

University of Arizona Document Delivery

Journal Title: Karol WojtyÅ,a : the thought of the man who became Pope John Paul II / Rocco Buttiglione ; translated by Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy.

Trans. #: 1138329



Article Author: Buttiglione, Rocco, 1948-

Call #: BX1795.P47 B87 1997

Article Title: unknown

Location: Main Library IN LIBRARY

Volume:

Item #:

Issue:

CUSTOMER INFORMATION:

Month/Year: c1997

Alan G Aversa
aversa@email.arizona.edu

Pages: 44-53 (scan notes and title/copyright pages for chapter requests)

Imprint: Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge, U.K.Eerdmans

STATUS: Graduate
DEPT: NDSNDG

University of Arizona Library
Document Delivery
1510 E. University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85721
(520) 621-6438
(520) 621-4619 (fax)
AskILL@u.library.arizona.edu

Paged by KE (Initials) 12/5 10:10

Reason Not Filled (check one):

- NOS LACK VOL/ISSUE
- PAGES MISSING FROM VOLUME
- NFAC (GIVE REASON):

3. *Karol Wojtyła's Philosophical Formation*

The years between the end of the War and 1960 (when *Love and Responsibility* was published) became for Karol Wojtyła a sort of philosophical apprenticeship. During this time he went first to the Theology Faculty of the Angelicum in Rome, which was particularly shaped by the figure of Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and then to the faculty of the Jagellonian University in Cracow, whose most respected member was Roman Ingarden, friend of Husserl and the father of Polish phenomenology. Garrigou-Lagrange introduced Wojtyła to St. Thomas and to St. John of the Cross, and Ingarden (and the other Cracow phenomenologists) made him aware of Scheler and of modern philosophy, especially that of Kant. In this chapter we will follow the progressive formation of Wojtyła's original philosophical position, through his dialogue with St. John of the Cross, with Scheler, and with Kant. We will give a section to each of these philosophers and their relation to Wojtyła, concluding with his eventual return to Thomas, which followed each of his meetings with modern philosophy. This return, upon which he meditated critically, was the means by which Wojtyła created an original philosophical construction.

Wojtyła and St. John of the Cross

The doctoral thesis which Wojtyła submitted for examination at the Angelicum Theology Faculty was his first theoretical work. It was called *The Doctrine of Faith According to St. John of the Cross*.¹ His choice of theme developed partly because his human and priestly vocation came to maturity under Jan Tyranowski's influence, and Tyranowski's masters, the two saints who had enabled him to understand his own mystical experience, were St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Perhaps it was from Tyranowski that Wojtyła derived a natural tendency to read in St. John of the Cross a kind of phenomenology of mystical experience.

Garrigou-Lagrange evidently influenced this choice of theme as well, for he too was a student of St. John of the Cross.² Indeed, during this period he was attempting to apply his knowledge of the Spanish mystic in defining a new priestly spirituality which would fit the questions and the problems of a world left devastated by the War. He continually and urgently sought the presence of the absolute within everyday life, that is to say, *a presence of mystical contemplation in the world*.³ This is a little-known side of Garrigou-Lagrange. Garrigou-Lagrange is usually remembered as a defender of a rather rigid and plodding Thomistic orthodoxy, but, from this vantage point, he shows an outstanding modernity.

Wojtyła's doctoral work on the literature of the problem of faith in St. John of the Cross had two main intellectual touchstones (apart from the work of Garrigou-Lagrange). The first was represented by an article written by Labourdette, *La foi théologique et la connaissance mystique d'après S. Jean de la Croix*;⁴ the other by Baruzi's book *Jean de la Croix et le problème de*

1. *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce*, trans. into English by Jordan Aumann, O.P., as *Faith According to St. John of the Cross* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981).

2. Among numerous articles and minor pieces see, for example, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Les trois âges de la vie intérieure, prélude de celle du ciel*, 2 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1938), and *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation selon St. Thomas d'Aquin et St. Jean de la Croix*, 2 vols. (Saint Maximin, 1923). See also *Les trois conversions et les trois voies* (Paris: Cerf, 1933).

3. *De sanctificatione sacerdotium secundum exigentias temporis nostri* (Turin, 1947) and *De unione sacerdotis cum Christo Sacerdote* (Turin, 1948). Wojtyła will make the theme of priestly holiness his own. Cf., among other pieces, "Służebność kapłaństwa," in *Duszpasterz Polski Zagranica* 26 (1975), pp. 389ff.; *La sainteté comme carte d'identité*, *Seminarium* 30, pp. 167ff.

