Natural Knowledge of God

By natural knowledge of God I shall understand the knowledge of God intended by the dogmatic constitution, Dei Filius, of the first Vatican council.

Chapter two of the constitution begins with the words:

> Eadem sancta mater Ecclesia tenet et docet, Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse... (DS 3004, DB 1785).

The corresponding canon reads:

> Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, creatorem et Dominum nostrum, per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanae lumine certo cognosci non posse: anathema sit. (DS 3026, DB 1806).

My interpretation of these statements will be based on Dr. Hermann Pottmeyer's study of the history of Dei Filius.[1]

[1] Hermann J. Pottmeyer, Der Höhepunkt der Auseinandersetzung um Glauben und Wissenschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Dogmatische-historische Untersuchung der Konstitution "Dei Filius" des 1. Vatikanischen Konzils. Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, diss. theol. 3542, 1963, III, 164-176.

First, then, there is asserted the possibility of certain knowledge, certo cognosci posse. Explicitly in the Acta there is envisaged not any quaestio facti but only a quaestio iuris. What is claimed is not fact but possibility, not act but potency.

Secondly, the potency in question is not passive but active, not moral but physical. It is not passive, a mere capacity to receive infused knowledge of God

Secondly, the potency in question is not moral but physical. The natural light of human reason is part of man's physical make-up. It is not asserted that this light is sufficient for fallen man to come to certain knowledge of God; on the contrary, the words ab homine lapso once were in the decree and later were removed from it.[2] Again, it is not asserted that man without divine revelation can reach the full development of his rational powers and so come to certain knowledge of God; on the contrary, that was the doctrine of the so-called moderate traditionalists, and the council ~~studiously~~ avoided condemning moderate traditionalism.[3] What was condemned was an outright traditionalism that flatly denied the possibility of the light of reason reaching certain knowledge of God.

Thirdly, the knowledge in question is not immediate but mediated, and it is mediated not by revelation but by creation. It is not immediate, face to face, but through a glass darkly. It is not mediated by revelation but shortly contrasted with revelation. Explicitly it is mediated by creatures, e rebus creatis, per ea quae facta sunt.

Fourthly, the object of this possible knowledge is God as principle and end of all things, and again, in the canon, as the one true God, our Creator and Lord. However, the council settled nothing about the extent of possible natural knowledge. Its position amounted to the assertion that man can form a true concept of the true God and know his existence with certainty.

Finally, the general intention of the council was to take a stand on the questions of the day. The stand it took was

the traditional stand that defended both reason and faith, reason against fideists and outright traditionalists, faith against rationalists and semi-rationalists.

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Difficulties with this doctrine are widespread today and they are not confined to those outside the church. A first question would be about the relevance of the doctrine. It springs from what seems to be an excessive objectivism, an objectivism that just leaves subjects out of account. It tells what can be done by the natural light of human reason, but it does not commit itself either to saying that ~~it ever actually was done or to predicting that it ever will be done~~ the possibility ever was realized or to predicting that it ever would be realized. A contemporary would want to know what ~~Secondly~~ there is about this possibility that makes any difference to human life or human society.

Secondly, the context of the doctrine is the distinction between faith and reason, grace and nature, supernatural and natural. This distinction has a long history in Catholic theology, but that history is complex, abstruse, difficult, Scholastic. A contemporary is quite ready to speak with the bible and the Fathers about God's grace and man's sinfulness. But ~~must things be complicated~~ he will ask whether things must be complicated with the notion of human nature or the natural light of human reason.

Thirdly, what the doctrine means is that there exists, at least in principle, some valid argument accessible to the human mind that concludes with an affirmation of God's existence and certain. But any such procedure would treat God as an object. Now for very many today God is not and cannot be an object. Consequently, they would repudiate any attempt to prove

God's existence.

Fourthly, there are those that would admit the possibility of establishing the existence of a merely metaphysical object, an ens a se, but they would argue with Max Scheler that the Christian God is a person, and that no person can be known as an object but only intersubjectively through co-operation and, so to speak, co-performance (Mitvollzug).[4]

[4] See Manfred Frings, Max Scheler, Pittsburgh (Duquesne Univ. Press) and Louvain (Nauwelaerts) 1965, pp. 135 f.

