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Affirmation and Confirmation
On Pneumatology and the Problem of Experience

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1. *Introduction: Pneumatology and Experience*

The subject matter of experience and knowledge forms a perennial problem for theology. How can we have knowledge in the realm of theology? How can we gain sound knowledge, verified, or at least supported, by experiential data, when a subject matter like God or the transcendent is concerned?¹

We should not think that the problem of experience and knowledge in theology is only a contemporary problem. My attention was drawn to the fourth century theologian John Cassian, who, in one of his *Conferences*, reports his visit to the desert monk father Nesteros². Eager to gain knowledge on God and the Bible, Cassian and his friend German bombard father Nesteros with questions. As a good teacher, father Nesteros starts with a consideration of what religious knowledge is; then he proceeds with an exposition of the senses of the Bible and the attitude that is needed to fathom these senses. I will not dwell at great length on his exposition, and I only point to the beginning of the conference, in which Nesteros divides religious knowledge into two kinds: theoretical and practical knowledge. Cassian uses, in his account of the lesson, the Greek terms that are related to these two kinds: *theoretike* and *praktike*, notions that show that the two words were fixed technical terms in his days. The theoretical knowledge has to do with the *theoria*, the contemplation of the divine; the practical knowledge is concerned with action and life. It becomes clear that the young student Cassian is eager to dive into the divine mysteries of theoretical knowledge. Father Nesteros is more reluctant in expanding on this kind of knowledge. As a counterbalance, Nesteros puts forward the practical knowledge and the importance of leading a purified life as a means towards contemplation. We may consider this text as an example of how practical knowledge was conceived as knowledge of a lesser rank in premodern times. Moreover, we should take to heart how premodern theology does not resign in this division, but seeks for a way to combine contemplative and experiential knowledge.

For our times, the problem remains in another form. Premodern theology sought to express whether there was any value in practical knowledge. Modern theology, after the Enlightenment, has more distrust over against contemplative knowledge, with its connotation of eternal insights. Modernity has learned to turn to the world of experience. Our knowledge is based upon data of perception. However, we have, in our recent centuries, learned to distrust such data. We are willing to take seriously human experience, but we are also aware that our perception of this experience is manipulated, affected by our gender position, our class position in society, and our position to world cultures.

How does theology situate itself in these circumstances? Theology has learned, on the one hand, to be suspicious towards experiences that present themselves; on the other hand, it has become sensitive to all kinds of experiences of people. It may be characteristic for our

¹ Using the notion of theology in this paper, I refer to the traditional, Christian field of systematic theology, not including the field of religious studies nor the theology of other religions.

² John CASSIAN, *Collatio XIV*, treated recently in the doctoral dissertation of W. REEDIJK, *Zuiver lezen. De Lectio Divina van Johannes Cassianus en de bijbelse hermeneutiek*, Delft, Eburon, 2003. Cf. O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968²; C. STEWART, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

times that theology is directed towards the experiences of everyday life. As eager as Cassian and his friend were to gain eternal knowledge of the divine, contemporary theology searches for every day religious experience.

This search has led to the emergence of a dogmatic field that has been neglected for centuries. I mean the field of pneumatology. It has been a New Testament tradition that the Holy Spirit has an epistemological function in teaching and bringing to remembrance everything that Jesus has said (John 14:26). It has been a Protestant theme to emphasize the role of the Spirit for religious knowledge and formation: the Spirit creates the attitude of belief in the believers; the Spirit makes Christ present in the Eucharist. Whereas for centuries this epistemological facet of the Spirit was neglected in favour of the doctrine of creation (the book of nature), revelation or incarnate knowledge through Christ, new possibilities have arisen from the seventies of the twentieth century, when pneumatology received renewed attention. The Roman Catholic Yves Congar presented a pneumatology with a thorough attention to the sources of church history, and with an ecumenical openness, especially towards Eastern Orthodoxy³. In Protestantism, Paul Tillich opened the way to a new orientation of the spiritual powers of culture⁴. Even the most Christological-oriented thinker of Protestantism, Karl Barth, had to admit in his final days, that he should have to rethink the project of his theology from a pneumatological perspective⁵. It was the cultural current of those days that human experience stood in the centre of attention. Pneumatology appeared to be the field to answer that cultural need. Moreover, academic theology had to face the rise of Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, in which there was widely room for ecstatic and creative expressions, experienced as gifts of the Spirit. Thus, theology has felt both a cultural and an inner-ecclesiastical urge to turn to the field of pneumatology. This has led to a 'rediscovery of the Spirit'⁶, both in Roman Catholicism⁷ and in Protestantism⁸.