4. In *Revue Thomiste* 42 (1936-37), pp. 16ff. On Labourdette see also "Le développement vital de la foi théologique," in *Revue Thomiste* 43 (1937), pp. 101ff.

l'expérience mystique.⁵ The problem which both of these works attempted to confront was the relation between dogmatic and mystical faith. Baruzi tended to oppose them, and, consequently, he also tended to oppose St. John's mystical conception of faith to that found in St. Thomas. On the other hand, Labourdette, a disciple of Garrigou-Lagrange, tried to reconcile St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross.

This was also Wojtyła's intention. He strongly emphasized the personal character of the encounter between God and man which engenders faith. Declarations of faith are orientated toward the proper object of faith, which transcends them. Mystical experience is a God-given experience in which creaturely boundaries transcend themselves toward God. Faith in a dogmatic sense and faith in a mystical sense are two aspects of a unitary process by which creaturely limits are transcended; in a certain sense, they represent a single faculty of theological transcendence.⁶

For St. John of the Cross faith is a proportionate means which makes the human encounter with God possible. At this point one encounters a difficulty for Thomistic interpretation: according to St. Thomas, faith is a virtue of the intellect which does not involve the will, whereas for St. John, the faith which establishes a "*proporcion de semejanza*" between God and the human being is an obscure faith in which the intellect knows that, in the "night of faith," it has to give up attempting to know. It is possible to interpret these positions as reflecting an opposition between an intellectual and a vitalistic view of faith: a conception of the faith which anchors it to the truth that man can know, and which begins from meditation upon finite things versus a conception of faith which makes it a capacity for the infinite unbounded by the limits of the intellect (a little like the Hegelian '*Vernunft*').

Wojtyła observes quite rightly that unitive faith, a faith enriched by the gift of the Spirit, and in particular by a gift of the intellect, and by being an organic part of the intentional tendency of the person toward God, involves all his faculties and virtues. This is living faith. Moreover, the obscurity of faith does not contradict the engagement of the intellect. In fact, the intellect, in the obscurity of the night of faith, recognizes the non-objectivizability of its proper object, which is God himself. It realizes that the highest wisdom one can achieve about God is knowing that one

5. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1924.

6. Cf. *The Mind of John Paul II*, pp. 106ff.; K. Wojtyła, *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*, pp. 245, 264.

cannot objectivize one's knowledge of Him. It recognizes that God does not come to be known as an object is known, but as a person is. As a person, he can be known only in a reciprocal relation of self-giving. In this way a human being dwells within God's personal interior and God within him, without the two being merged and without the difference between God and the human person being obscured. It is in this sense that we must interpret the intense affirmation of St. John of the Cross according to which the goal of every human being is to become "*Dios por participación.*"

Although Wojtyła's exposition is largely faithful to Garrigou-Lagrange, one can see evident traces of personal thinking which go beyond that of his teacher. From the notes which were appended to the thesis it is clear that Garrigou-Lagrange was aware of these differences.

The first note states: "Instead of the expressions, which are frequently used, 'divine form received in an intentional mode' and 'the form which is at the intentional level unlimited' one should simply say 'divine object'. To speak of a 'form' is to risk being understood erroneously, as the 'intentional species,' whereas we know that in the beatific vision the divine Essence is immediately seen, and this excludes every mediation of intentional species; it is the same Essence which functions as the *species*, both *species impressa* and *species expressa*, and which replaces both."⁷

In fact, the thesis has an evident tendency not to translate the experiential language, which comes from the subject of St. John of the Cross, into a metaphysical language which relates to the object. The young Wojtyła's main preoccupation was to read the writings of St. John of the Cross as a phenomenology of mystical experience. In this perspective, one can understand why Garrigou-Lagrange chose to criticize these expressions; Wojtyła was more concerned with danger of equivocity in the expression which qualifies God as an Object rather than the expression of "divine form perceived in an intentional mode."

