transcendental, is characterized by a process of personal self-giving and accepting the gift of others, which continuously enhances personal and societal flourishing. As we can see, personal transcendentals refer to a way of being that aims toward growth. Polo (2007) understands human growth as unrestricted both in terms of extension and direction, allowing the person to find her calling in life.³ In this sense, failure to grow in these four aspects of our personal being can lead to degradation and ultimately self-destruction, rather than to the mere absence of enrichment.

In order to highlight how transcendental anthropology can enrich neo-Aristotelian VE, we synthesize transcendental personalism's understanding of human beings and their development into three main ideas: (1) the person's unique intimacy and her call to moral excellence, (2) the person's transcendence and her call to interpersonal growth, and (3) the manifestation of the person's intimacy and transcendence through virtuous activity.

1. *Each person possesses an intimacy that makes her unique, absolutely original, and is the source of her dignity.* This intimate selfhood, "the depth of each one of us, the intimacy of each one of us" (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 29), is a complex whole of emotions, intentions, agency, decisions, and understandings, but, at its core, it entails a potentiality and a call to unlimited and original moral growth: "growth, *continuatio naturae*, hope, innovation, are ultimately derived from the person; they are an aspect of her ... The person is radically new... The person burst into history as sheer novelty" (p. 57). Each person has a *telos*, a potentiality to grow as a human being toward a purpose found in the highest fulfillment of personal being in its four transcendental aspects, namely freedom, coexistence,

intellection, and gift-love. Herein resides the deepest foundation of the person's dignity—her potential for original moral excellence based on her personal being, in particular on transcendental freedom and personal gift-love.

This purpose is existentially experienced as a personal calling that marks one's path in life (Polo, 1996a). Freely answering this call requires a personal disposition and dedication to moral excellence and personal growth. By committing to the cultivation of this disposition, the person is set on a path of realizing her highest potential as a human being, but this endeavor requires a sense of self that has been called a "relational self of virtue" (Fernández-González, 2019b) and is characterized by a profound commitment to engage in networks of interpersonal growth in virtue. It also requires honest self-inquiry that avoids moral hypocrisy (Batson et al., 1999), that is, the tendency to want to maintain self-esteem by at least appearing moral and good to ourselves and others, as well as an integrated sense of personal and professional vocation, that is, aspiring to use one's freedom and socioprofessional role as a service to the others (Akrivou et al., 2020) rather than for pure personal profit.

2. *The person's moral development is per se transcendental in the sense of transpersonal and interpersonal.*⁴ Rather than independent autonomous selves, humans are relational beings whose intimacy is capable of being freely open to other intimacies and, therefore, the person's moral development is spurred on in coexistence: "There is a higher freedom ... being for the other, being free for the other. That is a higher freedom and that is intersubjective freedom" (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 31). Interpersonal relations are not automatic, but rather premised upon each person's freedom. For transcendental personalism, freedom is conceived of as a "freedom for someone else" (not as a "freedom from that which hinders one's development"). Every human person is intrinsically called to live and grow for the other and with the other because "freedom is not independence; it is not autonomy. Freedom is destining oneself, transcending oneself. Freedom is 'for whom'" (p. 37). This significant-other person is the (transcendental) motivation for personal growth, and engaging in effusive two-way interpersonal relations is the locus (context) of personal growth. For the classics, goodness always tends to spread naturally (*bonum est diffusivum sui*), but for Polo "the person is not diffusive, she is effusive. Effusive means that persons give themselves. Personal being is gift" (p. 37). Self-giving that is voluntary and loving constitutes the path toward interpersonal moral growth. The person's radical freedom (freedom for self-giving) is at the origin of her horizontal (interpersonal) transcendence and makes possible different paths of personal and interpersonal growth.
3. *Human actions manifest the person's intimacy and transcendence and can potentially perfect the person.* "What is truly important is the action or the act, rather than the product. The human being ... comes before the product, in the acting. For a living being, to live is to be; the human being is found in his/her acts, in his/her activities" (Polo & Corazón, 2005, pp. 47–48). On a personalist account, as Wojtyła (1979) has shown, each human person is

intimately united to her particular actions and, at the same time, transcends them. All human activity manifests the person's inner world in concrete space and time and therefore has the potential to become a self-giving endeavor, thus allowing for interpersonal growth. From a transcendental personalist point of view, a truly human activity (be it economic, esthetic, political, intellectual, or of any other kind) includes free engagement with and for others and contributes to the moral growth of those engaging in it, and of those to whom the activity is addressed:

Transcendent motivation is living, acting, being moved in actuation not by results, not by the vital value that the act itself has, but by the benefit it brings to another: when human beings realize that selfishness is madness, that the most important thing about their actions is not even their virtue, but the other... Living while being motivated by others sums up the person (Polo & Corazón, 2005, p. 52).