Fifthly, there are all those very religious persons to whom philosophy means little or nothing. They know about God in a very real way and they know that this knowledge is something quite different from the logical business of premisses and conclusions. With Pascal they will distinguish between the Dieu des philosophes and le Dieu d'Abraham, d'Isaac, et de Jacob. So by a simpler route they reach much the same conclusion as the phenomenologist, Max Scheler. The god concluded from premisses is not the God Christians worship.

Sixthly, in our day the obvious instance of valid knowledge is science. Science is empirical. It proceeds from data and develops by returning again and again to the data. Moreover, it never adds to data any intelligibility, any unity or relationship, that is not verifiable in the data. Now there are no data on the divine. God is not among the data of sense and he is not among the data of human consciousness. God, then, is not a possible object of modern science.

Further, there is no verifiable principle by which we might conclude from this world to God's existence. For a principle is verifiable only if there are data on both the terms related by the principle. There are no data on God, and so there are not the data for a principle relating this world to God. Hence, to affirm natural knowledge of God in the contemporary context is to lay oneself open to the question, By what unverifiable principle do you propose to conclude from this world to God's existence?

One might answer, By an analytic principle. But then one has to meet the distinction between analytic propositions and analytic principles.[5] Analytic propositions are to be achieved by merely verbal definitions. Analytic principles are analytic propositions whose terms in their defined sense have been verified. With this distinction one once more is met by the demand for verifiability.

Seventhly, ontological and moral judgements pertain to quite different domains. In other words "ought" cannot occur in a conclusion, when "ought" does not occur in the premisses. To state that God is good in the moral sense presupposes moral judgements. They proceed not from an abstract ontology but from a person taking a moral stand, making an existential decision, committing himself to a Weltanschauung. But the God of religion is the good God and Lord, and so once more speculative reason or pure reason or objectively valid argument does not conclude to the existence of the God of religion.

moral judgements. Such moral judgements proceed not from an abstract ontology but from a morally good person.[b] Now the God of religion is the good God, and his goodness is mysteriously in contrast with the evils and suffering of this world. To acknowledge God as good is not just a conclusion; it is to adopt a whole Weltanschauung; it is to make an existential decision. So once more we come to the conclusion that draws a distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of religion.

Such, very summarily, are perhaps difficulties commonly felt about the doctrine of natural knowledge of God. I propose to discuss them, not in the order in which I raised them, but in the order that will best serve to clarify the issues.

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First, then, let us consider two meanings of the word, object. On the one hand, there is the etymological meaning of the word, which was systematized by Kant, and remains in various subsequent philosophies that have not broken loose from Kant's basic influence. On the other hand, there is the meaning implicit in all discourse: an object is what is intended in questioning and becomes known by answering questions.

The Greek word for object, to antikeimenon, means what lies opposite. The Latin, obiectum, whence are derived our word, object, the French, objet, the Italian, oggetto, means what is put or set or lies before or opposite. The German, Gegenstand, means what stands opposite. In all cases, then, "object" connotes something sensible, localized, locally related presumably to a spectator or sensitive subject.

In full accord with the etymological meaning of "object" is one of the key sentences in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. It occurs at the very beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic, and it asserts that the one way in which our cognitional activities are related to objects immediately is by Anschauung, by intuition. Since for Kant our only intuitions are sensitive, it follows that the categories of the understanding and the ideals of reason of themselves are empty; they refer to objects only mediately, only inasmuch as they are applied to the objects intuited by sense. Accordingly, our cognitional activity is restricted to a world of possible experience and that world not of metaphysical realities but of sensible phenomena.

See F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. VI, chapter 12, §§1 and 8. I have developed the present point in Collection (New York and London, 1967) p. 208, and in The Subject (Milwaukee, Marquette Univ. Press, 1968) p. 17.

Substantially the same position recurs in logical atomism, logical positivism, logical empiricism. Inasmuch as there is an insistence on the significance of the logical, discourse is admitted. But this admission is restricted by the affirmation of an atomism, positivism, or empiricism, for the only discourse considered meaningful is discourse that can be reduced to, or be verified in, or at least be falsifiable by sensible objects.

However, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed a series of attempts to get beyond Kant and, in one way or another, these attempts have consisted in an insistence on the subject to offset and compensate for Kant's excessive attention to sensible objects. This was already apparent

in the absolute idealisms of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. It took a more personal form with Kierkegaard's emphasis on the contingently existing subject and with the emphasis on will in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The phenomenological studies of intersubjectivity by Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler and the various forms of existentialism have set up against the objectivist world of impersonal science a not-to-be-objectified inner world of ~~authentic~~ subjects striving for authenticity.

Now it is clear that God is not and cannot be an object in the etymological sense, in the Kantian sense, in the sense acceptable to logical atomism, positivism, or empiricism. Moreover, as long as such a notion of object prevails, phenomenology and existentialism may allow us some access to God as a subject to whom we are subjectively orientated (Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee), but any procedure that regards God as an object will remain excluded.

So much for a first meaning of the word object. There is, however, a second quite different meaning. On this view, objects are what are intended in questioning and what become better known as our answers to questions become fuller and more accurate.

Objects are what are intended in questioning. What is this intending? It is neither ignorance nor knowledge but the dynamic intermediary between ignorance and knowledge. It is the conscious movement away from ignorance and towards knowledge. When we question, we do not know the answer yet, but already we want the answer. Not only do we want the answer but also we are aiming at what is to be known through the answer.

Such, then, is intending and, essentially, it is dynamic. It promotes us from mere experiencing to understanding by asking what and why and how. It promotes from understanding to truth by asking whether this or that is really so. It promotes us from truth to value by asking whether this or that is truly good or only apparently good. As answers accumulate, as they correct, complete, qualify one another, knowledge advances. But answers only give rise to still further questions. Objects are never completely, exhaustively known, for our intending always goes beyond present achievement. The greatest achievement, so far from drying up the source of questioning, of intending, only provides a broader base whence ever more questions arise.

Intending then is comprehensive. Though human achievement is limited, still the root dynamism is unrestricted. We would know everything about everything, the whole universe in all its multiplicity and concreteness, omnia, to pan and, in that concrete sense, that concrete and comprehensive sense, being. To that object our cognitional operations are related immediately, not by sensitive intuition, but by questioning.

Now if God cannot be an object in the etymological or Kantian or equivalent meanings of the word, object, it would be only a fallacy to conclude that he cannot be an object in the quite different meaning just indicated. Moreover, it has always been in the context, at least implicit, of this meaning that the question of God and arguments for God's existence have been presented. Nor is this meaning of the word, object, limited to philosophers and theologians. On the contrary, every serious scientist that ever existed was concerned with the advancement of science, with coming to know more than

at present is known, with the object to which we dynamically are orientated by our questions but which we only partially know.

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Secondly, let us consider the nature of the unverifiable principle by which we proceed from knowledge of this world to knowledge of God. Four points need to be touched upon, namely, what is verification? What principles need to be verified? Are there principles that do not need to be verified? Will these principles take us beyond this world to knowledge of God?

First, what is verification? Vulgarly, verification seems to be conceived as a matter of taking a look, of making an observation. In fact, while verification includes observation, it includes not one but indefinitely many, and it includes them within a very elaborate context. That context includes a very carefully formulated hypothesis, the logical examination of its presuppositions and implications, a comparison of these with the presuppositions and implications of commonly accepted theories, the devising of experiments that will reveal whether or not the data of observation correspond with the hypothesis now is the time for all context divides into two parts, direct and indirect verification. Direct verification is a matter of working out the logical presuppositions and implications of a very carefully formulated hypothesis, devising experiments that will yield data that do conform or not conform with the implications of the hypothesis and, when hypotheses conflict, devising crucial experiments that will resolve the conflict.