The renewed connection between pneumatology and experience forms the scope of my paper. What kind of experience is it, to which pneumatology connects? What is the nature of this connection? My paper is intended as a systematic contribution, in this sense that I also want to make a proposal of how we should conceive the connection between pneumatology and experience. I will start by turning to the pneumatology of Michael Welker and Jürgen Moltmann (§ 2), looking for a fundamental concept of experience. I will proceed by bringing forth a very different thinker, the French philosopher Jean Nabert (§ 3). I conclude by bringing these thinkers together in a conception on pneumatology and experience (§ 4).

2. Welker and Moltmann

It was the French theologian Yves Congar who started his pneumatology with an exposition on experience⁹. However, we need more than a declaration that experience is a relevant theme for theology. Instead of a prolegomena of experience, we need a pneumatology that makes experience an explicit part of its account. I have met such a pneumatology in Michael

³ Y. CONGAR, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint. Tome I-III*, Paris, Cerf, 1979-1980.

⁴ P. TILlich, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963.

⁵ K. BARTH, *Nachwort*, in H. BOLLI, *Schleiermacher-Auswahl*, München/Hamburg, Siebenstern, 1968, 290-312., p. 311.

⁶ H. MEYER a.o., *Wiederentdeckung des Heiligen Geistes* (Ökumenische Perspektiven, 6), Frankfurt a.M., Otto Lembeck/Josef Knecht, 1974.

⁷ Cf. B.J. HILBERATH, *Pneumatologie* (Leitfaden Theologie, 23), Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1994.

⁸ Cf. C. HENNING, *Die evangelische Lehre vom Heiligen Geist und seiner Person. Studien zur Architektur protestantischer Pneumatologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, Gütersloh, Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000.

⁹ Y. CONGAR, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint. Tome I*, Paris, Cerf, 1979.

Opmerking [T.L.H.1]: Need more than prolegomena. Experience as structural. Welker. God als problem of experience. Realistic theology (Vorwort). Free and unclear experiences of spiritual power. until his public/revealed person in creation. Problem: the value of experiences. Experiences that reveal less or more of the Spirit. The structure makes for a better conception of the Spirit. But does it solve the initial problem? Moreover: expansion of Spirit. Leads to creation. But what about history, currents? (cf. reg.) Summary: plurality of experiences as a problem. What makes experiences into experience? Not the concept of Spirit. Plurality of exp. and the notion of confirmation. (Litt.: the unction!?), sanctification.

Opmerking [T.L.H.2]: NOO aanvullen pp.

Welker¹⁰. The notion of experience forms the backbone of Welker's book on the Spirit. Welker starts with the observation that present culture has a problem in experiencing God's Spirit. Modernity has left us with a sense of God's absence. Moreover, theology has manoeuvred itself into a situation of captivity. Theology, according to Welker, has three dominant forms of thinking that hinder the perception of the experience of the power of the Spirit: a schematic thinking of whole and part, a dialogical thinking in an I-Thou relation, and a social moralism with its scheme of better and worse. Welker's theological alternative is, what he calls a 'realistic theology', which takes into account the biblical traditions and the difference of experiences of the Spirit, directed towards bringing forward a renewed sense of the reality of God¹¹.

Welker's material account begins with some 'early' and indistinct experiences of the power of the Spirit, laid down in processes of solidarity, revolt, and the power of protest. In these facets, the Spirit is present as a numinous power. The experience of the Spirit proceeds in a universal sense of justice and peace. The Spirit's resting upon the Messiah expresses this experience, which leads unto a vision that exceeds nature: a vision of a new creation through the Spirit. When the notion of a Messiah has been introduced, the next step is the actual presence of the Spirit in Jesus Christ. This presence runs into a pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, as a force by which a divided world starts to grow together. All kinds of differences and oppositions, for example between spirit and flesh, are taken away, until, ultimately, God can reveal himself publicly in his creation.

