Theology and Man's Future

In the sesquicentennial brochure, Knowledge and the Future of Man, 1 and again in Father Ong's essay in the book with the same title, 2 there is set forth a correlation between the accelerating expansion of human knowledge and, on the other hand, the ever accelerating pace of social and cultural change in the modern world. It is this correlation between expanding knowledge and socio-cultural change that confronts the contemporary university with a grave problem. For the university has ceased to be just a store-house whence traditional wisdom and knowledge and acceptable and cultural change. It provides a center in which ever increasing knowledge is disseminated to bring about ever increasing social change and cultural change. It has a grave responsibility for the future of man, and it is the concern of St. Louis University in sponsoring the present gathering to ventilate this issue.

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Accordingly, my title, Theology and Man's Future, is to be understood within this context. I shall speak to you of man's future, not directly, but only indirectly. Not directly, for I have not peered into any crystal ball and there foreseen the future utility or futility of theology. Only indirectly, for the direct and discernable determinant of man's future is the ever accelerating expansion of human knowledge. Theology enters into the picture only in the measure that it keeps abreast of this expansion and in interaction with it. My topic, then, is theology, not theology as a set of timeless abractions, not theology as rooted in three millenia of religious history, but theology as situated in a contemporary university, as influenced by other disciplines, as possibly relevant to questions other disciplines raise and to problems they confront and, consequently,

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as making its contribution to the thought that will direct the future of man.

First, then, let me say something of the influence other disciplines have had on theology and, particularly, on Catholic theology where the effect has been belated, more recent and so, at least apparently, more massive. Five areas here merit attention: hisotry, philosophy, religious studies, method, and communications.

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One of the profoundest changes in Catholic theology has been brought about by modern methods of historical study. It is true, of course, that Christianity has always been an historical religion. The Fathers appealed to the scriptures, the medieval theologians to both to the scriptures and to the Fathers, later theologians to all their predecessors. But they did not have at their disposal the resources and the collaboration of moddern scholarship with its critical editions of texts, its indices and handbooks, its specialized institutes and congresses, its ever monographs mounting accumulation of Anenograps and articles. The ideal that Afermed their interest and guided their attention was not the historical ideal of critically evaluating all available evidence with the aim of bringing back to life the societies and cultures of the past; it was the theological ideal of knowing God and knowing all things in their relation to God. So they tould tend to assume not only an unbroken tradition of faith but also unchanging modes of apprehension and conception. A great revolution was needed -- and it is not yet completed -- to make the development of doctrine an acceptable notion, to have it apprehended not merely in some abstract and notional fashion but concretely and

really through exact study of relevant texts, to admit historical methods not only in kke, patristic and medieval and later fields but also in the scriptures, and finally -- to come to the as yet unfinished task -- to effect the synthesis of historical and theological aims so that we have neither history without theology nor theology without history but both.

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A second major influence has been philosophic. theology has wedded to Aristotle. The beginnings of that wedding were auspicious enough. Atmwawmammathammunwmwavhta For medieval theology was doing but two things when him partly it accepted and partly it reinterpreted the Aristotelian corppus. On the one hand, it was providing itself with a conceptual system that would make it possible for it to work out coherent answers to its endless quaestiones. At the same time, it was ¢ christianizing the Greek and Arabic culture that was pouring into Western Lurope and threatening to engulf its faith. But what once was achievement, at a later date proved to A been, be an obstacle to vitality and development. Aristotelian thought is unacquainted not merely with the content but also

with the nature of modern science. It is not equipped to

distinguish and to A relate to one another the natural sciences, the human sciences, philosophy, and theology. It is unable to provide the foundations for their proper functioning and collaboration. Its conceptual system in part is to be revised and in part to be replaced by notions drawn from modern philosophy and science. is that contemporary theologians are drawing upon personalist, phenomenological, existential, historical, and transcendental types of philosophic thought to find the conceptual tools needed for their own thinking and writing. The results numumity, are eclectic rather than systematic and deeply based,

and here I feel there is a real danger in an age when modernism subjectivism of the modernists Is so easy and avoiding it so hard. now is the time when

modernist subjectivism and relativism are so easily accepted and so difficult to avoid becoming increasingly common.

