

DARIO SESSA

MANKIND ACCORDING
TO GOD'S DESIGN
Introduction to Theological Anthropology



«Vi farò pescatori di uomini» Mt 4,19

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FOREWORD

*The heart of man is a great enigma that the most
experienced people in the world have not yet solved*
(Bonaventure d'Argonne)

*The boundaries of the soul you will never be able to find,
however much you travel its paths:
so deep is its reality*
(Heraclitus)

*The bee knows the formula of its hive,
the ant knows the formula of its anthill,
man does not know his formula*
(Dostoevskij)

*Man is the animal that is not yet determined,
something fluid, a dark and veiled thing*
(Nietzsche)

This contribution is a study tool that is intended as a teaching aid for students facing complex issues of theological anthropology in the university context. It is in no way intended to replace any textbook but only to offer a general introduction to the course, dealing with some of its peculiar themes.

First and foremost, it is intended to help the reader grasp the meaning and scope of the question in the contemporary context. It also aims to focus attention on certain problematic issues worthy of further study.

This contribution was born *“in the field”*, i.e. in academic lecture theatres. It was also deemed useful to provide the reader with some indications. The material, which comes from

a critical synthesis of institutional lectures, is presented with varying levels of depth responding to different didactic needs, without sacrificing a proper scientific arrangement.

Indeed, the critical apparatus allows an in-depth study of the thematic nuclei treated according to the underlying perspectives and needs of the students. Students are invited to pay attention not only to the body of the text but also to the notes, especially those of an ephexegetical nature, which usefully integrate and explain the narrative of the text itself.

The necessary conciseness of the treatment makes it rather dense. It is recommended that an analytical rather than synthetic approach be used in the reading itself.

As in Philosophical Anthropology, the subject of the treatment is mankind. However, it must be made clear that the perspective is completely different. Man is not, in fact, seen from the perspective of man, but from the perspective of God.

Finally, a note on the underlying Thomist perspective that inspires the work. The perpetual wisdom of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, which is a key point of reference of the treatise, can be well understood in the light of J. L. Marion's words:

“A thought that is truly great manages to survive its own epoch in order to break through, in a timeless and stubborn manner, into other epochs other than its own and become in a certain sense contemporary. This paradox is excellently illustrated and exemplified by St. Thomas”¹.

¹ MARION J.L., *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théologie* (St Thomas Aquinas and Onto-Theology), in “Revue Tomiste”, n. 105 (1995) (*Actes du colloque tenu à l'Institut catholique de Toulouse les 3 et 4 juin 1994*), pp. 31-66. The quotation is on p. 31. All English translations are mine.

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