Transcendental personalist work is characterized by intentional loving service to others and by striving for high-quality execution. This quest for quality work in serving others through professional activity is the natural arena for the development of virtues, and in particular of practical wisdom, a major theme in neo-Aristotelian VE, which transcendental anthropology can also help to refine. According to Aristotle, practical wisdom, a key integrative virtue, allows the person to mobilize her cognitive, affective, decisional, and ethical dimensions in the choice and implementation of a wise course of action.

The understanding of practical wisdom proposed by transcendental personalism assumes and enriches Aristotle's account. It is first and foremost focused on a person capable of acting with unity; it presupposes that the practically wise person has already developed an appropriate stable moral character and is able to integrate the ethical, cognitive, affective, and practical aspects of wise action or choices, aiming to reach the person(s) involved as ends in themselves (Akrivou & Scalzo, 2020). Personalist wisdom is displayed in thoughtfully considering how a situation can be handled or transformed in line with one's interiority and relationships, in order to bolster the flourishing of intimacy and relationality among all persons involved, while also serving the common good. This understanding of practical wisdom assumes that a person acts freely and intentionally in a practically wise manner, guiding her choices with integrity. It emanates from transcendental freedom ("freedom for") beyond the limits of one's narrower (more cognitivist) social/psychological self-identity (Akrivou & Scalzo, 2020).

This understanding of practical wisdom, rooted in the personal radical, is consistent with the neo-Aristotelian tradition. For their part, analytic and modern understandings of practical wisdom are at odds with this personalist understanding. Aubenque (1999) argued that the complicated meaning of this cardinal virtue has gradually been degraded over time, eventually becoming a mere protective prudential practice, pragmatic self-interested rationality that aims

squarely at attaining an agent's ends via clever forms of action. Cognitivist approaches embody this degradation and reduce practical wisdom to cleverness, seeing it as a cognitive competence that can be cultivated individually and outside of interpersonal relations. In turn, behaviorists see it as a cognitive, protective, and prudential practice on the part of each individual subject-actor. Those accounts are inconsistent with Aristotelian ethics and do not include the richness of the human person because they only emphasize partial aspects thereof.⁵

This conception of personalist practical wisdom can be applied to the field of business management and leadership. As suggested by Akrivou and Scalzo (2020), this richer, nuanced, and more humane form of rationality involves mutual growth in integrity for all persons involved and supports friendship, trust, cooperation, gratitude, forgiveness, and even charity (Alford, 2018; Ferrer, 2015; Melé, 2009; Polo, 2007). Pérez-Lopez (2002) points to relationships that lack this kind of practical wisdom, seeing them as based on psychosocial control, which can appear in leadership or business management styles inspired by a modernist conception of the human being as an autonomous self. Thus, in a transcendental personalist understanding, the person is not a "factor" in the equation of effective leadership, but rather an end in herself and the basis of all social and organizational institutions; hence, business activity should be oriented toward serving the person (Bachelder, 2018; Spears, 2010a, 2010b; van Dierendonck, 2011; Yoelin et al., 2017).

4 | AFTER MACINTYRE: TOWARD A PVE PARADIGM

Although MacIntyre's ethical theory (MacIntyre, 2007) represents a significant critique of late modern capitalist institutions (Dobson, 2009; Knight, 2017) and is probably the most serious effort to address the moral limitations of Enlightenment-inspired modern ethics (MacIntyre, 1967, 1988, 1990, 2016), it nonetheless presents some shortcomings that can be augmented with the aid of transcendental anthropology. In this section, we argue that transcendental personalism is one of the vehicles that could lead those who admire MacIntyre's work—but see room for improvement—beyond MacIntyre. In this line, we will address two aspects related to VE more closely—including MacIntyre's contribution—that merit more development: (1) the understanding of human beings and their flourishing and (2) virtue's relationship to praxis and human work. We will first present the VE account of these aspects, followed by MacIntyre's neo-Aristotelian contributions to them; we will then explore how the philosophical insights of personalism based on Polo's transcendental anthropology can refine both.