Through this process, from early experiences unto a final manifestation in creation, we see an increasing contour of the Spirit arising. The activity of the Spirit consists in interfering in plural and relative worlds; the Spirit works creative by involving the weak. The Spirit liberates, creates justice and peace, and makes human beings participate in the enjoyment of God's glory. Ultimately, the experience of the numinous power of the Spirit leads unto a participation in God's eternal life. Translated into our focus of experiential knowledge in pneumatology, the experience of the Spirit is a matter of growing perception, unto a personal profile of Spirit and God arises in the creation, and human being participates in this manifestation¹². Far more than a theory of correspondence, this knowledge of God is even one of participation.

As such, Welker offers a highly inspiring pneumatology. His theology manages to incorporate traditional pneumatological themes into an original conception of the Spirit. For the moment, I am left, however, with one large difficulty: Welker's notion of experience. For what is exactly his understanding of pneumatological experience? We observe that the Spirit receives a sharper profile throughout the course of Welker's book. However, this course seems to imply a lessening of the profile of experience. The spirit has to do with experiences of liberation, safeguarding, and comforting. However, does that make every experience of liberation into an experience of the Spirit? We are reminded of 2 Corinthians 3,17: 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. Thinking in Welker's line of thought, one could say: where liberty is, there is the Spirit. Welker hastens to say that not all experiences of liberation are experiences of the Spirit:

“However, not *every human experience of liberation and freedom* is necessarily an experience of the Spirit of God. Uninspiring, despairing, life undermining powers, and

¹⁰ M. WELKER, *Gottes Geist. Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1992.

¹¹ WELKER, *Gottes Geist*, 49-57.

¹² Welker takes up themes from process theology, though his position differs from process theology on many details.

even demonic forces may as well awaken a pretence of freedom, may evoke deceptive experiences, experiences of alleged presented freedom”¹³.

That reasoning does not bring us further. Welker states that not every human experience of liberation is necessarily an experience of God’s Spirit, because there are alleged experiences of liberation. That implies that every true experience of liberation *is* an experience of the Spirit. Such a conception of experience implies that the power of the Spirit becomes a mere confirmation of forces that are at play in the world. Welker will not be pleased with that term confirmation. For in his opinion the force of the Spirit has largely critical potency. However, when every constructive, critical force may be named a power of the Spirit, a critical principle is lacking.

It is not clear how the Spirit is related to human experience. It is not clear what human experience implies, as well. Welker’s book implies a wide variety of experiences, ranging from experiences of liberation in society until the experience of sharing the glory and enjoyment of God. My critical remark in such use of experiences is, that any unity of experience is lacking. What remains is a variety of experiences, confirmed by the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Holy Spirit is the only guarantee for keeping together the range of spiritual experiences. However, what is the foundation for the unity of the Spirit, except a strong belief, rising from the Christian tradition?

Some of the criticism of Welker may be warded off by turning to Welker’s teacher Jürgen Moltmann¹⁴. His pneumatology has set the stage for many others, including Welker¹⁵. Still, it is surprising that Moltmann’s pneumatology has attracted relatively little attention. Perhaps this is because Moltmann’s pneumatology is incorporated into a trinitarian conception of dogmatics; this conception was unfolded before in his *Trinität und Reich Gottes*, running into *Gott in der Schöpfung* and *Der Weg Jesu Christi*. After *Der Geist des Lebens* the series ends in an eschatology *Das Kommen Gottes*¹⁶. Much of the themes that are broached in traditional pneumatologies have been treated in the other works. Moltmann’s conception of the Holy Spirit arises from his view of a social trinity, in which the Spirit bears and encompasses a kenotic movement between Father and Son. A mutual movement of inhabitation and pervasion is also given between God and world. The Spirit, seen from the perspective of creation, procures the world’s openness towards God. The ‘way of Jesus Christ’ shows a deep intertwinement of Christ and spirit. It is in the actual pneumatology that the liberating force of Christ is expanded over the world and becomes a spirit of life, as a prelude to the eschatological manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

When Moltmann speaks of experience, it must be clear that he opposes against the situation of God in subjective experience. His view is one of ‘immanent transcendence’; God has to be tasted in everything of the world. His conception of experience is inclusive¹⁷. In that conception, another word replaces the notion of experience: life becomes the central concept of pneumatology. The second part of Moltmann’s book presents the central concepts of

¹³ WELKER, *Gottes Geist*, 308 [indentation of the author Moltmann; translation TLH].