It would perhaps be wrong to think in terms of an opposition between the doctrines of Garrigou-Lagrange and those of Wojtyła. Rather, we can see that the latter as a matter of principle tended to develop the subjective side of the problem, while seeing it not as autonomous but as tightly bound to the objective side. St. John of the Cross has a particular importance here. From one side he shows the way in which faith is subjectivized by becoming experience. Simultaneously, from the other side, this subjectivization is

7. Wojtyła, *La fede secondo S. Giovanni della Croce*, p. 316. Garrigou-Lagrange's notes do not appear in the English *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*.

shown to be, so to speak, absolutely objective. Absolute value, God himself, comes — in mystical experience — to be perceived in a bare way, without any emotional content. In this manner we perceive in the most limpid way a relation with truth as it is constituted in the same subjective experience. This is a lesson which Wojtyła was not to forget but which would accompany him in all of his intense and fruitful encounters with Scheler's thought. Scheler offered a phenomenology of emotion which was completely different from, and at the same time complementary to, this aspect of St. John of the Cross. Wojtyła's point of reference in his engagement with Scheler would always be St. Thomas Aquinas, yet Thomas understood through St. John of the Cross; St. Thomas was thus given an experiential and existential dimension which made it easier to link his thought with phenomenology. St. John's phenomenology of mystical experience takes man towards the irreducible core of the person, and shows the necessity of transcending this core toward that truth who is God himself, by responding to the initiative of God toward human beings.⁸ This divine initiative, which traverses natural human structures, illuminates and, in a certain sense, makes the irreducible core of the human person experienceable; this core is normally left out of phenomenological description.

If, on the other hand, faith is the key to the comprehension of human beings, because it permits an experience deeper than the human truth, mysticism is the experience which faith brings to the most acute level of subjective perception. For this reason, if one wants to understand the human condition, one has to begin from mystical experience.⁹

This approach is foreign to much Catholic thinking and provocative to secular philosophy. Both disciplines are accustomed to dividing philosophy and theology neatly between themselves and to tucking mysticism away within one of the more abstruse compartments of theology — an especially unsightly one in the eyes of modern secular thought. Things were different for the great philosophers of the past. Their work inevitably reached into the domain of mysticism as they tried to take seriously and realistically the depths and the heights of the mystery of the human being,

8. It seems to me that this particular experience in which phenomenological analysis encounters its own limits and sees that it needs to be supplemented by metaphysics is crucial to Wojtyła's approach to phenomenology. This latter accepts that mystical experience can include the experience of shame (which can be developed into a metaphysics of sexuality) and of duty (which unfolds into a metaphysics of the person).

9. In this sense one can say that faith gives not so much a particular doctrine as, primarily, a particular human experience, which illuminates each universal value.

who finds himself set between the finite and the infinite. While such mysticism is not resigned to conceiving man as merely a finite being, it also cautions that he cannot reach infinity.

This theme of the relation between finite and infinite is the heart of Hegelian dialectic and, in its wake, of all of modern high culture. The modern project has been to secularize the great Christian affirmation of the meeting of the finite and the infinite in Christ, presenting this reconciliation as having been brought about by the autonomous forces of nature, history, and humanity — not as the gratuitous presence of God through grace. This idealistic position was attacked most combatively by some positivistic Catholics who opposed to it a literal division between finite and infinite. In the thinking of such Catholics, the consolidation of this divide between nature and supranature has led to the displacement of the unity of finite and infinite, the relation of which is the real solution to the human problem, beyond history and beyond the world. It has also led to the philosophical defense of the position of a man who is satisfied with finitude and to the philosophical attack upon the innate human tendency to transcendence, frequently denounced as hubris.

If we pursue this line of thought much further we will bring to the surface the identity between the two opposed positions which have for a long time monopolized cultural debate. On the one side, we find the revolutionary thesis, which is posited on the Marxist development of the Hegelian dialectic and which maintains the reconciliation of finite and infinite in history through revolutionary action. Insofar as revolutionary action is not actually able to effect an ontological change in the human condition, the revolutionary position is forced to attack individuals who are exposed as unfit for the design of history; the revolutionaries have to take recourse to terror and ultimately relapse into a state of general hypocrisy and demoralization in which they are left only with the selfishness of individuals and the arrogance of the dominant caste.

The reactionary argument goes to the other extreme. Those who hold it believe that we cannot live in this world in relation with the infinite; they wish, if possible, to extirpate from the human heart the nostalgia for the infinite, since this perpetual restlessness endangers the balance of temporal interests. In its extreme form the reactionary position is resolutely atheistic (as in the case of Charles Maurras) and uses the promise of a world beyond to exorcise the human desire for the infinite within this life. In its moderate form the reactionary stance can sit alongside a sincere faith, but it will be in some way devitalized and, above all, prevent

one from seeing how far the revolutionary position is true, in human and in Christian terms.¹⁰

From a Catholic viewpoint, the reactionary position is too close to that of the Enlightenment. All of the heterodox mysticism of modernity is a response to the expulsion of the genuine mystical moment from social and individual life. Only a revival of orthodox mysticism can respond to heterodox mysticism. In the sixteenth century, St. John of the Cross proposed just such a revival in the face of the naturalism of the “*alumbrados*” of his own time.¹¹ It is for this reason that his thinking contains, in germ, the response to the fundamental problem of modernity.