1. With regards to VE's conception of human beings and their flourishing, for Aristotle—who built and extended upon Plato's works—the proper *ergon* ("function," "task") of human beings consists in the activity related to the rational part of the soul

in accordance with virtue. The latter stresses the centrality of human nature (capturing both its biological and psychological facets), which can be perfected or improved upon (NE 1140b). This happens via the development of a virtuous way of being and living, which also entails developing the gamut of moral virtues, that is, morally good habits that are developed by phronesis-guided actions (NE 1103a) in light of a common understanding of the polis, of how they are connected and of what kind of society reflects the telos of a good life. The conception of human flourishing via the fulfillment of *ergon* has profoundly influenced Western culture, but it remains true that Aristotle lacked notions of selfhood and identity and therefore was unable to completely account for the existential experience of human freedom and its transcendence. For Aristotelian VE, human beings are not considered as beings with a transcendental dimension; they are instead seen as a superior part of nature with both individual and "species" properties, such as a superior capacity for reason. Aristotelian ethics emphasizes the importance of the right motives and the right emotions integrated with, rather than opposed to, rationality (Hartman, 2017). Individuality is understood as part of a superior nature that is linked with human beings' social nature and capacity to create political communities.

Neo-Aristotelian VE assumes this understanding of human beings as naturally sociable and rational in nature but also highlights the importance of free moral choice and the responsibility for cultivating our moral character, as well as of a voluntary inner disposition to virtue, as antecedents for fulfilling the teleology of life. It lacks, however, a notion of personal freedom, and volition is limited, making the "question of what should I do" unanswerable in a particular situation beyond the teleological dimension of human action. In other words, it neglects the fact that the person transcends her actions. In addition, as we noted at the end of Section 1, MacIntyre's later insights into human vulnerability and interpersonal giving and receiving remain underdeveloped because he does not explicitly propose philosophical anthropology on which to further develop them.

As we have shown, in Polo's transcendental anthropology, each human person reveals herself in her capacity to give and receive love with actions that express her freedom and gratuity, like when upholding a promise or practicing generosity, piety, gratitude, forgiveness, or care (Ferrer, 2015). This approach implies a shift from the Greek notion of *ergon* to the Latin conception of *munus* (gift) as constitutive of human flourishing. MacIntyre's insights into acknowledged dependence can find further development in the transcendental understanding of personal coexistence; the issue of human vulnerability (potentially present in human actions, capacities, will, intelligence, achievements, etc.) can be addressed on the grounds of the person's inalienable dignity and her transcendence. This is so because, based on a rich intimacy, uniqueness,

and personal call to excellence, the person is always "more" than her (faulty) actions, capacities, will, intelligence, achievements, etc. in which her vulnerability is made manifest.

2. The second aspect of VE that can be augmented with the aid of transcendental personalism refers to virtue's relationship with praxis and human work. Aristotelian VE sustains happiness (*eudaimonia*, usually translated as human flourishing) as the final end for human beings (Sison, 2015). For Aristotle, virtue is an excellence that consists in "living or doing well" (2009, NE 1095a) in accordance with rational activity, in other words, it corresponds to what is best in human beings. Indeed, human action deals with the "realization of a very wide range of activities, aimed at the configuration of life itself according to a certain ideal representation of the good life, which is properly human action; this is what Aristotle calls praxis in the strict sense of the term" (Vigo, 2007, p. 110). It is worth noting that only people who possess a certain rational representation of what a good life means are capable of *praxis*. This focus on human action (*praxis*) tends to stress virtue as an immanent result of human action in accordance with rational activity. However, action or *praxis* is different from production or *poiesis*: they represent two different ways of doing things (NE 1140a) and possess two kinds of teleology: "For while making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is its end" (2009, NE 1140b). As a result, since Aristotle considers action and production as mutually exclusive (2009, NE 1178b), VE is severely limited in its capacity to value technical (*poietical*, productive) activities—such as craftsmanship or manual labor—which, aiming at an external end or result, remain in the realm of means and out of the scope of ethics. Since these activities have a proper excellence (technical reason or *techne*) they are a "kind of virtue" since proper virtue is strictly directed towards the good, whereas *techne* is ambivalent and can be used badly.

Similarly, MacIntyre (2007) sustains that the external goods associated with production are goods of another kind, that is, goods that manifest excellent practices and that are most valuable based on their instrumentality (MacIntyre, 1988). However, a good product can also perfect the craftsperson since "the aim internal to such productive crafts, when they are in good order, is never only to catch fish, or to produce beef or milk, or to build houses. It is to do so in a manner consonant with the excellences of the craft, so that there is not only a good product, but the craftsperson is perfected through and in her or his activity" (MacIntyre, 1994, p. 284; Moore, 2017, p. 57). From a MacIntyrean perspective, "to make sense of the virtues we need to understand them in conjunction with the practices in which they are developed, the narrative of the tradition to which these practices belong and the social institutions which they are fostered within. These components are all needed if a person is to achieve excellence in life" (Dawson & Bartholomew, 2003, p. 128). Indeed, MacIntyre's proposed recovery of Aristotelian ethics is premised upon the idea of practice, a narrative order of human life that underlines our social, rather than individualistic autonomous nature and

is based on a moral tradition distanced from an individualistic view of human beings (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 222; MacIntyre, 1988, 1990, 1999). To this effect, *After Virtue* (MacIntyre, 2007) and *Dependent Rational Animals* (MacIntyre, 1999) emphasize socially established forms of cooperative relationships and action—practices—as loci for virtue insofar as they support the primacy of "internal goods while contributing to a common good" (MacIntyre, 2007).