¹⁴ J. MOLTSMANN, *Der Geist des Lebens. Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie*, München, Chr. Kaiser, 1991. Cf. T.W. YOO, *The Spirit of Liberation. Jürgen Moltmann’s Trinitarian Pneumatology*, Amsterdam, s.n., 2002.

¹⁵ For example, L. DABNEY, *Die Kenosis des Geistes. Kontinuität zwischen Schöpfung und Erlösung im Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (Neukirchener Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie, 18), Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1997; G. MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ, *Erwecke die Welt. Unser Glaube an Gottes Geist in bedrohter Zeit*, Gütersloh, Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993; M. WELKER, *Gottes Geist*.

¹⁶ J. MOLTSMANN, *Trinität und Reich Gottes, Zur Gotteslehre*, München, Kaiser, 1980; *Gott in der Schöpfung. ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, id., 1985; *Der Weg Jesu Christi. Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen*, id., 1989; *Das Kommen Gottes. Christliche Eschatologie*, id., 1995.

¹⁷ MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, ch. I, § 3.

Christian dogmatics in this perspective. Life in the Spirit implies a liberation into life, a justification of life, a rebirth to life, a sanctification of life, charismatic powers of life, running into mystical experience. If we are to characterize Moltmann's doctrine of the Spirit, we can only propose a single term: *Lebensbejahung*, life affirmation. The Holy Spirit is not simply the vital power, but it is the quality that makes life to life, that makes life worth living.

“Human life – and certainly not only human life — only becomes vivacious and felicitous in its vitality, when it experiences affirmation (*Bejahung*) and is affirmed itself”¹⁸.

That is not an obvious affirmation. Humans have become accustomed to death and destruction. It is a huge task to fight against poverty, injustice, and war. Moltmann is a theologian who has experienced the recent ecological and political crises of Tschernobyl (1986) and the Gulf War (1991), but also the democratic revolution of East Germany (1989). Therefore:

“We have experienced the catastrophes and read the signs at the wall, which call us from death into life ... We have experienced the powers of life negations, but we also experience the powers of life affirmation”¹⁹.

Indeed Moltmann's language is full of expressions like: power of life, room for life, source of energy, field of force. His pneumatology entails the explication of the Spirit as the spirit of life, and the implications of this spirit for living and believing.

Does Moltmann's pneumatology take away the criticism that we mentioned in dealing with Welker? Welker's weak point was given in the plurality of experiences, which brought us to the question: is the Spirit a mere confirmation of a plurality of experiences? In Moltmann we meet another model of experience. The unity of experience is given in the vital force behind the phenomena. It will be no surprise that Moltmann is charmed of Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, and lines up with life philosophies as of Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Georg Simmel²⁰. Still, this accentuation of a vital force can raise the reproach of a vitalism. Is the Spirit a synonym for the vital force in every living creature? We would not do justice to Moltmann, by interpreting him in this way. It is, for example, significant how Moltmann deals with the text of 2 Cor 3,17: ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’²¹. Different from Welker, Moltmann relates the verse to Christ. The risen Lord has become a vivifying spirit. His mode of existence is the vivification, and that is the effect that proceeds from him. “Freedom is present where Christ is experienced in the Spirit”²². This statement prevents the spirit of becoming a predicate to freedom.

Two themes prevent Moltmann's pneumatology from becoming a mere vitalism. First, Moltmann presents a conception of social trinity, in which the Spirit has a perichoretic function. The Spirit hovers between Father and Son, between God and world. The perichoretic identity makes that the Spirit can never be fully associated to a vital force within the world. Because the Spirit is part of an immanent transcendence, it expresses God in the life affirming forces of the world, without being identified with those forces. Second, Moltmann's view of the Spirit and the Trinity is presented within an eschatological framework. The history of salvation, according to this view, will run into a contemplation of God as Trinity, a full manifestation of the Trinity in the world, leading to a trinitarian

¹⁸ MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, 11.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, 12.