Contemporary Catholic theology, then, not only is open to philosophic influence but profoundly is in need of these philosophy. Here I must distinguish between primary and secondary assects of that need. The theologian will want to be acquainted with Stoicism in reading Tertullian, with middle Platonism in reading Trigen, with Neoplatonism in reading Augustine, with Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes in reading Aquinas, with Aquinas in reading subsequent theologians. But this need is secondary. It is a matter of acquiring the necessary background for particular tasks of interpretation. Again, it is through a study of the philosophers that the theologian will be introduced to philosophic questions, that he will reach answers relevant to his primary need, that he will learn to think and speak on the level of his age and culture. But again this is secondary. It is concerned with the pedagogy of meeting the primary need. It does not define the primary need itself. The primary need λ for the theologian to know what he is doing when he is doing theology. To reach such knowledge three prior questions must be answered. There is the question of cognitional theory: What am I doing when I am knowing? There is the question of epistemology: Why is doing that knowing? There is the question of metaphysics: What do I know when I do it? To these three questions the theologian needs full and precise and well-grounded answers. If he has those answers, his essential needs are met. If he does not reach those answers, then 🛊 he will not know what he is doing, not merely when he does philosophy but also when he does theology, when he is interpreting a text, when he is ascertaining a historical fact, when he is reconstructing a situation or mentality, when he

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moves beyond reason to faith, when he determines what is and what is not a matter of faith, when he seeks and understanding of the mysteries of faith, when he conferns himself with the problem of communicating the faith to all men of all classes and of all cultures. Briefly, theologians have minds and use them, and they had best know what they are doing when they use historically, them. Again, to put the matter, electronically, to follow Aquinas today is, not to repeat Aquinas today, but to do for the twentieth century what Aquinas did for the hirteenth. As key elements in.

Aquinas baptized Greek and Arabic culture, so the contemporary held hillosopher and/or theologian has to effect a baptism of modern culture.

A third major influence is the field of religious studies: the phenomenology of religion, the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion, the history of religions, and the philosophy of religion. I call this a major influence, not because the influence has been conspicuous, but because of very significant and pwperful contemporary trends. The first stems from Vatican II, and it consists in the hurch's concern with ecumenism, with non-Christian religions, and with the atheist negation of religion. This fact requires the theologian to reflect on his religion, not in isolation from all others, but in conjunction with others. It requires him to attend, not only to the differences separrating his religion from others, but also to the similarities that connect them with one another. To meet such requirements theology will be led into the field of while retaining its identity, religious studies and, indeed, Ato conceive | itself as a particular type of religious studies. There is a second factor leading to the same conclusion. I have already spoken of the relations of theology with history and with philosophy. But if it is to

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Fourthly, there is the area of methodology. The Aristotelian notion of science is one thing, the modern notion is quite another. Contemporary Catholic theology has already in actual practice a neurosis-like taken on the features of modern science. But in conflict with this practice there lurk in the minds of many theologians assumptions and implications that stem from Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. No doubt, theologians always have recognized that their subject was not a science in the Aristotelian sense, that in that sense it could be named science only by analogy. But the modern fact is that no science whatever satisfies the Aristotle's requirements. To keep on thin ing of theology as analogously a science is just to perpetuate a long list of misleading misconceptions.

For Aristotle science is of the necessary: we think we understand when we know the cause, know that it is the cause, and know that the effect cannot be other than it is. In the Their modern sciences necessity is a marginal notion. Substantive concern is, not with necessity, but with verifiable possibility.

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The intelligibility seeks is, not the intelligibility that cannot be other than it is, but the intelligibility that very intrinsically well could be other than it is and so is hypothetical and in need of verification.

Again, for Aristotle, there was a sharp distinction between theory and practice. Theory regarded the necessary; but the necessary is unchangeable; and the unchangeable cannot utterly be changed. It lies outside the whole field of practical activity. All one can do about it is contemplate it. But in the modern sciences theory and practice regard exactly the same objects; our they represent successive stages in the dealings with these objects. Good theory is the possibility of efficacious practice, and practice is the application of theory.