Although MacIntyre (1994) made a significant effort to expand Aristotle's notion of work, making it more inclusive of the poietical dimension of human activity—for example, including work into a narrative that gives it meaning—he is still far from rooting human beings' freedom in a personal, relational nature (as a way of "being"). Thus, human goodness is expected as a natural choice of dependent rational animals who share a social nature, but the relationship itself is not understood as a personal relationship that expresses communion among each person's unique intimacy. As a consequence, it incompletely explains love, especially in reference to persons as ends in themselves. For MacIntyre, the interpersonal dimension mainly motivates a common quest for the highest good and virtue as rational human beings who share an inherited social (biological, psychological) nature, but this view does not offer a complete account of personal growth's interpersonal dimension.

According to personalism (and to some versions of VE, at least implicitly), the person is not merely an agent, but rather "someone" with a singular, irreplaceable, and transcendental existence. In a transcendental anthropological understanding, sustainable personal growth in virtue happens both "together with others" (in communities of virtue) and, most importantly, *for the sake of others* "in order to be able to love better" (Fernández-González, 2019a, p. 27). Based on transcendental anthropology, PVE presents a higher-level disposition toward interpersonal growth in virtue and differs from the "states of character" of the different virtues (Fernández-González, 2019b). In addition, it points to a personal, more profound meta-disposition guided by the logic of personal gift (Scalzo, 2019), considering this the person's deep disposition toward acquiring and developing habits and virtues *for* and *with* others in their specificity and singularity as human persons (Baker, 2002). In this view, virtue does not exist for its own sake but rather is put at the service of (inter)personal growth, which requires placing the person at the center. Hence, it definitively informs improvement upon and continued restoration of a profound and sustainable humanistic ethos in modernity after MacIntyre, one that has staying power and that can truly reverse present dehumanizing tendencies.

Up to this point, we have presented how Polo's transcendental anthropology can refine (neo-Aristotelian) VE by augmenting our understanding of human beings' transcendent vocation and, therefore, defining the path for their full development, which includes personal and societal flourishing. Among the many applications that this enrichment of VE implies, and to exemplify the practical consequences for VE of incorporating personalist anthropology, in the next section, we specifically address how servant leadership acquires a new perspective in light of anthropological personalism.

5 | PVE IN ACTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND THE LOGIC OF GIFT

At the beginning of the last century, the so-called “logic of gift”—an archaic concept recovered by cultural anthropology (Caillé, 2000; Godelier, 1999; Hénaff, 2010; Mauss, 1966)—resurfaced in the social sciences after being long forgotten (Mauss, 1966). In recent years, reflection on the gift has piqued the interest of many academics in the field of economics and business (Baviera Puig et al., 2016; Faldetta, 2011; Scalzo et al., 2018; Schlag & Melé, 2019; Verhezen, 2009) and it is intrinsically related to the PVE approach. In practical terms—as we will show—the implications of PVE for business are related to a renewed conception of servant leadership.

The anthropology of the gift describes a way of understanding the person in a certain sense, as opposed to the notion of autonomy from the Enlightenment tradition (Godelier, 1999; Milbank, 2014), giving us a much more complex, rich, and fruitful anthropology. According to Marcel Mauss (1966)—who is responsible for the contemporary recovery of this concept—the notion of gift is a “universal social phenomenon” characterized by a “triadic structure” that includes three moments: giving, accepting, and corresponding.

The current literature defines the initial moment of the gift as a provision of goods and services without obligation, guarantee, or certainty of return, carried out with the intention of creating, maintaining, or regenerating a social relationship (Caillé, 2000, p. 124; Godbout, 2000). Aristotle, in circumscribing exchange to the realm of commutative justice, refers to the gift as a form of reciprocity (NE 1133a; Scalzo, 2014) when he mentions the temple of the three *Kharités* (MacLachlan, 2016; Scalzo et al., 2018), which represent the three social virtues required to build strong social relationships (*philia*) including generosity, gratitude, and reciprocity.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle points to a direct relationship between happiness, virtue, and friendship. The text starts and finishes with an approach to happiness (Books I and X) and is complemented in the middle with detailed development of virtue (Books II to IX) (Vigo, 2007). Besides happiness, his teleological approach to ethics is grounded in a conception of human nature that provides an *ergon* (function) to human life (NE 1097b), that is, a distinctive and fundamental *telos* (end), which in the case of human beings is a reason (NE 1098a). Human excellence resides in rightly fulfilling this function through human activities—*energeia*—in accordance with reason (Sison, 2015) in a certain community.