²¹ MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, 133-135.

²² MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, 134.

doxology. Life as it is now, already has its expressions of ecstasy. In fact, the essence of life is given in the moments of intense experience of life²³. Such experiences of deepened perception, as an “eternal instant” form a “cosmic liturgy of creation” in the present, which preludes to the eschatological praise²⁴. The eschatological perspective relates the spiritual experiences of the essence of life to a final doxology of God in history. This relation makes pneumatology more than a philosophy of life. The same theme had been dealt with in the final chapter of Welker’s book. For Welker the eschatological praise is a matter of increasing participation and intimacy²⁵.

In asking for the relation between pneumatology and experience, we thus encounter a view of the Spirit as a force that confirms powers of liberation (Welker), or as the force of life affirmation (Moltmann). The epistemological keyword for Welker is participation in the Spirit, for Moltmann deepened perception of the world in God. Comparing both models, I prefer Moltmann’s theology, which provides us with more unity in the notion of spiritual experience. I view Welker as an exponent of a reasoning that sanctions existing experiences. I have used the word ‘confirmation’ for this pneumatological experience. I prefer a pneumatology of affirmation. I use the notion of affirmation to express the endorsement of a fundamental drive beneath concrete experiences.

However, we still may ask whether we should not need a more critical notion than affirmation. We have seen that Moltmann provides a corrective element for pneumatology by his trinitarian conception and his eschatology. I would like to add to this corrective intention by radicalising the notion of affirmation, rather than putting forward an alternative concept. For this aim I turn towards the French philosopher Jean Nabert.

3. Nabert and the originary affirmation

Jean Nabert (1881-1960) is the most important twentieth century French philosopher in the Kantian, reflective tradition²⁶. Kant’s intention had been to reveal the organization of human knowledge, the transcendental structure of consciousness. Kant’s method suggests a large division between the natural disposition of human being and the awareness of the critical, reflective philosopher. Kant’s transcendental philosophy thus may lead to a neglect of the value of concrete experiences, which are covered under a veil of metaphysics and false intentions. The subject of knowing in Kant perceives the world from a bare structure of transcendental forms, and acts by some transcendental principles and postulations. Nabert displays another intention by radically starting with the human subject as it experiences its world. The act of reflection is not different from the natural disposition of human being. The structure of reflection starts in what is given in the human subject. Nabert’s attention is especially directed towards the human subject in the world of action. His work presents a

²³ Moltmann follows Heidegger with his view of human existence as ex-istence, ‘hinausstehen in die Wahrheit des Seins’. MOLTSMANN, *Geist*, 317, referring to M. HEIDEGGER, *Über den Humanismus*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1965 (originally 1949).

²⁴ Both the theme of perichoresis and the experience of the Spirit in a deepened awareness of being have been exposed before in J.V. TAYLOR, *The Go-Between God. The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*, London, SCM, 1972.

²⁵ WELKER, *Gottes Geist*, 304.

²⁶ On Nabert cf. P. LEVERT, *Jean Nabert ou l'exigence absolue* (Philosophes de tous les temps), Paris, Seghers, 1971; P. NAULIN, *L'itinéraire de la conscience. Étude de la philosophie de Jean Nabert* (Analyse et raisons, 4), Paris, Aubier/Montaigne, 1963.

renewal of Kant's second Critique, especially as laid down in Nabert's *L'expérience intérieure de la liberté* (1924) and *Éléments pour une éthique* (1943)²⁷.