Again, for Aristotle, science is certain. But modern science is not true and certain. It is an ongoing process in which the range and the probability of human knowing keep increasing, but truth and certainty are just limiting concepts. This fact, of course, marks a major problem in the method of contemporary theology, for theology is the offspring not only of science but also of faith, and faith claims truth and certainty.

Finally, an Aristotelian science was a compact affair; it could be tucked into a habit in the mind of a scientist.

But no modern science in its entirety is known by any individual. Modern sciences restrict are parcelled out among the many minds of the scientific community. As they are produced by a far-flung collaboration, so they reside distributively in the minds of researchers, professors, students. And what is true of modern physics, chemistry, biology, also is true of contemporary theology. There are no omnicompetent theologians.

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Finally, there is the area of communications. The church has always felt called to herald the gospel to all men of all cultures and all classes. But the full implications of this mission were hidden by the classicist notion of culture. For that notion was not empirical but normative. It did not study the different cultures of mankind but simply perpetuated the encient distinction between creeks and banbarians set up its own as the ideal and generously offered to instruct others in its own ways. Its classics were immortal works of art, its philosophy was perennial philosophy, its assumptions were eternal truths, its laws were the depositary of the wisdam and the prodence prudence of mankind. But modern culture is the culture that knows many cultures, that studies and compares them, that knows they are all man-made and subject to development and to decay. Just as theology has to enter into the context of modern philosophy and science, so religion has to retain its identity yet penetrate into the cultures of mankind. into the manifold fabric of everyday meaning and feeling that directs and propels the lives of men. It has to know the uses of symbol and story, the resources of the arts and of literature, the potentialities of the old and the new media in any given area of communication, the various motivations on which it can rely, the themes that in a given culture and class provide a Mae, carrying wave for the message.

So much for my first topic. I have indicated five profoundly major areas in which theology has been influenced or is about profoundly to be influenced by other disciplines: history, philosophy, religious studies, method, and communications. This list, of course, is not exclusive. I have selected them simply on the basis of their enormous contribution to theology or

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theology's pressing need of them. I now turn to my second topic, What has theology to offer? What relevance does it possess for the concerns of other disciplines? What aid can it bring towards a solution of their problems?

These are large and difficult questions and, perhaps, I cannot do better than go back to the basic theorem in Newman's Idea of a University. Tatav posm It contains two parts, one resitive, the other negativen The positive part is amply offfrmed by contemporary phenomenological accounts of harifon. Newman advanced that human knowing was a whole with its parts organically related no is the time for all good men to come positive, the other negative. Positively, n Newman advanced that human knowing was a whole with its parts organically related, and this quite accords with the contemporary phenomenological notion of horizon, that one's perceptions are functions of one's outlook, that one's meaning insmembily meaning insmembily meaning in smeaning in is a function of a context and that context of still broader contexts. On the negative side, Newman supposed that a part of knowledge was emitted, everlooked, ignored now is the time asked what would happen if a part of knowledge were omitted, overlooked, ignored, not just by some individual but by the cultural community, and he contended that there would be three consequences. First, people in general would be ignorant x of that area. Secondly, the rounded whole of human knowing would be mutilated. Thirdly, the remaining parts would endeavor to round off the whole once more despite the omission of a part and, as a result, they would become suffer distortion from their effort to perform a function for which they were not designed. Such was Newman's theorem. In fact, theology has for some time been dropped from many university curricula.

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So one well may ask whether newman's inferences have been confirmed in fact, whether there is widespread ignorance of specifically theological areas, and whether this has resulted

in a mutilation and distortion of human knowledge generally.

A fair and adequate answer to these questions would have many presuppositions in have been unable to undertake a survey, and so I must leave and would involve a very delicately nuanced survey. I cannot here expound the answers to these questions to your own observations and the former nor have I been able to undertake the latter. So I must be neflections and perhaps investigations.

content with having beised theirsue brought the matter to your attention.