As mentioned, a personalist approach goes beyond the “radical of nature” to include the “personal radical” (also called the Christian radical because of the importance of the human person in the Christian Tradition, see, for instance, Gilson, 1960). The Latin word *munus* reflects the notion of gift, a misleading term that is rooted in a long tradition of thought, and that, therefore, is loaded with great cultural significance (Hittinger, 2002).⁶ For Hittinger, “the idea of *munus* holds together the Aristotelian notion of an *ergon* or characteristic function with the more biblical concept of vocation

or mission. In so doing, it gets at something not well developed by conventional Thomism” (p. 392).

Polo builds on Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy to show that human flourishing not only rests on the possibility of becoming what is potentially included in the person's natural essence—as in the “classical radical,” which Polo defines as the capacity “to have” (virtues, goods, habits, knowledge, wisdom...)—but also, and especially, on being capable of giving, and this giving springs from personal intimacy (according to which the human person is always “more” than what she “has”). In his own words, “Intimacy is not an enclosed area, but rather is inwardly open in as much as the person is a gift. On the other hand, both operational immanence and virtue can be called modes of having. Human having is affirmed in giving.” (Polo, 1998, p. 208). That the gift is free means that it is not mechanically caused; rather, it communicates novelty: “The gift in action is gratuity in the sense that the gift giver has no need beforehand and the gift giver is only called as such in the very act of giving” (Haya, 1997, p. 324). The paradigm of the gift makes (self) donation the first constitutive moment of human reality, the moment at which personal identity and social bonds are founded because of that donation. Gift exchange is more than the sharing of a good; “it is the granting of a pledge that commits the giver as a substitute of himself and that stands for the conclusion of a pact” (Hénaff, 2010, p. 133), which is to say, it creates a relationship.

From this perspective, the person is not fully realized with the actualization of a form proper to her own nature (*ergon*), but rather has a transcendental end that goes beyond her nature and is expressed in the form of a *munus* in the sense of call or vocation; the person starts with the life she received, which then grows into a realized life through personal acceptance of the gift and contribution to it (Polo, 1996b). The person can freely destine herself to realizing her unique way of being, which has been received as a gift and which she will only come to know if she lives according to it.

The notion of *munus* reveals the relationship between concrete people and human nature as a common project (family in the first place), and this is so because it considers the human person called to configure relationships that constitute her. According to this tradition, personal relationships are the natural condition of the person's unique growth since they manifest a substantial aspect of the person: they naturally enhance, enrich, and broaden the horizon of humanity, allowing for people's growth.

For Polo, human growth is possible in a certain dynamic of accepting and offering what has been received in the interpersonal sphere (Polo, 2007). From the point of view of the person, the gift constitutes us (in what we are) and realizes us (in what we want to become), while revealing to us the very nature of our personal relationships. Every act of giving implies a “giving-of-oneself”; in other words, giving ourselves—which is proper to the gift that we are—transforms us at the same time that it transforms others. Hence, “the notion of the *munus* unifies two things which are so often split apart in modern political and social thought: first, what man [sic.] claims as his own, and second, what man has to give as a gift of service”

(Hittinger, 2002, p. 391, [gender insensitive language is original to the quote]).

This notion has also recently found a place in leadership theory, which in the last decades has shifted toward relational perspectives that emphasize the leader–follower interaction (Avolio et al., 2009). Among these efforts, servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995) stands out as a promising approach in leadership studies, adding high-quality dyadic relationships, trust, and fairness (van Dierendonck, 2011). The term servant leader first appeared in Robert Greenleaf's 1970 [1991] seminal work "The Servant as Leader." There, he notes, "The Servant-Leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead ... The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons?" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 7). The term grew in importance when the focus of leadership studies moved away from transformational leadership toward relational perspectives that emphasize the leader–follower interaction (Avolio et al., 2009). Servant leadership adds the component of social responsibility to transformational leadership (Graham, 1991) and emphasizes the needs of followers (Patterson, 2003). Indeed, "servant leadership is a holistic leadership approach that engages followers in multiple dimensions (e.g., relational, ethical, emotional, spiritual)" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 111), creating opportunities to help them grow within the organization (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Aimed to empower and develop people, this kind of leadership expresses and promotes virtues such as humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, stewardship, empathy, and compassion through genuine attention to and care for human beings and their needs.