Historically, as Ernst Bloch has shown in his *Avicenna und die aristotelische Linke*,¹² there is a subterranean but substantial link between all the forms of heretical mystical-gnosis, which derive from Averroës and Avicenna, from there into Paduan Aristotelianism and the thought of Giordano Bruno, and finally from there to Hegel and Marx. Bloch probably did not know the “*alumbrados*” who were the adversaries of St. John of the Cross, but if he had he certainly would not have hesitated to include them in his catalogue of precursors of modern dialectical thinking. In confronting them, St. John reaffirmed a Catholic equilibrium and rapport between the finite and the infinite; he did this not with a metaphysical treatise but with a phenomenology of mystical experience, with an articulate description of its manifestation. As St. John describes his experience, it is, on its most profound level, completely lacking in any emotional content.

The night in which all human sentiment is silent is also the experience of the absolute distance of God, the incomprehensibility of God, that which exceeds the entire measure of finite intelligence and, together with that his real presence, his drawing near within faith. No positive knowledge of God is possible, he argues; in this, the Spanish mystic is in accord with St.

10. I am using “revolutionary” and “reactionary” to refer to philosophical rather than political positions. But it can happen that a reactionary philosophy presents itself, for contingent reasons, as politically revolutionary.

11. The argument against the *alumbrados* is central to St. John of the Cross’s vindication of the connection between grace and contemplation. Contemplation, the unification of the finite and the infinite, is a gift of God and not a human achievement. That is, this gift is brought into history by the presence of God in the world, which is mediated by the Church. On this theme, the fundamental article is by Arintero: “Inanidad de la contemplación adquirida,” in *La Ciencia Tomista* 87 (1924), pp. 331ff.; see also 88, pp. 5ff. This article had a decisive influence on Garrigou-Lagrange.

12. Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963 (first edition, Berlin, 1952).

Thomas. Nonetheless, human faith truly encounters God, and God himself becomes the form of the human intellect. This happens not because the human person comprehends God, but because he welcomes God into himself and is welcomed by Him. For St. John, one knows God through a personal relation with Him, which is one of reciprocal giving. In this relation the night of the intellect becomes light, man understands that God, by not giving himself as an object of the intellect, wants to dwell as a person in the soul. What emerges from St. John's mysticism is, at one and the same time, both the ineffability and the personality of God. In this, it directly opposes heterodox mysticism, which typically makes the contrary affirmation of the impersonality of God and of the possibility of constructing an esoteric science of the divine which allows man to master God. God comes to be considered as just one part of the possible contents of the human mind, which can be thought about and taken possession of in order to make Him the subject of a science of the absolute.

Wojtyła draws three important conclusions from his analysis of St. John. First, human beings cannot know God as an object. The furthest that the exploration of natural reason can reach is to say that God exists; it cannot comprehend what God is. Second, faith is not given an intellectual grasp of what God is, for that would turn it into an absolute, God-like knowledge which knows the world and all that is within it. Faith is given a personal encounter with God which is real but, in this life, always remains in an obscurity ("the night of faith"). The nonobjectivizability of God for faith is different from the nonobjectivizability of God which is appropriate to natural reason. It is in the light of faith that this nonobjectivizability is seen to be an aspect of the personality of God, part of the essence of his person and through which he enters into a personal relation with us. The nonobjectivizability is thus the personal form of the relationship with God, and God initiates it. This is more important than may be captured in an emphasis on his absolute transcendence in respect of all relations which human beings attempt to set up with Him. Thirdly, understood in its purest form, the personal encounter with God in mystical experience occurs in an absence of emotion. All of the emotional aspects which are commonly thought to constitute the mystical experience as such are rather, in its essence, absolutely foreign to it.