But it is within this context that I should like to

indicate a possible relevance of theology to a basic problem of the human sciences. For the human sciences may be and f often are pursued simply on the analogy of the natural sciences. When this is done rigorously, when it is contended that a of human behavior scientific explanation in psychology is reached if the same behavior can be had in a robot, then managetate everything specifically human disappears from the science. sciences become exact by ceasing to treat of man as he is. On the other hand, when human scientists reject such reductionism, and many do, not only does the exactitude of the natural sciences vanish but also the human sciences risk becoming captives of some philosophy. For what the reductionist omits # white are the meaning and value that inform human living and acting. But meaning and value are notions that can be clarified only by painstakingly making one's way through the jungle of the philosophies.

Now the suggestion I wish to make is that theology, and in particular a theology that has carefully and accurately worked out its method, could provide the human sciences with hints or even models for tackling the type of problem I have mentioned. For theology has long worked in conjunction with philosophy. At the present time, Catholic

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theology is disengaging itself from Aristotle and deriving new categories from personalist, phenomenological, existential, historicist, and transcendental types of philosophic thought. It will possess a certain expertise in using the philosopheties without committing itself to more than it intends. It is much at home with questions concerning meaning from its study of developing doctrines and its problems of demythologization. HimaTly In my opinion, there is being developed a technique dealing competently, respectfully, and honestly with the conflicting judgements of value, even when such Adgements are foundational. now is the time for all Finally, not even the natural sciences can prescind from the question of value, for the very pursuit of science is the pursuit of a value, and the contention that science should be value-free, if taken literally, 2 wertfrei, implies that science should be worthless. theology has long been aware of conflicting judgements of value, even with radical conflicts, and a successful method of theology will have a technique for dealing competently, respectfully, and honestly with this issue.

are aware, much of modern humanism is an atheistic humanism.

For man to come of age, for him to be mature, for him to realize his potentialities fully, he must drop the illusory wishful thinking of his belief in God and cease projecting his own excellence into the sky. Only when he acknowledges that he is alone in the universe, that it is as aseless as it is silly to count upon some superhuman power, only then will man rise to his full stature, only then will he accept full responsibility, individually for his own living, and collectively for the world in which he and the rest of men do their living.

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Besides the sciences, there are the humanities and, as much

I have no need to insist, modern humanism is prone to ignore

God, to ridicule religion, when it is not militantly atheistic.

Whether certain youth movements indicate a break in this

trend, I cannot say. But I do not think I can do bester than

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ending with the filtration that an authentic humanism is

profoundly religious.

Man's development is a matter of getting beyond himself, of transced nding himself, of ceasing to be an animal in a habitat and of becoming a genuine person in a community. The first stage of this development sensibility that enables him to perceive his surroundings and to respond to what he perceives. But man not only perceives but also wonders, inquires, seeks to understand. de unifies and relates, constructs and exp extrapolates, serializes and generalizes. He moves out of his immediate surroundings into a universe put together by the symbols and stories of mythic consciousness, or by the speculations of philosophers, or by the investigations of befored scientists. But besides such cognitional selftranscendence, there also is a real that self-transcendence. Men | not only | ask | about facts but also about values. are not content with satisfactions. They distinguish between what truly is good and what only apparently is good. are stopped by the question, Is what I have achieved really worth while? Is what I hope for really worth while? Because men can raise such questions, and answer them, and live by the answers, they can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, of genuine cooperation*, of true love.

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Now there is a profound difference between particular acts of loving and the dynamic state to which we refer when we speak of falling in love and of being in love. That dynamic state, while it has its causes, coniditions, occasions, none the less once it occurs and as long as it lasts, is a first principle in one's living. It is the origin and source that prompts and colors all one's thoughts and feelings, all one's hopes and fears, all one's joys and sorrows. Moreover, such being-in-love is of three kinds. There is being-in-love with the domestic community, with one's mate and one's children. There is being-in-love with the civil community, making one's contribution to its needs and promoting its betterment. There is being-in-love with God. Of this love St. Paul spoke when he wrote to the Romans: "The love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Spirit of God that, has been given to us" (Rom 5, 5). To it he referred when he asked: "Then what can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword?" And his answer was: "For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths -- nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8, 35.38.39).