Indirect verification is more massive and, ultimately, more significant. All hypotheses, theories, systems of a science are linked together proximately or remotely in logical interdependence. So, for instance, the law of falling bodies was verified directly by Galileo, but it also has been verified indirectly every time in the last four centureies that that law was among the presuppositions of a successful experiment, or a successful application. Similarly, any other law or principle wins an ever securer position by the far-flung and almost continuous process of indirect verification whether in laboratories or in the applications of science to industry. None the less, not even the cumulative evidence assembled by the all but countless observations of direct and prolonged indirect verification suffice to exempt a scientific hypothesis from liability to revision. Unlike the everyday statements of common sense, such as "I now am here speaking to you," they do not meet the requirements for a certain judgement set by the natural light of human reason. They are merely probable, and everyone enjoying the use of the natural light of human reason knows that they are merely probable.

Incidentally this well-known fact is in strange contrast with the widespread view that an object is what is observed, or that observation is the sole criterion of valid knowledge, or that an object is by identity an object in so far as it is sensible.

Incidentally, may I remark that I should like to see greater attention paid by certain types of analytic philosophy to the notable gaps between an observation and a process of verification and, again, between the process of verification and, on the other hand, true and certain knowledge.

~~Secondly, what principles need verification?~~

Secondly, what is the need for verification?

Secondly, what needs to be verified? What is the need for verification? It is a need disclosed to us by what Vatican I referred to as the natural light of human reason, by what I should name our power to ask and answer questions. The first type of question, the question for intelligence, asks what or why or how. The question is put with respect to data, but the answer that is sought goes beyond the data; it is not just some other datum but something quite different from data, namely, a possibly relevant intelligible unity or relationship. Such possibly relevant intelligible unities or relationships are grasped by insights and expressed in hypothetical statements. From the nature of the case there arises, then, the further question, Is the possibly relevant unity or relationship the one that is actually relevant to this case or to this type of case. Common sense meets such questions by what I ~~have~~ in my book, Insight, called the self-correcting process of learning. Natural science meets them by the process of direct and indirect verification.

Thirdly, are there principles that do not need to be verified? Here I would distinguish two meanings of the word, principle. Commonly it is understood as a logically first proposition, an ultimate premiss. More generally, principle has been defined as what is first in any ordered set, primum in aliquo ordine. In this more general sense, an originating

power is a principle and, specifically, our power to ask and answer questions is such an originating power and so a principle. Now obviously this principle, which is the human mind itself, does not need verification for its validation. It is only by the actual use of our minds that any inquiry and any process of verification can be carried out. Hence, every appeal to verification as a source of validation presupposes a prior and more fundamental appeal to the human mind as a source of validation.

However, besides the mind itself, besides our originating power to ask and answer questions, there is the objectification of this power in concepts and principles. Besides the notion of being, which is the intending behind all our questions, there is also the concept of being, which is an objectification of the notion. Besides the native procedures of the mind in asking and answering questions, there is the objectification of these procedures in such principles as identity, contradiction, sufficient reason and, more fully, in logics and methods. Now these objectifications are historically conditioned. They can be incomplete or erroneous, and they can be corrected, revised, developed. Consequently, they have to be scrutinized, checked, verified. But the process of verification appeals, not to the data of sense, but to the data of consciousness, not to any data of consciousness but to the data on the process of asking and answering questions.

Fourthly, do these principles suffice to take us beyond the visible universe to knowledge of God? ~~Our intending is at root a divine discontent. Because it intends the necessary, it recognizes the possible as merely possible, merely hypothetical. Because it intends the unconditioned,~~

The answer to that question depends on the answer to our prior question about knowledge and its object. On Kantian and positivist views our knowledge is confined to a world of experience. On some subjectivist views, while we cannot know God as an object, still we can enter into some ~~praeternatural~~ subject-to-subject relation with him in religious experience. But if human knowing consists in asking and answering questions, if ever further questions arise, if the further questions are given honest answers, then, as I have argued elsewhere at some length, we can and do arrive at knowledge of God.[9]

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If I have said something to clarify the ambiguities of the term, object, and the process, verification, let me now draw attention to the ~~concrete~~ continuity of the intellectual with the moral and the religious, of the mind with the heart.