Recent findings show that servant leaders intentionally cultivate empathetic resources via a climate of empathy and compassion in order to prevent the negative aspects of social relations from springing up in organizations. These resources include paying attention to and placing priority on the psychological well-being and mental health of the people who work in an organization (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022), contributing to the reduction of visible workplace bullying (Ahmad et al., 2021). The moral psychology and selfhood with which servant leaders operate guides them to focus on service to others' well-being by, for example, encouraging prosocial and moral behaviors in professional relationships that positively impact employees' psychological and health needs, thus enabling work environments that fulfill such orientations (Rivkin et al., 2014).

Like personalism (Whetstone, 2002), it has a strong commitment to treating each individual respectfully, and an awareness that each person deserves to be loved. According to van Dierendonck (2011), "leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve display servant leadership" (p. 1228). A servant leader goes beyond his self-interest, is genuinely concerned with serving followers (Greenleaf, 1977; Stone et al., 2004), and is motivated by the need to serve (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Contemporary research shows that servant leadership inspires high-performance human resource practices implemented to improve employees' psychological well-being and growth. This kind of

human resource management has seldom been shown to reduce employees' performance, but rather quite the opposite; moral prosocial orientations and intentional actions on the part of servant leaders in C-level positions have been found to promote service differentiation, high-performance work systems, and innovation that allow firms to strategically survive and thrive in the face of competition and uncertainty (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021).

Because of its increasingly abundant theoretical interest and development (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018), many definitions coexist under this term, contributing to a lack of coherence and clarity in the field (Eva et al., 2019, p. 112). In an attempt to integrate all of these approaches and advance toward a comprehensive theory, Eva et al. propose the following definition: "Servant leadership is an (1) other-oriented approach to leadership (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114). Based on this, we sustain that PVE can further inform servant leadership in light of the three ideas mentioned in Section 2 including personal intimacy, transcendental personal development, and the potential of human action to express both intimacy and perfection. These ideas are detailed below:

1. In a transcendental personalist paradigm that values each persons' intimacy, the personalist servant leader is cognizant of others' dignity and worth, transcendence and uniqueness, and genuinely cares for every human being affected by managerial activity. That awareness motivates the leader to put her intimacy and heart into her work and to seek to integrate her professional vocation and business life in a more general sense of purpose through serving others.
2. Regarding the person's transcendence and her call to interpersonal growth, the personalist servant leader integrates the features of a "virtuous leader" (Havard, 2007, 2011, 2018) and of a "servant leader" (Greenleaf, 1977; Whetstone, 2002) with the logic of gift (Baviera Puig et al., 2016; Scalzo, 2019) in terms of gratuitous self-donation and seeking to grow in virtue by focusing on the moral growth of her subordinates. The personalist servant leader tries to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation and a culture of support and healthy emulation, not of competitiveness. At the workplace, she uses personal agency (*freedom for*) to create opportunities for cultivating friendship and engaging in two-way interpersonal relationships with colleagues and stakeholders more generally. She serves others because she understands that the intrinsic, unlimited value and dignity that she perceives in every person pushes her to serve them as best she can. Acting in this self-giving way requires the transcendental personalist businessman psychosocial resources based on personal motivation that draws from altruistic needs and motives (Batson & Shaw, 1991) and from genuine empathy (Batson & Moran, 1999). Considered as a cooperative system, the firm's activities—including technical work—should contribute to facilitating interpersonal encounters and trust. Impersonal treatment in a firm annuls human dignity and

TABLE 1 Virtuous, servant, and personalist servant leadership approaches

	Virtuous leadership	Servant leadership	Personalist servant leadership
Key concept	Character	Service	Transcendence
Leader's focus	Integrity and virtuous growth	Followers' needs and growth	Interpersonal growth
Rationale	Agent's growth in virtue	Serving and developing people	Self-donation, the logic of gift
Telos	Cardinal virtues (especially practical wisdom)	Relational virtues (especially trust and fairness)	Anthropological transcendentals (especially personal love)
Freedom	Self-mastery (ethical deliberation)	In serving others (relational)	For others (personal, transcendental)

Source: Authors' elaboration.

impedes access to moral realities that require trust in order to externalize them and then to internalize them again (Alvira, 2001). In short, in order to foment meaningful human interactions and personal growth, companies must genuinely promote progressively larger amounts of trust for all involved (Rosanas & Velilla, 2003), and a personalist servant leader (who is both a servant and a virtuous person) can provide it.

3. In terms of external manifestation of intimacy and transcendence through virtuous activity, the personalist servant leader sees her actions as a concrete opportunity for freely manifesting her intimacy and transcendence and freely engages in interpersonal relationships with a spirit of service. This engagement contains a double teleological aspiration: interpersonal growth (personal and other-centered flourishing) and the common good. Business thus presents an opportunity to grow as a person by developing virtues in personal relationships (Fontrodona et al., 2013). In this paradigm, maximizing profit is not the primary end of business, and is rather a secondary one, a means to the end of serving the people who partake in the associated internal and external communities.