All being-in-love is a total self-surrender. But the love of God is not restricted to particular areas of human living.

is the foundation of

It founds love of one's neighbor. It is the grace that keeps one
ever and devoted But it also, is much more; it is still

A faithful to one's mate. It is more intimate, more paramate.

more attumed to the despest yearnings of the human heart

But it also is something in itself, something personal, intimate,

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and profoundly attunded to the deepest yearnings of the human heart. So It constitutes a basic fulfilment of man's being. Because it is such a fulfilment, it is the source of a great peace, the peace that the world cannot give. Because it is such a fulfilment, it is a wellspring of joy that can endure despite the sorrow of failure, humiliation, privation, pain, desertion. Because it is such fulfilment, it removes the temptation to all that is shallow, hollow, empty, degrading without handing man over to the fanaticism that arises when man's capacity for God is misdirected to finite goals.

I have quoted St. Paul, but I would not have you think that being in love with God is to be found only among Christians. God gives all men sufficient grace for salvation. Nor is his grace without fruit. A celebrated student of religions, Friedrich Heiler, has listed seven features common to all the high religions. His account runs over ten pages, and I cannot repeat it here, partly because it is too long, but also because I feel that he would recognize at least a rough equivalence between his seven features and what I have said of being in love with God.

There exists, then, in man a capacity for holiness,
a capacity for a love that, in its immediacy, regards not the
mysterious reality,
ever passing shape of this world but the mystery; immanent and
transcendent, that we name God. Immansally Deeply hidden,
this love
intensely personal, is not so intimate as to be solitary.
The Spirit is given to many, and form a community.
The community endures over generations, spreads over different
nations, adapts to cultural changes. It acquires a history
of its origins, its development, its successes and failures,
its happy strokes and its mistakes. Its failures and its mistakes

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becloud its witness, but they argue not for the abolition of religion but for its reform.

Long ago St. Augustine exclaimed that God had made us for himself and that our hearts are restless till they rest in him. What that restlessness is, we see all about us in the mountainous and hatreds discontents and horrors and terrors of the twentieth century. But what it is to rest in God is not easily known or readily understood. It is just the opposite of any real or Illusony Wishful thinking now is the time for all good men to come understood. Though God's grace is given to all, still the experience of resting in God ordinarily needs a religious tradition for it to be encouraged, fostered, interpreted, 🕴 guided, developed. Though grace bestows both good will and good performance, still one shrinks and draws back from the performance of denying oneself daily and taking up one's cross and following Christ. For the fulfilment that is the love of appetite or God is not the fulfilment of any desire or wish or dream impulse but the fulfilment of getting beyond one's appetites and desires and wishes and impulses, the fulfilment of self-transcendence, the fulfilment of human authenticity, the fulfilment that overflows into a love of one's neighbor as oneself.

I have been speaking to you of religion at its best.

But an organized religion, a church, is not a conventicle of saints. It is like a net cast into the sea that catches all sorts of fish. If the same ultimate goal and ideal is proposed to all, there also must be proposed the successive stages in a development towards reaching the goal. So it is that, as generation follows generation, there is always a gap between the ideal and the real, between religion as it strives

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of self-deception or insincerity, this gap or contrast does not imply that religion is phony, that religious people say one thing and do another. The very being of man is not static but dynamic; it never is a state of achieved perfection; it always is a people at the dynamic. The striving of the religious man is to give himself to God in something nearer the way in which God has given himself to us. Such a goal is always distant, but it is not inhuman, for it corresponds to the dynamic structure of man's being, to the restlessness that is ours till we rest in God.

