

Summary

The primary objective of the following dissertation is analysis of St Augustine's views on human being and his stance on the concept of experience. Research conducted in this thesis is an attempt to describe the experience from philosophical point of view and to justify why the aforementioned issue is determined through onto-gnoseology. The discussion of the main thesis is comprised in four chapters. They include an outline of human ontology according to Augustine, anthropological aspects of experience and existence, experience in the framework of introspection and the issue of ontologism together with religious and mystical experience.

The first, introductory chapter comprises general characteristic of the concept of human being according to Augustine, especially the main construct of its ontological basis. The issue of the soul exposed by the author deserves careful attention. This particular phenomenon activates our efforts in the area of being, epistemology and also decides about spiritual realization. The writer from Africa has touched upon anthropological pluralism in his ontology. In this light, human being is not solely a system of neurons or a piece of matter, but remains a unique combination of the physical and spiritual realm. The first chapter is the basis for further research in the context of Augustinian epistemology, which allows us to better understand the impact of the human cognitive apparatus on experience both in terms of being and epistemology.

The objective of the second chapter was to discuss and analyse the main anthropological aspects of experience and existence. The analysis of selected aspects of experience presents human existence as an ordered structure that stands in opposition to all simplifications. It is clear from Augustin's ontology that human is good by nature, and hence if he sins, it is because he acts against his nature. This great philosopher strongly emphasizes that evil is a deviation and distortion of the creation and thus of the law established by God. The structure of the discussed chapter highlights the basic idea stated in the title, which merges many different strands of thought that appear in the Hippo's deliberations. Among them, we cannot ignore the subject of the bottom-up anthropology, as well as Augustine's attitude towards the experience of transcendence, the issue of the autonomy of conscience, existential realism, the way ideas exist and beauty reflected in the aesthetic experience. This chapter presents various approaches to experience which refer to the structure of human existence. It all points to the evidence that experience in the onto-gnoseological approach was defined by the thinker from Tagast as a joint functioning of cognitive and intellectual acts, which is not without significance when it comes to the abovementioned relationship of ontology and gnoseology.

The third chapter raises an important question of experiencing freedom. The Christian writer distinguishes between freedom in the ontological sense and freedom as a consequence of free will. The former is an existential aspect of human nature that enables man to free himself from the sin of transient things. In Augustine's teaching on the other hand, the role of freedom is to lead to moral integrity and spiritual development of man. The internal experience seems to argue for the existence of ontological aspects of human nature that together make one being. As has been

already pointed out, for the early Christian the inconceivable as well as spiritual basis of our psyche is by no means an epiphenomenon of physiological processes. The phenomenon of self-awareness demonstrates the true value of humanity, in which experience seen from onto-gnoseological point of view is a condition for the realization of good and love.

Augustine did not create a single definition of experience. It seems clear that the reflections of the Christian thinker convey an extremely complex semantic structure, in which we can capture several interpretations of internal experience, such as the concept of knowledge and self-aware acts, as well as experience that results from co-action of intellectual and volitional functions. The issue under discussion was presented from the perspective of self-observation, i.e. the process connecting the sphere of the internal universe of the human psyche with the intellectual activity of *cogitare*. Augustine describes this phenomenon as the fundamental characteristic of human nature, which means that experiences that occur in the depths of our consciousness are conditioned not only by external factors, but above all they are made in the introspective dimension, which obviously translates into experience understood gnoseologically. All this indicates that Augustine's anthropology is not limited to the self-conscious subject of mental experiences, but rather constitutes a multi-dimensional harmony of relations perceived from a Trinitarian perspective.

The last chapter of the thesis demonstrates the difference between religious and mystical experience. It is difficult to draw the line between the two experiences. However, considering personal experiences of the author, it should be assumed that his mysticism is preceded by a deep ascetic exertion. For him, mystical experience implies the most intimate and complete comprehension of God's reality, in which the relationship of "I and God" transcends the conventional "here and now". However, the experience under discussion (like with other mystics) does not completely exhaust the cognition of God's nature. To sum up: on the one hand, the Bishop of Hippo acknowledged cognition of the Creator through mystical experience, but on the other, by referring to the theology of Saint John, the author emphatically pointed to the epistemological aporia, in the light of which God goes beyond human cognitive abilities and therefore remains unattainable to a certain extent (J 1.18). Our author was aware that the primary purpose of mystical cognition is the gradual presentification of the mystery of God. Yet, the religious experience is manifested, for instance, through prayer, thanksgiving, living the liturgy and pastoral activity. Juxtaposition of these two experiences correlates the issues of Christian mysticism, intuition and God's enlightenment. For Augustine, the above-mentioned issues are partly related to the concept of ontologism. This last term seems to be both a subtle and innovative proposal, which enables to estimate further research prospects. The author himself never acknowledged the fact that the notion of being has priority over the theory of cognition. Similarly, intuition itself (also in the context of faith) does not imply the unity of cognition and being. Nevertheless, Augustin's thought cannot be denied a certain anthropological-cognitive triad, that manifests itself in the unity of the moment, namely the consciousness of the subject, of being, and of existence. Obviously, this is not about unity in the understanding of Thomism, but rather about a philosophical correlation which was mentioned more than fifteen centuries later by S. Frank. Therefore, it is impossible to determine unequivocally whether Augustine's

views can be described as ontologism. On the basis of our philosopher's personal experiences, the God, unattainable for human mind, remains eternal light. However, that does not indicate a stance in the light of which the Augustinian *visio* would imply the direct vision of the nature of God. The analyses carried out in the thesis remain to some extent open, and the theory of ontologism alone does not allow for its complete rejection.

It seems justified to claim that for the Bishop of Hippo, man, despite moderate dualism, remains a psycho-physical and spiritual unity. It can be easily discerned that the concept of experience discussed in the dissertation covers a broad pluralism of issues that provide a sense of motivation, as well as control over one's own life. When discussing experience, Augustine describes this phenomenon from the philosophical perspective, focusing mainly on the existential aspects of human nature. The title of the dissertation reveals a rather strong tendency that characterizes Hippo's anthropology, namely that man is not a solely material entity. The author's attitude towards the subject's experience is anti-naturalistic. That implies that a human being is not determined by behavioral factors. There is every indication that the invoked conception contradicts the above-mentioned tendencies and speaks for a humanistic approach, i.e. a view according to which human action is determined by intrinsic forces. These include: memory, intellect, will, consciousness, thinking in the sense of *cogitare*, cognition and love. The concepts in question play an important role in the reconstruction of various perspectives of experience and strongly support the thesis that experience results from onto-gnoseological structures.

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