Our conscious and intentional operations occur on four inter-locked levels. There is a level of experiencing, a level of understanding and conception, a level of reflection and judgement, a level of deliberation and decision. ~~Each~~ We are promoted, moved, from one level to the next by questions; from experiencing to understanding by questions for intelligence; from understanding to judging by questions for reflection; from judging to deciding by questions for deliberation. So the many operations are linked together both on the side of the subject and on the side of the object. On the side of the subject there is the one mind putting the many questions in pursuit of a single goal. On the ~~other~~ side of ~~the object there is the gradual cumulation of elements, as understanding grasps the intelligibility of what sense~~

the object there is the gradual cumulation and conjoining of partial elements into a single whole. So insight grasps the intelligibility of what sense perceives. Conception unites what sense separately perceives and intelligence grasps. Judgement pronounces on the truth of the conceiving and on the reality of the conceived. Decision acknowledges the value of actuating potentialities grasped by intelligence and judged to be real. So the transcendentals, the intelligible, the true, the real, the good, apply to absolutely every object for the very good reason that they are grounded in the successive stages in our dealing with objects. But they are one in their root as well as in their application. For the intending subject intends, first of all, the good but to achieve it must know the real; to know the real he must know what is true; to know what is true he must grasp what is intelligible; and to grasp what is intelligible he must attend to the data of sense and to the data of consciousness.

Now this unity of the human spirit, this continuity in its operations, this cumulative character in their results, seem very little understood by those that endeavor to separate and compartmentalize and isolate the intellectual, the moral, and the religious. They may, of course, be excused inasmuch as the good work they happen to have read is mostly critical while the constructive work they happen to have come across is mostly sloppy. But the fact remains that the intellectual, the moral, and the religious are three successive stages in a single achievement, the achievement of self-transcendence; and so attempts to separate and isolate the intellectual, the moral, and the religious are just so many efforts to distort or to block entirely authentic human development.

What is the intellectual but an intentional self-transcendence? It is coming to know, not what appears, not what is imagined, not what is thought, not what seems to me to be so, but what is so. To know what is so is to get beyond the subject, to transcend the subject, to reach what would be even if this particular subject happened not to exist.

Still the self-transcendence of knowledge is merely intentional. With the moral a further step is taken, for by the moral we come to know and to do what is truly good. That is a real self-transcendence, a moving beyond all merely personal satisfactions and interests and tastes and preferences and becoming a principle of benevolence and beneficence, becoming capable of genuine loving.

What, finally, is religion but complete self-transcendence? It is the love of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that is given to us (Rom 5, 5). It is the love in Christ Jesus St. Paul described when he wrote: "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, 38 f.). That love is not this or that act of loving but a radical being-in-love, a first principle of all one's thoughts and words and deeds and omissions, a principle that keeps us out of sin, that moves us to prayer and to penance, that can become the ever so quiet yet passionate center of all our living. It is, whatever its degree, a being-in-love that is without conditions or qualifications or reserves, and so it is other-worldly, a being-in-love that occurs

within this world but heads beyond it, for no finite object or person can be the object of unqualified, unconditional loving. Such unconditional ~~love~~ being-in-love actuates to the full the dynamic potentiality of the human spirit with its unrestricted reach, and, as a full actuation, it is fulfilment, deep-set peace, the peace the world cannot give, abiding joy, the joy that remains despite humiliation and failure and privation and pain.

This complete being-in-love, the gift of God's grace, is the reason of the heart that reason does not know. It is a religious experience by which we enter into a subject-to-subject relation with God. It is the eye of faith that discerns God's hand in nature and his message in revelation. It is the efficacious reality that brings men to God despite their lack of learning or their learned errors. It is in this life the crown of human development, grace perfecting nature, the entry of God into the life of man so that man comes to love his neighbor as himself.[10]

Now, no doubt, this subject-to-subject relationship to God cannot be objectified, if by an object is meant a naive realist's "out there," a Kantian's sensible object, a positivist's object of observation. But there is no rhyme or reason for employing the word, object, in that mistaken sense. Every act of imagination, every act of conceiving, every act of judging, every act of deciding, every act of speaking is also an act of objectifying. I can speak without speaking of myself and then I am just a subject, a subject as subject. But also I can speak about this conscious subject that I am, and then, as spoken about, I am subject as object.