I have been arguing that, because religion pertains to an authentic humanism, theology has a contrivoution to make to the humanities. But one can go further and argue with Karl Rahner that, dogmatic theology of the past bas to become a theologicial anthropology. By this is meant that all theological questions and answers have to be matched by transcendental questions and and answers that reveal in the human subject the conditions of the possibility of the theological answers. Explicitly Father Rahner excludes a modernist interpretation of his view, namely, that theological doctrines are to be taken as statements about merely human reality. His position is that man is for God, that religion is intrinsic to an authentic humanism, that in theology theocentrism and anthropocentrism bound coincide. On this basis he desires all theological statements to be matched by statements of their meaning and relevance in human terms. His purpose is not to water down theologic al truth but to bring it to life, not to impose an alien method but to exclude the risk of mythology and to introduce into theological thinking the challenge of rigorous controls.

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I must not give the impression, however, that such a theological anthropology already exists. Father Rahner has not, to my knowledge, done more than sketch how one might constructing go about designit. But the mere fact that the proposal has been made reveals how closely a future theology may be related to the human sciences and to the humanities.

Let me conclude with a brief summary. I pointed to five areas in which theology has been learning or has to learn from other # disciplines: history, philosophy, religious studies, methodology, and communications. Then I recalled Newman's theorem that the omission of a significant discipline from the university curriculum left a blindspot, the multilation of an organic whole, and a distortion of the will disciplines meet real human needs. that remained and endeavored to constitute a new whole While I, are not in a position to discern whether this theorem is born out by the facts, I did suggest that theology with a properly developed method would be of some use to human scientists that, on the one hand, wished to avoid all reductionism without, on the other hand, becoming captives of some philosophic fad. Further, I added that religion was part of an authentic humanism, and so that theological reflection on religion was pertinent to the human sciences and the humanities. Finally, I referred to a paper of Father Karl Rahner's, with which I am in substantial agreement, to indicate just how closely related to human studies a future theology may prove to be.

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NOTES

- 1) The brochure was issued by St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, on the occasion of its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary.
- 2) Walter J. Ong, editor, <u>Knowledge and the Future of Man</u>,
 An International Symposium, New York (Holt, Rinehart and Winston)
 1968.
- 3) Most recently on this there: P. Hünermann, Der Durchbruch geschichtlichen Denkerns im 19. Jarhrhundert, Freiburg (Herder) Freiburg 1. Br. (Herder) 1967.
- 4) Owen Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, The Idea of Doctrinal Development, Cambridge (The University Press) 1957.
- 5) Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, I, 2, 71b 10-12.
- 6) <u>Ibid.</u>, I, 33, 88b 30 ff. <u>Nicomachean Ethics</u>, VI, 5, 1140a 24 ff.
- 7) Posterior Analytics, I, 2, 71b 25 and 72a 37 ff.
- 8) See Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement,
 A Historical Introduction, 2 vols., The Hague (Martinus No Nijhoff)
 1960, pp. 159 ff. Also the index of subjects, s. vv. "Horizon"
 and "Lebenswelt," pp. 718, 720.
- 9) For this theorem I am indebted to Fergal McGrath, The Consecration of Learning, Lectures on Newman's "Idea of a University," Dublin (Gill and Son) 1962.

- 10) For a sketch of such views see the first part of Floyd Matson's The Broken Image, New York (Doubleday, Anchor) 1964.
- 11) For the "third force" in psychology, see Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, Princeton, N. J. (Van Nostrand) 1962, pp. 206 ff. In Sectional sociology there is the attention to meaning in the collective work, Toward a General Theory of Action, edited by Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, New York (Harper Torchboodk) 1962, pp. 4 ff. Cf. Parsons' study of Max Weber in Essays in Sociological Theory Pure and Applied, Glencoe, Illinois (The Free Press) 1949, pp. 72-93.
- Wertfreiheit that the values of the intellectual disciplines must be differentiated from other types of values constitutive of the culture. Decarate Daedalus 941(1965), 59.
- 13) Friedrich Heiler, "The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions," in <u>The History of Religions</u>, Essays in Methodology, edited by M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1959, pp. 142-153.
- 14) Karl Rahner, "Theologie und Anthropologie," in Schriften

 zur Theologie, VIXIVIII, 43-65. Einsiedeln (Benziger) 1967.

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