

Dissertation Abstract:

“The Notion of Human Experience in the Thought of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II: A Study of the Notion of Experience in the Light of an Adequate Anthropology”

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The question of experience is fundamentally related to the question of anthropology. In modern philosophy and theology, there is a tendency to depersonalize experience by reducing it either to sense-data or a mental construction. Such conceptions lack the dynamic, relational character of experience, since either the experiencing subject remains passive with respect to the experienced object, or the experienced object remains passive with respect to the experiencing subject. This dissertation examines the notion of human experience in the thought of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, inquiring whether he overcomes modern dualistic reductionist interpretations. In Chapter 1, we first present Wojtyła/John Paul II's philosophical method, showing that by integrating Thomistic metaphysics and phenomenology, he is able to give an adequate account of the subjective and objective dimensions of human existence. We show, then, how his philosophical method appears in his understanding of the human person. Special attention is given to the analysis of the relational nature of the human person. In Chapter 2, we demonstrate that while Wojtyła/John Paul II emphasizes the importance of both consciousness and the body in human experience, he neither narrows experience to mere sensory perception nor reduces it to the experience of consciousness. For him, it is the person that is the subject of experience. In Chapter 3, we analyze the question of a dynamic character of experience. We show that for Wojtyła/John Paul II an authentic experience is the fruit of being in relation, of being open and responsive to the good through acts of love. Finally in Chapter 4, we give a concise reflection on John Paul II's notion of Christian experience. The completion of our study with a reflection on Christian

experience helps us to see more clearly that an authentic experience can only be gained by man through acts of self-giving love.