

## INVITED GROUPS

Topic: John Paul II and the Theology of the Body

Moderator: Anthony Kosnik, Marygrove College, Detroit

Presenter: Benedict Ashley, O.P., Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis

Respondent: Ronald Modras, Saint Louis University

Ashley drew his analysis of Karol Wojtyla's anthropology primarily from the English translation of his book, *The Acting Person*, and from the talks on the first chapters of Genesis given during Wednesday audiences early in his pontificate.

Ashley holds that Pope John Paul II has supplemented a basically objective Thomistic anthropology with a phenomenology of the human person as revealed to the self and others through human acts. The pope has done this in order to give more consideration to human subjectivity than was common in neo-Thomism. In applying this method in his Wednesday catecheses on the Genesis creation stories, he engages in what amounts to a "narrative theology." From this narrative he draws such themes as the dignity of the human person, responsibility, relationality, stewardship, fruitfulness, sacramentality, and celibacy in both its created and fallen condition. Thus the anthropology presented in the phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy of *The Acting Person* is transformed in these catecheses into a *lectio divina* in the homiletic manner of the Church Fathers.

Ashley claims that John Paul II constructs a very original "theology of the body" in which its "nuptial meaning" and the complementarity of the sexes is seen as the root of the social character of the human person and a reflection of the Trinity. Ending on a critical note, Ashley asks how such a theology can be related to the life sciences to which John Paul II makes only minor reference, confining himself to phenomenological description and essential analysis.

In his response, Modras took issue with Ashley's claim that John Paul II has made a "synthesis of a philosophy of being and a philosophy of consciousness." On the basis of Wojtyla's Polish habilitation on Max Scheler, Modras points out that, for Wojtyla, a Catholic ethicist cannot be a phenomenologist because phenomenology recognizes no absolutes. Phenomenology can only be "accidentally helpful" in allowing Christians to analyze their own ethical experience. Modras pointed out that despite its personalist language and constant appeals to concepts like experience and freedom, John Paul II's anthropology is at its root Neoplatonic, Augustinian, and therefore static. His constant references to "subordination" in his book, *The Acting Person*, are expressive of a hierarchic, stratified conception of the human person. Wojtyla's identification of human

dignity with "self-control" and references to governing the body like a "compliant tool" deserve critical analysis and reflection, Modras believes. So too are Wojtyla's claims, in *Love and Responsibility*, that erotic sensations "deprive love of its crystal clarity" and "have no legitimation in true love."

The discussion which followed focused on the fact that, given the homiletic nature of the Pope's catecheses, the meanings he attributes to words like "erotic" or "concupiscence" can be ambiguous and not always consistent. His use of language, like his Thomism and phenomenology, can be ideosyncratic.

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Topic: What Is Eastern Catholic Theology?

Convener: Peter Galadza, St. Paul University, Ottawa

Moderator: Jaroslav Skira, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto

Presenters: Robert Taft, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome

Peter Galadza, St. Paul University, Ottawa

Andriy Chirovsky, St. Paul University, Ottawa

Myroslaw Tataryn, University of Saskatchewan

At the beginning of the session, on behalf of the convener and the panelists, the moderator extended his sincerest thanks to the CTSA for their invitation to host such a panel. Sentiments of gratitude were also echoed by group participants who indicated their hope that this Eastern Catholic group become a continuing group within the CTSA.

Robert Taft began his paper by noting that Eastern Catholic theology is not simply Eastern or Oriental Orthodox theology, nor is it Roman Catholic theology. Eastern Catholic theology is not a co-opting of another Church's tradition, and its distinctiveness lies in its ability to breathe with "both lungs" of East and West, enriching thereby the other major traditions.

After an historical overview of significant monuments in the history of Eastern Catholicism, he elucidated nine characteristics of Eastern Catholic theology. Firstly, Eastern Catholic theology includes both the Byzantine and Oriental traditions. Secondly, it is a theology in reaction both to the world in which it finds itself, and to the tendencies of the Orthodox to reject uniatism, and the Roman Catholics to latinize. Eastern Catholic theology is also in the making through its re-appropriation of its Eastern tradition. Fourthly, Eastern Catholic theology is self-conscious of itself, like Orthodoxy, but, it is not paranoid nor xenophobic, like certain strains in Orthodox theology, and is therefore open to the West. This latter aspect is Taft's fifth characteristic. Eastern Catholic theology similarly rejects that pseudo-antithesis between Eastern and Western thought