I have been contending, then, that the intellectual, the moral, and the religious are quite distinct but not at all disparate. They are three distinct phases in the unfolding of the human spirit, of that eros for self-transcendence that goes beyond itself intentionally in knowledge, effectively in morality, totally in religion. With the affirmation of this continuity our efforts at basic clarification come to an end, and we turn to meeting explicitly some of the questions that were raised initially but so far have not been treated.

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However, First, ~~then,~~ let us note very briefly our position. It is not the naive realist, Kantian, positivist view of the object. It is not the ~~naive~~ mixed view that leaves science to naive realists, Kantians, and positivists to add for humanist or religious reasons an insistence on the subjectivity of the subject. It is the view that man's spirit, his mind and his heart, is an active power, an eros, for self-transcendence; ~~and consequently that the object is the term or goal towards which self-transcending moves, subjectivity is intrinsically, constitutively, related to objectivity now is the time~~ since consequently, the subject is related intrinsically and, indeed, constitutively to the object towards which it transcends itself; finally, knowledge, morality, and religion are the three distinct phases in which such self-transcendence is realized.

Next, it was asked what is the relevance of the doctrine of natural knowledge of God, what difference does it make to human living and human society. Obviously, I cannot attempt to treat this question in any but a very summary fashion. There are those today for whom any thought about, any mention

of, either theism or atheism is just meaningless, for whom all religion at best is just a comforting illusion. Such opinions involve a profound ignorance of man's real nature, and such ignorance cannot but have a gravely distorting effect on the conduct of human affairs. The doctrine of natural knowledge of God means that God lies within the horizon of man's knowing and doing, that religion represents a fundamental dimension in human living.

Thirdly, it was urged that we have to drop the words, nature, natural, that we should be content to speak with scripture and the Fathers of God's grace and man's sinfulness. Now I have no doubt that such words as nature and natural, no less than object and verification, can be abused. But I also have no doubt that if we are not only going to speak about God's grace and man's sinfulness but also we are going to say what precisely we mean by such speaking, then we are going to have to find some third term over and above grace and sin.[11]

Fourthly, can a person be an object? A person cannot be an object if "object" is taken in a naive realist, Kantian, or positivist sense. But if "object" means that towards which self-transcending heads, obviously persons are objects: we know them and we love them.

But, it will be urged, according to Max Scheler, we know other persons only intersubjectively. I would grant that such a conclusion follows from Scheler's cognitional theory but, at the same time, I would point out that, just as we pass from consciousness of the self as subject to an objectification of the self in conception and judging, so too we pass from intersubjectivity to the objectification

of intersubjectivity. Not only do we (two subjects in a subject-to-subject relation) speak and act. We speak about ourselves; we act on one another; and inasmuch as we are spoken of or acted on, we are not just subjects, not subjects as subjects, but subjects as objects.

Fifthly, is not philosophy totally different from religion, and is not the God of the philosophers totally different from the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob?

~~There are many philosophies and, among them, many that reject religion. But the difference the questioner seems to have in mind is a difference, not between philosophic and religious doctrine, but between the stance, the psychology, of a philosophic and a religious approach. Moreover, presumably,~~ that of

On my analysis philosophy and religion are quite distinct but they are not totally different; they are two of the three phases of that single thrust by which the human spirit moves towards self-transcendence. What gives rise to the appearance of total difference, I should say, is a failure to distinguish between undifferentiated and differentiated consciousness. Undifferentiated consciousness is global; it is at once intellectual, moral, and religious; it does not sort out different types of issues, specialize now in one type and later in another, seek the integration of separate, specialized developments. Differentiated consciousness results precisely from this process of distinguishing, specializing and, eventually, integrating. As intellectual, it becomes technical. As moral, it concentrates on moral development. As religious, it heads towards mysticism. Now while differentiated consciousness understands undifferentiated, undifferentiated consciousness finds differentiated incompre-

hensible, totally different; not only does it find the technical aspects of science and philosophy simply alien to its religious piety; it also finds asceticism and mysticism equally or more alien.