The personalist servant leader approaches work as an arena for developing the virtues and personal qualities inherent to the activity of management; she does not look at others as "human resources" for the firm, but rather looks at the firm as a resource for human development. Concern for social justice and responsibility springs from and manifests the manager's moral selfhood and interpersonal transcendence. Accordingly, the economic activity of the personalist manager creates networks of giving and receiving (Bernacchio, 2018) and is inspired by the logic of the gift (Scalzo, 2019; Schrift, 2014).

In terms of moral psychology, the person's unity and continuity entail an understanding of human praxis as the core of our ethical being and moral identity (Alzola, 2015; Vigo, 1993; Weaver, 2006). This means that action-related choices ("What should I do?") are inseparable from questions of being ("Who am I?") (Weaver, 2006, p. 344) and of moral identity ("How does my action affect who I am and who I am becoming?"). This particular kind of practical wisdom becomes apparent in a network of other virtues, for example, effort and diligence in displaying a high level of professionalism, in developing the prudential ability to make and set future-oriented goals, and in making timely, honest, thoughtful, and good decisions.

Related with this, it should be noted that the moral psychology appropriate to personalist practical wisdom uses reason in an integrative fashion (integrating cognitive, affective, ethical, and practical aspects of wisdom) and with an orientation toward flourishing as communities and as social relational beings (Akrivou & Scalzo, 2020; Alford, 2018). While VE's manifestation of practical wisdom is characterized by "knowing why," in addition to "knowing what" and "knowing how," it lacks an additional step in "knowing for whom," which a transcendental-personalist orientation fills in. The latter asks personalist servant leaders to strive to understand not only "what" human beings are but also "who" and how to build interpersonal relationships conducive to mutual growth in a deeper, humbler, more devoted, and more profound manner.

Table 1 presents a summary of the characteristics and ideas included in this article about servant leadership and how a PVE can enrich it, ultimately opening up suggestions for new research directions.

6 | CONCLUSION

VE is a major philosophical branch that, following recent revival, has shown potential for overcoming the dualism, idealistic understanding, and key limitations associated with modernist ethics and morality. Toward that end, it relies on a humanistic approach that seeks to understand human beings' nature, purpose, and moral significance. Yet, while it examines human nature and action from a higher-order teleological framework, the most profound reality of *what being a human person* is remains outside of its scope. As noted in the introduction, our goal was twofold: first, to explore how a new theoretical perspective—Polo's transcendental anthropology—can enhance neo-Aristotelian VE and, second, to exemplify how this specific personalist approach can inform business practice by bringing new perspectives to servant leadership.

To achieve this goal, we first summarized the pertinent aspects of VE with a focus on MacIntyre's contribution, in particular his conception of virtues, practices, and internal goods, as well as his acknowledgment that poetical activities can perfect the agent and inclusion of human activity in a narrative order that gives it meaning, which has also incidentally contributed to demonstrating the advantages of VE in social practices and, therefore, in business and management.

We then argued that, in spite of his unique contribution, some of his latest and most interesting insights into the virtues of acknowledged dependence and human vulnerability remain underdeveloped. This underdevelopment is directly related to the philosophical limitations of the anthropology underlying neo-Aristotelian VE, which fails to refer to the person's relational nature as a way of being. We argue that MacIntyre's contribution can be enriched by focusing on *the person*, rather than on virtue.

Hence, we introduced Polo's transcendental anthropology as a possible foundation for a personalist VE approach that can enrich neo-Aristotelian VE and even overcome its shortcomings. We presented Polo's original synthesis related to the "classical radical," the "modern radical," and the "personal radical," which, as we explained, correspond to the three fundamental aspects of human beings that philosophical traditions have captured and accentuated differently within their historical contexts. For Polo, the insights that the first two radicals accentuate, namely, virtue as perfection of human nature (classical radical) and the autonomous self and freedom (modern radical), can be integrated and redirected by a personalist understanding of human beings. Therein, the person freely opens her selfhood and intimacy to interpersonal relationships of mutual care with others, and virtuous actions are a manifestation of said relationship.