We must turn at this point to the fundamental affirmation that, as Genesis says, the key to the understanding of man is his resemblance to God. It is necessary to say, at this point, that the mystery of the human being is rooted in the yet greater mystery of God. For if we have no positive

knowledge of God, then we have no positive knowledge of the human being, inasmuch as he or she is an image of God. It would certainly be possible to have some knowledge of human beings insofar as they belong to the animal kingdom and are thus objects with a physical structure and a psychology (because the psyche, up to a certain level, appears as part of the order of nature in the phenomenological sense). But we would not have any knowledge at a more profound level, the level which is constitutive of humanity, of what makes one human.

This lack of knowledge is not, perhaps, an absolute ignorance.¹³ We know that God and human beings resemble one another in being essentially persons, and precisely for this reason they are nonobjects, irreducible to instrumental reason. Persons cannot be spoken of as if they were things, nor are they reducible to a volatile and provisional state of emotion. Mystical experience comes to us like the perception of the value which another person, that is, God himself, gives us. Together with that perception, we experience the higher value of this person, attained in a complete emotional void. The most profound experience of a person touches his ontological nucleus through conscience. It is not entirely accurate to say that St. John of the Cross provides a phenomenological analysis of the ontological nucleus of the person. The phenomenological method can not attain the ontological level. But the phenomenological analysis of mystical experience certainly moves toward and lightly touches the ontological nucleus of the person, thus furnishing in experiential terms the proof from which the analysis of conscience can commence.

Rather than a positive anthropology, reading the deep resemblance to God in this way grounds a negative anthropology like the one which Adorno thought necessary, but for which he was not to give a foundation.¹⁴ Our analysis of the thought of St. John of the Cross and Wojtyła's interpretation of it can be directly connected with a personalistic norm, which can be formulated as a prohibition against violating in oneself and in others the mystery of the person. This prohibition also concerns the transformation of the person into an object. A negative anthropology so understood is not

13. One may say that Wojtyła is carried by his interpretation of St. John of the Cross toward a recovery of many of Pascal's themes. Thomas and Pascal do not clash, in Wojtyła's thought, but complement one another. Among others, the Pascalian theme of "Deus absconditus" is important.

14. T. H. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973, 1983). Grygiel also speaks about negative anthropology in *L'uomo visto dalla Vistola*, pp. 51-52.

at all an anthropology without any content but, rather, an anthropology which creates its own content from the person and then, by developing itself, gives life to an ethics founded on the personalistic norm.

How is it possible that the affirmation of the nonobjectivizability and, in a way, of the unknowability of human beings gives rise to positive norms? It is necessary to consider the fact that the first affirmation which derives from the thesis of human resemblance to God is that the human mystery is in itself a high value which has to be taken into account. On the other hand, insofar as a person is also a natural and embodied being and engages in a set of relationships to the world which have his body as their center, it is necessary that the treatment and use of the body take place within an human ethos. An anthropology which proceeded in this way would not want to circumscribe the statement of the essence of humanity, nor would it want to possess an absolute knowledge of that essence. Even less would it want to become a technique for the manipulation of human beings. Rather, by flowing into an ethics, such an anthropology dictates rules for the respect of human freedom and safeguarding human dignity — rules which allow it to face with more serenity and truthfulness the unforeseeable and surprising adventure which is human life.¹⁵

The engagement with St. John of the Cross strengthened Wojtyła in the conviction of the eminently personal character of Christian certainty. This was not born from a omnicomprehensive theory but by penetrating the heart of the person. It is because it is bound to the liberty of the person that it defends the person against objectivization and exploitation. But this does not imply the renunciation of a more solid anthropology which would elevate and give value to the person, and not humiliate and abandon him. In this way it will overcome the lack of ethical content which weakens certain nonmetaphysical “negative anthropologies,” causing them to descend into a bottomless scepticism.¹⁶

15. The knowledge of the nonobjectivizable dignity of man, of the transcendence of the person, is in this perspective the basis of the integration of the diverse objective sciences of man which provide the internal and external observations upon which the human sciences are based. This is a fundamental principle of Wojtyła's anthropology, which is given its definitive systematization in *Love and Responsibility* and in *The Acting Person*.

16. For Wojtyła on St. John of the Cross, see also “Quaestio de Fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce,” in *Collectanea Theologica* 21 (1950), pp. 418-68; “Zagadnienie wiary w dziełach św. Jana od Krzyża,” in *Ateneum Kapłskie* 42 (1950), pp. 24ff., 103ff.; “O humanizmnie św. Jana od Krzyża,” in *Znak* 6, pp. 6ff. On Wojtyła as an interpreter of