There remains the further question: Is not the God of the philosophers totally different from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

I am quite ready to grant that there are many mistaken philosophies and many mistaken notions of God. I am also ready to grant that undifferentiated consciousness has very little grasp of any philosophic notion of God, and so would find it impossible to equate the God of its piety with the God of philosophic discourse. Again, I should insist that moral and religious development vastly enrich our relations to God and our apprehension of him; in this respect I am greatly in agreement with Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand. But I should deny that our intellectual apprehension of any real object, least of all, of God is ever complete, closed, excluding further development. I should deny that the developments from moral and religious experience in any way fail to harmonize with intellectual apprehension. I should urge that just as the intellectual, the moral, and the religious are three phases in the single trust to self-transcendence, so too moral and religious development only reveal more fully the God that can be known by the natural light of human reason.

Sixthly, natural knowledge of God is not attained without moral judgements and existential decisions. These do not occur without God's grace. Therefore, the natural light of human reason does not suffice for man's so-called natural knowledge of God.

I mention this objection, not because it is to the point, but because the point is often missed. One misinterprets Vatican I if one fancies it is speaking, not about a quaestio iuris, but about a quaestio facti. The quaestio iuris is (1) whether there exists a valid argument for God's existence and (2) whether the apprehension of that argument is an actus supernaturalis quoad substantiam. Natural knowledge of God is denied if one holds that there is no valid argument or if one holds that apprehensing the argument is an intrinsically supernatural act. Natural knowledge of God is affirmed if one holds that there is a valid argument and if one holds that apprehending the argument is intrinsically natural. One goes beyond the quaestio iuris to the quaestio facti, when one turns from conditions of possibility to conditions of actual occurrence. Such conditions are always very numerous. In the present instance men must exist. They must be healthy and enjoy considerable leisure. They must have attained a sufficient differentiation of consciousness to think philosophically. They must have succeeded in avoiding all the pitfalls in which so many great philosophers have become entrapped. They must resist their personal evil tendencies and not be seduced by the bad example of others. Such are just a few very general conditions of someone actually grasping a valid argument for God's existence. An adequate account would include every entity that conditioned the actual occurrence.

Now Vatican I was not speaking of a quaestio facti but of a quaestio iuris, not of conditions of actuality but of conditions of possibility. I do not think that in this life any people arrive at natural knowledge of God without God's grace, but what I do not doubt is that the knowledge they so attain is natural.

NOTES

1) Hermann J. Pottmeyer, Der Höhepunkt der Auseinandersetzung um Glauben und Wissenschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Dogmatische-historische Untersuchung der Konstitution "Dei Filius" des 1. Vatikanischen Konzils. Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, diss. theol. 3542, 1963, vol. III, pp. 164-76.

2) The third schema of Dei Filius, composed by Fr. Joseph Kleutgen, read in the canon "... ~~ex~~ per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali ratione ab homine lapso certo cognosci et demonstrari posse: a. s." See Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum.... 53, 168.

3) The third schema had excluded the need of a religious tradition for man to arrive at natural knowledge of God. The chapter read: "... naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse, neque ad hoc traditam de Deo doctrinam omnino necessariam esse...." Mansi, ibid., 165.

Card. Franzelin's votum, preparatory to the council, was a chief source on the errors to be confuted and the doctrines to be proposed. His account of traditionalism is available in Pottmeyer, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 33 ff.

4) See Manfred Frings, Max Scheler, Pittsburgh (Duquesne Univ. Press) and Louvain (Nauwelaerts) 1965, pp. 135 f.

5) See B. Lonergan, Insight, pp. 304 ff.

6) I have expanded this sentence in The Subject, Milwaukee (Marquette Univ. Press) 1968, pp. 24 ff.

7) See F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. VI, chap. 12, §§1 and 8. I have treated this topic both in Collection (New York and London 1967) p. 208, and in The Subject (Milwaukee 1968) p. 17.

8) See chapter two in J. A. Martin, The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology, New York, The Seabury Press, 1966

9) Insight, chapter nineteen.

10) As described in 1 Cor 13.

11) This is clear from the history of the origins of the notion of the supernatural in medieval theology. See my article in Theological Studies 2 (1941) 290-306.