Further on, we synthesized transcendental personalism's understanding of human beings and their development, and we addressed two relevant aspects in VE more in-depth and in light of Polo's transcendental anthropology, including an understanding of human beings according to their flourishing and the relationship of virtue to praxis and human work. In this discussion, we questioned VE's conception of freedom as reached through the virtues and as a way of "having" through the mastery of action (in accordance with a certain conception of the good life) and instead argued for a notion of freedom consistent with personalist philosophy. According to PVE, *freedom for* leads us to engage in (inter)personal relationships (i.e., to grow together in virtue with specific others), thus highlighting our shared (coexistential) nature as human beings and the possibility of establishing personal, transcendent relationships with one another, based on the sharing of each persons' unique intimacy. Consequently, this approach, which clearly and profoundly understands persons as ends in themselves and centers of purpose, is founded on love as the main motivation for growth in interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, our approach revealed how the teleological horizon suggested by Polo's anthropology requires a shift from the Greek notion of *ergon* to the Latin conception of *munus* (gift). We argued that this offers neo-Aristotelian VE a deeper foundation and captures a fundamental disposition toward interpersonal growth since *munus* stresses each person's singularity and intimacy, while requiring that we be "together with others" (in communities of virtue) and more importantly *for* the sake of others, "to be able to love better." This is coherent with VE's attention to social and relational growth and action to fulfill a social nature that helps human beings reach their *telos*. Hence, our contribution proposes a new vision of human action and cooperative work that we hope will inspire scholars to explore what comes after MacIntyre.

Finally, to exemplify the benefits of assuming this personalist anthropology, we explain how servant leadership, whose conceptual background is compatible with an understanding of interpersonal self-giving as a way of service, acquires a new perspective considering anthropological personalism and the logic of gift. We argue for a renewal of the anthropological foundations of management in light of three personalist principles inspired by Polo's transcendental anthropology, namely (1) the person's intimacy and dignity, (2) the person's transcendence in her ontology as a human being who grows through interpersonal relationships, and (3) a notion of human action as the manifestation of the person's intimacy and transcendence and the arena for interpersonal development of virtue. We show how this personalist proposal constitutes a promising and urgent path if we are to renew humanistic, ethical leadership, and we suggest that it can provide servant leadership a profound foundation for engaging in interpersonal relationships conducive to mutual growth. While Polo's philosophy, and its implications in this proposal, is certainly complex, it presents significant potential for refining VE, genuinely helping business practice, and contributing to society in terms of the common good.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

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ENDNOTES

¹ His major works include early texts such as *Access to Being* (1964) and *Being I* (1966), and a four-volume *Course on the Theory of Knowledge* (1984–1996). His philosophical proposal reaches its culmination in *Transcendental Anthropology I: The Human Person* (1999) and in *Transcendental Anthropology II: The Human Essence* (2003). More information is available at the Leonardo Polo Institute of Philosophy, <http://www.leonardopoloinstitute.org/>. Retrieved 12/7/2021.

- ² The autonomous self represents a way of being in the world rooted in the subject-agent. Even with a prosocial orientation, it acknowledges the power of the self, action and cognition with an orientation toward the mastery of the other(s)/relations, the natural world and the cosmos and even parts of oneself (Akrivou et al., 2018; Akrivou & Scalzo, 2020).
- ³ Among humanistic psychologists, Rogers (1961) argues that the starting point of human acceptance is found in responding to one's calling. Similarly, Frankl (1984) highlights the call to finding meaning in life as the central motivational force of a person.
- ⁴ In this article, we understand transcendence in its transhuman-horizontal form, which includes openness to the other, gratitude and humor, acknowledged vulnerability and compassion, and caring, loving relationships. However, it should be noted that Polo's transcendental anthropology includes both horizontal-interpersonal and vertical-spiritual transcendence. According to him, the basis of interpersonal-horizontal transcendence is each person's unique, transcendent vertical relationship with God. Vertical transcendence is furthermore the basis of our shared humanity and our uniqueness, which characterizes our action. Focusing on horizontal transcendence in this article is a methodological choice and does not rule out the possibility of vertical transcendence toward ideal values (Kristjánsson, 2016) and toward the divine (MacPherson, 2015; Taylor, 2007).
- ⁵ Recovering the virtue of practical wisdom or phronesis in line with personalism and following virtue ethics' philosophical roots requires an appropriate moral psychology of action and the self. One recent effort in this direction refers to "Inter-Processual Self" (IPS) theory (Akrivou et al., 2018), which considers the human person processually and intentionally in relation to other persons (Akrivou et al., 2018; Trowbridge, 2011).
- ⁶ According to Hittinger (2002, p. 389), "The word *munus* is usually, but badly, translated into English as 'function.'" However, the semantic field of the term (*munus*, *munere*, and *muneris*) is related to the following concepts: gift, present; talent, obligation, function, tribute, office, personal commitment, vocation, mission, function, task, service, duty that implies a responsibility, duty that implies pastoral care, vocation of ruling, among others (see Moreno-Almárcegui & Scalzo, 2019).

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