I turn to this book *Elements for an Ethic*. Nabert intends to sketch the elements of ethical life. The three parts of the book express the three stages of reflection that are concerned with this life. The third part of the book describes the duties and moral sources of actual existence. The first part of the book is concerned with the starting point of moral reflection: what is given to the human subject? Surprisingly, Nabert does not start with a description of freedom. For all ethicists the concept of freedom is a necessary condition to moral life. However, Nabert does not want to start with freedom as a bare notion. He starts in the facts of human life, e.g., in the experiences that threaten the use of freedom. The philosopher should admit that human freedom is threatened from the beginning. Therefore, it should form an illusion to start with the capacity of freedom alone. Thus, Nabert presents an extensive description of the human subject in his endangered capacities. Under the heading of the 'fault' he describes the subject in relation to itself, and its awareness of transgressing rules. The notion of failure (*échec*) expresses the faltered relation of the subject to the world; and the notion of solitude covers the harmed experience of human being in relation to others. Now the question is how a human subject, so entirely covered under defects in relation to itself, to the world and to others, can develop into a responsible moral being. In short: how do we come from part I of the book to part III?

The answer is laid down in part II, devoted to the idea of an 'originary affirmation'. Where human being exhibits a desire for being, this desire receives an absolute affirmation, an affirmation laid down in saying 'I am'²⁸. This affirmation forms the foundation of the self. The certitude of this constitution of the self, however, does not go without criticism, as it also implies an appeal for realization, which goes with faults, failure, and solitude. We see that Nabert establishes a renewed Cogito, as Descartes did before. As in Descartes, this establishment is purely epistemological. There is no metaphysical or empirical basis for it. Nevertheless, it forms a necessary step towards the empirical realization of the human subject. The (empirical) I has to 'imitate and verify, as far as possible, the initial certitude'²⁹.

There is a long way to go towards realization. Nabert has devoted a separate book to the problem of evil, an obstruction to self-realization far more obstructive than fault, failure, and solitude³⁰. What remains in this trajectory of the self is a desire for being. Nabert, in his latest work, relates this essential desire to a *désir de Dieu*, a desire for God³¹. Or can we even say: a desire from God? For the desire proceeds from an absolute experience that confronts the subject. In Nabert, the absolute is both the starting point and the end of human existence. The originary affirmation that comes from the absolute leads to the possibility of existence for the I. It also presents an absolute task for the subject that realizes itself through fault, failure, solitude, and evil. The affirmation does not create a resting point, but only stresses the absolute character of the desire for being, which, finally, is a desire for/from God.

²⁷ J. NABERT, *L'expérience intérieure de la liberté*, Paris, PUF, 1924; *Éléments pour une éthique*, Paris, PUF, 1943/ Paris, Aubier, 1962².

²⁸ A comparison to the philosophy of Michel de Certeau arises, because Certeau makes a similar affirmation (*volo*, 'I will') to the mystical fundament of the subject. Cf. M. de CERTEAU, *La fable mystique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982. It would be interesting to compare De Certeau to what Nabert says on the ineffability of the originary affirmation; Nabert, *Éléments*, 70.

²⁹ Nabert, *Éléments*, 6.

³⁰ J. NABERT, *Essai sur le mal*, Paris, PUF, 1955/ Paris, Aubier, 1970².

³¹ J. NABERT, *Le désir de Dieu*, Paris, Aubier, 1966. Cf. J. BAUFRAY, *La philosophie religieuse de Jean Nabert*, Namur, Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1974. Jean Greisch has argued that this desire for God is rooted in an early text of Nabert from 1934; J. GREISCH, "L'inquiétude du se comprendre" et le désir de Dieu, in *RSPT* 82 (1998) 475-488.

4. *Conclusion: Confirmation, affirmation and desire.*

I put forward this conception of Nabert with the intention to deepen the notions of experience, confirmation and affirmation as set out in § 2. By way of conclusion I end with some theses that cover the argument of this paper.

1. Pneumatology forms the theological *locus* to explore the meaning of experience in theology.
2. In dealing with concrete, empirical experiences, pneumatology runs the risk of merely confirming experiences, without naming the specifically pneumatological character of the experiences.
3. Moreover, in confirming experiences, pneumatology runs the risk of losing a univocal concept of experience.
4. Therefore, pneumatology should concentrate upon the essentials behind empirical experience, namely, the affirmation of life.
5. The notion of affirmation should be brought from the empirical unto the transcendental, in order to express its character of absolute certitude and appeal.
6. This alteration of viewing experience from the empirical to the fundamental, offers new possibilities for naming the spiritual desire in being.

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